

PERSPECTIVES ON ATTITUDES,
ENGAGEMENT, EXPECTATIONS AND
ASPIRATIONS PRE- AND POST-
TRANSITION TO SECONDARY
SCHOOL

ELIZABETH-ANNE GAIR

MEd, PGCE (Learning and Teaching)


A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
University of Strathclyde

2015

Declaration

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.50. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

Signed: 

Date: July, 2015

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the teaching team at the University of Strathclyde and, in particular my supervisor, Dr Daniela Sime and Dr Aileen Kennedy, Course Director of the EdD programme for their encouragement and support.

I also wish to offer my gratitude to the headteachers, who valued my research and made arrangements for me to interview pupils, parents and staff. I would also like to thank the teachers and home / school link workers who so willingly shared their views in interview.

I wish to thank the pupils – both primary and secondary, and parents who participated in this study. This work would not have been possible without your engagement.

Dedication

To Kirsten, my daughter and Alastair, my husband for your support, patience and encouragement as I embarked on this journey, and to my sons, Jessel and Jason, for your belief that I would get here.

Learn, live, be all you can be.

Table of Contents

	Page
Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Appendices	viii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Abstract	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the study	1
1.1 Introduction and rationale	1
1.2 Policy and practice context	5
1.3 The focus of the study	8
1.4 The organisation of the study	8
1.5 Summary	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
2.1 Overview	12
2.2 Background	12
2.3 Concepts and theories related to transitions	14
2.3.1 A time of change	14
2.3.2 Social embeddedness and coping with transition	16
2.3.3 Identity, agency and structure	21
2.3.4 Life course theory and resilience	24
2.3.5 Transition as a process: a trajectory	25
2.3.6 Developmental mismatch in transition	27
2.4 Is there still a problem with transition?	28

2.5 Is there still a problem with transition? The Scottish context	32
2.6 The policy context: Initiatives and strategies	35
2.6.1 Integrated Community Schools and partnership working	36
2.6.2 Curriculum for Excellence and Assessment is for Learning	38
2.6.3 Parental involvement	40
2.6.4 Summary	43
2.7 Factors affecting pupils' attitude to learning at transition	43
2.7.1 Summary	46
2.8 Motivation, engagement, aspirations and achievement	46
2.8.1 Engagement and academic attainment	53
2.8.2 Aspirations and engagement	54
2.8.3 Summary	59
2.9 Expectations	59
2.9.1 Pupils' expectations	61
2.9.2 Parents' expectations	63
2.9.3 Educators' expectations	65
2.10 Summary	67
2.11 Rationale for the study	71
2.12 Research aims and objectives	73
2.13 Research questions	73
Chapter 3: Research Design	75
3.1 Overview	75
3.2 Researcher's position	77
3.2.1 Insider research: advantages and disadvantages	77
3.3 Research paradigms	79
3.4 Methods	83
3.4.1 Observation and video recording	83
3.4.2 Documentary analysis	84
3.4.3 Interviewing	86

3.4.3.1 Preparatory groups	87
3.4.3.2 One-to-one interviews	89
3.4.4 Participants and sampling	95
3.5 Triangulation	100
3.6 Ethical considerations	101
3.6.1 Power relations	103
3.6.2 Permission to carry out the research	104
3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity	104
3.6.4 Voluntary Informed Consent	105
3.6.5 Responsibility to participants	105
3.7 Limitations of the study	106
3.8 Data analysis	109
3.8.1 Overview: A definition for analysis	109
3.8.2 Data analysis process	110
3.8.3 Steps in Analysis	111
3.8.3.1 Analysing the data: Approach to coding	112
3.8.3.2 Analysing the data: Deductive and inductive coding	114
3.8.3.3 Data excluded from analysis or presentation	121
3.9 Reflection and summary	123
Chapter 4: Moving on: experiences and perspectives	125
4.1 Overview	126
4.2 P7 pupils' perceptions: Emotions / concerns at transition	133
4.3 P7 pupils' perceptions: Expectations	139
4.3.1. P7 pupils' perceptions: Preparation by the primary school	140
4.3.2. P7 pupils' perceptions: Preparation by the secondary school	145
4.3.3 P7 pupils' perceptions: Preparation by the home-link worker	147
4.3.4 P7 pupils' perceptions: Involvement of parents and family members	150
4.3.5 Summary: P7 pupils' perceptions – Expectations	152
4.4 P7 pupils' perceptions: Attitude and engagement	153

4.9.2 Perspectives: Attitude and engagement	216
4.9.3 Perspectives: Expectations (Readiness and resilience)	219
Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings	225
5.1 Overview	225
5.2 Emotions at the time of transition	227
5.3 Preparedness for secondary school: Readiness and resilience	230
5.4 Attitude and engagement in learning	233
5.5 Aspirations for education and career	236
5.6 Developing positive attitudes: The impact of parental involvement in negotiating the move to secondary school	239
5.7 The role of professionals in education	242
5.8 The conceptual framework	246
5.9 Summary	248
Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations	250
6.1 Contribution to professional knowledge	250
6.2 Implications for professional practice	259
6.3 Limitations and reflection	263
6.4 Recommendations	265
6.4.1 Recommendations for professional practice	266
6.4.2 Recommendations for further research	267
6.5 Endnote	267
References	269
Appendices	
Appendix A Research project: Introductory leaflet	284
Appendix B Research project: Introductory leaflet - Information for school staff and parents	285

Appendix C	Research project: Introductory leaflet - Information for pupils	286
Appendix D	Consent form for headteachers	287
Appendix E	Consent form for staff	288
Appendix F	Consent forms for parents/carers and children and young people	289
Appendix G	Interview schedule for primary headteachers	290
Appendix H	Interview schedule for primary teachers	291
Appendix I	Interview schedule for P7 pupils	292
Appendix J	Interview schedule for parents/carers	293
Appendix K	Interview schedule for home-link workers	294
Appendix L	Interview schedule for secondary senior management	295
Appendix M	Interview schedule for secondary teachers	296
Appendix N	Interview schedule for S1 students	297
Appendix O	Data analysis chart – Primary 7 pupils (Cluster 1 Urban)	298
Appendix P	Data analysis chart - Primary 7 pupils (Cluster 2 Rural)	301
Appendix Q	Data analysis chart – Primary 7 pupils (Cluster 2 Urban)	304
Appendix R	Data analysis chart – Professionals in education (Management)	308
Appendix S	Data analysis chart – Professionals in education (Teachers)	315
Appendix T	Data analysis chart – Professionals in education (Home Link Workers)	321
Appendix U	Data analysis chart – Parents (Clusters 1 and 2)	323
Appendix V	Interview transcript: JM-P7Boy-C1R (FAM1)	327
Appendix W	Interview transcript: GSM-P7Boy-C1U (FAM1)	334

List of Tables

	Page
Table 2.1 Ecological aspects that shape children’s development	18
Table 3.1 Approaches to interviewing	90
Table 3.2 Issues explored within interview schedules.	93
Table 3.3 Participants in the study: Preparatory group discussions	99
Table 3.4 Participants in the study: Individual face-to-face interviews	99
Table 3.5 Application of codes in analysis	119
Table 4.1 Data analysis chart – Primary 7 pupils (Cluster 1 Rural)	128
Table 4.2 P7 pupils’ emotions at transfer	134
Table 4.3 P7 pupils’ perceptions of increase in homework at secondary school	167
Table 4.4 P7 pupils’ responses – Aspirations for education	170
Table 4.5 P7 pupils’ responses – Aspirations for career	171
Table 4.6 Data analysis chart for secondary school: Cluster 1	183
Table 4.7 Data analysis chart for secondary school: Cluster 2	186
Table 6.1 Developing learners’ readiness and resilience for primary / secondary school transition	256

List of Figures

	Page
1.1 Average tariff scores of S4 pupils, 1998/99-2004/05	6
2.1 Contextual factors influencing learning and behaviour	22
2.2 Factors and requirements for a successful transition	32
2.3 Multi-dimensional and hierarchical structure of self-concept	51
2.4 Hierarchical structure for goals (Forms of Approach Goals)	51
2.5 Structure of goals and self-concepts	52
2.6 Concepts and theories relating to factors relevant to the move to secondary school	69
3.1 Interview focusing and framing (Scott and Usher, 2004)	92
3.2 Coding – A systematic approach	113
3.3 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis - Expectations	116
3.4 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis Attitude to and engagement in learning	117
3.5 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis - Aspirations	117
3.6 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis – Emotions at transfer	118
3.7 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis – Parental / Family involvement	118
3.8 Interrelationship of codes	120
4.1 Perspectives – Aspirations	214
4.2 Perspectives – Attitude and engagement	217
4.3 Primary 7 pupils’ pre-transitional emotions	219
4.4 Perspectives – Expectations (Readiness and resilience)	220
5.1 Key themes and sub-themes relating to the findings	226
5.2 Influencing pupils’ commitment to learning pre and post transition	244
6.1 Transition to secondary school: A framework for professional learning	258

Abstract

Amidst on-going initiatives aimed at raising attainment and promoting social inclusion, a key stage identified for improvement in the HMIE report: *Improving Scottish Education* (2006) is that of primary/secondary transition. Current programmes that can address this issue are *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18* (SEED, 2004) which allows schools curriculum flexibility and the *Integrated Community Schools* policy (HMIE, 2004) which offers a multi-agency approach to improving achievement, health and well-being for all pupils through collaborative working between cluster schools.

International researchers have found that repetition of topics, disregard / distrust of transfer information and failure to build on the work of the primary school (McGee *et al.*, 2003), inappropriate teacher support (Stemler *et al.*, 2006), misinterpretation of pupils' attitudes by school / teacher (Gnaldi *et al.*, 2005), inadequate parental support, difficulties in the family environment (Marjoribanks, 2005; Casanova *et al.*, 2005) and exclusion by peers and student's self-image (de Bruyn, 2005) are possible contributors to post-transitional decline in academic effort. De Bruyn (2005) argues that engagement is a strong predictor of academic achievement and Marjoribanks (2003) hypothesizes that post-transition academic performance has a significant impact on the formation of adolescents' educational aspirations.

This thesis seeks to discover perspectives in relation to pupils' attitude, their engagement in learning activities, and the aspirations of learners – pre- and post- transition to secondary school. The thesis also reports on the exploration of expectations - those of learners and stakeholders (parents, school management, teachers and home/school link staff) at this crucial point in an individual's education. Additionally, it explores whether the presence of aspirations before and after transition might relate to the formation of a

positive attitude to learning and to providing focus for pupils engaged in the move to secondary school.

The thesis compares learners' education and career aspirations with those of their parents. It reveals perceptions of the role of aspirations in influencing Primary 7 learners' and Secondary 1 students' attitude and engagement in learning, from the perspectives of the learners themselves, their parents and educators. The thesis finds that parental involvement and support, and the family work / study ethic are perceived as strong pre- and post- transitional influences on learners' attitude to, and engagement in learning, and on their aspirations for tertiary education and career.

Additionally, given the sustained focus on transition within academic research and educational policy, this thesis finds an absence of written policies on transition and inconsistent practices between different schools - within and between clusters.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the study

This thesis is an exploration of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences and perceptions within two school clusters (consisting of the secondary and two of its associated primaries in each case), in one region in Scotland. It is a study of the key issues that impact on pupils moving to secondary school - from their own perspectives, and in relation to their aspirations. This chapter outlines the background and rationale for the research, the policy and practice context and the research focus. It closes with a brief overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.1 Introduction and rationale

In educational transitions, the word “transfer” has been applied to refer to the move from one school to another and “transition” to refer to the move from one year to another within a school (Galton *et al.*, 1999, p.9). Nevertheless, the words “transfer” and “transition” tend to be used interchangeably in reference to children’s move from one educational establishment to another, or from one stage to the next within a school. Regardless of the terminology, educational transitions have been the focus of much research and writing, as the level of success during transition (in particular, the first transition to primary school) can impact critically on children’s development and future progress, both academically and socially (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007). According to these authors, the extent to which a child achieves a sense of success in their first transition can influence future transitional experiences.

In the United Kingdom, moving schools tends to be age and stage related and occurs as follows: moving from pre-school to primary; from primary to secondary school and from secondary to tertiary education or the world of work. As such, these changes might be considered transition / transfer combinations. At these critical points in a learner’s educational career, stages as well as institutions are changed, except for in all-through

schools, where the transfers involved are accommodated within the same educational establishment.

For the past two and a half decades, the move to secondary school has been regarded with some concern, both internationally and nationally, by educators, local education authorities and governments. Various authors and researchers have focused attention and theorised this transition and several common themes have emerged relating to the impact of transition on learners' achievement and adjustment to secondary school. The data from studies evidence that there is a hiatus (decline or dip) in academic progress that is inherent in the move to secondary school (Galton *et al.*, 1999, 2003; OFSTED, 2002; Graham and Hill, 2003; McGee *et al.*, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005; Bryan and Treanor, 2007; Estyn, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). This has resulted in a variety of government and local education authority initiatives and programmes to address the issues regarding primary to secondary school transition.

Several reasons have been put forward for the dip in academic performance which is experienced at this stage. Amongst them are inappropriate teacher support (Stemler *et al.*, 2006) and discontinuity of learning and teaching approaches and curriculum (SEED, 1999; Galton *et al.*, 2003; McGee *et al.*, 2003). Eccles and Midgley (1989; 1990) and de Bruyn (2005) point to a mismatch between the child's stage of development - passing from childhood to adulthood, and stage in education - moving from primary to secondary school. It has been suggested that this mismatch results from the simultaneous occurrence of (and interaction between) early adolescent developmental changes and the structural changes in the social environment that is the new secondary school (Eccles and Midgley, 1990, p. 134). For some transferring pupils, transition to secondary school is perceived with anxiety (Graham and Hill, 2003; Zeedek *et al.*, 2003); however, several authors indicate that many pupils are generally optimistic about the forthcoming new opportunities.

In conceptualising this transition, the impact of significant others (peers and adults) on the developing child has been perceived as an important aspect influencing how he or she engages with transitional experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1979) put forward the ecological concept (consisting of a series of systems or microsystems that link to form a network or mesosystem, influenced by wider society or the macrosystem) of an individual's development. Inherent in this thinking, an ecological transition takes place whenever a child changes education setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Others have talked about the primary / secondary transitional experience as a time of change - when growing up is conceived as the outcome of moving from one developmental stage to another (Schaffer, 1996; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Vogler *et al.*, 2008). Research has also documented that the trajectorial impact of positive perception and engagement in the transitional process may be age dependent (Elder, 1994); influenced by who the individual is and the way they have developed (Terry, 2006) and dependent on the child's resilience and coping mechanisms – ability to make life changes (Vogler *et al.*, 2008). Additionally, whether the experience is perceived as one of loss of the familiar surroundings, peers and teachers in the primary setting (Muldoon, 2007) or the shift from one identity to another in commencing secondary school (Ecclestone, 2007) may impact on the way in which the child engages with the process.

Children's motivation (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000; Barker *et al.*, 2006), engagement in and attitude to learning (Mc Gee *et al.*, 2003; de Bruyn, 2005) and aspirations (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Marjoribanks, 2005; Yeung and McInerney, 2005) have also been highlighted as factors affecting academic performance. In addition to these, other conditions might have an impact. These may relate to self-efficacy beliefs or ability and effort to effect positive outcomes by being prepared in circumstances (Bandura, 1995), and ability to self-motivate by accepting more challenging tasks as a result of improvements in performance - expectancy value theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Drawing from these concepts and theories, which I examine in depth in the study, I rationalised that the hiatus across primary / secondary transition might seriously

disadvantage some learners. On reflection, this thinking, influenced by my personal and professional background as an educator, stimulated the desire to carry out this study.

I have worked in primary education as a teacher and headteacher for approximately thirty six years. The first eighteen of these were in a Caribbean island, where historically and traditionally, education and to “be educated” are aspects held in high regard. There is an emphasis on academic achievement (London, 1989, pp. 281 – 282; Campbell, 1997) and education is often perceived as a way to self-actualise or to raise oneself to a higher status. At the time, it was not apparent whether the perceived ‘dip’ in academic attainment identified by research in the Scottish context existed in the Caribbean education setting, or at least, I was not aware of this as a specific issue. However, over the passage of time and upon making the transition from teaching in the Caribbean to the Scottish context, and from classroom teacher to school management, I have engaged more widely with the issues around securing achievement and academic success for all pupils. These may be the reasons that I have become more alert to the issue. In addition, I spent approximately two years (October 2006 – July 2008) seconded by my local education authority to work with several schools, both primary and secondary. My role included the integration of services, such as health and the police into planning with school management. I held responsibility for promoting partnership-working to reduce the various barriers that might prevent pupils - particularly the more vulnerable, from achieving. I also co-ordinated cluster-working (bringing schools together to effect improved efficiency of service) for four secondaries and their feeder primaries. Responsibilities included facilitating meetings for school management to plan aspects such as the curriculum, staff development and the delivery of activities to smooth transitions - pre-school to primary and more specifically, primary to secondary. It was at this time that I carried out the research exercise.

1.2 Policy and practice context

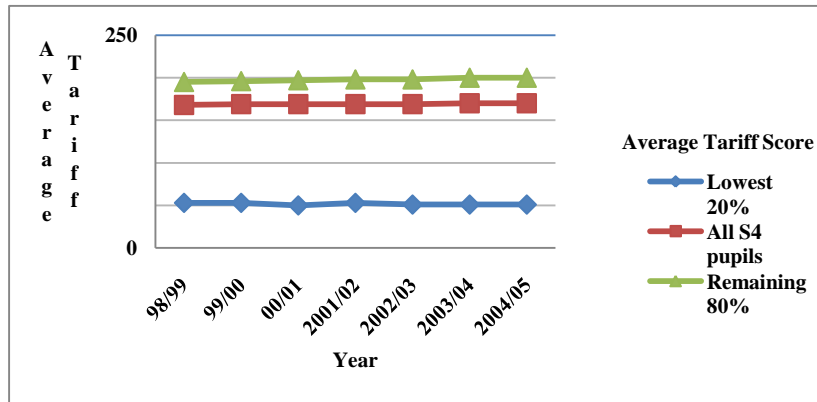
In Scotland, the *5-14 National Guidelines: The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum* (SEED, 2000) provided guidance for planning and delivering learning and teaching from primary to early secondary education in Scottish schools. The document advised on the elements of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression in all subjects within the curriculum. The last two aspects have been central to concerns raised over the past two decades on the subject of the decline in pupils' attainment and academic progress post transfer to secondary school.

In the context of Scottish education, *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18* (SEED, 2004), the result of the review of the curriculum, may have been viewed by some educators as well placed to address some of these concerns. The new curriculum claims to allow for an element of flexibility in delivering learning and teaching and continuity across transfer from nursery to primary education and from primary to secondary school. This is a development that might relate favourably across the critical points of transition and transfer as pupils progress through the Scottish education system.

Raising levels of attainment is highly placed on the agenda in respect of the national policy in education. The Scottish Executive's *CtOG (Closing the Opportunity Gap) Targets* (2006) highlighted that the highest performing students in Scotland attain as well as their peers internationally, but that there is a wide gap between the highest and lowest performers. The measure used was the average tariff score - a calculation made in April/May of each year, based on the achievements of pupils beginning S4 in the September of two years previously. In 2002/2003, the average tariff score of the lowest attaining 20% of S4 pupils was 53, compared to a national average tariff of 168. A target was set in September 2004, to increase the average tariff score of the lowest attaining 20% of S4 pupils by 5% (a score of 56) by 2008 (Scottish Executive Social Research, 2006). Consequently, inherent in their target setting, schools focused attention on raising attainment of their own lowest attaining 20%. However, data for 04/05 suggested a slight decline in the average tariff score for the target group. This was

evidenced by a score of 51, compared to a national average of 170. This widening of the gap between the national average tariff score and that of the lowest attaining 20% of S4 pupils is noteworthy.

Figure 1.1: Average tariff scores of S4 pupils, 1998/99-2004/05



Adapted from: The Scottish Executive (2007) *Closing the Opportunity Gap (CtOG) Programme: Phase 1 Evaluation Annexes: Scottish Government Social Research*
Source: SQA and School Census data
Note: excludes pupils in special schools.

Additionally, using data from 2006/2007, the Scottish Government's *CtOG (Closing the Opportunity Gap) Programme: Phase 1 Evaluation* (2007, p.35) highlighted that although there has been a generic slight improvement in the S4 tariff score in Scotland, little change has been recorded in the tariff scores of S4 pupils in the 15% most deprived areas.

In respect of quality assurance and raising attainment levels in Scottish education, the HMIE report *Improving Scottish Education* (2006) identified P6 and P7 in primary education and S1 and S2 at secondary, along with boys and lower-attaining pupils at all stages, as groups to be targeted for further improvement. Taken in conjunction with the *CtOG* (2006) data noted above, this underlines the importance of maintaining the focus on raising attainment for the lowest achieving learners, at both national and local levels of government. That two key cross-sectoral stages (upper primary and the early years in

secondary) have been identified by the HMIE report for the attention of educators, with a focus on improving attainment and achievement, is another reason that I consider study of the move from primary to secondary school to be at the forefront of the profession.

Primary/secondary transition may be viewed as multi-faceted consisting of pastoral (social /emotional), pedagogical (concerned with learning and teaching) and curricular aspects. Schools across the sectors employ their own strategies - informed by national and regional guidance, to meet the needs of pupils in transition. In Scotland, the *Integrated Community Schools* (2004) initiative and the *Parental Involvement Act* (2006) advocate for wider involvement (beyond staff within schools) in taking action to raise levels of attainment. The *Parental Involvement Act* (2006) provides guidance for schools in involving parents in their child's education, whilst the *Integrated Community Schools* (2004) initiative has influenced the way in which schools work with partner agencies such as the Police, National Health Services and Social Work to remove barriers to learning thus effecting more positive outcomes for children in vulnerable family circumstances.

Nationally, both primary and secondary schools have been proactive in endeavouring to facilitate programmes to smooth transition, amongst them: bridging projects; cross-sectoral exchange visits by staff and pupils; induction programmes and organising classes so that pupils are taught with at least one peer in the first year of secondary school (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). However, perceptions of the roles of the various actors (the child, teachers and parents) involved in the transitional experience have been highlighted (Zeedek *et al.*, 2003), with concern expressed for how proactively engaged the transferring pupil and parents are in the process (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). It is apparent, therefore, that transition to secondary school continues to prove challenging for some children.

1.3 The focus of the study

In carrying out this study, I have focused on the theories, concepts, methods and methodologies which key authors such as Galton, Gray and Rudduck (1999), Graham and Hill (2003), McGee *et al.* (2003), Boyd (2005), Casanova *et al.* (2005), Marjoribanks (2005), Yeung and McInerney (2005), Bryan and Treanor (2007), Fabian and Dunlop (2007), Topping *et al.* (2007) and Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008), amongst others, have highlighted and applied over the last decade. Analysis and evaluation of their work have informed the direction of the study.

In order to identify whether gaps existed in earlier research, and to further develop academic and professional knowledge and thinking in relation to whether pupils' own aspirations and attitudes might contribute to their academic performance post-transition, I felt it important to re-examine and analyse expectations of and attitudes to academic endeavours pre- and post-transfer from primary to secondary education. I also wanted to examine the afore-mentioned issues to determine whether they might be associated with learner engagement and achievement – from their perspective.

Consequently, this thesis is the report of my research enquiry as I explored together with the learners, parents, school management staff, teachers and home/school link workers participating in the study, their perceptions of the challenges associated with the move from primary to secondary school. In addition, the thesis reports on the efforts employed to prepare learners, in terms of making them ready for this transition, and in addressing its impact on their engagement in learning. The issue of whether holding aspirations for tertiary education and career can provide a focus at primary/secondary transfer, and during the first year of secondary school, was also explored.

1.4 The organisation of the study

The thesis is divided into six chapters, with this chapter serving as the introduction to the study. Chapter 2 reviews the evidence and provides justification for this research

enquiry, and so it focuses on the literature and existing studies of the past ten to twelve years - both international and national. It evaluates concepts regarding pupils' attitudes and pupils', parents' and educators' expectations at transfer, and the impact of these factors on learners' engagement. The chapter also explores whether pupils' own awareness of aspirations (both educational and career-related), and keeping a focus on pupils' interests can have a positive influence on engagement in academic endeavours. My examination and evaluation of the literature attempts to identify gaps through exploring themes pertaining to the topic, different authors' perspectives and researchers' conclusions and recommendations which suggest solutions for maintaining academic engagement post transition/transfer to secondary education. In this chapter, I also examine the policy context and impact of current initiatives such as *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18* (SEED, 2004) and the *Integrated Community Schools (ICS)* policy (HMIE: 2004). Subsequently, the research questions are identified in this chapter.

Chapter 3 - the Research Design Chapter, explores the methodologies and methods considered and eventually selected for the study. More specifically, I discuss existing research paradigms and choices made, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different methods, explain the selections that I made and detail the important aspects of ethics and limitations of the study. This chapter also outlines the data analysis process that I employed.

In Chapter 4, I present findings which emerged from the process of data analysis. Obtaining participants' perceptions is an essential element of this study and so the findings of the enquiry are presented to allow for this. The findings are presented under headings that reflect the key themes of the research exercise and which were highlighted from the review of the literature and my engagement in the data analysis process.

Findings from the study are discussed in Chapter 5. Links are made with the concepts and theories explored in the Literature Review Chapter (Chapter 2), where appropriate, and with the aim of moving thinking forward. Consequently, Chapter 5 is structured

according to the major themes that relate to primary / secondary transfer and transition: pupils' attitudes to and engagement in academic endeavours; whether there is an association or relationship between perceptions of engagement, achievement and academic attainment and the influence or impact of the expectations of stakeholders – parents, education staff and peers on pupils' aspirations at this critical stage in their education. Within this chapter, I put forward suggestions and claims with justification, based on participants' representations which emerge as common and collective.

In Chapter 6, I conclude the thesis and I make suggestions on how this study can contribute to professional knowledge and practice. Bearing in mind the limitations of this study, I also outline implications for changes to practice regarding the move to secondary school. Additionally, I make recommendations that may inform decision-making for education management and teaching staff in planning for learners' transition to secondary school. I also make recommendations for further research in this critical area of pupils' education career.

1.5 Summary

In summary, the purpose of this first chapter was to provide a general introduction to, and rationale for, the study. I began by outlining how I identified the focus of the investigation by exploring a specific research area. I explained briefly how the research enquiry was structured and carried out. I indicated the importance of the findings for improving professional knowledge and practice in this vital aspect of educators' work. Finally, I gave an overview of the organisation of the thesis.

Previously in this chapter, I highlighted that primary/secondary school transition has been placed on the agenda for improving education in Scotland. Thus, the next chapter will provide the terminological distinctions in relation to transfer/transition from primary to secondary school, and a critical examination of the literature and existing research on

transition. It will also identify the current gaps in knowledge and provide a justification for this research enquiry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter reflects on the theoretical and conceptual issues related to the study. The terminology used in existing literature is clarified and research findings concerned with transition from primary to secondary school are evaluated. Current initiatives and strategies implemented in Scottish schools which may impact on transition are examined and, in light of these initiatives, consideration is given to whether there is a still problem with children's transition to secondary school. The chapter maps how previous work and research have influenced and informed the present study.

2.2 Background

The degree of success achieved during children's educational transitions can be a critical determinant in their social and academic progress and development (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007). Although transitions occur throughout childhood and indeed an individual's life, in western cultures, the challenges of educational transitions have led to increasing interest in this aspect of a child's educational path. This is mainly due to the accompanying alterations in expectations and experiences as learners move from one stage to another within a school, at the stages of pre-school to primary school (Fabian, 2002; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Margetts, 2007) and primary to secondary school (Graham and Hill, 2003; Berwanger and Greibel, 2007; Bryan and Treanor, 2007 and Topping *et al.*, 2007).

Indeed, improving achievement and raising attainment levels at all stages are key areas of attention in Scottish education. However, the HMIE report *Improving Scottish Education* (2006) identified essential stages for further improvement in primary education, with a focus on P6 and P7 and lower-attaining pupils at all stages. More specifically, the report indicated that in about 25% of the schools inspected, the high levels of attainment from P1 to P4 were not sustained later on. Additionally, the

document specified that, at secondary level, there is a need to improve performance at S1 and S2. A subsequent report published in 2009, *Improving Scottish Education: A Report by HMIE on Inspection and Review 2005-2008*, upheld that continued focus on the upper primary stages is required. This document also advised that closing the gap at these stages would better position pupils as independent learners as they move to secondary school. Furthermore, it highlighted a need to raise achievement for pupils at the early stages of their secondary education by building on prior learning and by providing the element of challenge within learning activities.

As indicated in Chapter 1, many education professionals agree that a ‘hiatus’ or dip in academic achievement is associated with the move from primary to secondary school - nationally (Galton *et al.*, 1999, 2003; OFSTED, 2002; Graham and Hill, 2003; Bryan and Treanor, 2007; Estyn, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008), and internationally (McGee *et al.*, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005). Consequently, the effective management of educational transitions has been the focus of research and policy, resulting in interventions and initiatives to address the issue.

This review of evidence seeks to examine and evaluate existing work on the move from primary to secondary school and to identify gaps in knowledge, thinking and methodologies applied in existing studies. It aims to move thinking forward, and crucially, it seeks to re-establish whether there is a problem with transfer / transition to secondary education or indeed, whether the occurrence of a ‘dip’ in attainment might be attributed to another factor or combination of factors. Additionally, the review explores whether pupils’ own awareness of aspirations, both educational and career-related, and keeping a focus on pupils’ interests (Yeung and McInerney, 2005) can have a positive influence on engagement in academic endeavours.

Reference to ‘transfer’ in terms of changing educational institutions, and to ‘transition’ in relation to a change in stage within a school - as applied by Galton *et al.* (1999), has been clarified in the Introduction - Section 1.1 (p.1). Vogler *et al.* (2008, p.2) conceive

transition as a change from “one state or status to another, often associated with ‘upward’ shifts...” Drawing from Vogler *et al.* (2008), this work will apply the term ‘transition’ in examining and discussing the move to secondary school, as it includes not just movement from one school to another, but also changes from one stage of learning to another and importantly, the apparent changes in identity inherent in negotiating a position in the secondary setting.

2.3 Concepts and theories related to transitions

The research on transitions explored various concepts such as an ecological concept (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), identity and agency (Mayall, 1994), goal theory (Yeung and McInerney, 2005) and loss (Muldoon, 2007). In addition, continuity in learning and in academic progress has been the focus of studies on transitions (Suffolk Education Department, 1997; OFSTED, 2002; HMIE, 2006 and 2009). As indicated previously, transitions occur throughout an individual’s life; however, in considering a learner’s academic career, researchers have examined transitions at the pre-school/primary, primary to secondary and secondary to tertiary points of learners’ education career. This section examines the theories and concepts related to transition at the primary-secondary stage; however, it also draws from work on early and other transitions that may help to theorise the decline in pupils’ progress in learning at this stage of education.

2.3.1 A time of change

Vogler *et al.* (2008), in accordance with Eccles and Wigfield (2002), posit that a transition can be considered a change from one way of being to another. This seems to suggest that any period of change in life may be considered a ‘transition’ - a time when an individual moves from one stage to another. Bearing this point in mind, the move from primary to secondary school might be perceived as a time of transformation in educational life - a time when the young person progresses through the changes required for ‘settling in’ and performing at secondary school. That the move is not just an issue

of transfer (changing schools), but also one of transition, may be one reason that there is what appears to be a hiatus, as 'the move' takes place across schools, with different expectations and possibly varying standards.

It may be reasonable to suggest that the change inherent in moving from primary to secondary education may occur over a period of time, and that 'transition' in this scenario is not instantaneous, but may take place on a time continuum. Elder (2007) highlighted that the duration of a transition is important – how long will the transferring individual be in the particular transitional experience? The time frame within the transitional period will differ from one individual to another. Arguably, the physical aspect of the transition to secondary school - becoming familiar with the new physical environment - may be more instantaneous for the majority of pupils, given the variety of opportunities for induction (taster days / activities for learners and secondary teacher visits) offered by many secondary schools (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008, p.6; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008, p.10; The Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008, p.10). Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest that 'induction', in the primary / secondary transition scenario, can be considered the time and activities arranged to prepare learners for the move to secondary school. Such time and planned learning and teaching activities can be organised to take place in either the primary or secondary setting.

Schaffer (1996) posits that development is about change. This seems to imply that change is necessary to effect development or growth. Thus, it would appear that a pupil's transition to secondary school might be perceived positively, if the outcome post-process is associated with growth or development. However, formulating this constructive perception may depend on whether change has taken place in the direction that others expect (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). It may not always follow that growth is the outcome of the process of change.

In an educational setting, the perception of a positive or successful transition to secondary education might be subjective and based on the expectations of several individuals and not singularly the transferring pupil (Fabian, 2007). In respect of pre-school to primary transition, neither parents nor teachers perceive themselves as requiring change to the extent that children must in the transition to school (Dockett and Perry, 2007). Indeed, it is the pupil's adjustment that is used as a criterion in judging the success of the transition (Dockett and Perry, 2007b, pp. 20-21), with expectations for the majority of changes required for success placed upon "the least experienced participants" in the transition – the children (Dockett and Perry, 2007a, pp.102-103). This concept may also be applicable at the stage of primary to secondary school transition, and indeed, the young person's perception of a successful transition might be at variance from that of other actors (parents, teachers, school management and education policy-makers) involved in that individual's learning or family environment (Elder *et al.*, 2003, p.11; Ecclestone, 2007, p.5). In light of this last point, and drawing from Fabian and Dunlop (2007), the child's perspective of their earlier transition (the experience of transition to primary school) might influence the success of their primary-secondary school transition.

Additionally, other factors and emerging eventualities such as changes in family, health and well-being or financial circumstances may affect how an individual copes with change. Drawing from Terry (2006), who we are, how we have developed, life experiences and interactions with the various actors (parents, carers, teachers and other individuals) form and shape us and may influence the way we deal with change and the time it takes to adjust to its effects. Thus, it would be reasonable to conceive that this is no different for the change inherent in moving to secondary school.

2.3.2 Social embeddedness and coping with transition

Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorised that the social embeddedness of an individual's life – the social ties to others, the networks developed over time and the developmental

dynamics of relationships - can be perceived as shaping the individual, a part of a person's life course from childhood to adulthood. This seems to advocate that at the stage of transition to secondary education, current and past environments – childcare, school, peers, family, neighbourhood and the links between these, have already contributed to shaping the individual, and posits for the impact or influence of parents / carers in shaping the academic expectations of learners (Coleman, 1988; Pooley *et al.*, 2005; Schlee *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, relationships with and expectations of significant others (teachers, peers) may be crucial in influencing the aspirations of those children and young people in home environments where such support is lacking.

Indeed, 'who' the child is may have some bearing on how they deal or cope with transition. Given that human beings are always developing throughout the life stages, it is reasonable to conceive that an individual is always in a transition of some sort. Bronfenbrenner (1994, pp. 39/40) put forward that the entire ecological system in which growth occurs for an individual, must be considered when attempting to understand human development. He explains that this system is composed of five sub-systems (see Table 2.1) which are organised socially and that these sustain and direct human growth.

Table 2.1: Ecological aspects that shape children’s development

System	Factors influencing development	Facilitating settings
Microsystem	Children’s <i>experiences and interactions</i> with peers, teachers and parents/carers.	Everyday settings - home, school, child care centre.
Mesosystem	Relationships between microsystems - <i>complementary and/or conflicting practices and belief systems.</i>	Formal / informal communications between parents/carers and teachers/ institutional staff.
Exosystem	Interconnections with microsystems - <i>areas of social life that impact on / influence children’s lives.</i>	Parents’/carers’ work settings/practices which may constrain their availability to care for their children at home – hours of work, proximity to home.
Macrosystem	Dominant beliefs and organisation of institutions – <i>shape the cultural settings in which children develop.</i>	Impact of the economy, policies, laws and regulations on parents’/ carers’ activities.
Chronosystem	Change or consistency over time - <i>affect / influence the individual’s characteristics and environment.</i>	Changes in family structure, socio-economic status, employment and place of residence.

(Note: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1994)

A micro-system may be defined as:

A pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment.’

(Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39)

Thus, the relationship between the developing child and their immediate environment is vital to development. In relation to school endeavours, parents and carers within the micro-system are crucial in helping to shape a learner’s academic expectations. Therefore, it may be conceivable that a learner’s social embeddedness might influence / effect positive transitional experiences.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) refers to proximal processes working in the immediate environment to create and maintain development within the micro-system. In the immediacy of the education setting, further development of the individual occurs through interaction within the roles, actions and reactions of others operating in the setting. Such interactions within proximal zones of the system encourage and sustain development. Thus, it is apparent that the child’s ability to cope with the changes inherent in the new setting through the move to secondary school is crucial for a successful transition (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Bronfenbrenner also puts forward the concept of a meso-system (a system of micro-systems) comprised of the associations or relationships between two or more settings in which the developing person must operate, such as the home and school, whilst conceptually, the macro-system is concerned with economical, institutional, cultural patterns (customs and beliefs) of the developing individual’s environment. Therefore, this would suggest that within the context of primary-secondary transfer, the responsibility for a smooth

transition lies with the child, parents and the community and not just the school (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

Concepts in relation to social capital fit with Bronfenbrenner's ecological concept and help to theorise the impact of relationships and networks on the developing individual and their educational outcomes. Pooley *et al.* (2005) analysed definitions of social capital found in the literature and conceptualised social capital as comprised of three integrated themes – relationships (interpersonal and intra-group), networks (comprised of principles such as trust, reciprocity, structure and density – size, number, complexity) and competencies (the individual's personal resources – self-esteem and self-efficacy). According to Pooley *et al.* (2005, p.73), competence from a psychological perspective can be conceived as “the individual's capacity to interact effectively with their environment.”

Coleman (1988, 1989, 1990) focuses on social capital - the intricacy of relationships among proximal social structures, the family environment and the individual's behaviour, and how these relate to human capital. In accordance, Hogan (2001), in conceptualising social capital postulates for relationships across generations – “between adult children and their aging parents, between children and grandparents, step-parents and other family members” as influential. Coleman's concept of family influences consists of three aspects - financial, human and social capital and in respect of education, human capital is conceived as also referring to the resources parents use to create a positive learning environment (Coleman, 1988).

Building on this thinking, Schlee *et al.* (2008) suggest that social capital can be an indicator of the child's academic performance and can be measured by the quality and quantity of networks connecting the child with their parents' resources. The researchers explain that this concept of connectedness can be extended outside the family, to include other social environments which include school. In their study, Schlee *et al.* (2008) found that family income impacts significantly on children's academic achievement and

that academic performance is influenced by parents' active involvement in their children's school activities. Social capital, therefore, as it relates to the child's family circumstances can impact on academic outcomes. It would be reasonable to suggest that family circumstances, as well as parental expectations and aspirations, can impact on the child's own aspirations and educational outcomes. It is also conceivable that the support of parents / family members, at the stage of moving to secondary school, can be crucial to a child's successful transition.

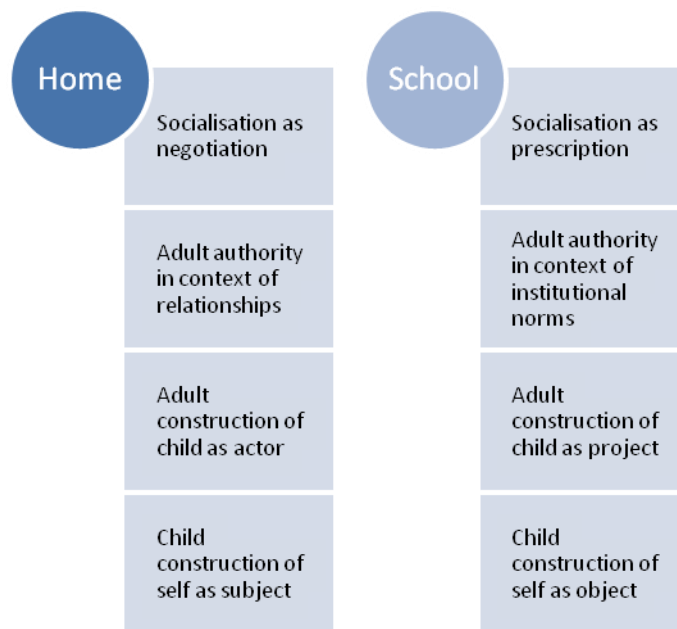
Thus, based on the ecological paradigm put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1994), and concepts related to social capital, an individual's disposition, family circumstances and home-school factors might influence the primary to secondary school transitional experience for each individual. However, Vogler *et al.* (2008, p.25) caution that the "social policy and child's rights perspective" inherent in ecological theory position the child centrally within "multi-nested systems", whilst failing to recognise that systems are driven by the many priorities of certain groups of adult actors, namely *policy and decision makers*.

2.3.3 Identity, agency and structure

On school entry, children have to negotiate, construct and develop another identity (Mayall, 1994). It might be rationalised that this would also apply in the transfer to secondary education. Mayall (1994) argues that within social settings, the interactive, ever-changing personal relationships of individuals play an important part in the construction of a young person's specific identity and in shaping their actions. On reflection, in the past, the traditional view of the approach to educating children can be perceived as positioning the child passively. It is noteworthy that the viewpoint presented is that whilst at school, intergenerational relationships are based on adult direction with laid-down social norms, from the child's perspective (Mayall, 1994, pp.117-118). The author suggests that childhood is a period of growth characterised by instability and ambiguity – dependency and change. This thinking also presents a

passive positioning of the child in the developmental process. Figure 2.1 below outlines a contextualisation of learning and behaviours in the home and school setting which reflects this:

Figure 2.1: Contextual factors influencing learning and behaviour



Adapted from Mayall (1994)

According to Mayall, although interactions in relationships with adults in both environments (home and school) appear to position the child passively, the child’s perspective is that controls initiated by adults are more evident in the school than in the home. However, Mayall explains that in developing identity, young people must negotiate how to operate in a setting where other people’s impact on themselves might affect their success in their social environment. Such involvement in negotiation indicates a learning approach by the child to adjust / alter behaviour to fit the agendas of adults (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007). This contradictory point suggests that the child has an active role to play and corroborates with newer approaches to childhood and educating children that present a perception of the child as an active participant:

“Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes.”

(James and Prout, 1997, p.8)

Thus, it is reasonable to conceive that active participation might be empowering for pupils in transition from primary to secondary education. Woodhead (2006, p. 28) affirms the implication that educational establishments are required to recognise that children should be positioned as active contributors who are continuously involved in making meaning of, and participating in emerging and on-going interactions in their social world. Nevertheless, Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) explain that transition arrangements – induction programmes, teachers’ and pupils’ exchange programmes appear to focus on the school’s proactivity, with less attention placed on the role of the child.

In accordance with this and Bronfenbrenner’s concept, Ecclestone (2007) posits that transition is not just a change process, but a shift from one identity to another. She claims that much research focuses on how transition affects *identity* – “ways in which the self is represented and understood in dynamic, multi-dimensional and evolving ways” (2007, p.2). Ecclestone argues that in current practice, two other key concepts receive secondary attention from researchers - *agency* and *structure*. ‘Agency’ may be defined as the ways in which an individual constructs their life course through decisions, actions and reactions taken within life chances, and within the constraints of past experiences and social circumstance (Elder *et al.*, 2003, p.11). ‘Structure’ refers to the structural factors such as class, gender, race and financial conditions that shape, constrain or determine identity and agency (Ecclestone, 2007). That an effective transition extends beyond easing or controlling situational changes or smoothing transfer between them, suggests a requirement for a “better understanding of how an individual progresses cognitively, emotionally and socially between different subjects at different

stages of their learning and how they navigate the complex demands of different contexts” (Ecclestone, 2007, p.2).

Therefore, drawing from the concepts and theories presented, the transferring pupil is entering a very different world influenced by a variety of ecologies. Pupils are brought together from different schools and neighbourhoods and may have been influenced and shaped to some extent by those. In each of the ecologies mentioned, there will be non-family members who can influence the child and have an impact - either positive or negative, on their life. Thus, when working with pupils who are in transition to secondary, educators on both sides of the process may need to consider the ecological context of the individual - their separate and rapidly changing social and educational environments.

2.3.4 Life course theory and resilience

Perhaps, it would be reasonable to posit that *resilience* defined as “children’s ability to make key life changes” (Vogler *et al.*, 2008, p. 25) - is a necessary ingredient for successful transitions. Elder (1994) presents life course theory as composed of “structured pathways through institutions and organisations to the social trajectories of individuals and their developmental pathways” (1994, p.5). The model bears relation to the ecological approach to human development and is conceived of evidence from longitudinal studies in the USA over difficult periods - substantial social change such as migration, economic depression and armed conflict. The research evidences that the meaning of change and capacity to cope with hardship is significantly dependent on age (Elder, 1994, p.10). Adversity appeared to foster in families a need to marshal human resources, with adolescents assuming new roles and developing initiative, cooperation and responsibility; whereas, those who were still young children at the time demonstrated lower school performance and emotional and social difficulties until middle adulthood. Drawing from this, it is plausible that the factor of resilience may influence the pre-adolescent learner’s ability to negotiate identity, settle in, adjust and

perform in response to the changes inherent in the institutional transition of primary to secondary school.

Variance in perspectives concerning the factor of gender in primary-secondary school transition is noteworthy. According to Vogler *et al.* (2007, p.17), “Children’s experiences of institutional transitions may also be shaped by their gender.” However, commenting on the factor of gender as a predictor of a poorer transition, West *et al.* (2010) postulate that there is inconsistency in the findings of existing studies. They indicate that in US studies, girls are most affected by the move to secondary school with regard to peer relations, in particular (2010, p. 23); whilst evidence from New Zealand suggests that boys appear to be more vulnerable (McGee *et al.*, 2003).

Later research (Mann, 2004; Boyden and Mann, 2005) corroborates evidence that environmental conditions influence and impact differently on children’s development and their capacity to cope. In accordance, evidence gathered from long-term studies on school transitions reveal that risk factors (emerging eventualities which place individuals at risk) can cause pupils to disengage academically and may lead to eventual drop-out (Punch, 2003). However, bearing in mind that not all children suffer from negative repercussions of harmful experiences (Vogler *et al.* (2008), children’s own resilience – *ability to bounce back, to ‘stick in’* – can assist in securing successful school transition. Is there, then, a role for policy and decision-makers in education, educators and staff within educational establishments in supporting children and their parents/carers in coping with difficulties in order to improve their chance of a successful primary-secondary transition?

2.3.5 Transition as a process: a trajectory

Transition may be conceived as a trajectory that, if accepted, can propel an individual forward (Elder, 2007). However, as indicated previously in this chapter, an individual’s pre-disposition, age and stage in the life course may dictate whether this propulsion is

grasped positively or rejected. Elder (2007) put forward that, in some ways, transferring to secondary school is very much a developmental transition – a time when the pupil must learn ‘how to’ construct a new position, influenced by the interplay between life stage and social change, in the new educational setting. This seems to suggest that it is also crucial to consider when transition is taking place, and in the case of primary/secondary transfer, this inevitably occurs at another critical point in the young person’s life – that of the move into adolescence. Eccles and Midgley (1989; 1990) and de Bruyn (2005) refer to this coincidence as a “developmental mismatch” – a concept which will be considered in the next section of this chapter. The transitional time-frame may, of course, differ from one child to another, as the time that an individual comes out the other side of the transition is not fixed, and may vary from person to person. The transferring pupil’s ‘personal resources’, that is - the prior experiences that the pupil brings and the nature of their experiences, are crucial to the outcome of the transition for that individual.

Elder (2007) also suggested that transition should be about maintaining the individual’s inner quality. It may be reasonable to put forward that this way of thinking might assist in alleviating the challenge of transition for some children. Indeed, the transfer to secondary may not present as a problem for the majority of primary leavers, but for those for whom it is challenging or difficult, educators need to engage with individual pupils and their parents to smooth the process. In light of this, it might be useful to view transition as a tool – a means for facilitating progression. There can be no doubt, therefore, about the transformational potential inherent in primary/secondary transition for all pupils, but particularly for those pupils who are more vulnerable. Thus, the role of leadership, within local education authorities and schools, in planning action to support transition, is crucial.

2.3.6 Developmental mismatch in transition

It has been suggested that self-image and exclusion by peers can contribute to a decline in academic performance and that for some pupils in transition, popularity might emerge as more important. Van Houtte (2004) put forward that adolescents' status is determined by their popularity and not by their educational or individual performance. De Bruyn (2005) also agrees with this concept of a shift in focus for some individuals in transition and argues for the developmental mismatch hypothesis as an explanation for pupils' post-transitional underperformance. Building on previous work by Eccles and Midgley (1989), de Bruyn (2005) reported that the move to secondary school presents a time of uncertainty and upheaval for many children, with a resultant "dip" in attainment. The researcher's work with 739 first-year pupils from six secondary schools in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, examined the conflict experienced by the transferring pre-adolescent pupil. He found that the issue related to negotiating new educational and social roles and put forward that the new school setting with unfamiliar teachers and peers, increased workload and accompanying responsibilities coincide inappropriately with early adolescence, creating conflict of two important developmental stages that occur simultaneously. De Bruyn claims that this is manifested in a sense of unrelatedness in an environment which may be lacking in the level of support and familiarity previously offered in primary school, thus affecting pupils' attitudes and their engagement in academic endeavours.

Indeed, status and relationships with peers may assume precedence as learners enter the new secondary setting, adding another element to the ecological systems within which they operate and develop. It is reasonable to conceive that the influence of peers can have an impact on the pre-adolescent's attitude and engagement in learning as they attempt to negotiate new relationships in the wider social arena that is the new secondary school setting. It must also be considered that major changes are inherent in the move at this crucial stage of the child's development *and* educational transition. Consistent with the view put forward by Eccles and Midgley (1989; 1990), de Bruyn suggests this coincidence of developmental stage and educational change is a mismatch.

The move to secondary school necessitates the child's adjustment to: physical discontinuities in surroundings— size, location and number of people; social discontinuities – identity changes, social network and adults in their life, and philosophical discontinuities with pedagogical approaches which differ from previous experiences (Dockett and Perry, 2007). It is conceivable, therefore, that a period of disengagement may be the consequence of this coincidence of developmental stages - for some pupils making the move to secondary school. This concurs with results reported on research presented by Muldoon (2007), highlighting the concept of 'loss' as important to understanding the problems experienced by pupils in transition to secondary school. The longitudinal study of children moving to secondary school in England revealed pupils' perception of an 'ebbing away' of support and distancing as a result of the social context of the secondary school when compared to primary. This may be particularly relevant for pupils in transition to secondary from small, rural schools, who may experience difficulty in establishing new friendships and a support network of peers.

2.4 Is there still a problem with transition?

Given the volume of research and writing on the issue, and the numerous initiatives and strategies applied by education authorities and schools on both sides of primary-secondary transfer, is there still a problem with transition to secondary education? The theories and concepts examined previously in this chapter underline intrinsic challenges in a child's development, which are inherent in the move to secondary school. In addition, findings from research support the thinking that there are still problems (which will be explored within this section) at this point in an individual's education.

The report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspection of Schools (2002), *Changing schools: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Transfer Arrangements at Age 11*, highlighted various aspects related to transition to secondary requiring action to secure improvement: 1) continuity and progression; 2) knowledge of assessment strategies

across the sectors (primary/secondary) and 3) the quality of information transferred between schools. These transitional issues emerged from a study involving thirty-two primaries and sixteen secondaries in eight local education authorities in England, which were visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors during the summer and autumn terms in 2001. In accordance, McGee *et al.* (2003) point to the repetition of topics, disregard and distrust of transfer information and failure to build on the work of the primary school as contributing to the 'dip' in some learners' academic performance.

Galton *et al.* (2003) reported on practice in nine local education authorities in England that were using initiatives - bridging projects, a literacy hour and surveys with headteachers and teachers, to address continuity at transfer. In a study carried out over two years – January 2000 to December 2002, designed to build on their earlier review of transfer and transition (Galton *et al.*, 1999), and to better understand the dips in attitude, engagement and progress post-transfer to secondary school, data from about 300 primaries were used to track progress along with discussion with over 50 headteachers. The researchers found that the Year 7 Curriculum (post-transfer from primary school) was not sufficiently challenging and that pupils found school less enjoyable (Galton *et al.*, 2003, pp. 49 - 51). They concluded that continuities in learning require to be strengthened.

The study carried out by Gibbons and Telhaj (2006) evaluated 'peer group quality', i.e. the influence of peers' background and abilities on the attainment of the newly-transferred pupil. Using data on home addresses and school attendance to compare outcomes of children who live in the same street or attended the same primary school to age 11, the researchers explored how pupil attainment at age 14 responds to differences in prior age 11 attainment of their current peer-group. The sample was drawn from 99% of the standard state primary schools in England and changes measured in secondary school over a three-year period from the end of primary schooling. Gibbons and Telhaj (2006) found that it seemed unlikely that the success/failure balance for new entrants to secondary education would be affected by attendance alongside low/high ability peers.

However, it was concluded that pupils appear to perform better in the early years at secondary school when their new peers have a good record of attainment prior to transfer. Additionally, the researchers acknowledge the difficulty in separating the influence of peers from the influence of unobserved personal characteristics.

The ways in which peer cultures and primary school pupils' attitudes towards friendships shape and affect their experiences around transfer to secondary school were also examined by Pratt and George (2005). The researchers found that all pupils, boys in particular, experience stress associated with school transfer, peer acceptance and teacher expectations. Crucially, concern about belonging and fitting in with peer groups was revealed to be very significant, exceeding other concerns, such as academic success. Thus, it is apparent that peers can provide a source of support or hindrance to a learner's commitment to learning.

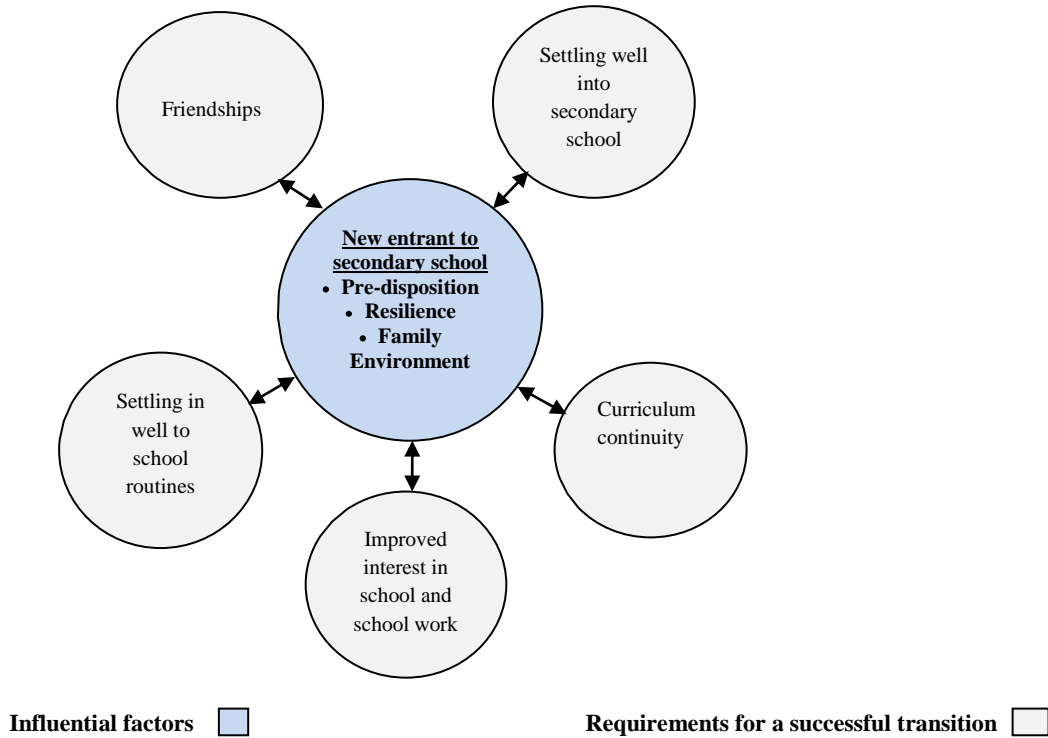
The survey carried out with 199 students in a school in Hong Kong by Yeung and McInerney (2005) reports on motivation and aspirations at transition stage. Four school motivation factors consistent with the task, effort, competition and praise scales of the Inventory of School Motivation (McInerney *et al.*, 2001, 2003), one education aspiration factor and one career aspiration factor were applied within a structural equation model instead of the conventional correlational approach. All four goal orientations were found to be positively associated with both aspiration outcomes – education and career. Thus, motivation factors were found to relate significantly with aspiration factors. However, task and effort were found to have strong associations with education factors, whereas task and praise had stronger associations with career aspirations. It was also found that 7th grade students – the stage equivalent to the Scottish education system S1 – had significantly higher scores in task and effort orientations and career aspirations than 9th graders (S3 stage equivalent) and higher scores in praise orientation than 11th graders (S5 stage equivalent). The authors concluded that the apparent drop in motivation scores post Grade 7, particularly in effort and task, indicated the need for urgent attention to student motivation in high school years. This is an aspect that my study

seeks to move forward – that education and career aspirations might influence engagement and attainment at the primary-secondary transition point.

Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, 2008) examined fifty transition plans and gathered information from school management, pupils, parents and staff in eight local education authorities in Wales. Transition plans formalise how secondary schools and their partner primaries work together on the curriculum, learning and assessment for the 7-14 stage of education. The study was carried out to examine the quality of transition planning and to identify and recommend areas for further work in order to address the "slip back...when children move from primary to secondary school, because they do not receive the teaching appropriate to their needs and abilities" (Estyn, 2008, p. 2). The resulting report found inadequacy, with plans varying significantly in quality - "Most are at least satisfactory and a few are very good", focusing "...too much on processes and not enough on outcomes..." and not enabling schools and management "...to measure the impact of planned action." (Estyn, 2008, p.5). This last statement suggests that there are discontinuities at transition, in agreement with the findings of the study carried out in England by Galton *et al.* (2003).

Evangelou *et al.* (2008, p. 16) found that there were five aspects necessary for a successful transition: 1) establishing friendships and developing self-esteem and confidence; 2) settling well into secondary school with no cause for concern to parents; 3) improved interest in school and school work; 4) settling in to new routines well and 5) experiencing curriculum continuity. Moving forward from this thinking and the concepts and theories explored previously, I would suggest a revised model for a successful transition to secondary, with three additional but crucial factors: 1) the individual's pre-disposition, 2) resilience and 3) the family environment - as individuals may experience, internalise and progress through transition and success in different ways (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Factors and requirements for a successful transition



The conceptualisation above suggests interplay between influential factors and requirements for a successful transition. The relationship between these aspects may point to the degree of success of the transitional experience for an individual. Indeed, the child’s pre-disposition, resilience and the family environment may influence how well he/she develops friendships, settles into secondary school or shows improved interest in academic endeavours.

2.5 Is there still a problem with transition? The Scottish context

Graham and Hill (2003) employed a quantitative, partially longitudinal study carried out in schools in Glasgow to investigate the impact of transition on children’s educational and personal/social development, and aimed at understanding how pupils experience and construct primary/secondary transition. The researchers paid particular attention to ethnic minority groups and found that ethnic background was related to capacity to

adjust or settle in to changes associated with transition. The researchers found that most children coped well with transition and held positive views about induction programmes; however, a larger proportion - though a comparatively small number, of children of minority ethnic backgrounds experienced difficulties and disappointment. Graham and Hill (2003) also reported that more new entrants to S1 - first year of secondary school - felt less pressured to fit in. However, their findings revealed that Asian pupils reported feeling less confident with classmates post transition compared to their pre-transition view. The researchers reported that minority ethnic pupils were more likely to feel that difficulties with fitting in were due to everyday issues and appearance. These are factors that might negatively affect attitude to learning, engagement and achievement at the beginning of secondary education for minority ethnic pupils. The methodology applied by Graham and Hill (2003) may have been reliable in identifying and confirming, albeit in a generic way, pupils' general satisfaction with transition programmes in Glasgow and with the personal / social elements of transfer; however, the results of the study emphasise that specific attention still needs to be directed at the personal / emotional dimension for identified groups. Thus, it would appear that there has been some success with interventions to smooth the transfer to secondary school. Nevertheless, Graham and Hill (2003) have also highlighted that future research might focus on maintaining academic progress.

Further research, commissioned by SEED, in response to research evidence that suggests that there is a dip in pupil attainment at transition point took place between March 2005 and September 2006. The report by Bryan and Treanor (2007) presents findings from an 18-month evaluation of 3 pilot initiatives carried out in schools in Glasgow City in 2002 (ENABLE) and in North Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire in August 2004. The initiatives were aimed at improving the transition from primary to secondary school. Designed to support teaching and curricular transition, mainly in literacy and numeracy, the pilots also examined social and pastoral issues. The report posits that school management should be enthusiastic, committed and have 'vision' when dealing with transition and that selection of teachers for the transition stage should be based on their skills in

encouraging/supporting individual pupils and willingness to adapt their curriculum.

Given the existing exam-driven nature of secondary schools, this recommendation might prove challenging to implement.

The follow-up on a previous study held in 2004, ScotSPRinG reports on the findings of 2 projects – ‘*The Transition Project*’ and ‘*Collaborative Learning/Group Work Project*’.

The initial ScotSPRinG project, carried out in 24 Scottish primaries, found that the use of collaborative learning techniques to teach science promoted significant gains (in science), and proved beneficial in creating social connectedness between pupils.

Topping *et al.* (2007) aimed the latter of the follow-up projects at discovering whether 204 Primary 6 / 7 pupils who were involved in the original project, sustained gains in the earlier study in subject area (science), achieved two years after their transfer to secondary school. The researchers found that pupils who were involved in the earlier project (ScotSPRinG) at the primary stage were advantaged in science and, by “spontaneous transfer” in maths, in early secondary compared to 440 pupils who did not participate in the primary project (Topping *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, reflecting the social aspect of transition, pupils involved in the earlier project reported gains in the number of relationships they retained.

Additionally, the follow-up study revealed that both urban and primary pupils in transition held more positive attitudes to the focal subject (science) than pupils who were not involved in the original project. The authors suggest that involvement in the earlier primary project (ScotSPRinG) had a “...continuing effect into the early stages of secondary...” and “...enduring attainment and attitude 2 years later in secondary school” (Topping *et al.*, 2007, p.2). However, contradicting the expectation that rural children would have more difficulty adapting to secondary school, pupils from rural schools upheld the higher attainment scores in science achieved in primary, and gained better results in attainment tests than pupils from urban schools after transfer to secondary. Furthermore, test results evidenced that whilst collaborative learning / groupwork

impacted positively in primary that satisfactory replication in secondary school might not be possible.

Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) reported on research conducted in a city in Scotland and found that transition was still a difficult matter for some children. Their longitudinal study, carried out with pupils “known to be having/potentially having problems with transition”, their parents and professionals, revealed that successful primary-secondary transition depended on the impact of “... a child’s internal attributes, family, peers, school systems, professionals and community”. Thus, the literature and existing studies on the topic establish that the transfer and transition to secondary education in Scotland is still one of the most challenging periods in a pupil’s academic career. In this section, I have explored a variety of reasons which have been suggested for post-transitional decline in attainment for children in the Scottish education system. Graham and Hill (2003) theorise that pupils appear to become temporarily disengaged at transition. In addition, there is evidence of stress and concern about belonging (Pratt and George, 2005) and loss of momentum for some pupils after transfer (Topping *et al.*, 2007) as the novelty of moving to secondary education wears off and exciting induction day activities are replaced by the ‘normal’ routine of secondary school. I would suggest, therefore, that it is reasonable to conceive that there is still a problem with the move to secondary school for some pupils in Scottish schools.

2.6 The policy context: Initiatives and strategies

Various initiatives and strategies have been implemented in attempting to ameliorate the transitional experience for young people beginning secondary education in Scotland. It is important to consider the current policy context within Scottish education and how this might impact on transition to secondary school. Amongst others, there are three key initiatives which might be considered to be influential in the process of primary / secondary transition: *Integrated Community Schools* (2002), *A Curriculum for Excellence* (2004) and the *Parental Involvement Act* (2006).

2.6.1 Integrated Community Schools and partnership working

It is apparent that the Scottish Executive initiative *Integrated Community Schools* (2002) encouraged a move away from the traditional arrangement of schools engaging individually with other agencies towards working as clusters of schools - secondaries and their associated primaries – with partner services such as Health, the Police and Social Work. This initiative aimed to improve engagement in educational endeavours by reducing the negative impact of barriers to learning for more vulnerable children, young people and families. The HMIE document '*How Good Is Our School: The Journey to Excellence*' (2006) is directed at improving standards of education in Scottish schools through self-evaluation and identifies these 'barriers to learning' as the learning environment, disability and medical, social or emotional factors.

Thus, an *Integrated Community School* might be well-positioned, through this co-professional approach with its focus on health, well being and social inclusion, to meet the needs of the more 'at risk' transferring pupil. For many educational professionals, the *Integrated Community Schools (ICS)* arrangement presents an excellent forum for meaningful discussion, for collaborative working across the primary / secondary sectors to smooth the transition process for all primary leavers and to plan for maintaining continuity, progression and academic performance. However, one problem at the primary/secondary transition stage is that, generally speaking, secondary schools hold little confidence in the data transferred by primary schools and underestimate the abilities of pupils on their entry to secondary education (Evangelou *et al.*, 2008, p. 2).

There are other difficulties associated with applying a multi-disciplinary approach to working. Amongst the issues are: the length of time taken to reach consensus given the number and variety of 'leaders' from partner agencies or services; meetings which might lack genuine focus as representatives from individual schools and services may attend meetings with their own agendas and justifying cost / time efficiency in relation to the number of high-profiled management staff in attendance at multi-agency meetings (SEED, 2003).

A major challenge associated with the *Integrated Community Schools (ICS)* initiative is that the earliest concept and pilot programmes - *New Community Schools (1998)* - were aimed at catchments identified as areas of deprivation. However, all schools in Scotland were directed to become *ICS* with a resulting super-imposition of the *NCS* model over all situations and educational establishments regardless of whether schools / clusters were in deprived catchments or not. In present times (2011), it would appear that a more workable approach is being applied with school clusters being more selective about the 'partner services' with whom they engage in co-professional working, depending on the cluster's social and educational needs. Given that the *ICS* initiative allows for more joined-up working between feeder primaries and their secondary school, it can also be perceived as a positive move to plan for raising attainment through improved transition from P7 to S1. Many heads of schools find the *ICS* collaborative approach to planning for improvement useful and supportive; however, they share the view that more could be done to establish a shared sense of leadership among senior managers in partner agencies (HMIE, 2004). Although as yet, there is no measurable evidence that this development effects improved levels of achievement and attainment for primary leavers, including the more vulnerable, Tett (2005) suggests that inter-agency programmes can contribute to social inclusion by sustaining projects that prioritise collaborative partnership working.

Budgetary pressures might also apply in a variety of contexts with the result that local councils may be faced with having to implement restrictions to spending and financial allocation to services – including education. As a result, school management might find it difficult to continue to direct limited financial resources to working in partnership, and may need to return to keeping a focus on activities within their own establishment. For example, it may be crucial to consider whether the school's finances can continue to offer mobility to primary pupils in order to facilitate establishing social relationships with peers from other primaries prior to transfer to secondary education. Indeed, headteachers might resort to financial decision-making, prioritising impact on their own establishment.

2.6.2 Curriculum for Excellence and Assessment is for Learning

The review of the *5-14 National Guidelines* (SOED, 1992) and the introduction of *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18* (SEED, 2004) appear to have been generally welcomed by schools as a means to improving levels of pupil engagement and achievement. Offering schools flexibility (SEED, 2006), this new curriculum provides opportunities to develop programmes that allow for smooth transition from pre-school to primary and from primary to secondary education. It may also be envisaged that the new curriculum might offer opportunities to engage and stimulate pupils by organising learning and teaching activities around pupils' interests. However, in its earliest stage of implementation, potential problems might be: schools' and educators' differing interpretations of the degree of flexibility allowed to interpret guidance within the new curriculum, and concern that pupils from feeder primaries in transition to the associated secondary school might have achieved educational outcomes with varying levels of expectations and standards of achievement, prior to commencing secondary education (Reeves, 2008).

Learning experiences, both in context and content may vary from one primary educational establishment to another. The experiences and outcomes outlined in *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18* (SEED, 2004) can be delivered through several approaches, including active learning - "children's active involvement with the learning process" (Monk and Silman, 2011, p.16), and collaborative learning - working closely together to build capacity for healthy relationships with others as well as enhancing their learning outcomes" (Murdoch and Wilson, 2008). However, Boyd *et al.* (2007, p. 54) advocate that in the secondary setting, there is a positive impact on pupil achievement when lessons are planned and delivered through a collaborative learning approach, in longer blocks of time, and which facilitate projects that are learner-centred. This is an aspect that feeder primaries and their associated secondary might adopt, through joint planning for curricular and pedagogical continuity and progression, in order to address raising achievement across primary/secondary transfer.

Yet another aspect of concern is that the exam-driven nature of secondaries may not ‘fit’ with the pedagogical methodologies of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. There has been much concern over the quantity and quality of assessment within education. However, it is apparent that measurement is a requirement to develop comparison of educational standards and its impact on economical potential across countries and cultures. One such measurement tool is *PISA*. The *Programme for International Student Assessment* (*PISA*) conducts regular assessment (triennially) of achievements of 15-year olds in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (OECD, 2005). *PISA* considers a range of educational outcomes such as pupils’ motivation to learn, their self-beliefs and learning strategies and not just attainment and academic performance (OECD, 2005). In excess of 400,000 students from 57 countries that constitute approximately 90% of the world economy participated in *PISA 2006* which assessed science as the focal subject, but included reading and maths. A question raised for policy-makers from the findings of *PISA 2006* is: To what extent can schools and school policies moderate the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on student performance? It is suggested that the relationship between socio-economic background and student performance provides an indicator of the capacity of education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities (OECD, 2007, p. 34).

Within *A Curriculum for Excellence*, one element undertaken by schools that appears to improve levels of pupil engagement with some degree of equitability is *Assessment is for Learning* (SEED, SQA, L&T Scotland, 2006). With a focus on formative assessment methods, it is apparent that pupils become more involved and empowered to take responsibility for their own learning through encouragement to reflect on their efforts, and on how their learning outcomes could be improved (Black *et al.*, 2002). This pedagogical (learning and teaching) methodology can be linked to the concept of self-efficacy - an individual’s ability and effort to influence or control events and circumstances that affect their life (Bandura, 1995), in particular the development of the learner’s efficacy belief through the influence of “mastery experiences” which effect acquisition of “cognitive, behavioural, and self-regulatory tools for creating and

executing appropriate courses of action to manage ever-changing life circumstances” (Bandura, 1995, p.3). According to Zimmerman (1995, p. 204), learners with high efficacy belief work more willingly, harder and persist longer when challenges are encountered. Another aspect of the *Assessment is for Learning* initiative is that it promotes improvement in the process and frequency of communicating the quality of learners’ efforts to the pupils themselves and to their parents (SEED, SQA, L&T Scotland, 2006). Internationally, it was expressed that formative assessment has encouraged high student performance, equity of outcomes and learning to learn skills (OECD, 2005).

Recent research in Scotland evidences that continuity and progression in learning has proved challenging to achieve. Boyd *et al.* (2007, p.121) put forward two key curricular-related aspects as contributors to discontinuity in primary-secondary transition: “...lack of time for dialogue among teachers across the sectors... and lack of shared understandings about pedagogy”. Pedagogical dialogue is an essential ingredient for a smooth transition, both within and across the sectors.

2.6.3 Parental Involvement

As indicated previously in this chapter, the HMIE document ‘*How Good Is Our School: The Journey to Excellence*’ (2006) encourages and provides guidance to allow all Scottish schools to engage in the process of self-evaluation with all staff – teaching and auxiliary, parents and pupils. The process aims to examine the school’s performance with the key target of improving achievement for all pupils. A major focus has been placed on leadership in recent HMIE inspections, with emphasis on improving learning and teaching and on the role of school management in encouraging parental involvement in school life. It is suggested that the majority of schools enjoy purposeful relations and encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school (HMIE Report: *Improving Scottish Education*, 2006). Indeed, the *Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act*

(2006) outlines the following aims for meaningful engagement between education authorities, schools and parents:

- to help parents to be involved with their child's education and learning;
- to welcome parents to be active participants in the life of the school and
- to encourage expression of parents' perspectives on education.

Put simply, the guidance advocates that all Scottish schools engage with parents at three levels - learning in the home, partnership with schools and parental representation.

However, according to MacKenzie (2010), in Scotland, interpretation of legislation and policies associated with parental involvement tends to be limited to an understanding as "parents supporting the curriculum and uptaking a role in governance" (2010, p.3).

It would appear that learning in the home and community can have the most impact on learning. According to MacKenzie (2010, p.2), this type of parental involvement is the least visible and most challenging aspect to measure. The author positions governance as the most highly visible type of parental involvement but claims that this has the least impact on learning. Thus, measures of success in parental involvement practice should be concerned with impact on pupils' learning and parents' co-operation. Additionally, MacKenzie (2010) puts forward that pedagogical approaches that are behaviourist - learning takes place because the learner associates rewards with particular actions, and cognitivist - new knowledge is integrated with existing understanding can impact positively on learning. In seeking to reinforce desired outcomes, the learning environment should be structured with set objectives for parents, MacKenzie (2010, p.5) explains that having parents in classrooms to experience active learning is an example of such practice.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) reviewed the literature to establish research findings on how parental involvement, parental support and family education relates to / impacts on pupil achievement and adjustment in schools. The researchers reported that degree of parental involvement is strongly related to family social class and the level of the mother's education – the higher the class and level of maternal education qualification,

the greater the degree of involvement. They also reported that level of parental involvement is diminished where certain factors were present such as material deprivation, maternal psychosocial ill health, single parent status, and as the child grows older. In addition, strong influences impact on level of parental involvement - the child's attainment (a higher level of attainment effected a higher degree on involvement), and the child's ability to mediate actively between parents and the school. Cultural ethnicity was also found to be a factor influencing degree of parental involvement. However, it is noteworthy that "at-home good parenting" was central to influencing "significant, positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation" (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003, p.4).

Fabian and Dunlop (2007) also highlight the importance of involving parents in the early stages of their child's transitional experience. The authors explain that parental involvement strategies are manifestations of the *condition of readiness* – the compatibility between the child and the establishment that serves the child. Although the last statement refers more specifically to early years' transition such as the move from pre-school to primary education; the construct may well apply in the move from primary to secondary school and from secondary to tertiary educational establishments. It is conceivable that inadequate parental support and difficulties in the family environment can impact negatively on the child in transition to secondary school (Marjoribanks, 2005; Casanova *et al.*, 2005), and in accordance Fabian and Dunlop (2007) point to "readiness" as being a condition not only of the child and the school but as a condition of the family. Therefore, it is apparent that more in-depth involvement of parents early in the preparation for the move to secondary would be beneficial in effecting a positive transitional experience for the child.

2.6.4 Summary

The initiatives and actions covered in this section are not exhaustive, but represent some of the key efforts by education authorities and schools to raise standards and achievement in Scottish education. Educational establishments that have embedded the principles of these initiatives within their approach to delivering the curriculum have secured some benefits for pupils. Amongst them, the opportunity for pupils to learn through engagement in activities that present ‘real world’ situations. However, an increase in attainment levels, particularly for those pupils whose academic performance positions them in the bottom 20%, has not yet been confirmed. Indeed, one problem schools face in attempting to raise standards is the number of initiatives that they are presented with for development.

2.7 Factors affecting pupils’ attitude to learning at transition

Galton *et al.* (2003), Graham and Hill (2003) and Yeung and McInerney (2005) argue that pupils’ attitudes to learning might be associated with achievement and attainment. Each study recommends that schools become proactive in adopting strategies aimed at preventing and addressing fluctuations in pupils’ attitudes to learning as they transfer to secondary education, in order to maintain continuity in academic progress. It has been suggested that much attention is paid to the social aspects of transition and not enough on academic aspects. Galton *et al.* (1999) argue that exchange of information at transition to secondary education tends to deal more with pastoral care and administrative issues and that there is less emphasis on academic achievement. They justify this point by providing evidence that “the marks of 7% of 11-year olds in first year secondary dropped by about one third when compared to the final year in primary and that approximately 40% of all 11 –year olds do not make satisfactory predicted progress in their first year of secondary education” (Galton *et al.*, 1999, p.17).

Is it possible to direct too much attention to social aspects at the beginning of such an important point of change in pupils’ educational careers? McGee *et al.* (2003, p.9)

explain that American studies suggest that pupils who experience post-transition difficulties were highly associated with the likelihood of school dropout, and according to Stemler *et al.* (2006), transition to secondary school can be considered a time of upheaval. As indicated previously in this chapter, the timing of primary to secondary transition coincides with the commencement of adolescence, with individuals learning to cope with the accompanying physical and emotional changes (de Bruyn, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2006). This is a time when self-image and acceptance by peers might be highly important to the young person. In Scotland, this may be particularly significant as the primary/secondary transition period brings together children from different feeder schools. In some instances, transferring individuals might be from small, rural educational establishments where they might be the sole individual or one of a very small number making the change from primary to secondary school. Thus, it may be argued that it is vital that attention to the social aspects weigh equally in the balance of activities planned to address primary/secondary transition.

Another factor that might impact on the young person's ability to settle in and perform in the new learning environment might be modifications in the way learning and teaching is organised and delivered. The research findings reported by Galton *et al.* (2003, p.113) reveal that there is still concern about continuities and discontinuities. The researchers claim that whilst schools and policy-makers have directed attention to curriculum continuity, less consideration has been given to continuity in pedagogy – learning and teaching methodologies. Regarding continuity, they argue that there is significant loss to pupils who may have developed the ability to talk about learning in the primary setting, only to find that this aspect is not built on in secondary school. However, Galton *et al.* (2003, p. 113) posit that schools need to review the balance placed on continuity and discontinuity across primary/secondary transfer, as discontinuity can mark a new beginning in their education career. These are factors which can impact either positively or negatively on pupils' attitude to learning, and getting the balance right can help to sustain enjoyment of school across transition.

It is important to examine the extent to which schools are engaged in practices that shape pupils' attitudes to learning. Differences in teachers' perceptions and interpretations or misinterpretations of pupils' attitudes can be another aspect of transition that might impact on pupils' attitudes. It is vital at the pre-adolescent stage when pupils are also experiencing emotional upheaval that they feel that they are understood and valued not only as learners, but also as individuals:

“Adolescence is a time when motivational values, goal orientations and sense of self are being defined, redefined, challenged, adopted, changed or abandoned and as such the school environment provides the social, intellectual and moral reference points outside the family on which to gauge the importance of one's own developing values and goals.” (Yeung and McInerney, 2005, p.539)

This thinking highlights the central position that schools have in shaping and re-shaping attitudes to learning. It is, therefore, important to consider whether practices within education confirm and reinforce pupils' perceptions of their academic efforts. The practice of setting whereby pupils are grouped by ability might be one example of how educators may be confirming pupils' perceptions of their own efforts as worthless – if they happen to be placed in the 'bottom' set. This raises the question: Are teaching strategies sufficiently differentiated for pupils placed in the low ability set? Indeed, at secondary level in the Scottish context, as for other international contexts, although teaching and learning may progress at a slower pace for pupils placed in lower ability sets, groups of pupils may still be exposed to teaching approaches comparable with those offered to more able achievers; whilst others may be taught through approaches more suited to the lesser able pupil (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2003).

School attendance might also be an indicator of a pupil's commitment and attitude to school and learning. Graham and Hill (2003, p.13) discuss the impact of teachers' perceptions of pupils' capacity to cope with changes due to transition and argue that children with negative teacher reports, particularly in language, were more likely to have

poor transition experience scores. They found that attendance levels were often associated with transition scores, which measured pupils' capacity to adjust and settle in, and put forward that pupils with low transition scores attended less regularly.

2.7.1 Summary

The importance of educators in both primary and secondary sectors in directing and maintaining attention on the academic, emotional and social aspects of transition is highlighted in the studies explored above. It is apparent that focus on all aspects is particularly crucial, as primary/secondary transition occurs simultaneously with the adolescent stage of development. Barker *et al.* (2006) corroborate the afore-mentioned perspectives, in their unification of the literature on students' academic motivation, by explaining that the 'turmoil' that some adolescents experience is displayed through low levels of school motivation, negative attitudes to school and decreased perception of self. Thus, in endeavouring to maintain positive attitudes to learning in the new secondary school setting, the role of both the primary and secondary sectors is vital in: providing continuity – in the curriculum and in learning and teaching methodologies; keeping pupils motivated and in helping them to develop a positive perception of themselves as learners.

2.8 Motivation, engagement, aspirations and achievement

Wigfield and Eccles (2000) posit that student motivation predicts educational outcomes such as psychological well-being and academic achievement. Marjoribanks (2003) hypothesized that academic performance following the move to secondary school has a significant impact on the formation of adolescents' educational aspirations. Yeung and McInerney (2005) posit that pupils' motivation, engagement and achievement are associated. McGee *et al.* (2003) define engagement as pupil-initiated effort in learning activities that effect achievement and De Bruyn (2005) found that engagement is a strong predictor of academic achievement. Drawing from the definitions and the finding

noted above, if engagement levels decline upon entry to secondary education, then it would be reasonable to conceive that achievement levels might also decline.

De Bruyn (2005) hypothesised that role strain levels reduce academic engagement. In conceptualising 'role strain', de Bruyn argued that significant levels of strain accompany the new roles of adolescents upon entry to secondary school. De Bruyn defined role strain as the stress experienced by a pupil as he or she endeavours to maintain stability in attempting to negotiate a position amongst pressures that are direct messages from various actors in the new educational setting. He conceived that the various elements and actors that a child encounters upon entry to secondary school can be viewed as 'roles', with each role accompanied by its own set of expectations and rules. De Bruyn suggested that the stress of these new roles can have a negative effect on engagement in learning. Indeed, the 'actors' in the new school are many – the school, teachers, peers and parents and in de Bruyn's research, children reported being stressed by the expectations of these actors.

In addition, findings from de Bruyn's (2005) research indicate that role strains predict declines in socio-emotional functioning. Findings confirmed an increase in stress levels - invoked by peer exclusion. De Bruyn found that peer role strain was associated with peers' expectations for a child to adopt a more relaxed attitude towards school, whilst parent role strain was revealed to be counter-productive when related to parental control, and a more authoritarian parenting style. The parental expectation that children work hard to gain high grades was revealed to be another source of parent role strain. School role strain; however, was associated with the new environment - unknown teachers, increased workload and accompanying responsibilities. That teachers did not share the child's pre-occupation with external appearance as a means of gaining popularity was found to be associated with teacher role strain.

An order was revealed in relation to the exertion of pressure with most perceived role strain presented as school related, followed by parent, teacher then peers (de Bruyn,

2005). De Bruyn put forward that teacher and parent role strains predict engagement, whereas school and parent role strains predict achievement. It is noteworthy that parent role strain predicts both engagement and achievement. In addition, De Bruyn (2005) explained that investigation of the study of the causes of engagement can provide educators and parents with opportunities to influence and modify classroom behaviour conducive to achievement. Nevertheless, de Bruyn's theory assumes a unidirectional flow of influence with pressure applied to the new entrant into secondary education, thus affecting levels of engagement and leading to low achievement. An alternative view is that the flow of influence might also move in the opposite direction, as consistently failing to achieve may lead to disengagement as self-esteem and self-worth might be negatively affected. The impact or effect on the new entrant might be that the various actors in the new setting apply even more pressure.

The importance of the role of all involved with the child in transition has been highlighted in the *Transition to School: Position Statement* (Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group, 2011). The document outlines the characteristics and key roles of the child, parents and families, local communities, educators and policy makers - in terms of opportunities, expectations, aspirations and entitlements. Developed as an "aspirational document", the paper emphasises the requirement for action from those who have a role for the education, care and well-being of young children. It positions the educational entitlements around the transition to school in the "context of social justice, human rights (including children's rights), educational reform and ethical agendas, and the established impact of transition to school on children's ongoing wellbeing, learning and development" (ETC Research Group, 2011, p.1). Whilst the paper draws attention to roles and opportunities within this first transition, it is also a summons to action to improve children's life chances by reducing inequality in educational access and outcomes. The recognition and contribution of all involved in the transition to school – the child, families, communities, educators and policy makers has been placed as central to this call. It is reasonable to suggest that the concepts outlined in the *Transition to School: Position Statement* (ETC Research Group, 2011)

are applicable to the transition to secondary school, to achieve continuity in strategic approaches and action to improve children's life chances.

Indeed, schools and educators have a vital role to play in providing a sense or source of purpose for pupils that is grounded in their own interests, strengths and talents. Various studies evidence that pupils' motivation in education is associated with their perspective that tasks are important when they are perceived as central and relevant to themselves (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000; Yeung & McInerney, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, it may be reasonable to conceive that - essential to continuity and progression in learning - pupils require to be *motivated (stimulated and enthused)* by the learning activity) and *engaged (actively seeking to learn)* in order to achieve. Yeung and McInerney (2005) highlight the importance of holding aspirations for the future – for higher education, a career and for preparation for the forthcoming stages in life – as these aspects can serve as a driving force or indeed provide a sense of purpose or direction for individuals desiring to achieve. It is, therefore, important to consider that views concerning achievement held by present-day young people may be at variance with those of their parents, teachers and key decision-makers in education. The document *Improving Scottish Education* (HMIe, 2006) provides clarification for achievement and attainment as follows:

“The terms ‘achievement’ and ‘attainment’ are both used in the Scottish educational context in connection with learner outcomes. Attainment, as an indication of levels of performance in assessment and examinations... Achievement as the overarching term which includes both attainment in qualifications and success in those broader aspects.”

(HMIE, 2006, *Improving Scottish Education*)

It would appear, therefore, that educators are vital actors who might affect pupils' engagement – either positively or negatively. A crucial requirement, for stimulating

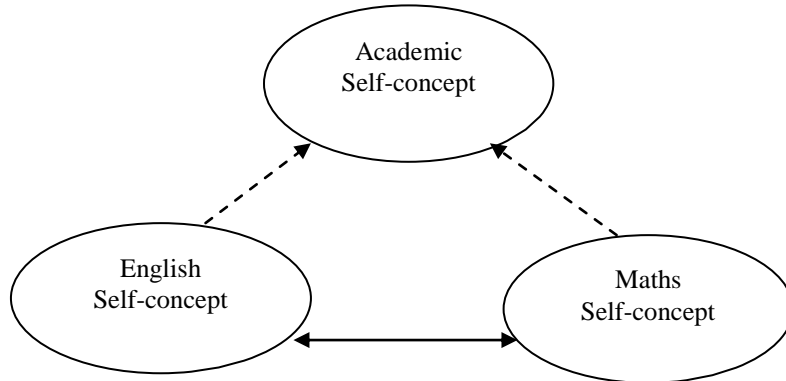
motivation and assisting pupils in developing positive attitudes to learning, might be sharing intended learning outcomes / goals and providing pupils with reasons for the assignment of specific tasks (Black and Williams, 1998). This thinking is in accordance with the concept of “personal efficacy expectations”: that “efficacy beliefs regulate functioning – cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes” (Bandura, 1995, p.5); that “expectancies and values are assumed to directly influence performance, persistence and task choice” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p.118) and that achievement goals guide and direct learners’ cognition, behaviour and affect as they engage in academic tasks (Yeung and McInerney, 2005). Thus educators’ role in sharing learning outcomes and rationalising tasks might be particularly necessary across transition and transfer in order to maintain motivation and levels of engagement.

Consideration must be given to what encourages or motivates a pupil to do well at school and how motivation impacts on the primary-secondary transition experience. Studies on *goal theory – why students decide to engage in academic tasks* and student *self-concept – evaluations of self* – attempt to explain how motivation, engagement and achievement might be related. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), an individual is intrinsically motivated when they engage in activities which are of interest to them and which they enjoy. Extrinsic motivation refers to engagement in activities for the reward they might bring and as such, motivations to achieve might be different for pupils in transition to secondary school.

In goal theory, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) and Barker *et al.* (2006), amongst others, explain that pupils with *ego-involved* or *performance goals* are concerned with assessments of their competence – are interested in out-performing other pupils. Those who are *task-oriented* are concerned with *mastering the skills* required to complete the task. In their study, Barker *et al.* (2006) combine goal theory and academic self-concept in an effort to create a comprehensive model of student motivation, grounded in the thinking that the two dimensions are interrelated and that when combined provide

insight into student achievement. Academic self concept appears to be related to Maths and English self-concept (Figure 2.3).

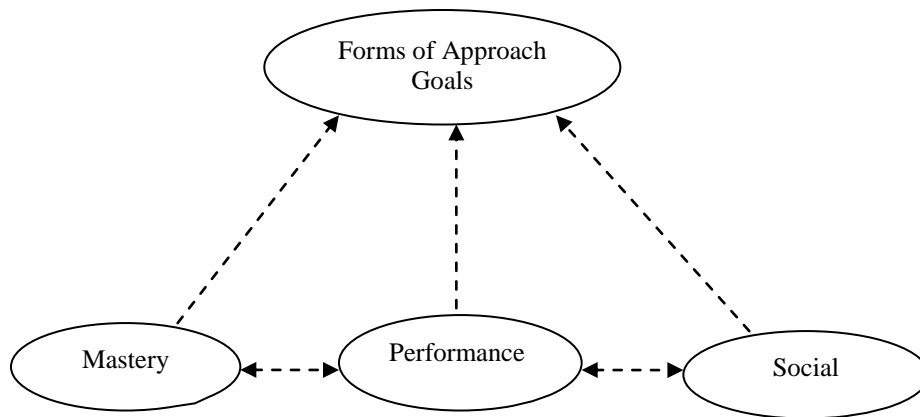
Figure 2.3: Multi-dimensional and hierarchical structure of self-concept



Barker et al. (2006)

In their model, the second dimension, goal orientations represent purposes for achievement structured as forms of goal approaches (Figure 2.4).

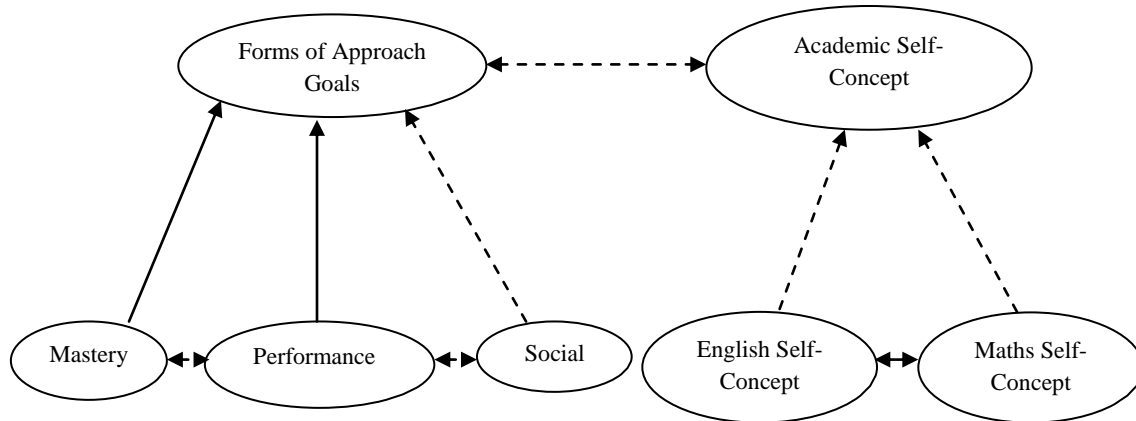
Figure 2.4: Hierarchical structure for goals (Forms of Approach Goals)



Barker et al. (2006)

When combined, the researchers present the concept that these two dimensions predict student achievement (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Structure of Goals and Self-Concepts



Barker *et al.* (2006)

The model in Figure 2.5 indicates that goals and self-concepts should be viewed as multi-dimensional and not uni-dimensional constructs. Barker *et al.* (2006) claim that social goals in combination with academic goals motivate adolescents in achievement oriented settings, and that increases in self-concepts bring about increases in approach goals and vice-versa. However, according to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003, p.7), parents' full support is vital if learners are to realise their potential. The researchers postulate (2003, p.16) that a learner's achievement influences parental aspirations, and that parental expectations increase as the child's level of achievement increases. Thus, the role of corporate parenting is a crucial element of the work of educators, particularly for those learners whose circumstances present a lack of parental aspiration. One implication from this thinking and from other researchers in this area (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000; Wigfield and Eccles, 2002; Marjoribanks, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005) is that for educators and decision-makers in education, an improved understanding of the relationship between motivation and goals is crucial in planning to raise pupils' achievement and levels of attainment. I would suggest; however, that it would also be reasonable to conceive that a pupil's own perspective of achievement can impact on their attitude to learning, motivation, engagement, expectations and aspiration for future education and career.

2.8.1 Engagement and academic attainment

It is generally agreed that active engagement or pupil-initiated effort in learning activities is a crucial element for achievement. McGee *et al.* (2003) identified issues relating to the impacts of transition on student achievement and adjustment to secondary school through a survey of pupils in New Zealand and a review of international literature. The researchers posit that the period post-transition to secondary education can be a time of academic difficulty and disengagement and that this may be the result of a lack of academic challenge. In accordance with this claim, Graham and Hill (2003) also theorise that all pupils become temporarily disengaged at transition, but that those individuals who emerge as disaffected prior to transfer to secondary education become more prone to disaffection in secondary school.

In conceptualising achievement goal theory, Yeung and McInerney (2005, p.1) posit that goals are cognitive accounts of the reasons students adopt for their learning in achievement circumstances. The researchers argue that students' achievement goals guide and direct their cognition, behaviour and affect as they engage in academic tasks. They suggest that this occurs as students attempt to rationalise why they are doing academic tasks. This highlights the association between pupils' motivation, engagement and achievement. In concurrence, De Bruyn (2005) describes engagement as the range of behaviours that pupils direct toward academic effort. He explains that engagement influences educational outcomes, including achievement. In accordance, Marjoribanks (2005, p.650) posits that in the family environment, achievement values can shape children's behaviour so that achievement motivation, which is generated between parent-child interactions, can be translated into successful school outcomes. Indeed, when social class and family size are factored out, parent-child interactions have none the less been noted as having a significant and positive impact on children's behaviour and achievement (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003, p.28). It would appear therefore, that engagement may be influenced by both the school and home environments and that these two dimensions, within which the child interacts, can impact on achievement.

2.8.2 Aspirations and engagement

Research and the development of policy and practice have focused on educational and occupational aspirations in seeking to reduce educational inequality (Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group, 2011; Baker *et al.*, 2014; Hegna, 2014). The involvement of the child, family, community and educators in the formation of aspirations is positioned as facilitating positive “educational trajectories” (ETC Research Group, 2011, p. 2). Baker *et al.* (2014, p. 5) suggest that aspirations can “affect students’ commitments to and investment in education” and are “related to a range of educational and social outcomes.” In concurrence, Hegna (2014) indicates that reduced educational aspirations post-transition to upper secondary education relate to decreased effort, as well as low and decreasing achievement - with factors such as gender, social class and immigrant background interpreted as having a role in shaping aspirations.

According to Yeung and McInerney (2005, p.541), goal orientations have been found to be positively associated with aspiration outcomes. The researchers claim that for high school students, two important academic outcomes are: the desire for further education and career aspirations after high school education and to identify these aspirations as an additional driving force impacting on student motivation and academic achievement. They posit that educational aspirations strengthen a pupil’s desire for lifelong learning and career aspirations and may push the student to work hard for better employment opportunities. This suggests that aspirations for the future - and expectations of education in achieving goals, can provide pupils with a valuable source of purpose.

The researchers’ methodological approach consisted of a survey, with 199 (12-18 yrs old) students in a Hong Kong school investigating two aspects of aspirations: education and career aspirations. Four motivation factors drawn from the task, effort, competition and praise scales of the Inventory of School Motivation (McInerney *et al.* 2001, 2003 cited in Yeung and McInerney, 2005), one education aspiration factor and one career aspiration factor were applied within a structural equation model instead of the conventional correlational approach. The scales were administered as two *mastery*

orientation constructs (task and effort) – *engagement in the task in order to master or become competent in the skill* - and two *performance* constructs (competition and praise) – *engagement in the task to obtain favourable judgements of competence* (Barker *et al.*, 2006). It is noteworthy that one item for the task factor, “I like to be given chances to do something again”, was omitted from the analysis as it reduced the reliability of the scale (Yeung and McInerney, 2005, p.542). Although task repetition may not ‘fit’ with the analysis for this particular study, it might be a vital factor in the relationship between motivation, engagement and achievement, depending on the individual’s learning styles. It might be reasonable to assume that, for certain pupils, re-visiting a task may afford an opportunity to improve the outcomes and that this might impact positively on engagement and attitude to learning.

Yeung and McInerney (2005, p.542) posit that motivation factors relate significantly to aspiration factors. They found that task and effort appear to associate strongly with education factors whereas task and praise had stronger associations with career aspirations. This information may prove vital to educators in planning and developing programmes for children in transition to secondary education, particularly for lower achieving pupils. It has been suggested that deterioration in motivation and academic performance throughout adolescence may be due to “a less facilitative classroom environment” providing inadequate support and assistance to ease transitional difficulties (Yeung and McInerney, 2005, p.540). In addition, the authors argue that, with differences in teaching practices across transition, declines in achievement motivation may not be inevitable. Indeed, the co-relation between engagement and academic attainment might be an indicator of student achievement. The indication is that engagement – efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks - influences achievement. Yeung and McInerney (2005) define personal investment theory as:

“... having three key components: personal goals, sense of self and facilitating conditions that are presumed to influence engagement in school tasks and may play a

role in directing behaviour toward outcomes that individual students would like to achieve.” (Yeung and McInerney, 2005, p.538)

The researchers suggest that teachers and schools need to maintain motivation at a high level throughout high school. They argue for the importance of taking advantage of pupils’ main interests at the beginning of high school experiences as a source of motivation and learning. Additionally, they underscore the need to provide interesting and challenging learning activities throughout schooling. Indeed, considering pupils’ aspirations for the future might prove useful in focusing their academic efforts.

The longitudinal study of 1660 young people in Oslo, carried out over three time points (before, during and after selecting upper secondary education) to determine how educational aspirations are affected by educational choice and the transition to upper secondary school, found that several had changed their educational aspirations over the three-year period (Hegna, 2014). Data was collected in three waves from 2006 to 2010. The first was collected in 2006 in the first term of ninth grade (the equivalent of S4/5 in the Scottish education system), which is the second year of lower secondary school - before the students had begun preparations for their educational choice. The second wave of data was collected 16–20 months later in 2008 in the second term of tenth grade (S5/6 in Scotland), the last year of lower secondary school. The third wave of data collection took place during 2009/2010, in the second term of the second year of upper secondary school, 18–25 months later.

Hegna (2014) revealed a relationship between decreasing aspirations before transition to upper secondary school, reduced / low achievement and school effort. An association was also found between decreasing aspirations and male gender, majority ethnic background and lower social class. The findings of the study revealed that the young people who lowered their higher education aspirations during upper secondary education were identified as putting less effort into homework than previously, poorer baseline grades, and deteriorating academic performance. These characteristics were noted

regardless of the programme of learning, gender, social class or immigrant background. The results indicate that barriers linked to students' background influenced their processes of educational choice. Therefore, it is apparent that students' social background, identity and their scope for educational choice can impact on their educational aspirations (Hegna, 2014).

Baker *et al.* (2014, p. 3) highlight the prominent position given to aspirations within policy discussions and documents, and the claim that low aspirations play a part in "sustaining poverty and creating educational attainment gaps". In their paper providing an overview of the aspirations of young people (aged 14) who were involved in the EPPSE Project, Baker *et al.* (2014) challenge policy-makers' positioning of low aspirations as a major problem related to educational inequality. The researchers used a subset of data from the longitudinal project from students at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9 in England - the equivalent of S2 in the Scottish education system) to focus on aspirations for an undergraduate degree. Baker *et al.* (2014) found that – generally, young people held high aspirations – regardless of social background. However, although aspirations were high for students from less advanced backgrounds, aspirations were lower than those of their more advantaged peers. Whilst Baker *et al.* (2014) indicate the significance of aspirations and acknowledge they are not irrelevant in explaining variance in educational outcomes; they argue that these findings challenge claims that poverty of aspiration is significant to disadvantaged / low income groups.

Baker *et al.* (2014) highlight the deficiency in policy-makers' current focus and weighting on cultural factors – including aspirations, as reinforcing assumptions and suppressing the significance of other contributors, in explaining educational inequality. They suggest a shift in policy-makers' focus from disadvantaged learners' lack of "ambitious aspirations" to supporting parents and teachers in providing students with effective guidance as they progress through the education system. Therefore, it is conceivable that the identification and acknowledgement of the individual learner's interests, talents and educational and career aspirations may be important within the

suggested re-focused approach to secure continued engagement in learning - at the crucial point of transition to secondary school.

De Witt *et al.* (2013) indicate a concern in Britain - and worldwide, in relation to students' lack of interest in studying science and in science-related careers. The first phase of their ASPIRES (Science Aspirations and Career Choice: Age 10–14) longitudinal study was aimed at investigating the development of students' educational and occupational aspirations over time. The survey facilitated an exploration of associations between the attitudes and aspirations of 9000 pupils in the last year of primary school in England. In general, DeWitt *et al.* (2013, p.1046) found that students held positive attitudes to - and self-concepts in science, reported positive parental attitudes to science and held positive images of scientists. Nevertheless, the researchers underline that these positive “experiences and images” did not lead to strong aspirations in science. Variance was found in terms of gender and ethnicity – with girls and students of mixed black and white ethnicity revealed as having lower aspirations in science when considered in relation to boys and white students; whilst students of South Asian heritage held higher aspirations in science.

DeWitt *et al.* (2013) emphasise the association between positive parental attitudes to science and students' aspirations in science. They highlight the link between students' positive self-concept in science, positive attitudes to school science and higher aspirations in science (p.1047). The research revealed difference at the level of educational establishment, highlighting that the school attended can account for the variance in students' aspirations in the science. It must be considered that this finding may translate to other subject areas. This is upheld by Baker *et al.* (2014) who indicate the significance of the contribution of the educational establishment in reducing educational inequality.

The development or adoption of strategies aimed at addressing an anti-work culture is another aspect for consideration. McGee *et al.* (2003, p.11) summarise that few steps

appear to be taken by schools to address the drop in interest in academic activities, and that academic attainment in the first year of secondary education seems to be related to pupils' decreased interest in academic activities. Yeung and McInerney (2005, p.539) put forward that during adolescence, students' motivational orientations and sense of self might place boundaries on the amount of effort they invest in academic endeavours. It might be that certain pupils assume that they can relax their academic efforts and 'take it easy' until S3, when attention begins to focus on examinations.

2.8.3 Summary

The studies explored in this section underline the relationship between engagement in learning activities and academic achievement. For some pupils in transition to secondary school - those who may lack motivation and enthusiasm for learning, and who may perceive themselves as being unsuccessful at academic endeavours, it may be difficult to continue to direct effort at academic endeavours. Indeed, for such individuals, it may prove challenging to begin to formulate aspirations for future education and career, especially in educational establishments that keep an emphasis on academic achievement.

2.9 Expectations

It was indicated previously in this chapter that many actors - parents, teachers, school managers and peers, interact with the child making the move to secondary school. This aligns with the *Transitions to School: Position Statement* (ETC Research Group, 2011, p.3) which outlines expectations of the move to school as it pertains to children, families, communities, educators and educational systems and organisations. In conceptualising the impact of expectations in the primary/secondary transition scenario, it is important to consider what the various actors 'expect' in terms of a successful move to secondary school. One reason attributed to the decline in student achievement is the differing expectations across education sectors, with a lowering of the receiving school's

expectations “as opposed to the higher expectations of the contributing school” (McGee et al., 2003, p. 4). Kärkkäinen and Rätty (2010, p. 229) relate teachers’ and parents’ expectations of the child’s progress in learning, on entry to secondary school, to their perceptions of the “malleability of the child’s competencies”. Malleability is positioned as interpersonal - the child’s potential when compared to his/her previous competencies, and normative – the child’s potential in comparison to his/her peers’ competencies (Kärkkäinen and Rätty, 2010, p. 229), with parents’ expectations presented in relation to maintaining an optimistic view of their child, whilst teachers’ expectations relate to the child in comparison to other children, and within curricular standards. In terms of the child’s own expectations of their performance post transfer to secondary school, Kärkkäinen and Rätty (2010) put forward that children’s expectations of themselves relate to their views of their own abilities and capabilities. However, Graham and Hill (2003) align expectations with concerns about the move – making new friends, the size of the new school and a perceived increase in workload. Additionally, the literature presents peers’ expectations in the context of the child’s adoption of a more relaxed attitude towards school (de Bruyn, 2005; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2006; West *et al.*, 2010).

In conceptualising the child’s own expectations of their efforts in learning, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) posit that within expectancy-value theory, when an individual is able to respond positively to the question “Can I do this task?”, their performance is improved, resulting in motivation to take on more challenging tasks. The authors also argue that expectancy to succeed is matched to the degree that an individual feels in control of success or failure. Similarly, Zimmerman (1995, p.204) posits that “A learner with high efficacy beliefs will work more readily, harder and persist for longer when difficulties are encountered, than those who doubt their abilities.” Indeed, the outcome of the transitional experience to secondary school may be dependent on expectations held by pupils, their parents, educators and decision makers with a responsibility for transition within the education establishment (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). A positive or negative experience may be the result of the impact of actions and interactions of all the afore-mentioned individuals and the systems within the educational setting. Thus,

expectations are considered in the contexts of perceptions and concerns about the child's ability to make the required adjustments, and in relation to pupils' engagement in learning, at the time of primary secondary transition. To this end, expectations will be explored as they pertain to each category of actor - separately, in the sections which follow.

2.9.1 Pupils' expectations

The literature identifies pupils' own expectations as factors which may impact on attainment and achievement. Graham and Hill (2003) refer to "pupils' expectations of the transition compared with their experiences". The researchers suggest that it is at transition, particularly at primary/secondary transfer, that pupils' uncertainty with regard to their expectations or conceptualisations of secondary school may become evident. These appear to relate to pre-transitional children's predictions and concerns, as well as their perceptions of how well they would cope with: making friends in the new setting; the higher academic level; higher expectations of secondary teachers, and how disciplinary matters are dealt with.

In investigating pupils' expectations of transition in Glasgow, Graham and Hill (2003) found that 9 in 10 primary pupils had one or more concerns about the move. The researchers revealed, however, that post-transition, 41% of pupils stopped being concerned almost immediately, approximately 25% stopped after 2 - 4 weeks and 2% were still concerned about friendship and school work. A disproportionate amount of this latter group was Asian and female. This posits for early intervention strategies and the requirement to focus attention on identified individuals and groups at transition. The research also reported that, for most pupils, positive expectations were met, but that the homework experience was worse than expected. They claim that managing learning and homework across a wider range of subjects proved difficult for some pupils. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative efforts by teaching staff across the

primary –secondary transition stage to deliver on pupils’ expectations and in maintaining academic progress.

Additionally, Graham and Hill (2003) also found that the highest numbers of P7 pupils expressed fears of moving from being the seniors in primary to being the youngest in secondary, with minority ethnic pupils more likely to report that they coped less well than predicted with the social/environmental changes of transition. In contrast, this group expressed that they were more confident with curricular changes, particularly homework.

In terms of pupils’ expectations of level of difficulty and workload, it was found that 80% of pupils involved in the study carried out by Fouracre (1993) agreed that they expected secondary school work to be more difficult, whilst 84% expected an increase in the amount of homework. Additionally, the literature suggests that repetition of work already covered was consistent with some secondary schools’ interpretation of ‘a fresh start as starting from scratch’, with pupils’ expectations of subjects prior to transfer not being fulfilled post-transfer (Galton *et al.*, 1999, p.26). This implies that pupils may become temporarily de-skilled, as they are required to adjust to or learn new rules and acclimatise to the new physical environment post-transfer. With regard to academic performance, Graham and Hill (2003) found that 66% of P7 pupils expected this to improve, with Asian children most likely to be confident of improvement; however 80% of them were less likely to feel they had improved academically post transition. The authors recommend that more attention needs to be directed at the second phase of transition, post preparatory programmes, to help pupils adjust to secondary school.

Galton *et al.* (1999) suggest that in planning for directing resources to smooth the transfer process, educational establishments need to refocus attention to ensuring that pupils’ commitment to learning is sustained and progress improved. Their report recommends interventions to support schools in sustaining pupils’ progress and motivation at critical points in their school career and in addressing the needs of those

pupils at risk of falling behind, dropping out and failing. According to Graham and Hill (2003, p.10), pupils generalise that primary teachers were less strict, that they knew them for longer and that they were taught by only one teacher all year. Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) point to the importance of diminishing the gap between primary and secondary schools “in terms of the expectations of students” (2008, p.16). This emphasises the importance of the relationship between teachers and pupils in association with attitudes, engagement and achievement and indeed, the expectations of pupils in transition to secondary. The literature evidences that transferring pupils’ expectations are associated with their perceptions and concerns about the move to secondary school. In summary, their perceptions or concerns can be conceived of as: social - lack of familiarity with adults in the new setting and having to establish new friendships; environmental - adjustments to new surroundings, rules and routines; and curricular - increased workload (classwork and homework) and increased level of difficulty of school work.

In planning action to address transferring pupils’ expectations in relation to their concerns about the move, consideration must also be given to whether pupils’ perceptions of achievement differ from parents’ and educators’ and the impact of such difference on motivation and engagement in learning. For pupils whose ability does not feature as a barrier to learning, attitudes and levels of engagement may be indicators of achievement and commitment to learning. Schools and parents need to work together at critical points in a pupil’s educational career, particularly at transfer, to help to address pupils’ expectations of the move (their perceptions and concerns) and to shape perceptions of achievement.

2.9.2 Parents’ expectations

Marjoribanks (2005) and Casanova *et al.* (2005) posit that inadequate parental support and difficulties in the family environment are key elements that may contribute to post-transfer academic decline. As indicated previously in this chapter, through co-

professional working, the *ICS* initiative, with its multi-agency partnership approach, might alleviate challenges which are based on family environmental issues. However, this initiative in particular may not continue to exist to deliver respite, given the current economical and budgetary pressures.

Griebel and Berwanger (2006) discuss three levels of challenges within the transition process: individual, interactional and contextual. The authors highlight that pupils as well as their parents / carers need to contribute at all levels to effect a successful transition. However, educators indicate that efforts to engage parents in their child's education tend to attract the same parents, whereas certain others, for whose children engagement with the school would prove beneficial, are not forthcoming.

The research report by Evangelou *et al.* (2008) highlighted parents' expectations of primary and secondary schools in improving transition for their children. The researchers found that parents held the perception that their P7 children should be better prepared for the work at secondary, homework increased, more induction days and secondary school visits and taster sessions provided. The report presented the findings of a sub-study on transitions undertaken as part of The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education 3 – 14 (EPPSE 3 – 14 Project). The study encompassed family background and considered socio-economic status and gender. A mixed methods approach was applied: interviews with officers from six Local Education Authorities, questionnaires with 500 children in their first year at secondary school and their parents and twelve case studies drawn from the questionnaires who noted positive experiences of transition were also selected. The researchers found that one out of three parents expected that primary leavers should be better prepared for work at the first year of secondary and that homework should be increased. One in five expected more induction days, taster sessions and visits to the secondary school, whilst one in ten felt that communication with their children should be improved and that they should be listened to more. These findings reflect pupils' own expectations in terms of their perceptions or concerns about the move. (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Graham and Hill, 2003; Jindal-Snape

and Foggie; 2008). There is a question about parents' own preparedness for and involvement in their child's transition to secondary education. Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) recommend that schools should raise parents' awareness about the changes inherent in their child's move to secondary school, and that there is a role for the school in helping them to cope. It may well be that more active involvement in transition activities for parents might impact positively on pupils' transitional experience.

2.9.3 Educators' expectations

The literature provides evidence that there is variance between primary and secondary teachers' expectations of pupils' learning across primary-secondary school transition. Fouracre (1993) found that P7 teachers worked pupils hard in preparation for a perceived increase in level of difficulty of the tasks at secondary school. The study by Fouracre (1993) also reported that many pupils in their first year found secondary work repeated what they had already covered in primary and aligned tasks to revision. Galton *et al.* (1999, pp. 26-27) and Graham and Hill (2003, p.10) suggest that teachers' expectations are associated with their perceptions of the child in transition - in terms of social characteristics, performance and behaviour. In accordance, McGee *et al.* (2003, p.10) indicate that there is a lowering of expectations of the receiving school in relation to the child's performance, with the focus of teaching moving from mastering specific tasks to attaining a grade / passing exams.

In terms of teachers' expectations, consideration must be given to whether pupils attempt to 'live up' to labels, and that the differences in teachers' expectations and perceptions at transition / transfer might influence pupils' enthusiasm, motivation and engagement, and as a result, their progress in learning. Galton *et al.* (1999, pp.26-27) put forward that at primary level, certain pupils might be perceived as being "at risk", whereas post transfer to secondary, there might be the tendency to perceive the same individuals as "problem makers". This indicates that stereotypical views may exert an influence when educators make judgements about certain individuals or groups of young

people. The result might include either ignoring or targeting individuals, and might well be a factor that impacts on pupils' attitudes and engagement levels.

In discussing the impact of transition on experiences and progress in learning, Graham and Hill (2003, p.10) express that new S1 pupils were generally positive about teachers, however significant numbers reported differential treatment with regard to issues and social characteristics, mainly performance and behaviour. The authors found that this was more prevalent for minority ethnic children. The research reveals that teachers did not perceive the level of alienation from among minority ethnic pupils as different from white children. In particular, the authors noted that a number of S1 teachers felt that minority ethnic pupils did not face any particular problems; others perceived that they had different or additional problems. Some teachers felt that differences between cultures of home and school created these problems (Graham and Hill, 2003, p.14). This discrepancy between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of their difficulties is noteworthy. Yeung and McInerney (2005) posit that in order to alleviate the decline in academic performance, the school curriculum may need to be improved to become more practical and relevant to students' daily lives and to their future job-seeking needs. They suggest that perhaps teachers need to adopt more innovative teaching methods to arouse interest in learning in the curriculum and emphasize the importance of effort to school achievement.

Another key area to consider is the discontinuity in teaching approaches across transfer, with the viewpoint that strategies applied at secondary move away from mastering specific tasks to attaining a grade (Mc Gee *et al.*, 2003, p.10), and may allow for more "off task" behaviour. According to Mc Gee *et al.* (2003), the onset of adolescence and lower expectations – in terms of secondary teachers' perceptions of pupils' attainment in the primary school, are influential on post-transition performance.

It is evident that the child making the move to secondary school must make adjustments to meet the different expectations of various actors. Peer social systems – peer groups

and peer pressure, present challenges to the child's identity (West *et al.*, 2010). According to Gibbons and Telhaj (2006), it is apparent that the influence of new, unfamiliar peers in secondary school is much stronger than the influence of children who are familiar from the primary school setting. Negotiating a new position or identity also features in the interplay amongst peers, who expect a more relaxed attitude towards school (de Bruyn, 2005). Thus, in this study, expectations will be explored in terms of the child's, peers', parents' and educators' perceptions of abilities and competencies - concerns about coping with the change, and about making progress in learning in the new educational setting.

2.10 Summary

That learning is affected by the changes inherent in the move for some pupils seems to be well established. This chapter examined research and writing on transition and transfer from primary to secondary education. The main conclusion – noted internationally and nationally - resulting from these studies is that there is a 'hiatus' - dip or decline, in pupils' academic endeavours and attainment post-transfer to secondary school (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Graham and Hill, 2003; McGee *et al.*, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005; Gibbons and Telhaj, 2006; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008). Many of these studies have focused on discontinuity in learning and teaching approaches (McGee *et al.*, 2003) and in social interaction with familiar peers and teachers at this crucial time in a young person's educational career (Graham and Hill, 2003).

Another claim put forward as contributing to this post-transfer 'hiatus' in attainment is that at the onset of adolescence "motivational orientations and sense of self" influence the young person's investments in academic endeavours (Yeung and McInerney, 2005, p. 539). Additionally, Yeung and McInerney (2005) posit that for high school students, two important academic outcomes are: desire for further education and career aspirations after high school education. Stated more succinctly, these authors claim that educational aspirations strengthen a student's desire for lifelong learning, and career aspirations push

the student to work hard for better employment opportunities. That these aspirations are an additional driving force, impacting on student motivation and academic achievement (Yeung and McInerney, 2005), is a key aspect which I set out to investigate through this study. My own thinking - that aspirations for the future, and expectations of education in achieving goals to fulfil those aspirations, provide pupils with a valuable sense of purpose, as they engage in primary/secondary school transition - was influenced by this claim.

Figure 2.6 visualises my approach in unifying, structuring, explaining existing theories and concepts and in adding my own thinking in relation to the move to secondary school.

Figure 2.6: Concepts and theories relating to factors relevant to the move to secondary school

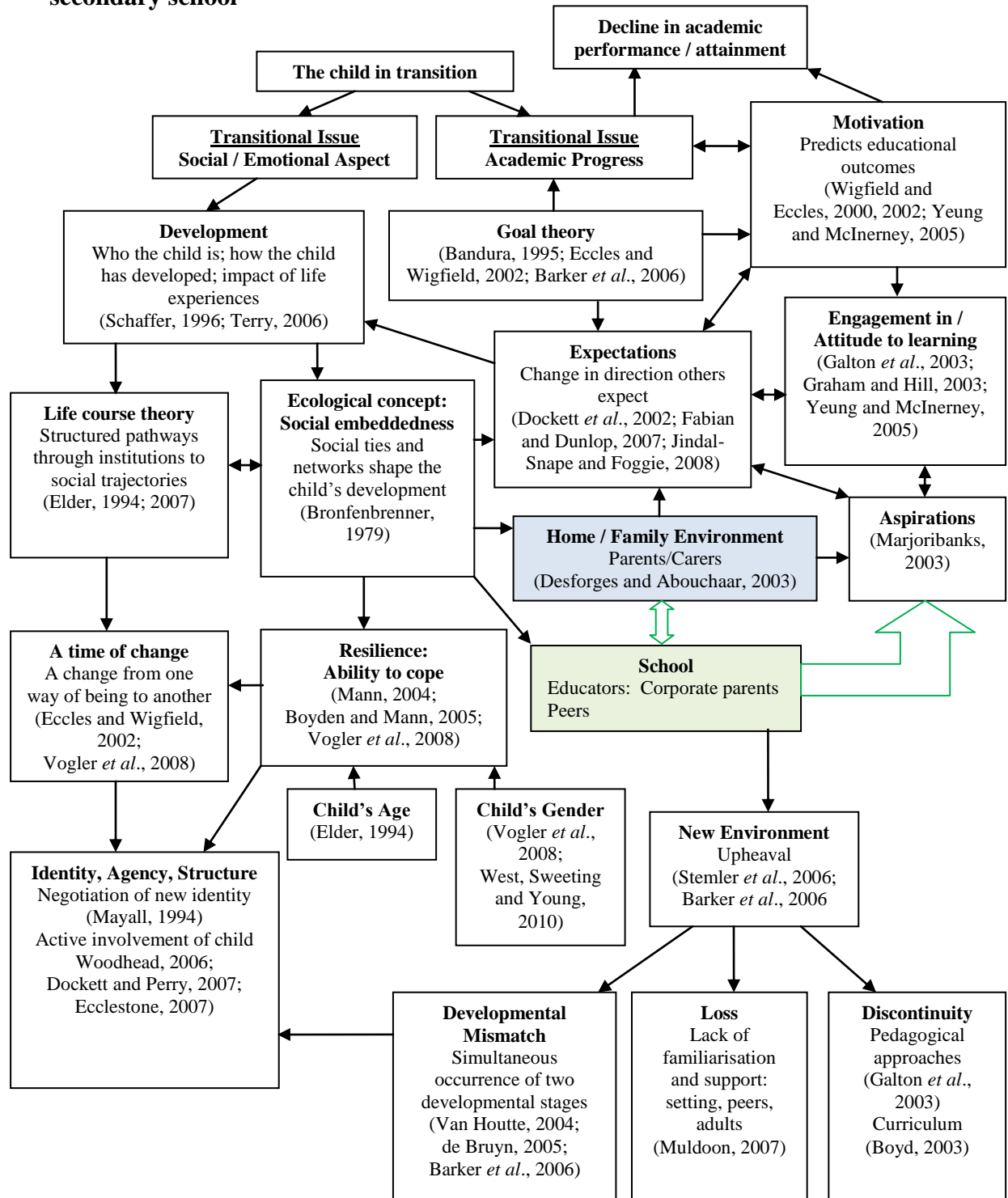


Figure 2.6 maps the interplay between the numerous concepts and theories from existing studies, which relate to influences on the child in transition to secondary school. It charts transitional issues in terms of social and emotional aspects, and progress in learning. The model was designed to unify existing concepts and theories about transition, inform the rationale for the study and generate thinking for the research design. The process of integrating the concepts and theories into a unified model also helped to clarify the research aims and objectives.

The model maps how the social and emotional aspects of primary to secondary school transition are impacted on by the issues of development – who the child is, how the child has developed and the impact of life experiences (Elder, 1994; Schaffer, 1996; Terry, 2006). The structured pathways that the child is exposed to in educational establishments (Elder, 1994, 2007), and social ties and networks that shape development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), are considered to have an impact. Change from one way of being to another (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Vogler *et al.*, 2008), the child's resilience or ability to cope with change (Mann, 2004; Boyden and Mann, 2005; Vogler *et al.*, 2008), influenced by the child's age (Elder, 1994, 2007) and gender (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010) are additional elements which impact on the child's ability to renegotiate his/her identity in the new educational establishment. The simultaneous occurrence of two developmental stages – the onset of adolescence and a new stage in education also impact on the child in transition (Eccles and Midgley, 1989, 1990; Van Houtte, 2004; de Bruyn, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2006).

Figure 2.6 makes connections between expectations, family influences and educational outcomes. In terms of motivation, engagement, commitment and maintaining progress in learning, goal theory (Bandura, 1995; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Barker *et al.*, 2006) is conceived to predict educational outcomes (Young and McInerney, 2005), influenced by expectations for the child to change in the direction that actors expect (Dockett *et al.*, 2002; Fabian and Dunlop, 2007; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Motivation and expectations impact on the child's engagement in learning (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Graham

and Hill, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005), while social capital and family influences; including the support of parents indicate connectedness and academic outcomes (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990; Hogan, 2001; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Pooley *et al.*, 2005; Schlee *et al.*, 2008). Figure 2.6 positions the role of educators, and decision-makers in education, crucially - as corporate parents in circumstances where there is a lack of parental support. The model underlines that a sense of loss – lack of familiarisation with the setting, peers and adults (Muldoon, 2007), discontinuity in pedagogical approaches (Galton *et al.*, 2003) and the curriculum (Boyd, 2003) can impact on the outcome of the child's transition to secondary school.

Examination of the concepts and theories which are summarised above, and mapped in Figure 2.6, influenced my own thinking - that aspirations can impact on the child's engagement in learning and motivation to maintain progress in learning, pre- and post-transition. Thus, drawing from the concepts and theories explored in this literature review, the study focuses on perceptions and expectations before and after the transition to secondary school.

2.11 Rationale for the study

I have explored how the process of transition 'fits' within the current policy context in Scotland, and the existing initiatives, programmes and strategies that are directed at addressing or even redressing the dip in pupils' progress in learning, which appears to accompany the transition from primary to secondary education. Boyd (2005) explains that, generally, arrangements for primary-secondary transition in Scottish schools are good. However, different educational establishments, or professionals within them, may/may not 'sign up' to different learning and teaching approaches. Variances exist in opinions amongst teaching staff across the primary and secondary sectors about how transferring pupils might deal or cope with the move to secondary (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). In some instances, pupils who were perceived as difficult or challenging appear to settle well into secondary, whereas others, whose previous academic

performance and behaviour caused no concern, appear to regress (Fouracre, 1993). Personalities, characteristics and individual skills may play a vital role in how an individual pupil copes with the changes inherent in transitions (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007). However, I have explored in this chapter how coping with or adjusting to change can be influenced by a number of factors within the child's historical context, such as the family environment and how family members cope with or react to change.

There can be no doubt that moving to 'big school' is an important event in a child's life. It might be reasonable to conceive that some children may not have had the opportunity to share or explore with others in any depth, their real concerns and expectations about the new school prior to this transition. Indeed, aspects of self-image (Van Houtte, 2004) and anxiety about managing the new workload (Zeedyk *et al.*, 2003) might sit within these concerns and may affect how pupils cope with the transition to secondary school. Nonetheless, a key factor highlighted as contributing to difficulty in transition is that of discontinuities in curriculum, pedagogy and relationships (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Boyd, 2005; Fabian and Dunlop, 2007; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

Although the theories, concepts and existing research explored in this chapter point to the complex nature and the difficulties inherent in the move from primary to secondary education, it must be acknowledged that many pupils manage this transition well. Nevertheless, there seems to be a gap in current research into pupils' education and career aspirations, and attitudes to school endeavours as contributing factors to post-transitional progress in learning *from the perspective of the young people*. As such, it is worth considering whether pupils' educational and career aspirations are reflective of those held by the various actors – parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education – who hold expectations of their commitment to learning. Therefore, in my study, I set out to explore: pupils' attitudes to and engagement in school endeavours before and after transition from primary to secondary school; whether pre- and post-transitional pupils hold aspirations for education and careers and whether these were in

line with the aspirations and expectations - in terms commitment to learning, that parents and teachers hold for their young people.

2.12 Research aims and objectives

Specific aims and objectives of the research emerged from gaps identified in the literature and the studies examined in this chapter. Thus the aims are: 1) to discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school and 2) to investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts – learners, parents and education staff, Given that I would be exploring participants’ perspectives and that these would be contextualised in relation to the move from primary to secondary school, I reasoned that the objectives of the study should reflect this. Thus, the objectives of this study were to discover:

- whether education and career aspirations influence pupils’ attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours and
- views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school, and whether there is a relationship between pupils’ education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

2.13 Research questions

Cohen *et al.* (2005, p.75) indicate that the general purposes, aims and objectives of the research serve to aid formulation of the specific research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 22) explain that the research questions should make assumptions about the theory more explicit and the data collection methods more focused. Therefore, it is important to formulate the right research questions in order to lead to conceptualisation of the methodology and methods to draw out appropriate data for analysis. Based on the gaps in evidence identified through reviewing the literature and

the above research objectives, I developed the following research questions, which subsequently informed decision-making regarding the approach or methodology and methods which I applied in the study:

Research Question 1: What are pupils' education and career aspirations before and after transition from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1) in a Scottish local authority?

Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of pupils transferring to secondary education on how education and career aspirations influence attitude to and engagement in school endeavours?

Research Question 3: What are learners' expectations of various actors - parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education - in helping them to achieve these aspirations, and what are actors' expectations of children in transition to secondary school?

In the Research Design Chapter (Section 3.1), I make explicit how the questions were generated – based on this review of the literature. Chapter 3 then outlines how I designed the study and the processes of data collection and analysis in order to take forward thinking in this area.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate and illuminate issues with regard to designing the research. The chapter reflects on, details and provides justification for decisions made in the development of my approach as researcher – the methodology applied to the study, the methods that I eventually adopted to collect the data, and the procedures employed to analyse the data. In the Literature Review Chapter, Figure 2.6 was conceived to unify and map the interplay between concepts and theories related to the primary to secondary educational transition, and the inherent ‘dip’ in learning progress at this point of change.

I am interested in perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and whether education and career aspirations can influence commitment to learning before and after transition to secondary school. In Chapter 2, I explored how motivation and expectations can impact on the child’s engagement in learning (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Graham and Hill, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005). I noted that both factors – motivation and engagement link with goal theory (Bandura, 1995; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Barker *et al.*, 2006) and are conceived to predict educational outcomes. Goal theory which positions aspiration for education and career as important academic outcomes for high school students was also examined. Thus, Research Questions 1 and 2 (noted below) were formulated to frame the study around an exploration of learners’ perspectives of education and career aspirations pre- and post-transition to secondary school.

Research Question 1: What are pupils’ education and career aspirations before and after transition from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1) in a Scottish local authority?

Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of pupils transferring to secondary education on how education and career aspirations influence attitude to, and engagement in, school endeavours?

In the Literature Review Chapter, I also considered how the social and emotional aspects of primary / secondary school transition are impacted on by the issues of development and life experiences (Elder, 1994; Schaffer, 1996; Terry, 2006). I examined how the social ties and networks that shape development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) might have an impact on the learner in transition. My examination included the requirement for the child to change from one way of being to another (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Vogler *et al.*, 2008), and resilience or ability to cope with change (Mann, 2004; Boyden and Mann, 2005; Vogler *et al.*, 2008). These were positioned as additional elements which impact on the child's ability to renegotiate his/her identity in the new secondary setting. I highlighted that coping with / adjusting to change can be influenced by factors such as the child's historical context - the family environment and how family members cope with / react to change. I explored how social capital and family influences, such as the support of parents, might give an indication of connectedness and academic outcomes (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990; Hogan, 2001; Desforges and Abouchar, 2003; Pooley *et al.*, 2005; Schlee *et al.*, 2008). Drawing from this, I rationalised in Chapter 2 that the corporate parenting role of educators, and decision-makers in education, might be crucial in circumstances where there is a lack of parental support for learners. Thus, I established that there are connections between expectations, family influences and educational outcomes, and that these may include expectations for the child to change in the direction that others expect (Dockett *et al.*, 2002; Fabian and Dunlop, 2007; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). In addition, in Chapter 2, I outlined that, in terms of expectations, the study is aligned to concerns and coping in the new educational setting. Therefore, Research Questions 3 and 4 were designed to frame an exploration of concerns and expectations - in terms of coping with the changes inherent in the move to secondary school, and with regard to aspirations before and after primary / secondary school transition.

Research Question 3: What are learners' expectations of various actors - parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education - in helping them to achieve these

aspirations, and what are actors' expectations of children in transition to secondary school?

Given that the study is exploratory in nature, I was aware from the outset that it would not be possible to carry out a large scale study within a part-time doctoral course, due to practical constraints and the requirements of the thesis process. Therefore, I decided that, with the required permission, the study would take place within my own local education authority in Scotland as the setting for exploring these questions. I give full details of this context later in this chapter.

3.2 Researcher's position

Greenbank (2003) posits that a researcher is influenced by his/her own position - *ontological* (relating to assumptions which concern the nature of the social occurrences being investigated) and *epistemological* (concerning knowledge constructs – how knowledge is acquired and communicated to others) (Opie, 2004; Cohen *et al.*, 2005). Thus, it would appear that when deciding research methods to adopt, the researcher is influenced by his/her own values.

3.2.1 Insider research: advantages and disadvantages

In accordance with Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 29), professional reflection might be deepened in instances when researcher and practitioner are one and the same, contributing to the “setting and clients”. This development of professional reflection might also take place through engaging in research in the educational setting. From the outset, interest in researching the transition from primary to secondary school was initiated by my experiences and, to some degree, insider knowledge. One might perceive both benefits and constraints integral to this position of practitioner and ‘inside researcher’ as influential to how my thinking was formulated and to my approach to the study (Anderson *et al.*, 2007). Thus, some benefits according to these authors are:

- a degree of knowledge regarding issues of sensitivity within educational establishments;
- awareness of appropriate use of language in communicating with participants and
- some general knowledge about systems and procedures within schools, such as the organisation of the school day, in general.

In any case, there were also benefits in holding prior knowledge with regard to pedagogy (learning and teaching methodologies), both current and those proposed through the new *Curriculum for Excellence* and crucially, to having observed first hand - over a prolonged period, both formally and in an informal way, arrangements for transfer / transition in the various schools with which I have been associated.

Anderson *et al.* (2007) explain that one aspect of disadvantage for the insider researcher is negotiating the balance between ‘self’ in relation to practice and others who share the practice setting. Thus, it was crucial that the research involved others – pupils, parents and staff, as active participants and not just as subjects to be studied. Although my thinking about the issue may have formed unconsciously over time, I was aware that care was required to ensure that I was un-biased and that I did not apply pre-conceived ideas to analysis. I knew five of the six heads of establishment who engaged in the research exercise and I perceived this to be an advantage instead of a disadvantage; however, I was aware that participants might perceive my position as one of power and that I would need to be cautious with this area of constraint. I deal with the issue of power relations in Section 3.6.1 of this chapter. I am, at the time of writing (2011), once again, a class-committed headteacher, teaching 2.5 days of the week.

Greenbank (2003) suggests that it is difficult to predict the cost and benefits of a research exercise. In the context of carrying out this research study, my position is that of part-time doctoral student. The following might be considered constraints inherent in the formulation of my approach: I was a lone-researcher with limited resources in terms of time to dedicate fully to the study and there were budgetary pressures put upon the

study as I was self-funded. I will refer to these constraints and those mentioned previously, at points where they may have had an impact on the study later in the chapter.

3.3 Research Paradigms

Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 3) explain that research is about “understanding the world” and that this is informed by the researcher’s view of his/her own world. The authors posit that what understanding means - and its purposes, can also influence the researcher’s understanding. In other words, in the search for truth, assumptions are made about the world and reality, based on the researcher’s own views. Thus, assumptions give rise to the choices made by the researcher and according to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 21), ontological assumptions (those that concern the nature of social occurrences) initiate epistemological assumptions (ideas about how knowledge is formed and communicated to others), which in turn influence choice of methods of data collection. Expressed more succinctly, in social science, the researcher’s methodology is based on assumptions about the social world or paradigms (theoretical models or sets of beliefs), which organise his/her view of reality (Birley and Moreland, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.19; Punch, 2005, p. 27). Thus, the researcher’s stance might be set within positivism, interpretivism or realism.

The positivist stance is characterised by the claim that knowledge or explanation can be provided through the use of quantitative methods and scientific description (Punch, 2005, p.28). It conceptualises “...the social scientist as an observer of social reality” and “as analyst or interpreter of the subject matter” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, pp. 8 – 9). The perceived strength of this approach is that reality might be achieved through measurement. The positivist approach is also characterised by the researcher’s position that the “truth” can be revealed through objective rather than subjective intervention – a stance criticised by Scott and Usher (2004, p.2) as presenting a “false picture of reality”. Lack of choice, individuality or freedom to offer interpretations of experiences, and to

assist in the active construction of “our worlds” are aspects offered as criticisms of this approach, according to Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 19), who also state that when the research exercise attempts to understand human behaviour and its complicated nature, positivism is less successful.

The element of control inherent in methods associated with positivism such as: experimental research that isolates one variable for investigation, or correlational research that investigates variance between two or more variables (Birley and Moreland (1999, pp. 31-34) were felt to be unsuitable for my study; as were: survey - useful in creating an overview but less so in eliciting in-depth information; or developmental study that would follow a specific group over a period of time. In this study, the research questions were designed to glean in-depth information from participants’ perspectives as they relate to the move to secondary school. Cohen *et al.* (2005) refer specifically to contexts such as the classroom and school in explaining that positivism is less successful in investigating human behaviour “where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world” (2005: p. 9). Thus, I felt that assuming a positivist approach would be unsuitable for my study as the inherent degree of control would hinder individuals’ ability to speak for themselves (Birley and Moreland, 1999, p.33). I reasoned, therefore, that given the nature of my study – I was concerned with the qualitative nature of participants’ opinions and interpretations of their transitional experience and aspirations for future education and career - that a quantitative approach would be inappropriate.

As an alternative to the positivist stance, a qualitative, interpretive approach positions people as actively constructing their social world – offering interpretations of, and perspectives on, particular events, experiences and circumstances (Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 6-7; Cohen *et al.*, 2005; Silverman, 2006, p. 44). The indication is that through an interpretivist approach, meaning is constructed and “articulated” from the emergence of descriptions of social “facts” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 145) with the

researcher's confidence and consistency in his/her judgements considered a form of reliability (p.150). Cohen *et al.* (2005, pp.22 - 26) explore interpretivism as *phenomenology* – formulating viewpoints based on theory that behaviour is determined by experience and varies from situation to situation; *ethnomethodology* - the researcher seeks to understand how people make sense of the social interactions in their everyday world, and *interactionism*- exploration of the processes that individuals use to construct and represent meaning. I realised that these perspectives presented a common characteristic, a natural fit for research in schools that would be suitable for my study. I recognised, however, that I would need to ensure “trustworthiness and authenticity of findings” in applying an interpretive approach, as individuals' accounts may vary in quality of description or presentation (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 277).

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005), the realist paradigm draws from interpretivism – “people actively construct their social world” (2005: p.21), and positivism - “knowledge is based on sense experience and can only be advanced by observation and experiment” (2005: p. 8). Given that a key aim of the study was to explore views concerning attitudes, aspirations and expectations at the time of transition / transfer to secondary school, I decided that I would focus on participants' perceptions and interpretations of these issues. In general, pupils may be exposed to similar situations and experiences when moving to secondary school, but may interpret them differently. It is these interpretations that the study was concerned with; and so I sought to draw out underlying experiences and the differences in perceptions of those experiences. Thus, I deemed a purely qualitative, interpretive approach appropriate to my study instead of realism.

I felt that I would “begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them” and that, “theory should not precede research, but follow it” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p. 23). I rationalised that through an interpretive approach, I would glean data from the meanings and perspectives concerning education and career aspirations of the participants involved in the study. Thus, theory would be grounded in the data generated from the research exercise (Birley and Moreland, 1998, p.29; Cohen

et al., 2005). However, I was aware that Silverman (2006, p. 47) points to the following criticisms of the “anecdotal nature of qualitative research”: 1) reliability of the soundness of participants’ explanations and 2) validity – truthfulness. The latter point *truthfulness* may be perceived as questionable. I was also aware that the issue of consistency when analysing qualitative data can present a problem, which might influence reliability and validity of data. After consideration and reflection, I realised that although a small scale study, the selection and number of participants would need to be appropriate for gathering qualitative data which would ensure validity – the “depth, richness and scope of the data achieved” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p. 105), and reliability - the match between what is recorded as data and actual occurrences in the setting being researched (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p.119).

As indicated previously, Greenbank (2003) argues that the researcher’s own values impact on research and that as a result, the application of research methods is not ‘value-free’. My own opinion - that failing to achieve, or inconsistency in achievement and attainment, might affect some pupils’ attitudes, interactions and engagement negatively – reflect my own values, my ontological and epistemological position. Therefore, I felt it important to consider the viewpoints of the key actors - parents, teachers, other staff and the key decision-makers, who interact with pupils and contribute to shaping their pathways within the educational setting (Elder, 2003; Ecclestone, 2007). It was crucial, however, to place a focus on pupils’ own attitudes, aspirations and expectations, as these could be indicators of pupil motivation, engagement and achievement values. Thus the methodology applied assumed that examination of participants’ educational and career aspirations at transfer may provide insight into pupils’ interpretations of the issue.

I also wanted to investigate the relationship between pupils’ educational and career aspirations and those parents held for their children. Consequently, in an attempt to be value-neutral, I endeavoured to secure:

- triangulation by eliciting qualitative knowledge regarding respondents’ interpretations and

- reliability and validity by examining whether there is a relationship between pupils' educational and career aspirations and those of their parents.

3.4 Methods

Silverman (2006, p. 15) posits that methodology refers to the researcher's approach to studying occurrences or experiences and may be defined as either quantitative or qualitative, whilst methods are the particular research techniques. Research methods are the ways or instruments that are used to elicit data for analysis. Silverman (2006, p.18) discusses four main methods for use by qualitative researchers – “observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews and focus groups and audio and video recording”, and explains that the researcher should resist regarding research methods as “mere techniques” (Silverman, 2006, p. 30). Choice of methods could impact either positively or negatively on the quality of data collected. In other words, advantages and disadvantages are inherent in the use of each method and I was aware that I would need to ensure that the most appropriate methods were chosen to elicit the most useful information for analysis.

3.4.1 Observation and video recording

Observation as a method is favourable when attempting to understand culture, and indeed the culture of each local education authority and each school - including policy, practice and attention to the formation of pupils' aspirations for education and career - might be influential in pupils' transfer and transitional experience to secondary education. One advantage of using direct observation as a method to glean information is that it elicits both oral and visual data (Cohen *et al.* 2005, p. 313). Another is that the data gathered is contextual, covering the context of the educational setting (Yin, 2009, p.102). As observer within the class/school, I would be in a position to adapt and respond to emerging issues as I attempt to construct knowledge (Cohen *et al.* 2005, p.140). However, my sample consisted of six participating schools in one education

authority with the involvement of 60 individuals. Thus, I rationalised that my sample size, would be too large (Silverman, 2005, p.111) and that it would prove time-consuming to carry out an observational study, within a part-time doctorate. Additionally, in accordance with Silverman (2006, p.19), I felt that it might be difficult to achieve reliability as I might record events differently within the differing contexts of each educational establishment. In other words, contexts such as the nature of the school, the type of lesson observed and the individual teaching the class might influence the quality of the data gathered. I was also aware that events might proceed differently because participants were being observed (Yin, 2009, p.102). I was interested in exploring participant's views and not in how pupils behave within their transitional experiences (Silverman, 2005, p.113). For this reason, and the limitations mentioned previously, I deemed observation an inappropriate method to elicit data for analysis.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 280-281), video-taping tends to yield more accurate data than audio taping and can capture non-verbal communication. Although those aspects might be advantageous to the researcher, Silverman (2005, p. 60) explains that transcription and analysis of video data are more difficult than working with audio data. I felt that I did not need video data, as indicated previously; I wanted to explore opinions and not behaviour. I wanted to keep the collection of data uncomplicated in the interest of manageability. I also felt that some participants might be 'put off' by the presence of a video camera whilst others might feel that they would need to 'act' for the camera. I thought that these latter aspects might impact on the reliability of the data. Thus, I decided that videotaping would be an unsuitable method of data collection for my study.

3.4.2 Documentary analysis

Seale (2004, pp. 368 – 370) and Silverman (2006, pp. 19, 159) also explain that analysis of written material is a favourable method - content analysis, in particular, in which categories are determined and the number of occurrences within each category is counted – in order to glean reliable data about a large sample. This method seems to pay

attention to reliability of measures (ensuring that where there are multiple researchers, data are measured in the same way) and validity (through exact counts of word use) in quantitative content analysis (Seale, 2004, p. 369; Silverman, 2006, p.159). It may have been possible to use questionnaires as a method for eliciting such information.

However, I felt that this would be more suitable to a positivist approach and that the very nature of questionnaires would limit the data, particularly if participants were perceived as low achievers or recognised as having additional support for learning needs and who might require assistance to complete the questionnaire. I wanted participants to feel that they could engage in discussion about the issue and so to offer their opinions freely. Furthermore, I felt that using questionnaires would be too broad and impersonal an approach.

It may have been possible to analyse documents concerned with transfer and transition for each of the participating schools as a research method; however, none of the secondaries or the primary schools in the sample had written policies for transfer and transition, at the time of carrying out the research exercise. Embedded in practice, the secondaries sent letters/communications to parents (via primary school bag post), and to the headteachers of the primary schools. These documents concerned timetables for transfer and induction to secondary school. Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 162) suggest that in analysing documents it is important to consider the “worth of the data” contained in them. I felt that parental letters and timetables would not give the depth of information that my study required as I wanted to gather information about the actual experiences and perspectives of the pupils and stakeholders. Consequently, I rationalised that data gleaned from analysing these documents would be limited and as a result, would bear implications for reliability of the data.

Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985) point to the importance of data collection from non-human sources in qualitative research. This method initially seemed appropriate for my study as the HMIe Report: *Improving Scottish Education* (2006) that drew my attention to the issue of primary/secondary transition was easily available, open-

published (in the public domain) and factual. That the document itself might reflect *facticity* – “a sense of neutral, objective truth” in attempting to *naturalise* the statements made about primary/secondary transition – “making them seem ‘natural’ and unquestionable” (Seale, 2004, p. 257) was worthy of consideration and reflection. I was aware, however, that although the document reflects the national situation, that the statements within may not be representative of the primary/secondary transitional experience offered by the numerous - but individual, educational establishments across the country. Crucially, given that the research questions were aimed at eliciting data regarding participants’ opinions and interpretations of their transitional experience, as well their aspirations for education and career, I decided that documentary analysis would be an inappropriate research method in this study.

3.4.3 Interviewing

Yin (2009, p.102) explains that one strength of the interview as an instrument for collecting data is that it is targeted, focussing directly on the issue, and that another advantage is the element of insightfulness in providing perceived inferences and explanations. I was aware, however, of several weaknesses to be avoided – bias due to poorly constructed questions; in responses and in poor recall from the interviewee who might simply state what he/she feels the interviewer wishes to hear (Yin, 2009, p.102). Nevertheless, given that I wanted to consider personal perceptions and interpretations, I selected to employ interviewing as a qualitative method - in an attempt to benefit from the advantage of offering a deeper picture based on the interpretations of participants. I was aware, however, that according to Silverman (2006, p. 46), I would need to be consistent when categorising participants’ descriptions of their experiences, and that reliability of interpretation of the transcripts could be weakened through my own interpretations of what the interviewee meant or by how I explain participants’ anecdotes of their experience, thus influencing validity (Scott and Usher, 2004, p.110; Silverman, 2006, p. 47).

I deemed it appropriate to employ group discussions in the first stage of the study, and then to explore the emergent issues through face-to-face, one-to-one interviews, using audio-taping to record discussion and to glean information for analysis. I felt that this combination of methods would provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the issues, first in supportive groups and then individually, thus eliciting rich data – proceeding beyond predictable findings (Silverman, 2006, p. 26).

3.4.3.1 Preparatory groups

At the first stage of the research exercise, I carried out preparatory group discussions of approximately twenty minutes duration to give participants an opportunity to explore the issues together, and to familiarise pupil interviewees with the content of the interview schedule at this initial stage of the research, in each educational setting. I wished to facilitate “informal group discussions ‘focused’ around a particular topic...” (Silverman, 2011, p. 207), in exploring whether holding aspirations for education and career - pre and post transition to secondary school, can drive pupils’ enthusiasm for learning.

Initially, I had planned to use focus groups discussions. Silverman (2006, p. 110) suggests that through this method the researcher can use skills of facilitation to glean information from the discussion. I was also aware of Seale’s view in relation to one benefit of focus group discussions (2004, p.181) - that interactions between participants can elicit different data than might emerge from one-to-one interview. Additionally, Silverman (2004, p. 180) claims that another advantage of focus group discussion is that it is “naturalistic” in that it is closer to every day conversation. Silverman explains that focus group discussions can be based on a schedule of questions (2011, p.208), and can help to clarify issues that the researcher wishes to raise (2013, p.211) in the one-to-one interviews. He advises that the schedule of questions is followed by use of stimulus material and a ranking, rating or card sorting exercise (2011, p.208). Wilkinson (2004, p.178) suggests that questions are not asked of each focus group participant in turn but

that the interviewer moderates the group discussion, “actively encouraging participants to interact with each other.”

On reflection and as indicated previously, I had set out to engage the participants in focus group discussions at the first stage of the research. I wanted the research methodology to benefit from the clarification of issues, prior to engaging participants in the face-to-face interviews. Nevertheless, I was aware that whilst a positive perception of the focus group discussion is that it might allow some participants to speak openly, it could be disadvantageous to others who might perceive the forum as inhibiting. I realised that more support would be required to involve *all* participants if some were more confident to speak than others. I had to ensure that I posed questions to quieter participants to facilitate their involvement, to a greater degree than utilised in focus group discussions. The preparatory group discussions allowed for more direction than moderation to keep the discussion flowing. I decided not to use a stimulus (beyond the schedule of questions), nor a ranking or card sorting exercise, as I felt that quieter participants would not engage fully with these exercises – without my involvement. I did not want to lead participants’ responses. Given the modifications noted, I did not adhere to the methodology recommended for carrying out focus group discussions but made adjustments for the age, stage and range of discursive ability of participants. In respect of the time dedicated to carrying out the preparatory group discussions, for consistency across participating schools, and to meet the demands of their busy schedules, I allocated one day to engage in both the group discussion and the face-to-face interviews in each establishment. Therefore, I deemed the duration (approximately twenty minutes) and methodology of preparatory group discussions appropriate.

The literature establishes that the duration of the transition period can vary from one individual to another (see Chapter 2, p.15); therefore, I decided to include S3 pupils in the research exercise. Discussions were carried out with seven preparatory groups, consisting of participants as follows: one of six P7 pupils in each of the four primary schools involved; one of six S1 students in each of the two secondaries and one of six S3

students in the secondary in Cluster 1. In Cluster 2, only three S3 participants came forward - two volunteered on the morning of the research exercise, requesting individual interviews. I did not wish to turn these two volunteers away and so included them in the morning's exercise. I will refer to these participants later on in analysis and in the discussion chapters.

In order to offer a comfortable and familiar environment, discussions were arranged to take place at the pupils' own school, in a quiet room as far as possible. This seemed to encourage participants to respond in some depth and I was careful to ensure that each respondent was given a fair opportunity to respond by posing questions directly to named participants. I audio-taped these discussions and during this procedure made a note of any point that I wished to examine further, as these were the same participants who would engage in individual interviews afterwards. The one-to-one interviews, were used to follow-up any issues and aspects revealed by individual candidates during the group discussion. Crucially, this study is original in that, in examining the existing literature, I had not discovered the application of this method as a means of exploring pupils' aspirations for education and career, and how this might influence their endeavours in learning as they made the move to secondary school.

3.4.3.2 One-to-one interviews

Byrne (2004, p.182) posits that qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Additionally, she explains that open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore would provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions. Drawing from this thinking, I used qualitative interviewing to explore views and experiences. However, I opted for semi-structured interviews – the interview was structured with specific topics to be discussed and set open-ended questions in order to

reduce bias and to facilitate the organisation of data for analysis; whilst it was unstructured in that prompts and probes were used to explore the interviewees' views of their experiences in detail, thus facilitating the acquisition of "personalised information about how individuals view the world" (Cohen *et al.* 2005, p.278).

Silverman (2006) posits that there are three different approaches (see **Table 3.1**) which can be applied in attempting to gain an understanding of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee and interview techniques, and in determining the validity of the accounts that interviewees offer.

Table 3.1: Approaches to interviewing

	Data	Methods
Positivism	Interview data have the 'potential' to make facts about the world available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved through random selection of interview sample; • Application of standardised interview questions and • Might be best suited to survey research.
Emotionalism	<p>Interviewees' experiences aid the active construction of their social worlds.</p> <p>Essential that the data generated elicit a genuine insight into participants' experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievable through the use of unstructured, open-ended interviews and • An atmosphere of open communication is encouraged.
Constructivism	Positions the interviewer and interviewee as active participants in the construction of meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview treated as topic for constructivism; • Interview mutually constructed and unstructured.

(Note: Adapted from Silverman, 2006, pp. 118/119)

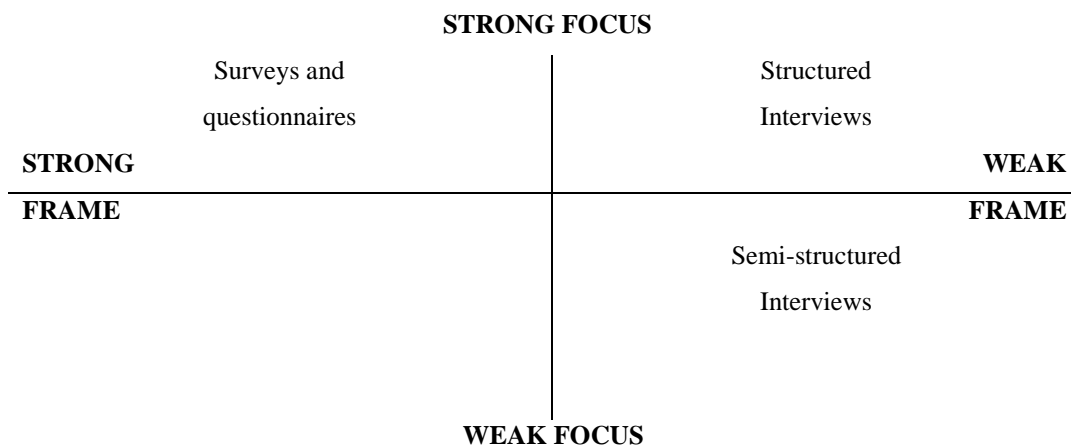
According to positivism, the main issue is to produce data that are “...valid and reliable, independently of the research setting” whilst within emotionalism, data are created to glean an understanding of people’s experiences. Silverman (2006, p.118-119) also claims that treating the interview as a topic instead of a “research resource” is consistent with constructivism.

One decision that I had to make early in the planning stage was whether I was looking for facts or opinions from the selected data collection methods. Byrne (2004, p. 182) states that interviews give “representations’ of participants’ views, opinions and experiences”. Given that my approach is interpretive, and that my study was concerned with participants’ pre- and post-transitional perceptions, I felt that structured interviews within a positivist approach would limit the flow of open interviewer / interviewee interaction. I wanted to access participants’ interpretations of their experiences, which is inherent in an emotionalist approach to interviewing as a data collection method (Silverman, 2004); however, I decided that I would need to apply an element of control whilst carrying out the interviews. Silverman (2004) explains that emotionalism “differs from positivism in that positivists regard departure from the interview schedule as a possible source of bias”. I felt that this last point would be a limitation, in that the minimal presence of the interviewer can create an “interpretive problem for the interviewee” (Silverman, 2006, p.125).

According to Scott and Usher (2004, p. 109), there is an active role for both the interviewer and interviewee, inherent in interviewing as a method, within which there is a degree of control exerted by the interviewer, whilst the interviewee “gives accounts of their lives in terms of their understandings”. This is reflective of constructivism and suggests that as interviewer, I would be required to position myself as an active participant, that I was not just having a conversation. However, I felt that whilst the interview should be conversational, I would need to demonstrate some control. Scott and Usher (2004, pp. 111 – 112) also claim that there is a relationship between *focus* (the degree of control by the interviewer over the contents of the exchange) and *frame*

(control over timing and duration of the interview) in the structure of an interview (see **Figure 3.1**). I selected to locate the interview within a ‘weak’ focus and frame, in order to exert limited control over what interviewees offered as interpretations. In addition, I did not want the interviewee to feel either kept back if they became uncomfortable with the interview or constrained by time, if they wished to conclude.

Figure 3.1: Interview focusing and framing (Scott and Usher, 2004)



During the one-to-one interviews, I exercised some control by determining which units of talk to follow up with further questioning, and this reflected a degree of constructivism. Thus, I did not apply any one approach to interviewing, but drew from the emotionalist and constructivist approaches suggested by Silverman (2006).

According to Silverman (2006, p. 110), when attempting to gain an understanding of the interviewee’s perspective of an issue, through talking and their interpretation of context, the interviewer should listen actively to allow the interviewee to talk freely and to attribute meanings. To gain this understanding, I needed to determine:

- how to present myself – whether as researcher or educator / learner;
- how to achieve and maintain trust and demonstrate sensitivity and
- how to establish rapport.

Thus, interview schedules (**Appendices G – N**) were designed, keeping in mind the afore-mentioned points, for each category of interviewee: P7 pupils, two of the parents of participating pupils from each primary, school management, teachers and the home link worker from each of the school clusters. Table 3.2 provides an outline of issues explored in the interviews. The questions were drafted to elicit information for the themes identified previously in the literature review and the research questions.

Table 3.2: Issues explored within interview schedules.

Interview structure	Pupils	Parents	School Staff
Background	Own feelings about the move to secondary.	Own feelings about the move to secondary.	Interest, responsibilities and experience in area of transition.
The transition process	Views of own preparedness for secondary school – socially, emotionally and academically.	Views of child’s preparedness for secondary school - socially, emotionally and academically.	Efforts to prepare pupils for secondary school - socially, emotionally, academically and transfer arrangements.
Exploration of themes: Aspirations Engagement Attitude Expectations Achievement	Opinions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • own efforts; • own aspirations for education and career; • expectations of others and • own views of achievement. 	Opinions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child’s efforts; • aspirations for child’s education and career; • expectations of school and • own views of achievement. 	Opinions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils’ efforts; • pupils’ aspirations for education and career; • meeting expectations and • own views of achievement.

During the individual face-to-face interviews with pupils, I attempted to interact with each interviewee and aimed to understand their experience, opinions and ideas. In order to explore the degree to which opinions corroborate on pre and post transitional experiences (and in securing triangulation), it was vital that opinions were also gathered from key actors involved in working with transferring pupils. Thus, at this stage of the study, I also carried out semi-structured interviews consisting of approximately 17 questions with the various adults who had given consent: a member of the senior management team and two teachers from each of the secondary schools; each headteacher and one teacher from the primary schools and the home-link worker for each school cluster.

Additionally, I carried out one-to-one, 20 minute interviews with two parents of Primary 7 pupils from each primary school involved to glean information regarding their expectations of their children's academic efforts, and their aspirations for their children's future at the time of transfer to secondary education. I had initially planned to carry out these interviews at school-organised parents' information evenings in order to maximise the opportunity for participation. However, in each instance, it was pre-arranged that I interviewed the two parents individually at the school, as it was felt that parents' evenings were not private by nature and that they might wish to speak with me in privacy. Incidentally, all parents who volunteered to be interviewed were female. Byrne (2004, p. 183) puts forward that, in realism, interviewees' accounts are evaluated according to how accurately they reflect the real social world, which is assumed to exist independent of verbal communication. This would suggest that interviews are positioned as a resource to provide 'real facts' about the social world. Although my approach was not based on realism, I drew from this in designing the interview schedules to follow topics and themes which emerged out of the literature review. The questions were designed to allow the interviewee to talk freely about what they felt important or relevant in relation to the theme. However, I was aware that it is vital to note that the content offered by the interviewee is a representation of the 'real world' from his/her perspective (Byrne, 2004, p. 182).

That research should be different from others with the same concepts, to be deemed unique, was a key aspect that I considered in embarking on this study. Byrne (2004, p.182) suggests that “qualitative interviewing is a particularly suitable method for accessing complex issues, such as values and understanding ...it is a flexible medium and, to a certain extent, allows interviewees to speak in their own voices and with their own language”. I wished participants to speak freely - expressing their own views, in order to gain an understanding of the relationship between attitude, engagement, expectations and education and career aspirations and the influence of these attributes within pupils’ pre and post transitional experiences. Thus, this study attempts to achieve originality by moving forward thinking, in relation to the aspects above, not by dealing with them in isolation but by drawing them together to examine collaborative impact and relationships between them.

3.4.4 Participants and sampling

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.27) indicate that sampling is fundamental for analysis and that, in qualitative research, setting boundaries and creating a frame to qualify the constructs that emerge from the study are two key requirements. As a consequence, I recognised that it was essential that this study addressed the research questions directly, and was defined within limits of the time and funds that I could direct to it. I decided, therefore, that in order to ensure reliability, it was crucial that the sample included examples of what I wanted to study and not just a random sample (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.27). Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 92) explain that the quality of a research study is as much influenced by the suitability of the sampling strategy as by the appropriateness of methodology and methods. The authors explain that decisions and judgements about the following important factors can affect the outcome of the research exercise:

- the sample size,
- representativeness of the sample – for this study, the extent to which the sample represents the whole population of pupils in transition to secondary school in Scotland, thus affecting validity,

- access to the sample and
- the sampling strategy – whether *probability or random* (every member of the population has an equal chance of being included, or *non-probability* - a specific section of the wider population is intentionally included (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p. 99; Seale, 2004, p. 173).

In making judgements about sampling at the planning stage, I was aware that there are links between sample size and *representativeness* (accurately representing the whole population). I wished to ensure that sufficient participants were included and that there was a degree of heterogeneity (diversity) in the population. The local education authority and wider region where the study was carried out is rural in nature, consisting of sixteen secondary schools and over one hundred primaries. Logistically, towns and villages are widely dispersed. Thus, it was vital to select sample school clusters (secondary schools and their associated primaries) representative of the region to ensure *reliability* – that the results could be replicated if the research was rolled out across the region.

In order to ensure manageability as well as reliability, I chose to use a relatively small, but *representative* sample - *the composition of the sample could be reflected across the region*. It is worth noting at this point, that given the rural nature of the local authority in which the study was carried out that geography might impact on practice in respect of transition. As such the education authority might be representative of homogenous education authorities in Scotland but less so of others. Initially, the sample in this study consisted of pupils from P7: 11-12 years, S1: 12 – 13 years and S3: 14-15 years of age. Participants were drawn from the two different school clusters and consisted of the secondary school and two associated feeder primaries. In each instance, one of the primaries was a small, two teacher school (with a pupil roll under 50) situated rurally (approximately 7-10 miles from the town). The other primary, in each cluster in the sample, can be considered a large primary (one with a roll of about 150 and the other - 250 pupils approximately). Each large primary was located in or just outside the town

centre. I selected to include both small and large primaries to ensure that the data collected could be replicated, reflecting the geography across the region and in terms of the size or location of the school – so that the data collected would be valid. In the two secondaries in the sample, the young people were approaching the end of the academic session (mid-June) and were in the midst of a transitional experience for the next stage of their secondary education. As a result, the S1 pupils were placed at the S2 stage and S3 pupils at S4 for the last three weeks of the school year. However, they will be referred to as S1 and S3 for the research exercise.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.30) recommend that sampling should include decisions about “settings, events and social processes” and not only about the participants. In each of the schools selected to participate, an open invitation was extended for individuals to engage with the research. This included the headteacher or his / her representative and class teacher in the primary setting. In each secondary, the Maths and English teacher for the Secondary 1 Class were invited to be interviewed. In seeking reliability and validity of data, I rationalised that views should be sought from Maths and English teachers as the information transferred from primary to secondary school reflected pupils’ academic performance in these subjects. Each cluster of schools had a designated home-link worker – a key worker (assigned the role in this and many local education authorities) who works to create supportive links between home and school for more vulnerable pupils and families, and whose remit included transition. Given the relevance of this role, I felt it important to invite each home-link worker to be interviewed.

The correspondence (Appendices A - C) which I drafted - to communicate the purpose of the research and to invite individuals to participate, was distributed by the headteacher on the assumption that he/she would know the children as individuals. In the small rural schools, the headteachers taught the senior class. I also felt that the teacher / headteacher would be best positioned to select an appropriate mix of pupils with differing levels of achievement - yet willing and able to speak openly - should there

be more affirmative responses than required. Nonetheless, in each of the two small schools involved, there were only six pupils transferring to secondary education. All responded affirmatively and opted to be involved in the research exercise. As such, probability sampling was effected in the small primary schools; whereas, in each of the two larger primaries, the chance for selection was unknown (non-probability sampling) as involvement post-notification of the study was eventually decided on a 'first come - first served' basis - the first three male and female respondents - and so the first six responders were selected for interview. Subsequently, I contacted headteachers by telephone to arrange suitable times for visiting the school to carry out the research. Given the busy nature of schools, I tried to avoid a time of the year when there were pressures such as examinations but crucially, just prior to the move to secondary education. Each school arranged one day that was given over to the research. However, for one primary school, one parent had to be interviewed at home and another at work. The programme for the day in each school was agreed and planned as follows:

- discussion with Headteacher / senior management;
- class teacher or subject teacher interview;
- preparatory group discussion;
- interviews with individual pupils and
- interviews with parents.

For each cluster, I organised to interview the home-link worker on another day. Nevertheless, on arrival at each school, I needed to be responsive to eventualities and consequently, adapted the planned programme to meet the needs of the school on that day. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 indicate the sample involved in the preparatory group discussions and the face to face interviews.

Table 3.3: Participants in the study: Preparatory group discussions

Cluster 1				
	Secondary 1	Large Primary	Small Primary	Total no. of groups
No. of groups	* S1 pupils -1 S3 pupils -1	*1	*1	4
Cluster 2				
	Secondary 2	Large Primary	Small Primary	Total no. of groups
No. of groups	*S1 pupils -1	*1	*1	3

*Note: * The pupils/students involved in preparatory group discussions also participated in face-to-face individual interviews. A preparatory group discussion for S3 students in Cluster 2 did not take place.*

Table 3.4: Participants in the study: Individual face-to-face interviews

Cluster 1	Secondary	Large Primary	Rural Primary	Total no. of participants
Management	1	1	1	3
Teachers	2	1	1	4
Home-link Worker	1			1
P7/S1 pupils	6	6	6	18
Parents	0	2	2	4
Total no. of participants	10	10	10	30
Cluster 2	Secondary	Large Primary	Rural Primary	Total no. of participants
Management	1	1	1	3
Teachers	2	1	1	4
Home-link Worker	1			1
P7/S1 pupils	6	6	6	18
Parents	0	2	2	4
Total no. of participants	10	10	10	30
Total no. of participants across the 2 clusters	20	20	20	60

The sample, therefore, was made up as follows: in each of the four primaries, preparatory groups consisted of six pupils and in the secondary school in Cluster 1; there were six S1 pupils and six S3 pupils in the group discussion. However, in the secondary in Cluster 2, six S1 pupils made up one group, whilst only three S3 participants came forward for the preparatory group discussion - two volunteering on the morning of the

research exercise but requesting individual interviews. A decision was made to exclude the S3 interviews from data analysis and this is detailed in Section 3.8.3.3.

Additionally, the sample consisted of a member of the senior management team and two teachers from the secondary schools, the headteacher and one teacher from the primary schools, two parents of each primary and the home-link worker for each school cluster.

Thus, I used multiple case sampling that was purposive rather than random, as I felt that it would be difficult to avoid bias with random sampling in such a relatively small number of cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.27). The authors suggest (p.29) that an element of confidence in the findings is added with the use of multiple case sampling. I drew from this thinking to strengthen the validity of the findings, as I felt that whilst looking at similarities and contrasting aspects across cases, if findings were replicated that a degree of robustness would be added to the study.

3.5 Triangulation

Cohen *et al.* (2005, p.112) define triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”. The authors explain that dependence on one method of data collection may prejudice or distort the researcher’s view of the “reality” being investigated. However, they indicate that where triangulation is used in interpretive research to explore different actors’ perspectives, the same method would generate different sets of data. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 267) and Silverman (2006, p. 404) present triangulation as a matter of corroboration through the comparison of different kinds of data (e.g. quantitative and qualitative), and/or methods (e.g. observation and interview). I considered these views in determining how triangulation would be achieved in this study and realised that this aspect is vital at every stage of the research exercise: at the point of considering methodology; determining methods, data collection and analysis. I decided to seek corroboration and therefore validity through triangulation of methods, data and participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p. 108).

Gibson and Brown (2009, p. 58) explain that to achieve triangulation of methods, different forms of data might be gathered for comparison through using different methods. The authors suggest that an overview of ideas might be gained through focus groups, which could then be followed up through focused one-to-one interviews. I drew from this thinking in carrying out the preparatory group discussions, noting participants' views that were common or at variance, prior to gathering data about individuals' views and experiences through face-to face interviewing at each participating educational establishment. The preparatory discussions were useful in that they helped me to gain overall insight of themes, and an indication of commonality and variance of participants' views. I was able; therefore, to ensure that there would be a degree of validity (trustworthiness) in the information collected.

The study employed qualitative methods; however, I also sought to investigate whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and parents' aspirations for their children. In addition, I wished to achieve triangulation by eliciting data and views from multiple sources with the aim of "...bringing many perspectives to bear on the question" (Richards, 2009, p.20). Thus, I sought to achieve triangulation of data from examining, in depth, responses from the range of different participants.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 288) posit that the qualitative researcher must consider "the rightness or wrongness" of actions and interactions in relation to participants involved in the study, and Cohen *et al.* (2005, p. 49) explain that "each stage in the research sequence may be a potential source of ethical problems." Drawing from this and BERA's *Respect Code of Practice* (2004), I recognised that this aspect required consideration throughout every stage of the research exercise. Thus, I obtained ethical consent to carry out the study from the University of Strathclyde first, and subsequently gave careful consideration to ethics in designing the research, engaging in data

collection, in data analysis and in the production of the thesis. Accordingly, I reflected on and attempted to address the following moral and ethical issues:

- people's understanding of what they are becoming involved in;
- whether participants would perceive themselves as being exploited;
- ensuring participants', colleagues' and establishments' anonymity;
- whether a report should be provided and
- who would benefit from the research.

Initially, I wished to interview six pupils from each of the four participating primary schools, six first year pupils and six students in their third year from each of the two secondary schools. It must be noted that these are differing ages and stages in a child's education career. All children and young people under the age of eighteen years are covered by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). With regard to participation rights which refer to respecting children as "active members of their family, community and society", the UNCRC (UN 1989, Article 12) states that the right to form and express views is fundamental to participation and that consideration should be given in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. Alderson (2008, pp. 17 - 19) suggests that responsibility for ensuring that children's participation rights are respected lie with adults; however, the author implies that children wish to share more responsibility with adults. Alderson explains that, regardless of age, involving children and learning from them are essential components in respecting their rights and best interests (2008, p. 20). In the primary school setting and for the young people in the first year of secondary school, I felt it was vital that parents signed consent forms giving permission for their child's participation in the study. In practice in the secondary schools in which I carried out the research exercise, parental for consent is not required for young people of fourteen years and older to participate in preparatory group discussions and interviews, and as such the young person's own signature was accepted as an indication of their permission to be interviewed.

It was important; nonetheless, that as I wished to glean views from children, that communication with parents did not give the impression that participation was compulsory. This was necessary in order to alleviate feelings of being pressured into participating. Moreover, it was crucial that parents'/carers' perception was not one of power relationships - neither school/parent, nor indeed researcher/participant. I did not want individuals to feel that there was an obligation to take part because communication regarding the study was sent by school bag post. The tone set in the communication was one of involvement and assistance with the study. Therefore, I deemed it important that in order to address the issues above that:

- I considered the perceived authority / power of researcher from the participants' perspective;
- adequate information was conveyed to the range of participants, using appropriate language, about the study by way of oral and written communication;
- the relevant permissions / consents were obtained;
- participants' right to withdraw was made clear;
- confidentiality was included and
- I demonstrated responsibility to all participants.

I deal with each of these ethical issues in the following sections.

3.6.1 Power relations

Previously in the chapter, I indicated that my employment in the local education authority positioned me as an 'inside researcher' and that participants might hold perceptions about the balance of power in the research context, particularly the interview setting. Undertaking research in a familiar environment had advantages to some extent. I have been resident in the local area for over seventeen years and wished to carry out the research in schools within my own local education authority where I have taught these past sixteen years. However I am not, and was not, at the time of the research exercise, teaching in any of the sample schools. Nevertheless, heads of establishment in the participating schools knew or had knowledge of me. I engaged with them prior to

carrying out the study to provide an understanding of the aim of the research and of the type of data to be collected. Scott and Usher (2004, p.116) explain that power relations are conveyed in the way in which interviews are focused and framed. Given that this was to be my key method of data collection, I tried to ensure that all participants had a good understanding of the procedure and content of the discussion prior to beginning interviews. I also communicated to participants within the initial correspondence, before the commencement of preparatory group discussions and individual face-to-face interviews that they could refuse to participate or indeed cease to continue with the interview if they so desired.

3.6.2 Permission to carry out the research

From the outset of my studies, I was aware that this element is a crucial requirement (BERA, 2004; SERA, 2005; Respect Code of Practice, 2004) and deemed it important that permission was sought and granted prior to commencing the study. Verbal permission was secured; however, written requests to carry out the study were sent and responses received from the relevant personnel within the education authority, headteachers and staff, all parents / carers of those P 7 pupils who took part and pupils over twelve years within agreed sample schools (Appendices D – F). Additionally, parents'/carers' written permission was also sought, in addition to pupils' verbal agreement if the children were younger than twelve years of age (see Appendix F).

3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

I was also aware that care should be taken to protect participants and schools, and so prior to carrying out the study, sample schools and respondents were informed that in order to secure confidentiality, establishments, names of participants and information collected from the study would be anonymised – all identifying names and places would be removed (Seale, 2004, p.120). Permission was sought from each individual to record the interview digitally and participants were informed that any comments used in the

report would be anonymised by the use of codes and names removed. In addition, data - audio tapes and transcripts - concerning participants, the schools and the local authority were stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet, and these will be destroyed two years after completion of the doctoral study.

3.6.4 Voluntary Informed Consent (Appendices D – F)

I stated earlier that for pupils, preparatory group discussions with six individuals were planned for the first stage of the study in each participating school. Subsequent to this, further verbal consent was sought from each participant prior to the commencement of the interview with each individual. Additionally, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point if they felt uncomfortable with the questions or if for any reason at all they felt that they no longer wished to continue.

3.6.5 Responsibility to participants

Bearing in mind the sensitivity of the topic regarding low achievement, care was taken during preparatory discussions to focus questions on pupils' aspirations and expectations. Information about levels of attainment and achievement in reading, writing and maths was sought directly from the headteacher or class teacher either *after* the preparatory group discussion (for S3) or *after* having interviewed all pupils who wished to participate, as I did not wish to make judgements or pre-conceive participants' views. I did not; however, use the attainment data in analysis and provide justification in Section 3.9.

In order to ensure validity, all participants – headteachers, school staff (teaching and non-teaching) parents / carers and pupils were asked the same questions for each category. Participants were also made aware that a brief summary reporting the findings would be made available, if requested. To show my appreciation for their involvement

with the research exercise, pupil participants were provided with a bookmark labelled with the title of the study and a certificate of participation.

3.7 Limitations of the study

There were various factors which presented constraints to carrying out this research exercise. Firstly, the research was restricted to a small number of schools, encompassing only two areas within one local education authority. Thus, I was aware from the outset that the information gathered may not be fully representative of experiences in all areas and in different education authorities. I aimed therefore to secure reliability and validity by triangulating methods, participants (children and adults), and research data from the range of participants interviewed.

I was a lone researcher in full-time employment, and as a result, time and timing were resources that proved challenging to manage. It was important to ensure that an adequate allocation had been directed at: 1) collecting the data and 2) being responsive / reflexive to the data – analysis could not be rushed. I tried to overcome this constraint by ensuring that I had appropriately organised time to carry out the exercise - to collect and to collate data. Where timing was concerned, it was vital that the research was carried out in the last term of the school year - before transfer to secondary school. Generally, this is a very busy period in schools and although arrangements had been made in advance with each participating school, I sometimes had to alter the time-table for interviews, in order to facilitate eventualities that emerged at the establishment. I reasoned that alterations, such as rescheduling an interview to take place before an interval or towards dismissal time, might affect engagement in the interview for some participants.

The time allocated to carry out each interview might be perceived as a limitation, more in terms of the quantity of information that could be gleaned. I had planned to carry out interviews of twenty minutes, given the number of interviewees (approximately eleven)

that I had to speak with - in the one day, at each school. I wanted to ensure that although small, the sample was large enough to draw adequate data from their descriptions. Therefore, I allowed for flexible timing as some interviewees were confident in speaking whilst others provided limited information. In the latter scenario, the interview time was briefer, whereas it was lengthier for more confident interviewees. Where participants spoke freely, the interview lasted about thirty minutes. I reasoned that, in the context of lone researcher on a part-time basis, lengthier interviews would be more suitable to a study involving fewer participants.

Funds were also a limited resource. I wanted to ensure that the data collected would be both reliable and transferable and so, though a small study, I selected a reasonably sizeable sample. This meant that there were many interviews to transcribe and I used a professional transcriber for 50% of the interviews, applying pseudonyms to secure confidentiality. I transcribed 50% of the interviews myself. This allowed me to keep the research manageable. On reflection, using a professional transcriber to generate some of the transcripts might have had implications, in terms of my own early engagement with the data. I tried to address this limitation during the first reading of all the transcripts by listening to the audio and checking for accuracy.

With regard to methodology, carrying out preparatory group discussions at the first stage of the research exercise might be considered limiting, in terms of the data gleaned. I had to adapt the method, directing questions to support the involvement of quieter participants. This approach may have elicited different information from data gathered through more 'free-flowing' focus group discussion. On reflection, it might be perceived that engaging participants in group discussions at the first stage of a research exercise - with the same focus, might elicit different data. Nevertheless, the preparatory group discussions provided an initial overview of commonality and difference in participants' opinions, which I followed up in the one-to-one interviews. As indicated previously in this chapter, in interpretive research, triangulation can be achieved using the same method (in this case interviewing) to generate different kinds of data, through

the exploration of different actors' views (Cohen *et al.*, 2005). I felt that interviewing the number and range of participants in the study would elicit sufficient data to allow for identifying commonality and corroboration of views, as well as differences of interpretations / descriptions. Through this method, I anticipated that a good degree of triangulation - in terms of participants and data, and reliability and validity, would be achieved in the research.

During the period when the research was carried out, I made a few assumptions. I assumed that the participants who were interviewed were adequately representative of other learners, educators and parents; appropriate interpretation of the data collected and that data collection was stopped at an appropriate stage. Additionally, during the research, I did not consider certain other factors and eventualities that might have affected participants' interpretations – in particular, their perceptions of different influences on their levels of engagement and commitment to learning. In other words, I (and the participants themselves) may have made assumptions about attitudes and levels of engagement - *at that point in time*. It must be considered that pupils' levels of engagement and commitment to learning can vary at different stages in their academic career, depending on emerging eventualities, even over very brief periods of time.

It may be conceivable that using only a qualitative approach presented a limitation to the study, in that participants' interpretations and explanations of the situation regarding transition may have been “a product” of the power relationships which exist within educational establishments. The views of daily life for the children and young people in schools can be shaped by interactions in establishments where, according to Cohen *et al.* (2005, p27.), “inequalities of power are regularly imposed upon unequal participants”. I needed to be mindful that interpretations of occurrences in their own school environment might be influenced by inherent relationships and interactions and differ from the realities of existence within other Scottish schools (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, p. 27).

3.8 Data analysis

The methodology and methods described so far in this chapter were informed and influenced by themes related to pupils' attitude, engagement, aspirations and expectations at the point of transition to secondary school. Initially, these themes were identified in preparing the literature review chapter, informed by theories and findings of other researchers' work. I have explained in previous sections of this chapter that a qualitative approach was applied in the study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), Seale (2004), Silverman (2006) and Gibson and Brown (2009), analysis of the data collected is very much integral to the researcher's methodology and so I will attempt in the next section to show how I engaged with, and developed processes to analyse the data.

3.8.1 Overview: A definition for analysis

The Collins English Dictionary defines analysis as 'the separation of a whole into its parts for study and interpretation'. Gibson and Brown (2009) put forward that understanding the relationship between what we are analysing and how we analyse is important. The authors explain that "analysis is about the relationship between data and conceptual problems" (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p.4). This would suggest that the researcher is required to ensure that procedures of analysis must relate, in both the procedural context and content, to what is to be analysed. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that a feature of qualitative data is the clarity of the "thick descriptions" set in real contexts, and that analysis is about reducing, presenting and drawing conclusions from the data. In accordance, Seale (2004) states that minimisation of data is an important aspect of analysis and Silverman (2006) explains that to make "analysis effective, it is imperative to have a limited body of data with which to work" (2006, p.8). This highlights the importance of depth of analysis. Thus, drawing from the definitions and thinking above, I developed an understanding that analysis is about the study of units of information gathered and how they relate to concepts or general ideas, individually and

as a whole, and that the interpretation of that relationship is crucial to drawing conclusions.

In this study, analysis was undertaken to explore relationships between attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition to secondary school (themes identified in preparing the literature review chapter), and whether these are associated with children and young people's views of achievement. Thus, the study was directed at:

- investigating whether expectations of and attitudes to school endeavours pre- and post-transition from primary to secondary school might relate to pupils' aspirations for tertiary education and future career;
- discovering whether pupils' and parents' education and career aspirations are associated and
- exploring whether there is a relationship between pupils' and parents' views of achievement.

As I engaged in the process of data analysis, I was mindful to keep the key aims of this study foremost. I anticipated that by engaging participants in semi-structured interviews that their responses would provide sufficient and appropriate data to address the research questions outlined in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.13).

3.8.2 Data analysis process

Gibson and Brown (2009, p.4) explain that "Analysis is always about something or of something, and the thing that it is about or of is fundamental for understanding how that analysis works". In analysing the data collected in this study, the contexts were pre-transitional perceptions and reflections post-transition, within the participating educational establishments. The stages, or procedural context, followed in analysing the data gathered are described later in this section.

Seale (2004) explains that analysis can be done without “particular reference to specialist methodological approaches such as conversation, discourse, grounded theory or semiotic analysis”. Each of the afore-mentioned concepts is concerned in some way with talk, interactions and the understanding of their meanings. Gibson and Brown (2009, p.4) suggest that meanings are contextual and may be constructed differently based on the analysis formulated by the individual. This indicates the very subjective nature of data analysis. In keeping with the interpretive aspect of my approach, I selected to apply qualitative thematic analysis to this study, aware of the need to be objective and to avoid super-imposing my own opinions or interpretations over interviewees’ interpretations. To verify the findings of this study, I have described in detail, in the next sections, the steps taken so that a clear pathway can be followed from the raw data to the findings. It is anticipated that through sharing these experiences, a degree of objectivity has been achieved and although the same interview schedule cannot be repeated, other researchers can apply different methods to study the same phenomenon and then compare the data.

3.8.3 Steps in analysis

Boyatzis (1998) refers to thematic analysis as “a way of seeing”. He explains that when engaged in thematic analysis, the researcher progresses through three phases: recognising important moments; encoding and then interpreting them. However, it is noteworthy that the same information might be interpreted differently by different individuals. Used as a process for encoding qualitative data, themes or patterns allow for interpretation, and may be produced *inductively* from the information collected or *deductively* from theory and earlier research (Boyatzis, 1998). The preparatory group discussions provided insight into the ‘important moments’ which informed the one-to-one interviews. The latter provided the opportunity to elicit interpretations specific to each participant.

Gibson and Brown (2009, p.128/9) also explain that the aim of thematic analysis is to search for ‘*aggregated*’ themes and examine commonalities, differences and relationships across the data collected. I felt that through ‘thematic analysis’ - analysis of those themes identified in the literature review chapter, at the data collection and the data analysis stages - factors which influence pupils’ aspirations for tertiary education and for a future career would be revealed. I also anticipated that, through exploration of themes, I would discover pupils’ perceptions of achievement and whether they are in line with adults’ perceptions of the subject. Thus, drawing from this concept and that of Boyatzis (1998), I developed and employed the following early deductive themes in data analysis for this study:

- Aspirations for tertiary education;
- Aspirations for future career;
- Attitude and engagement in school endeavours;
- Expectations and
- Views of achievement.

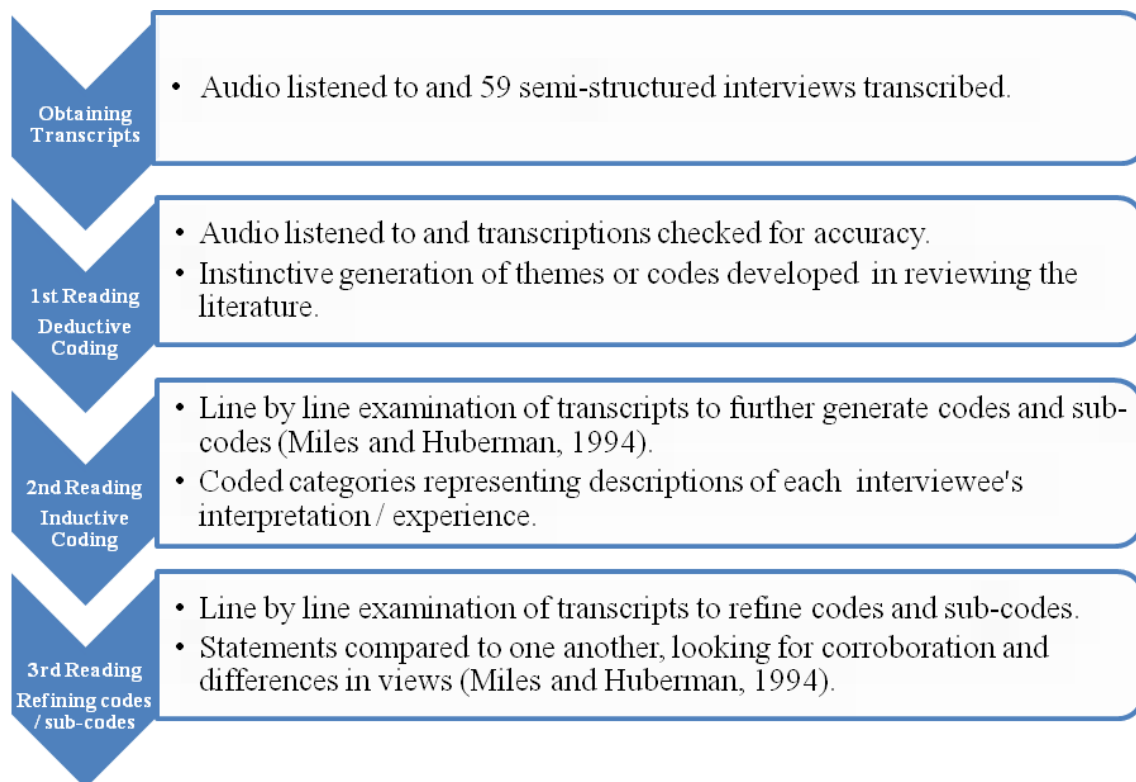
Although I had an idea of these deductive themes at the outset, I was; however, aware that in order to perceive patterns for further development of emerging themes and codes as I engaged in data analysis, I should assume a stance of openness and flexibility (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 5).

3.8.3.1 Analysing the data: Approach to coding

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p.56), coding is analysis involving differentiation and combination of, and reflections about data collected. The authors explain that codes provide labels which are given to the units of meaning gleaned from the descriptions gathered during the study. Gibson and Brown (2009, p.130) explain that apriori codes are categories relating to the specific interests fundamental to the research questions (identified before examination of the data), and which formulate the general framework of categories for deeper exploration through empirical coding. I recognised the early deductive codes of this study (outlined in the previous section) to be

apriori codes whilst the empirical codes were those which would emerge from examination of the data. The approach used to code the data is outlined in Figure: 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Coding - A systematic approach



As indicated previously, the initial themes which I explored were deduced from the theories, concepts and research studies examined in the literature review chapter. This fits with the view put forward by Seale (2004, p. 313) that a coding scheme is developed both deductively and inductively. Since the literature review informed the research questions – they were borne from gaps identified in the literature review, and the research questions were developed in an attempt to address those gaps, the process initiated early thoughts for a coding system. Thus, elements of codes for data analysis in this study were derived from my own deductions and aspects of theory – *theory-driven code development* (Boyatzis, 1998), as opposed to ‘template analytic technique’ which applies the use of another researcher’s codes or framework in analysis. Consequently, my initial (deductive) codes provided a start list (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and reflect

the aims of the research project. These codes were, to some extent, synonymous with the themes mentioned previously in this chapter, whereas the inductive / empirical codes emerged from the data collected.

3.8.3.2 Analysing the data: Deductive and inductive coding

I had fifty nine interviews to be transcribed (the audio for one S1 student in Cluster 2 was distorted and unusable), and given that I am a part-time doctoral student, in full time employment, I used a professional transcriber to generate 50% of the transcripts, while I transcribed the other 50% in order to get a feel for the data. All transcripts were word-processed and then imported into Nvivo. In using these transcripts for analysis, I ensured that I first listened to the audio to generate and refine the analytic instincts (deductive themes and codes) which had developed as I reviewed the literature. Subsequently, on the second reading of transcripts, I engaged in inductive coding - line-by-line examination of interview data to further generate / develop sub-codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

As indicated previously, Seale (2004, p. 313) explains that one purpose of data analysis is to “minimize, through exclusion of irrelevant data and grouping of data based on similarity”. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.83) explain that data overload in association with time required for processing field notes and for coding can prove challenging with qualitative studies. I was aware that the quantity of data collected during this research study could be vast; therefore, I focused attention for analysis, on the key questions of the interview, instead of on ‘ice-breaking questions’ (such as those confirming the interviewee’s name, age and stage in school); those employed to secure a degree of comfort and rapport during the interview process. Thus, focus was kept on responses relating to attitudes, engagement, achievement, educational and career aspirations. I carried out a third examination of transcripts - line by line, focussing of the key themes and codes and created sub-divisions of codes. I took into account any unexpected issues that emerged during data collection. I searched for predominant views, frequency of

occurrence and significance placed by the participants. I looked for questions where answers indicated corroboration, for example, of pupils' responses with parents and /or professionals. Additionally, I considered any differences or implications inherent in participants' responses.

Therefore, my coding scheme, which was initially informed by the literature review and the methodology of the research, developed as the project proceeded. Drawn from gaps identified in the literature review, the research questions framed the questions within the interview schedule. Themes drawn from the literature formed deductive codes whilst during interview; participants' responses were used to explore issues in greater depth. At the second reading of transcripts, in order to generate meaning from transcripts and interview data, inductive codes which represented descriptions of each interviewee's experience were assigned. The process described set up the thematic framework for examining the data. The codes, therefore, described categories which condensed and structured the data. Meaning was created from the third reading of interview transcripts by considering: frequency of occurrences; the themes and patterns of commonality and differences of interviewees' interpretations. Figures 3.3 – 3.7 illustrate how the coding system applied in this research exercise.

Figure 3.3: Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis

Theme: Expectations

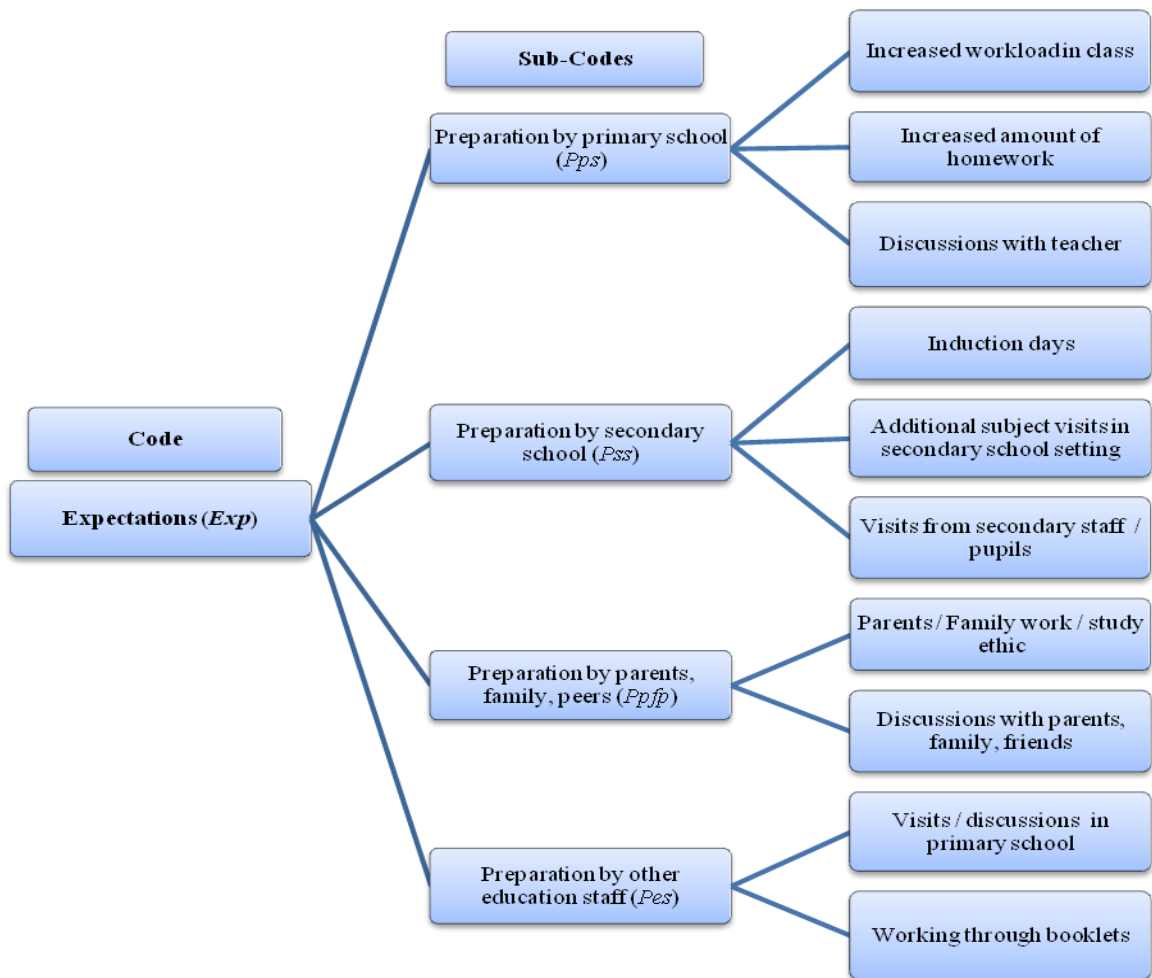


Figure: 3.4 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis

Theme: Attitude to / Engagement in learning

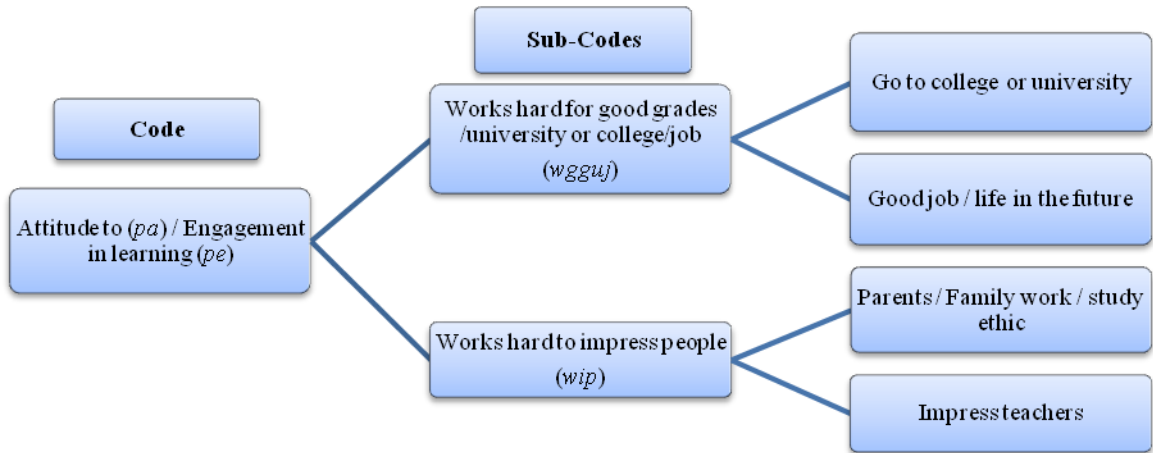


Figure: 3.5 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis

Theme: Aspirations

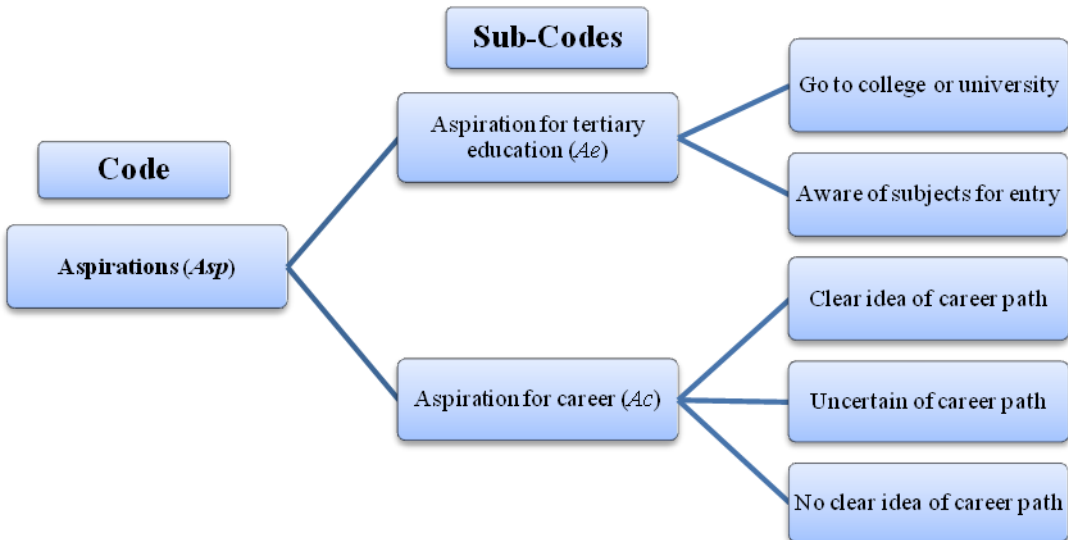


Figure: 3.6 Codes and sub-codes used in data analysis

Theme/ Code: Emotions at transfer

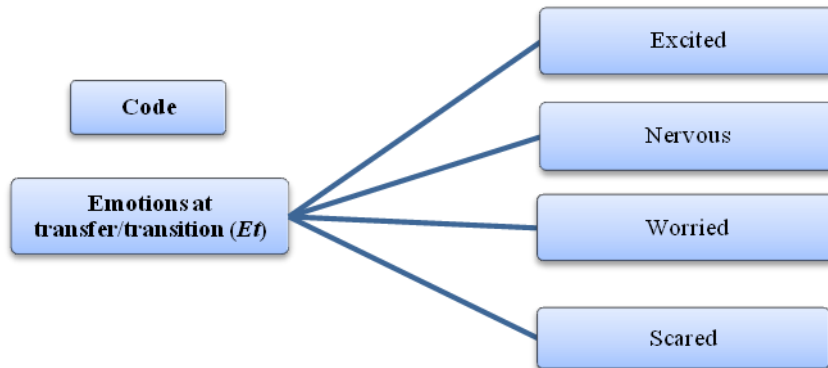
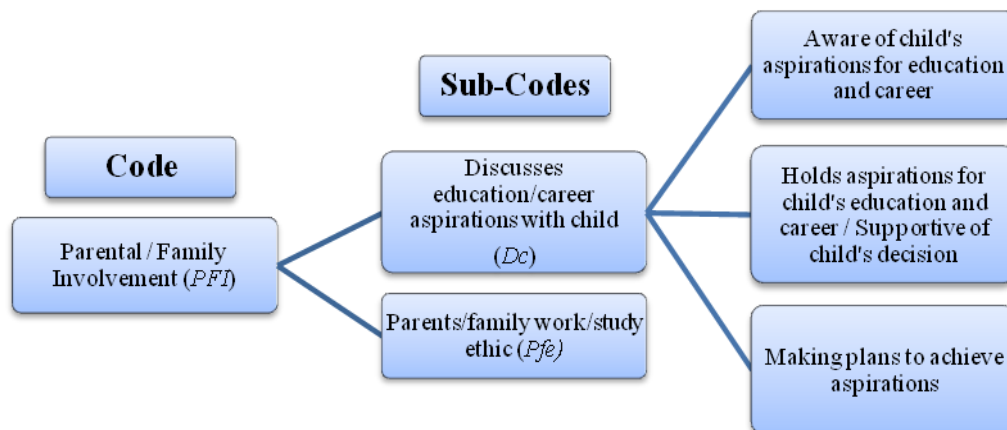


Figure: 3.7 Codes, sub-codes and sub/sub-codes used in data analysis

Theme: Parental / Family involvement



In summary, I used the thematic / coding framework noted above to organise and classify data according to the deductive and inductive themes and codes sub-divided into sub-codes related to interviewees' descriptions. In categorising data, the codes and sub-

codes were applied to highlighted descriptions from transcripts using the italicised letters shown in each thematic/coding chart. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 represent inductive codes which emerged from analysis of transcript data and Table 3.5 provides an illustration of how codes and sub-codes were applied in analysis. The extracts are from transcripts of interviews: 1) with a Primary 7 boy from a large, urban primary school and 2) his parent.

Table: 3.5 Application of codes in analysis

Coding Sample 1	Extract from Transcript
<i>EG</i>	Why do you think it is important to work hard at school?
<i>Pa</i>	<i>DM</i> Because if you work hard at school you can sit your exams and that, and then if you get your exams you can go to college and get a good job, or university.
<i>Asp, Ae, Ac</i> <i>wgguj</i>	<i>EG</i> Have you thought about what kind of job you would like to do when you're older?
<i>Ac</i>	<i>DM</i> Two choices. I want to be an architect or someone that coaches dolphins... works with dolphins at water parks [inaudible 0:05:22]
Coding Sample 2	Extract from Transcript
<i>Ac</i> <i>pa</i>	<i>M</i> He's determined that he wants to do architecture. That's what he's determined to do. Whether it's - he's a great one for building Lego connects, always has been from a tot and he still does. And I think he has it into his head that he's a fantastic structural engineer, one of these things that he has it into his head that that's what he would like to do.

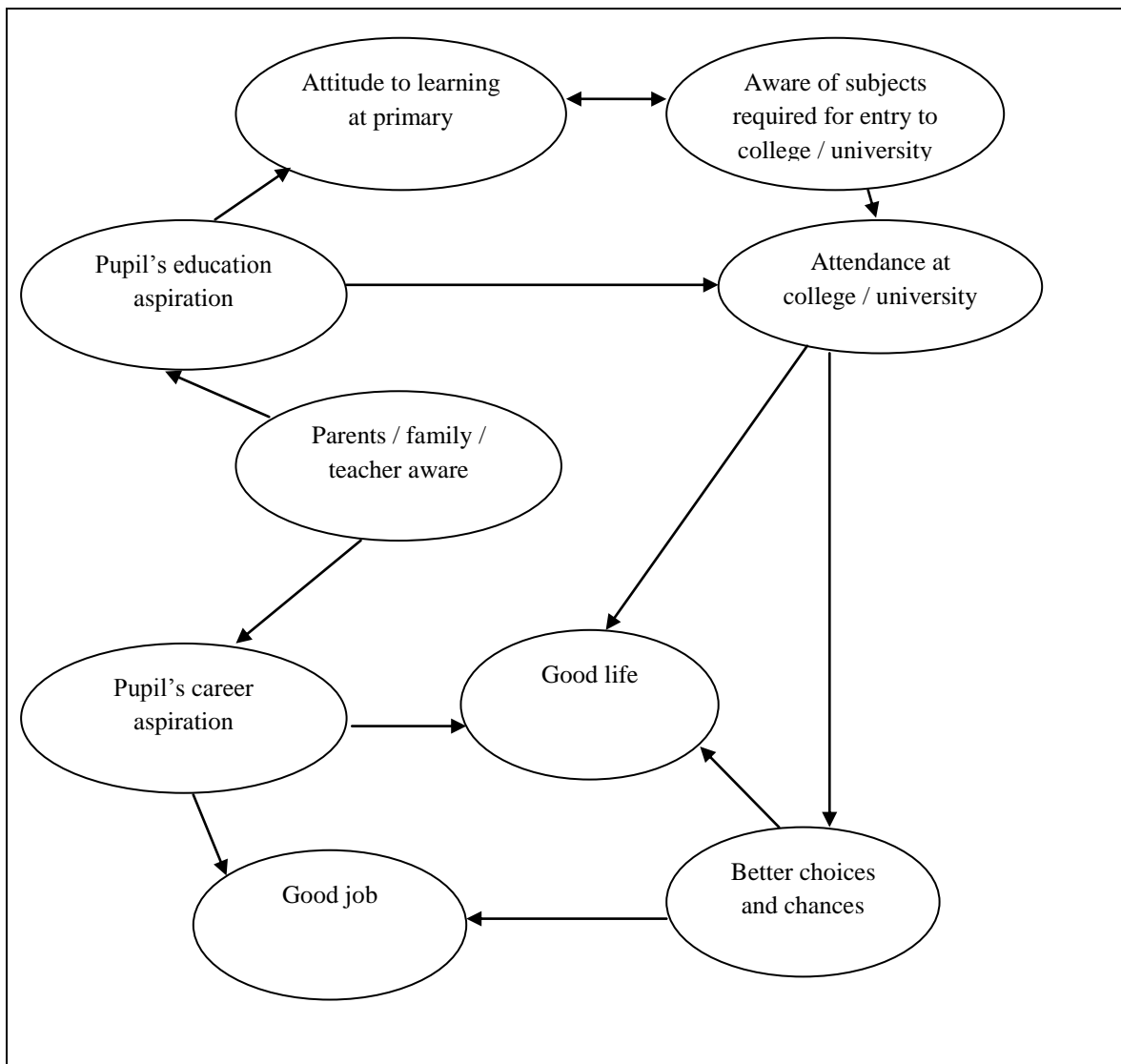
Note: *EG*: researcher, interviewer, *DM*: Primary 7 pupil, *M*: parent of *DM*

Asp: Aspiration *Ae*: Educational aspiration *Ac*: Career aspiration

Pa: pupil's attitude *wgguj*: working for good grade, job, to go to university

Drawing from Miles and Huberman (1994, p.71), I found it useful for analysis to display codes and sub-codes on a single sheet in order to track the development of the coding structure. This system of pattern coding helped in the reduction of data, provided the frame-work for analysis across cases and allowed me to map the codes visually (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.70). Figure 3.7 illustrates the interrelationship of codes which emerged during the analytic process.

Figure 3.8: Interrelationship of codes



Upon consideration and reflection with regard to using a computer software package for data analysis, I became aware that, according to Bazely (2007), the researcher may lose closeness with, and the context of, the data. I had thought of using either NUD.IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data by Indexing, Searching and Theorising) or Nvivo and decided to use Nvivo8 to support analysis - for its capacity to organise and store the data, for making notes and querying the data. In this way, I was able to keep interview information according to school and cluster. However, I did not have the time to dedicate to learning to use Nvivo to its full capacity and so I used the software in a limited way. I found the software more suitable for storage and recording, as I felt that my thinking processes would be fully engaged as I manually worked through the data.

3.8.3.3 Data excluded from analysis or presentation

As indicated previously in this chapter, in the secondary in Cluster 1, six S3 students presented for the group discussion whilst only three S3 students came forward for the group discussion in Cluster 2 – two volunteering on the morning of the research exercise. These two students had requested individual interviews, explaining that they had been instructed by their Headteacher to attend, in anticipation that the discussion might impact positively on their attitude to learning. The Headteacher corroborated their statement in this regard, indicating that both students had become disengaged and were not interested in school. I felt that the participation of these two students was not of their own will. I rationalised that this would influence the interpretations gleaned from their interviews, rendering the data unreliable and invalid. This meant that there would be one willing S3 participant from the secondary school in Cluster 2, and as such I felt there would be an imbalance in terms of participation from the S3 students of the two clusters. As a result, I made a crucial decision that I would not include data from S3 students in analysis. The audio for S1 Student 6 in the secondary school in Cluster 2 was distorted and unusable.

I kept in mind that perception of ‘achievement’ might be different for the participants interviewed. Thus, it was vital to deal with this as an interview question. However, data about achievement were generated from several questions, and so the last question – pertaining to this, was only asked in interviews where participants had not addressed the issue in responding to any other interview questions. Aims of the study were to discover interpretations of achievement, and whether there is a relationship between education and career aspirations and commitment to learning, at the time of primary / secondary transition. I wanted to examine the perceptions of participants in the study, including parents and school staff. Many parents use measures of academic performance to decide which secondary school their children should attend. Such reports are accessible by way of league tables. However, other measures of achievement appear to be less well presented to the public. Of relevance to the research is the issue that pupils’ engagement, commitment and attitudes to school endeavours may be influenced by their aspirations. I recognised that attitudes can be difficult to measure and to interpret. Oppenheim (1996) posits that beliefs reinforce attitudes, which can attract strong emotions leading to particular behaviours. Put more succinctly, individuals may have the same experiences; however they may interpret them differently. The individual’s predisposition might be a contributing factor to their attitude to learning. For example, certain pupils may view tests and examinations as unimportant. Such individuals might be more inclined to align non-academic success to achievement.

Lack of analysis of learners’ attainment data may be perceived a limitation of the study. On reflection, the collection of attainment data may have been as a consequence of my inexperience as a researcher. Initially, I collected the attainment data, thinking that analysis might contribute an element of rigour to the research exercise. However, as I engaged in the data analysis process, I changed my thinking. I rationalised that as the research is concerned with commitment to learning, aspirations at transition to secondary school, and participants’ views in this regard, that analysis of performance levels was not required. In addition, as the study is qualitative in approach, I felt attainment data analysis would bring in a quantitative element. I reasoned that

attainment data is not always an indication of a learner's commitment and enthusiasm for learning, as it relates to achievement or their aspirations. Thus, I decided not to include attainment in data analysis.

In addition, it was not possible - or appropriate, to include data for analysis from every interview question for each participant. I had a considerable amount of data to reduce and minimise, and so I focussed on the research questions, themes/codes and sub-codes to determine relevance of the information to the research exercise. I adhered to the coding framework and where participants' responses did not address the interview question asked, the information was not included for analysis.

3.9 Reflection and summary

In Section 3.5, I explained that in this interpretive study, I set out to achieve triangulation through using the same method (interviewing) to generate different sets of data by exploring different actors' perspectives (Cohen *et al.*, 2005). To this end, I used the same interview schedule for preparatory group discussions and the one-to-one interviews. I also aimed to achieve triangulation of data and participants, in accordance with Miles and Huberman (1994) and Silverman (2006), through corroboration of data from the range of actors who participated in the study. Upon reflection, the extent to which triangulation was achieved might have been affected by the following conditions: 1) different data may have been generated had I carried out the intended focus group discussions, instead of defaulting to preparatory group discussions and 2) the small number of participants in each educational setting may render the data untransferrable. However, I believe the data gleaned can enable other researchers to apply the findings of this study to inform decision-making for their own research.

A major issue for the methodology was that fifty percent of the interview transcripts was generated by a professional transcriber instead of having produced them all myself. The technical element alone had been outsourced and I redressed this by carrying out three

readings of the transcripts, checking and amending the transcript against the audio-tape, at the first reading. However, I feel that my approach to working with the transcripts in analysis, and the framework for analysis kept my approach credible, consistent and trustworthy - in terms of procedures, and the objectivity of the findings, which are outlined in the next chapter.

This chapter provided an overview of the research design - methodology, methods of data collection and the analysis process applied in this study. It described how code categories were identified and developed. In the next chapter, I present the findings from the study. Although the study may not be generalised or represented in similar populations, it is intended that the study will provide rich descriptions or interpretations so that readers, educators and policy and decision-makers in education can consider the findings and recommendations to inform their own practice.

Chapter 4: Moving on: experiences and perspectives

The findings from the analysis of data gathered in the research exercise are presented in this chapter. The data was drawn from interviews with fifty-nine participants – P7 pupils (twenty-four), S1 students (eleven), parents (eight), and educators – management (six), teachers (eight), and home / school link staff (two).

It was evident from the literature that there is a scarcity of existing research as to whether education and career aspirations influence attitude to school endeavours and engagement in / commitment to learning, both pre and post transition to secondary school - *from the perspective of the learner*. The review of the literature also evidences a gap in existing research in relation to whether there is an association between a learner's educational and career aspirations and parental aspirations for their child's / young person's tertiary education and career. Additionally, the literature review chapter explored the expectations of learners and actors - parents, teachers and decision-makers in education, in terms of the child's ability to cope with the adjustments inherent in the move to secondary school, and maintaining progress in learning at transition. These key issues identified in Chapter 2 informed the research questions:

Research Question 1: What are pupils' education and career aspirations before and after transition from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1) in a Scottish local authority?

Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of pupils transferring to secondary education on how education and career aspirations influence attitude to, and engagement in, school endeavours?

Research Question 3: What are learners' expectations of various actors - parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education - in helping them to achieve these aspirations, and what are actors' expectations of children in transition to secondary school?

In order to present the findings coherently and comprehensively, I have kept in mind each of the research questions that framed the study.

4.1 Overview

This section of the chapter outlines the way in which the findings were drawn from the raw data. It underlines that generating the findings began with the data analysis process. The data for analysis was generated from semi-structured interviews. The key issues identified in Chapter 2 generated the broad research questions, and informed the questions within the interview schedule for each category of participant (Appendices G – N). The questions within the P7 and S1 interview schedules were first asked in preparatory group discussions at each of the participating schools. The preparatory group discussions provided insight into the generic issues for learners in transition. Notes were taken and these issues were followed up in the one-to-one interviews. The same interview schedules were used for the one-to-one interviews. Participants in the one-to-one interviews were one and the same as those who participated in the preparatory group discussions; however, through this method it was possible to begin to identify aspects of commonality and difference, and to follow up issues raised. To generate meaning from the transcripts, codes were assigned to themes common to participants' descriptions at the first reading of the transcripts. A second reading, which involved line by line examination of the transcripts, allowed for creating sub-codes - categories that were sub-division of codes, representing each interviewee's descriptions. The codes and sub-codes set up a framework for examining the interview material. This thematic/coding framework provided structure and order in the data analysis process, allowing for classification and organisation of the data. The framework was refined through a third reading of transcripts, comparing statements and identifying corroboration and differences in the views of each category of participant – P7 pupils, S1 students, parents, educators (management and teachers) and home / school link staff. In this way, the framework facilitated the process of reducing and condensing the amount of qualitative data.

Areas are explored in relation to participants' perspectives pre- and post-transition to secondary school: 1) perceptions about attitudes to, and engagement in learning activities; 2) pupils' / young people's views about aspirations for education and career

and 3) the impact of the involvement of parents and /or family members. The process of analysis also examined and reflected on two other recurrent issues concerning children transferring to secondary school: their emotions / concerns at the time of transition; and expectations as they relate to perceptions of the child's abilities and competencies (in being ready and resilient), to cope with the change and make progress in learning in the new educational setting.

In classifying and minimising the data, each school was assigned its own analysis chart, generated from the thematic / coding framework. Each P7 / S1 interviewee was allocated a column within the chart for their school. This was replicated for each of the six schools that participated in the research exercise – four primaries and two secondaries. This method of charting was also applied in examining the descriptions given by adult participants. The charts were examined for aspects of commonality and differences across categories of participants and the schools. Table 4.1 depicts how interviewees' descriptions were recorded under main themes / codes and sub-codes, for the small rural primary school in Cluster 1.

Table 4.1: Data Analysis Chart - Primary 7 Pupils (Cluster 1 Rural)

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 James	Pupil 2 Ralph	Pupil 3 Frank	Pupil 4 Josh	Pupil 5 Rachel	Pupil 6 Rose	
Emotions at transfer		<i>Excited</i> <i>Fine</i> <i>Nervous</i> <i>Worried</i> <i>Scared</i>	Excited; Concerned about size of school and bigger people	Really excited	Fine; Concerned about bigger people	Excited but nervous; Concerned about being picked on	Excited but nervous; Concerned about behaviours of secondary students	Scared at first but fine now; Concerned about bullying	
Expectations	Preparation by PS	<i>Increased workload / level of difficulty in class</i>			✓				
		<i>Increased amount of homework</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
		<i>Discussions with teacher</i>	PS teaches responsibility and teamwork Discusses aspirations with teacher	Teaches about adulthood and drugs awareness Discusses plans for job			Talks with P7 Teacher	Puberty talks with P7 Teacher Discusses aspirations with teacher	P7 Teacher listens to problems
	Preparation by SS	<i>Induction days</i>							
		<i>Subject visits in SS</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		<i>Visits from secondary staff / pupils</i>	✓			✓ and questionnaires			

	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 James	Pupil 2 Ralph	Pupil 3 Frank	Pupil 4 Josh	Pupil 5 Rachel	Pupil 6 Rose
	Preparation by parents, family, peers	<i>Discussions with parents, family members, peers</i>	Parents, peers		Parents	No still a child		Parents, peers
		<i>Parents', family work / study ethic</i>						
	Preparation by other education staff	<i>Visits, discussions in primary school</i>	Transition work with HLW	Transition work with HLW	Transition work with HLW	Transition work with HLW	Transition work and fun games with HLW	Transition work with HLW
		<i>Working through booklets</i>						
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		✓	✓	✓			✓
	Working hard to impress people				✓ (to avoid getting into trouble)	✓		
		<i>Plans for coping with increased quantity of homework</i>		Will do when come home	Concentrate to get it done	Worried but won't think about it	Worried about quantity - too much	Worried about quantity

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 James	Pupil 2 Ralph	Pupil 3 Frank	Pupil 4 Josh	Pupil 5 Rachel	Pupil 6 Rose
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	<i>Desire to attend university or college</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		x
		<i>Aware of subjects for entry</i>	✓					
	Aspiration for career	<i>Clear idea of career path</i>		Does not mention	✓	Does not mention		✓
		<i>Uncertain of career path (2 jobs in mind)</i>	✓					
		<i>No idea of career path</i>					x	
Parents' / Family Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations with child	<i>Aware of aspirations for education and career</i>	✓		✓	No still a child		
		<i>Holds aspirations of child's education and career /Supportive of child's decision</i>	Provides encouragement		Provides encouragement			
		<i>Plans in place for funding tertiary education</i>					✓	
	Parents' / Family work / study ethic	<i>Child's aspirations in line with parents' / family achievements</i>						

			Pupil 1 James	Pupil 2 Ralph	Pupil 3 Frank	Pupil 4 Josh	Pupil 5 Rachel	Pupil 6 Rose
Notes				Parents' focus is on older brother who is about to start university.			Doesn't like secondary teachers; Will not know their names	Will become a hairdresser by working in friend's salon

NB: PS – primary school P7 –primary 7 SS – secondary school/staff HLW – home link

To strengthen the data, and to explain more fully the complexity of participants' perceptions and experience of primary/secondary transfer - *from more than one perspective*, data were collected from four participant groups. Analyses grids for all categories of participants in the study - P7 pupils, parents and educators (management in education, teachers and home/school link workers) are appended (Appendices O - U). The two analyses charts for the S1 students are presented within this chapter,

In presenting the data, direct quotes which represent participants' interpretations are included in the research. The data gathered from the respondents described the following key issues: P7 participants' interpretations of their pre-transitional experiences as they relate to emotions / concerns; perceptions about preparations for the move; expectations in terms of learners' and actors' perceptions about ability to make adjustments, and perceptions about support to cope in the new setting; S1 participants' views of post-transitional experiences - approximately one year after beginning secondary school; pupils' and young people's views about their aspirations for education and career; parents' aspirations for their child's education and future career; interpretations of how aspirations for education and career might influence attitudes, engagement and commitment to learning - at the time of primary / secondary transition, and pupils' and parents' interpretations of achievement. Consequently, I will present data to reflect representations and perceptions of pre- and post-transitional experiences, perspectives of attitude to and engagement in learning, and expectations in relation to the learners' ability to cope with the move and make progress in learning. I will also present perceptions in relation to aspirations for tertiary education and career at the time of transition to secondary school, and the influence of parental, family and peer involvement at this crucial stage in a pupil's education career.

Thus, material gleaned from the interviews will be presented in the sections which follow under the research aim and interview questions that generated the qualitative data. During analysis, it emerged that the last theme (parents' and family involvement) overlapped with and impacted on all others, and so involvement of parents, peers and

other stakeholders will be dealt with as an aspect of each of the other themes. The generic perspectives from data analysis for each theme will be summarised in a designated box at the end of each section. In the summary of this chapter, perceptions will be drawn together in order to generate the discussion in Chapter Five, and the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Six.

4.2 P7 pupils' perceptions: Emotions/concerns at transition

The literature review explored existing research which evidences that pre-transitional pupils' experience anxiety associated with the move to secondary school (Fouracre, 1993; Graham and Hill, 2003). The chapter established that learners' concerns or worries – before transition, are associated with their perceptions of difficulty in forming new relationships and the level of difficulty / workload – in particular, homework at secondary school. This research exercise was carried out with twenty-four Primary 7 pupils in four primary schools (rural and urban) in the final term of academic session. In order to meet the research aim, Questions 1 and 5 were asked in the interviews (preparatory group discussions and one-to-one) to gather information regarding how transferring pupils felt about the move to secondary school. Although this is a well-researched area, the concerns / worries of these particular pre-transitional pupils were explored to gain an understanding of: 1) their expectations of parents' and educators' support to make them ready / cope with the move (Section 4.3); 2) the context for their perspectives of attitude and engagement in learning (Section 4.4), and 3) the context for their aspirations (Sections 4.5).

Research Aim 1: To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives of attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.

Interview Question 1: How do you feel about moving to secondary school?

Interview Question 5: Have you any worries / concerns about going to secondary school?

All pupil participants stated how they felt about the move, at that point in time, just prior to transfer to secondary school. Although all schools – the primaries and associated secondaries that participated in the study - had taken steps to address the social / emotional aspects of the move, a few children had real anxieties about transition. In response to the question on how they felt about the move to secondary school, of the twenty-four Primary 7 participants from the four primary schools, most pupils were generally optimistic about the move to secondary school. Positive responses were recorded from fourteen P7 interviewees - ranging from “really excited”, “excited”, “really good”, “good”, “fine” and “happy”. Six pupils indicated that they were generally optimistic; however, they immediately expressed some anxiety, extending their response to include that they were nervous, scared or worried. Another three pupils admitted feelings of anxiety only – nervousness, worrying and being scared; whilst one pupil described initial anxiety, becoming gradually more positive closer to the transfer. Table (4.1) shows the variety of responses from the twenty-four interviewees by school cluster.

Table 4.2 P7 pupils’ emotions at transfer

	Number of Pupils						
	Really Excited / Excited	Really Good / Good	Fine / Happy	Excited / Good but Nervous	Scared at first but fine now	Really Nervous / Nervous	Scared Nervous Worried
Cluster 1 Rural	2		1	2	1		
Cluster 1 Urban	1	1	2	1		1	
Cluster 2 Rural	2		1	1			2
Cluster 2 Urban	2	1	1	2			
Total	7	2	5	6	1	1	2

Note: Number of Primary 7 interviewees = 24

The following responses from Josh and Ossie typify responses from the six P7 pupils who described ambiguous emotions about the move:

Um, as I said, I feel excited but I feel a tiny bit nervous but I don't know why.

(Josh, P7, small primary in rural area, Cluster 1)

Excited.... Well, just a little thing, not much. Just about in case I didn't find my way around I think, just at the start.

Ossie, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 2)

Ossie's statement also communicates that his own position would require some negotiation on his part, in order to adjust in his new setting, as indicated in the phrase - "...just at the start". In contrast to this type of response that presented a positive perspective prior to presenting concerns or worries, Rose from a small rural school in Cluster 1 indicated that she had changed her initial view, to become more positive about the move. However, she also alludes to having made adjustments - prior to the move, "...but now I'm fine because...I really like working":

I don't mind, really. I was really, really scared, but now I'm fine because I've kind of like, I really like working.

(Rose, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 1)

Cathy's concern about "fitting in" was one aspect of worry about the move to secondary that was presented.

I feel quite fine and sometimes I just hope that nothing...that something doesn't go wrong, hope I'll just fit in.

(Cathy, P7, large primary in urban area, Cluster 1)

This concern was also expressed by some as difficulty in making new friends. Other "worries", as some termed it, were associated with the size of their new school - the layout and the possibility of getting lost. They also presented that they would be the youngest in the secondary setting and would be amongst "bigger people", as expressed by James.

Just like...wee things. I don't really know why but it's just, it's much bigger and a lot bigger people in it.

(James, P7, small primary in rural area - Cluster 1)

Notably, two of the six pupils interviewed from the small rural primary in Cluster 2 and one from the large urban primary in Cluster 1 offered no positive comment in response to this particular question, expressing only that they were nervous or scared and linking these emotions to the challenges of establishing new friendships, the size of the new school and getting lost. The following transcript extracts from these three pupils communicate these concerns:

I am a bit scared in case I won't make any new friends.

(Janet, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

I'm a bit nervous because I'm frightened in case you don't make friends and maybe they don't like you as much as what they do here. It's a bigger school and you could get lost as well.

(Candice, P7 in a small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

Nervous...about people picking on me.

(Lucy, P7 in a large, urban primary in Cluster 1)

Although ten of the twenty-four pupils interviewed registered some degree of worry or concern (six of whom expressed ambiguity of emotion), the data from this study revealed no clear impact of the nature of the primary school's location, whether rural or urban, on P7 pupils' emotions about the move to secondary school. Pupils' descriptions of their emotions might have been dependent on their ability to express their feelings about the move. George's comment in the transcript extract below encapsulates articulately both the positive and challenging aspects of the move, and of his emotions at that point - from his perspective.

I'm really excited because it's a whole new experience and stuff like the classes will be different, and like we'll all have loads of new friends and stuff like that and new teachers, and we'll get outings and it'll kind of depend on the teachers as well, and I'm nervous at the same time because, like, the classes might be harder and like, it's a lot bigger school than here 'cos [because] it's got, like, a thousand pupils at it I think, so we'll all be like new and things like that.

(George, P7, large primary in an urban area, Cluster 2)

George's response and other participants' views presented above confirm earlier studies that some pupils worry about being a new entrant, getting lost, the size of the school, the increase in number of pupils in the new setting and fitting in. Pranks and bullying behaviour, such as name-calling and being picked on featured amongst pupils' concerns. Joan and Rachel offered their perspective of the behaviour expected at secondary school. Their perspective appeared to be based on rumour; however, their comments indicate the influence of peers in affecting the emotions of pupils in transition through the communication of negative opinions / anecdotes about the move.

It's exciting, in [on] the same hand, like somebody said, things like (names classmate) said it might be since we'll be youngest, I feel like you might get a little bit bullied for, like, the first week or two, but then you won't.

(Joan, P7 small primary in rural area – Cluster 2)

Well, Janice said that you have to have your tie on low, but Susan said that you have to have it high, because if you have it low, people come behind you and grab the tie and pull it up and they might strangle you, so if you have it loose, it won't hang you.

(Rachel, P7, small primary in rural area – Cluster 1)

Some pupils described perceived challenges in terms of interaction and relationships with secondary school staff. These were elements of the move about which some Primary 7 pupils expressed worry. They appeared to be concerned about the number of teachers and whether they would manage to learn their names. They also worried about

the perceived strictness of secondary staff and possible detentions. Joan explained that pupils would be treated very differently post-induction day activities.

And he [the teacher at Induction] seemed really nice. And then I went to English, he was called Mr Jones. He also seemed quite nice, but the thing is, sometimes with induction days, the teachers are nice just so, like, you know that you're going to go into a nice class but then once you're actually in the class and, "Yous [sic] have been bad", like, the exact same thing because you don't think it's bad, then they'll tell you off.

(Joan, small primary in a rural area - Cluster 2)

Whilst some pupils expressed excitement at the idea of having more teachers and subjects at secondary school; these aspects were also presented as reasons for being nervous about the move. The transcript data evidence interpretations – from transferring pupils' perspectives, about the range and quantity of issues that they are required to address or begin to negotiate directly on starting secondary school. Key issues that caused worry were: the larger number of pupils in the new setting; getting lost - associated with the size of the new school premises; and establishing relationships - fitting in or making new friends, interactions with secondary teachers and dealing with perceived behaviour of secondary students – including bullying. Analysis of the data gleaned from interviews with the twenty-four Primary 7 pupils also revealed that the very emotional issues related to moving to secondary school that some pupils anticipate positively were perceived negatively by others. The perspectives presented by P7 participants provided background for the exploration of their expectations, attitude and commitment to learning and their aspirations later in this chapter.

Despite steps taken to ease the transition from primary to secondary school, by the primary and secondary, some Primary 7 pupils still have concerns or worry about the move.

For some P7 pupils, their perspective of the move, as being a positive or challenging experience, related to a concern about ability to adjust and “fit in” their new educational setting.

4.3 P7 pupils' perceptions: Expectations

The review of the literature explored the *condition of readiness* as it relates to the compatibility between the child and the serving establishment (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007). Chapter 2 established that readiness is a condition not only of the child and the school but a condition of the family. Children's own resilience – *ability to bounce back, to 'stick in'* and how this aspect can assist in securing successful school transition was also explored (Vogler *et al.*, 2008). Additionally, Chapter 2 examined children's own expectations in terms of their own perceptions of their abilities and competencies to make adjustments to new surroundings, rules and routines; and their perceived increase in workload as it related to the quantity and level of difficulty of class work and homework. In this study, the P7 pupils' interpretations of readiness and resilience were aligned to their expectations of being prepared and able to cope with the move.

The twenty-four Primary 7 pupils were asked whether and how they were prepared by school staff or others for their move to secondary. Questions 3 and 4 were asked in the interview to gather information about transferring pupils' perspectives in this regard.

Research Aim 2: To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.

Question 3: Have you been prepared for going to secondary school?

Question 4: How have you been prepared?

Generally, the P7 interviewees described being made ready by educators, their parents and peers to cope and make adjustments in the new educational setting. They perceived preparations in terms of dealing with their worries or concerns and managing workload (an increase in the quantity and level of difficulty of class work and homework). They mentioned they were prepared by primary and secondary teaching and management staff, guidance/pupil support staff from the secondary school, the cluster's home-link

worker, parents and peers. I will deal with each of these agents in a designated subsection below.

4.3.1 P7 pupils' perceptions: Preparation by the primary school

The data revealed that in the primary school a focus was kept on pastoral aspects of the move. In order to prepare Primary 7 pupils for secondary, primary school staff engaged in talks with the children about their worries or concerns, settling in, coping with routines in their new setting and with increased workload of both class work and homework. Engagement in this kind of transition-focused discursive activity with the children was one of the main methods used by the four primary schools.

In the small rural primaries in both clusters, eleven of twelve Primary 7 pupils referred to helpful discussions with their headteacher, who was also their teacher for approximately half of the week. The management support teacher taught the class for the remainder of the week. On the other hand, in the large urban primary, in Cluster 1, all pupils engaged in discussion about transition mainly with their class teacher; whilst, in Cluster 2, all pupils reported similar discussions with four of the six mentioning 'circle time' type activities with the class teacher. The following extracts exemplify pupils' representations about how primary teaching / management staff prepared them for transition through discussion.

Yeah, because the teachers, they give you a lot of information on anything that you're kind of nervous about that we can talk to them about it, and they will help you.

(Anne, P7, large primary in an urban area – Cluster 2)

She has, she's took [taken] us through once to tell us not to be worrying about high school because you can enjoy it because there is more freedom than in primary school and just, you know, to have fun and get along with everybody and make life easier.

(Candice, P7, small primary in rural area – Cluster 2)

It is noteworthy that Candice in the small rural school in Cluster 2 indicates that there was only one discussion about transition with the class-committed headteacher. However, in both the small rural primaries in the sample, in addition to talking about the move with their class committed headteacher and the management support class teacher, the children also engaged in discussion with their cluster's home-link worker. In general, in the rural primaries, eleven of the twelve P7 interviewees' descriptions imply that discussion to support the move to secondary school was designated to this key worker with a responsibility for making links between home and school. This aspect will be dealt with in Section 4.3.3.

'Circle time' in primary school classrooms is a whole class meeting about a specific emotional / social issue, where each individual has a turn to speak within ground rules, to ensure emotional wellbeing and considerate listening. As mentioned previously in this section, specific 'circle time' dedicated to discussing the move was a strategy that was mentioned by four of the six pupils in the large urban primary in Cluster 2. This implies that there was more than one transition-focused discussion through 'circle time'. Forbes' reflection shows that this kind of discussion offered the opportunity to come to the realisation that his feelings about the experience were similar to those of other pupils.

Yes, because when we do circle time in school...what people are scared of... but there are other people that have got the same ... so I'm the same as them. And we've also been talking about what the classes are going to be like and what registration class we're in.

(Forbes, P7, large primary in an urban area – Cluster 2)

George, a pupil at the same school, presents the perspective that his teacher's empathy with transferring pupils was helpful in that she shared her own early secondary transfer experience with the children.

Yeah, cause our teacher went to the high school, so she's been telling us, like, if you go to history... it's a really big trip, and things like that she's been telling us about it.

(George, large primary in an urban area – Cluster 2)

In addition to discussion that focused on transition, six of the twenty-four P7 children interviewed perceived an increase in the quantity and level of difficulty of class work. Five of twelve children in the urban primaries and one pupil in the rural primaries reported that preparation for secondary school also took the form of being assigned a heavier or more difficult workload in class. Thirteen P7 participants perceived an increase in the quantity of homework. In the rural primary schools, six of twelve pupils described an increase in the quantity of homework; whereas, seven of twelve children perceived that the quantity of homework had increased in the urban schools. For those children who described an increase in workload, in terms of quantity and level of difficulty for class work and homework, their perception was that this made them 'ready' for the workload at secondary. Julian's response was typical of the kind of response given in relation to workload and preparation by one participating primary school.

Well, the teachers have been giving us extra homework just to get us, because you get a lot of homework [at secondary]...

(Julian, P7, Class 1 in large primary in an urban area, Cluster 2)

However, in this large urban primary, there were two Primary 7 classes from which the six interviewees were drawn. The extract above evidences teachers' differing practice and expectations within the same school when compared with the following extract. Lynn in Class 2 explains that there is more class work and less homework; whereas, Julian from Class 1 informed that preparation consisted of the assignment of more homework.

Well, I would say because we've been doing, we've not had a lot of homework lately but we've been doing a lot of school work and understanding to try and fit in and see what it's like at the secondary school.

(Lynn, P7, Class 2 in large primary in an urban area, Cluster 2)

The extract above indicates this pupil's perspective of a heavier workload in the Primary 7 class as preparation by the primary school for the move to secondary school. In contrast, pupils from the small rural primary, who were transferring to the same associated secondary school in this cluster, had a different experience from those pupils in the large urban primary, in relation to the school's use of homework as preparation for secondary school. Joan's response shows this.

Well, it might be a bit of a big road because sometimes the teachers forget to give us our homework and sometimes...like on some weeks we just don't have homework, we just don't have it. Like we go for like three weeks not having homework and then make you have homework for a week and then you can go again for not having homework for a little while. So having, like getting homework every day and having to hand it in the next day, it'll be hard because we usually get three or four days to do it.

(Joan, P7, small school in a rural area, Cluster 2)

It would appear that Joan is also saying that an increase in homework, and in the frequency of assignments, needs to be integral to preparation for secondary school in order to deal with the workload. In both the rural and urban primaries which participated, there were references to being given suitable class work by the primary teacher. Nevertheless, from some children's perspective, it seems that one strategy, used by the primary schools to prepare pupils in transition, was to assign class work that was similar to that given in the secondary school. The following responses give an indication of pupils' interpretations about the level of difficulty of class work assigned in their last year in primary school in preparation the move to secondary school in Cluster 1:

We've done like, well, our work is one of the things.

(Frank P7, small school in rural area, Cluster 1)

Well, it changed when I went into Primary 7. It's like (Sunnytown Secondary), half of it was secondary work, to show us what it would be like and that.

(Dirk, P7, large primary in an urban area, Cluster 1)

Homework and pupils' approaches to coping with workload will also be examined in association with pupils' engagement and attitude to learning in Section 4.4.5 of this chapter. Generally, pupils in transition to secondary school highlighted that preparation by the primary school was also linked to preparation for adulthood and life. Fourteen of the twenty-four children also referred to aspects such as teamwork, the value of hard work, interpersonal skills, getting on with friends and responsibility. The importance of good health, alcohol and drugs awareness were offered as examples of values learned through preparation by the primary school. The responses below exemplify this perspective:

I don't know how to put it into words. It'll shape your kind of view of your future, it will make a skeleton of what you're going to be when you're older because school just opens so many doors for you and just shows you so many things.

(Janet, P7 pupil in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

Like wherever you go, like, teamwork is probably going to help you, you're going to be working in a team and stuff like that, like you're not going to be working on your own all the time, you will have to work in a team sometimes... Yeah, we are usually over at Choices ['Choices for Life' event] for the last week and that was like about drugs, like make the right choices, basically, for life, and stuff like that.

(George, P7 in a large primary in an urban area in Cluster 2)

In this study, some P7 pupils perceive that preparation by the primary school was relevant not only for their transition but for life beyond secondary school, in terms of the development of their skills for work, adulthood and readiness for life.

Based on children's perspectives, the participating primary schools' strategies for engaging P7 pupils in discussions varied in terms of format and frequency, within schools and across the two clusters.

Some Primary 7 pupils perceived an increase in workload, either in class work and / or home work, including level of difficulty as preparation by the primary school for the move to secondary school.

Pupils reported differences in teachers' practice and expectations regarding quantity and frequency of home work assignments in preparation of secondary school, within the same school and across the cluster primaries.

Primary 7 pupils perceived the efforts of primary teaching staff (discussions and learning activities about responsibility, teamwork, healthy lifestyles and drugs

4.3.2 P7 pupils' perceptions: Preparation by the secondary school

In addition to being made ready for the move to secondary by the primary school, pupils in both the small, rural and large urban primaries of the two clusters generally mentioned the involvement / effort of the secondary school to make them ready through visits and induction days. Nine of the twenty-four P7 participants (six children from the rural schools and three from urban primaries) mentioned visits in the primary setting from secondary staff. All P7 pupils in Cluster 1 described attending the secondary school to be taught science; whilst in Cluster 2, it would appear that P7 children were not taught in the secondary setting but visited in their primary school. All P7 participants referred to the induction days in the secondary school in relation to being made ready for transition.

Preparation by the associated secondary school for transferring pupils of the rural schools and the large urban primary in Cluster 1 were subject-focused, consisting of

visits to the primary by the science teacher and pupils' visits to the secondary school for science lessons and challenges.

Yes, a man from the science department came in and talked to us about it...and we've been going up to the (names secondary school) for Thinking Science and we've just been up on Friday for the Science Challenge.

(James, P7 pupil in a small rural primary – Cluster 1)

We've gone to Thinking Science and we've...we've done the open evening.

(Grant, P7 pupil in a large, urban primary – Cluster 1)

By contrast, in the large urban primary in Cluster 2, preparation was not subject focused, consisting of visits to the primary by the headteacher, two senior pupils, and guidance or pupil support teachers of the associated secondary school. Interaction between pupils, secondary staff and senior pupils during these visits tended to be discursive, pastoral in nature and also used to communicate routines in the new school setting.

Well, they sent Mr (Headteacher of associated secondary) and these two teachers. We had two teachers I think, the one that took us was called Mrs A-----, or something like that... They've been sending ... for a long time just to tell us what's happening, and sports day things from the high school.

(Julian, P7 pupil in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Well yeah, cause we've had a couple of visits from some of the teachers there. There was Mr (names HT of associated secondary) and he came over with two of the pupils there and we got to ask questions and that so...

(Elspeth, P7 pupil in large, urban primary – Cluster 2)

Well, they're having induction days and the headmaster was talking through the problems, the good things and the bad things to tell us about what we have to do. That was it.

(Henrietta, P7 pupil in a large, urban primary in Cluster 2)

Henrietta’s comment “That was it” seems to suggest that she might have liked more input from the secondary. The data revealed differing preparatory experiences for pupils transferring from the feeder primaries – both rural and urban - to the associated secondary school in this cluster. Whilst none of the pupils from the large primary mentioned pupils’ visits to the secondary school, transferring pupils from the small, rural primary appear to have made a visit to the new setting, prior to the induction days.

We went for a day to see...like half a day and to have lunch there, I had a teacher – science.

(Janet, P7 pupil in a small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

In general, at the time of interview, all pupils expressed that the induction days (three in total in both clusters) which were to be spent in the secondary school were going to be helpful in making them ready for moving on. Transferring pupils of Cluster 1 and from the small rural school in Cluster 2 also mentioned enjoying visits to the secondary school to experience learning and teaching in science; however, specific bridging projects were not mentioned as a strategy used in either of these two clusters.

The approach taken by the secondary schools to prepare or make P7 pupils ready for transition through pastoral and subject-focused visits differed across clusters.

Transferring pupils perceived the three induction days in the new secondary school setting as valuable to their transitional experience.

4.3.3 P7 pupils’ perceptions: Preparation by the home-link worker

Questions 3 and 4 also elicited data in respect of input to P7 / S1 transition by the cluster’s home link worker. The data revealed that in both clusters, P7 pupils in the two small rural schools received input from the home-link worker. Eleven of the twelve children in the rural primaries described input from the home-link worker. Although the

programme of work delivered by this key worker in each cluster focused on worries and concerns about the move, there were differences in aspects that received attention.

In the rural school in Cluster 2, five of the six pupils interviewed mentioned that they were visited by a “lady”. The data revealed that this person was the cluster’s home-link worker who had made one visit. Responses are presented below from four of the five participants who referred to preparation by a “lady”. One pupil of the six interviewed from this school did not mention the home link worker.

Well, we had this lady that came in and she told us – she had this book and she told us what – like what periods and all that do, what we had to do and all that and she said that we’ll need a bigger bag because there’s more stuff.

(Jack, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 2)

There was lady that came to see us but I can’t remember her name. She told us that we would be getting these diaries, to write down what homework you had got and stuff and that you get lots of PE as well.

(Candice, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 2)

A lady came in and told us about it [the move to secondary], discussed it a bit.

(Drew, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 2)

Oh, that lady came who was just telling about...

(Janet, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 2)

Pupils’ references of the home link worker in this small rural school in Cluster 2 as “a lady” imply that a relationship with transferring pupils had not been established and that preparation focused on communicating the routines of the secondary setting. In addition to a visit to this primary school, the data revealed that the home-link worker kept a focus on individual pupils referred to her by headteachers of *all* primaries and the associated secondary in the cluster. She worked mainly with pupils whose circumstances presented barriers to their learning – a criterion for referral to her service. Her work also

involved engagement with parents / carers and partner agencies to alleviate the challenges which hindered engagement with school. It would appear that one visit was made to the class as her caseload prioritised P7 pupils with additional needs transferring to secondary school, and their parents.

But it was sit down, talk with mum, get her concerns, talk with the child, would she like extra visits? What was worrying them, if anything, about going up to the school? Is there anything we can help with? And head teacher... usually everyone agrees, extra visits put children at ease. Presently [I] just [see] the children that are referred, because I have always had a high caseload.

(Mrs McLeary, home-link worker in Cluster 2)

In Cluster 1, as in Cluster 2, visits were made to the rural primary by the home-link worker; however, she was referred to by her first name by all six participants. A relationship had been established. The data revealed that she had several visits and engaged all the P7 pupils in working through a specific transition resource to address being prepared, and worries and concerns about the move through discussion and games.

Also there's Kate, [names HLW] and she helped us get through all that. There was [sic] quite a few games. We also did like - an activity, but we didn't have to write our names, so we kind of all had different coloured pens to write it down on a sticky pad. She typed them all up on the computer and the next week that she came she told us we didn't have to say our names. She slightly changed them a bit and so we had to figure out a way to sort it out, so that was fun.

(Rachel, P7, small primary in a rural area, Cluster 1)

In contrast, in the large urban school in Cluster 1, most of the six P7 pupils mentioned working through a transition booklet which was prepared by S6 pupils in the associated secondary; however, none of the six interviewed referred to working with the home-link worker. The home-link worker for this cluster also had a remit for prioritising pupils with specific needs and barriers to learning in both the primaries and associated secondary school.

[We]...got a book and it tells you like how it's...like if you're ready to go [to secondary]... And it's just like exercises and it just tells you that you shouldn't be worried because it's quite fun... It's a book made from sixes in the (associated secondary) and it's called Fast Forward.

(Cathy, P7, large primary school in an urban area, Cluster 1)

No mention was made of visits or working with the home link-worker, nor of working through specific booklets or games in the large urban primary school in Cluster 2. This presents an aspect of difference in the preparation within feeder primaries for the move to the associated secondary school.

Differences existed in primary schools' deployment of the home link worker in supporting P7 pupils' transition to the associated secondary within the same cluster.

The range of tasks deployed to the home-link worker in supporting Primary 7 children's transition from the feeder primaries to the associated secondary varied across the primary schools within the same cluster.

Pupil enjoyment and engagement in actively constructing their transitional experience was facilitated where the home link worker had established a relationship through several focused P7 class visits, and through the use of transition focused tasks and games.

4.3.4 P7 pupils' perceptions: Involvement of parents and family members

Fifteen of the twenty-four P7 pupils mentioned the preparation they received from their parents or other family members and friends. Question 2 of the semi-structured interview elicited pupils' interpretations of their involvement:

Research Aim 2: To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.

Question 2: Have you been thinking and talking with anyone about your move to secondary school?

The involvement of parents and relatives such as siblings and cousins who had been able to share their own experience of moving to secondary school was described as supportive by the majority of transferring pupils. Descriptions gleaned from interview transcripts of pupils in each participating primary indicate the supportive environment created through discussion by parents and family members to help ease transition.

Yes, I've spoken to my dad and my mum, and my brother Ronald, he's at that school, so I've been talking a bit to him, and I spoke to my uncle and my auntie and a couple of other people that are going with me as well.

(Frank, P7 in a small rural primary – Cluster 1)

I've been talking with some of my step-brothers and sisters, my Mum and the teachers and just all of my family about it.

(Cathy, P7 in a large urban primary – Cluster 1)

My mum says that the high school's really big, but you should get used to it... but my mum's from a major city, she's from a big city and so she's used to high schools with like double the amount of the high school here.

(Joan, P7 in a small rural primary – Cluster 2)

I've been talking to my cousins, my mum and dad... talking to me about what's it going to be like there and how I'm going to get there, and how I'm going to come home for lunch sometimes.

(Forbes – P7 in a large urban primary – Cluster 2)

Parents' support through the move was important from pupils' perspective and coping with change appeared to be an integral element of talks with their children. The comment from Joan who was transferring from a small rural primary implied that she believed her mother may have found moving to secondary school easier as she was from a big city; whilst Forbes, on the other hand, was reassured by his family that he would occasionally have lunch at home.

The data which relates to the family work/study ethic is not presented in this section. The study revealed that for some P7 children, the family work/study ethic appeared to influence the child's attitude and engagement in learning, and related to expectations to cope and be ready for transition. I decided that the data, which evidences this relationship, will be presented in Section 4.4.1.3

Pupils in transition to secondary school appear to value the discussions with parents and relatives about how to cope with aspects of the move, in particular those about which they are nervous.

4.3.5 Summary: P7 pupils' perceptions: Expectations

In summary, the P7 pupils described a range of transitional issues for which they believed they needed to be prepared or ready. In general, their interpretations related to their perceptions and or expectations of what is required to be compatible with, and to cope in their new educational setting. These two aspects related to their perceptions of readiness (being compatible) and resilience (ability to cope – stick in) in the transition. Generally, they believed that they were being made ready and able to cope by the primary and secondary schools, the home-link worker and parents/family members. Some learners perceived 'being ready' and 'able to cope' in terms of their own competency. One issue was an increase in the quantity of homework / workload in secondary. However, strategies in relation to the quantity of home-work / workload in preparing pupils for secondary school varied from one class to another in the same

primary school, one primary school to another within the same cluster, and from one cluster to another within this particular local authority.

Generally, pupils felt well-prepared by the primary and secondary school for the move. In addition, most pupils said that their primary school had taught them skills which might be useful in adulthood. They felt they had learned skills for work and for life, with responses indicating that preparedness was perceived by almost all pupils generally as not just being ready for secondary, but also for adulthood. Almost all indicated involvement of their parents / family members in providing support through discussion and advice about what to expect and how to cope in the new school.

The deployment of the home-link worker varied, with the two rural schools making use of this key worker's skills to address transition for all pupils. It would appear however that pupils' perception of this initiative was dependent on the relationship that they had with the home-link worker and the level of interaction this person had with the children. The data revealed that in the small rural primary in Cluster 2, the visit may have been a one-off to discuss transition overall; whereas, in the rural primary in Cluster 1, there is evidence of the delivery of a prolonged programme engaging the skills of the home-link worker. In this study, the P7 pupils' interpretations of their expectations were aligned to being prepared or ready for the move to secondary school.

4.4 P7 pupils' perceptions: Attitude and engagement

This theme was examined in the literature and also emerged from the data gleaned from interviews with the twenty-four Primary 7 pupils transferring to secondary school. The literature review highlighted that attitude to learning might be associated with achievement (Galton *et al.*, 2003; Graham and Hill, 2003; Yeung and McInerney, 2005), and that the child's personal efficacy beliefs regulate functioning (Bandura, 1995). Engagement – *pupil initiated effort in learning activities* was explored in terms of being a crucial element for achievement (McGee *et al.*, 2003), as were the links between

motivation, engagement and achievement (Yeung and McInerney, 2005). This section of the chapter investigates the concept that pupils' attitude can affect their engagement at this crucial stage. The focus is on pupils' attitude to learning activities and reflects pupils' interpretations in relation to why they engage in learning pre- and post-transition.

During the preparatory group discussions at each participating school, in both the primary and secondary sectors, and the individual face-to-face interviews, homework was generally raised and perceived to be a challenge inherent in the move to secondary school. According to Wigfield and Eccles (2000), Yeung and McInerney (2005) and Barker *et al.*, (2006), pupils' perspective of the importance of tasks can be aligned to their perception of relevance to themselves. To this end, P7 pupils presented perspectives of homework as it related to their attitude and engagement in learning.

Some P7 pupils described actions that were self-regulatory and / or regulated by parents, in preparing to deal with the quantity of homework at secondary school. Consequently, in this study, homework will be dealt with as integral to children's attitude to learning (Section 4.4.5). Additionally, my aim was to explore perspectives and links with regard to whether the presence of education and career aspirations at the point of transfer to secondary school might influence pupils' attitude to and engagement in school endeavours.

4.4.1 Overview

In order to glean information about their attitude to and engagement in school endeavours, Questions 8 – 10 were asked of all Primary 7 participants in order to generate discussion:

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Question 8: Do you work hard at school?

Question 9: Do you think it is important to work hard at school?

Question 10: Why is this important to you?

Responses from the preparatory group discussions were then followed up in order to gather more detailed and specific information. During the process of data analysis, three key perspectives emerged about pupils' attitude and engagement in school endeavours at the point of transfer from primary to secondary school as follows:

Perspective 1 Working hard at primary school is seen as important for getting a good education, linked to going to college or university.

Perspective 2 Getting a good education, including attendance at college or university, is related by young people to better chances at securing a good job and better chances later on in life.

Perspective 3 The expectations and involvement of parents, family and teachers influence children's attitude to and engagement in academic endeavours.

Findings in relation to these perspectives are presented below. An understanding of the term "hard work" from pupils' perspective emerged from the data as staying on task and sustaining effort at doing one's best work, with some degree of consistency.

Additionally, homework and how or whether pupils planned to manage the quantity at secondary school emerged as an aspect that pupils associated with their attitude to learning. Consequently, although some data concerning homework was presented previously, I will also present perspectives in relation to whether transferring pupils were self-regulating (initiating action to cope with or manage homework), as an element of readiness for transition to secondary education in Section 4.4.5.

4.4.1.1 'Working hard' at primary school is important for getting a good education and is linked to going to college or university

Thirteen of the twenty-four Primary 7 interviewees held the view that hard work at primary school leads to attendance at college or university after secondary education. Generally, this perspective was held by pupils in both the small rural schools as well as

the two large urban primaries, and was offered voluntarily when responding to the interview questions on ‘working hard’ at school. Interviewees’ responses below typify this perception:

.... so you can go to university and get a good job.

(Ralph, P7, small rural primary in Cluster 1)

If you work hard at school, you can sit your exams and that, and then if you get your exams you can go to college and get a good job or [go to]university.

(Dirk, P7, large primary school in an urban area, Cluster 1)

Some pupils also expressed their opinion using alternative words, which indicated their belief that the chance of going to college was reduced if one did not ‘work hard’ at primary school and continued the effort at secondary school. From Joan’s perspective, “working hard” is understood to be an essential factor without which there is no progression through to the next stages of education.

Well, yes, because if you want to get your A levels and you want to do hard (work) at college and all that, then you need to work hard at primary school because it’s like steps, if you don’t work hard at primary school, high school, then you don’t get to go to college...

(Joan, P7 in a small rural primary, Cluster 2)

Additionally, the extracts above demonstrate pupils’ perspective that there is a relationship between their aspirations for tertiary education and future career and the effort that they invest in their school work. Rose, a pupil transferring from a small rural primary offers a different perspective, and although she alludes to a relationship between getting a good education and going to university, she expresses no ‘real’ desire or aspiration to attend university herself. She presents an awareness of achievement and progression from secondary education along vocational lines instead of an academic path.

Well, because if you don't work, you won't learn anything and you won't be able to get a job or go to college...No, I don't really want to go to university. I would like to be a hairdresser when I'm older. There's someone that I know, and I would ask if I could help them, and do a few jobs at the hairdresser.

(Rose, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Frank's statement typifies some pupils' general awareness - from their perspective, that "hard work" improves life chances and increases potential to earn a good income.

Yeah, just to get a good education and then that means I've got the potential to do lots of things when I'm older, like do something that earns really good pay, to keep me going.

(Frank, P7 pupil in small, rural school in Cluster 1)

However, in contrast, Josh (see extract below) expresses that he works 'fairly' hard but indicates his efforts are hindered by the low level mis-conduct ('*talking constantly*') of peers.

Josh ...I don't mind the actual school work 'cause we do already get a lot of work and all that sort of stuff.

EG Now, would you say you work hard at school?

Josh Fairly...cause [because] I get distracted quite easily...when people talk constantly...like, James...

EG But you're aware so it's something you can do something about... and do you feel it's important to work hard at school? Do you think people should work hard at school?

Josh Well, it depends.

*EG Do you feel **you** should work hard at school?*

Josh Cause, um, if you want to do things in life, well, you got to work hard...

Josh provides a response that can be conceived as evasive – "*Well, it depends*" - when asked about the importance of working hard at school. A response indicating that it is

important to achieve in life was only forthcoming when emphasis was laid on the word *'you'* – referring to his own efforts. He does not state that college, university or a good job are amongst *'the things in life'* to be achieved. These views from this pupil, might indicate that there are those pupils who are unsure about whether “hard work” is a requirement for the move to secondary or may be uninterested in moving on to college or university.

Some pupils presented other perspectives for working hard at primary school. In addition to desire for tertiary education, some pupils offered the following as motivators influencing their attitude to academic endeavours: to impress people; to avoid getting into trouble; love of learning; to gain rewards; love of the challenge of getting the right answers; to be finished first or to complete the task quickly and to catch up with other pupils in the class.

So you can learn about different things that you've never thought [sic] about, and learn about them.

(Calum, P7 in a large urban primary – Cluster 1)

Yes, because we get rewarded well and we learn new stuff.

(Jack, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

Well, because if you work more hard [sic] you get your things done more quicker [sic] and if you're behind then you can catch up.

(Lucy, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 1)

The data presented evidences that in this study, some P7 pupils made links between working hard and their attitude and engagement in learning, and aspirations for education and career. They described a variety of reasons for working hard: to get a good education, a good job or to have a better life in the future. Whilst the extracts presented indicate participants' perspectives; it should be considered that – for some, these interpretations may have been influenced through aspiration-oriented discussion

with parents, family members and / or educators. This is explored in Sections 4.4.1.3 and 4.6

Some Primary7 pupils perceived “working hard” at primary school as an important element in getting a good education.

They associated getting a good education with going to college or university.

The majority perceived that attendance at college or university will increase their chance at securing a good job and improve life chances.

4.4.1.2 Getting a good education, attendance at college or university is related to better chances at securing a good job and better chances in life

Whilst thirteen of the twenty-four P7 pupils at the point of transition from primary to secondary school perceived that getting a good education was aligned to attendance at college or university, another perspective which emerged from the data was that hard work and attendance at college or university was associated with improving their chances of getting a good job when they become adults. In the extracts which follow, the interviewees express clearly that not working hard equates to not being able to secure a good job:

If you don't work hard, you won't get good grades and then you can't get a good job and things like that.

(Anne, P7 pupil in a large urban primary in Cluster 1)

If you don't work hard you are going to end up, like, in Tesco's, working in Tesco's, like stacking shelves. And if you get like a really good job you could end up, like, doing something like a vet or a nurse or a doctor.

(Forbes, P7 pupil in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Forbes's perception of achievement through 'hard work' at school appears to be linked to type of job later in life. His statement implies that he sees certain jobs, "*working in Tesco's, like stacking shelves*" as the result of failing to work hard. In corroboration, the majority of Primary 7 interviewees held the perspective that working hard at primary school relates to having better choices of career and better chances in life. Most pupils from both the rural and urban primaries held this perception. Extracts from interview transcripts of Frank and Candice give examples of responses given.

Just so, like, you can get a good life and you can get the potential to do lots of things, and so you can do whatever you want to do, if you get a good education and you'll be able to go to university.

(Frank, P7 in a small rural primary – Cluster 1)

Yes I do. I think it's very important [to work hard], if you want to have a nice lifestyle then you know, get a good job so you can get a house and that. I think it's very important.

(Candice, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

Frank's opinion highlights the view that increasing potential is crucial in having choices and improved chances of achieving success. Hard work at primary school is noted as a necessary investment in order to secure potential for a better life in the future.

<p>The majority of P7 pupils believe that potential to do well later in life (getting a good job, affording a good lifestyle) is improved through hard work at primary school.</p>
--

4.4.1.3 Involvement of parents, family, and teachers in influencing attitude to and engagement in learning

The impact of parental involvement was explored in the review of the literature. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) point to the significant impact of parental involvement on children's achievement. In respect of the influence of parents and family on the

child, the data revealed a range of ways in which parents communicated their expectations or became involved in influencing their child's attitude to and engagement in learning at the time of their transition to secondary school. Questions 8 – 10 of the parents' interview schedule corresponded with those from the pupils' semi-structured interviews and were asked to elicit views on their involvement:

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Research Objective 2: To discover learners' views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school and whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

Question 8: Do you feel that (name of child) works hard at school?

Question 9: Is it important that (name of child) works hard at school?

Question 10: Why is this important to you?

The questions above also elicited opinions - from some parents, about their aspirations for their child's career. Providing encouragement and support to cope with the move to secondary school, and re-inforcing the family work/study ethic, were the main methods through which parental involvement impacted on the child's attitude and effort invested in learning. One pupil expressed that his positive attitude to learning at this crucial point of transfer to secondary school is influenced by successful members of his family. He aligned success in life with ownership of businesses. He indicated that he wanted to succeed because his mum wants him to do well and because it is the 'family way'.

Oh yeah, because if you don't work hard you are not going to get anywhere in life so, so my mum just tells me that... Yeah, because my mum wants me to do well because the rest of my family has done very well so, like businesses and stuff... My grandpa and my mum own(s) two businesses. My granny is joint partner with my mum. My dad owns a business.

(Julian, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

The impact of parental involvement, the family environment and work/study ethic on the learner's attitude to and engagement in learning is also evidenced in Julian's statement. Generally, in responding to the corresponding questions on this aspect, pupils' perception that their parents provided encouragement was noted, as responses from Julian (noted above) and James (see quote below) typify:

[My parents try], just, like, to encourage me.

(James, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Julian's statement describes a clear awareness that his mother's aspirations for his achievements require to be in line with the family's business success. He positions her expectation - "...my mum wants me to do well", as influencing his attitude to learning. Julian's motivation to achieve - "to do well", appears to be influenced by his mother's aspiration. In corroboration, within the eight families that participated in the study - where a pupil and parent of the same family were interviewed, three pupils seemed to want to study within areas similar to their parents. These pupils' responses were associated with what their parents expected their child to study in the tertiary stage of education:

Science. I don't know what else...Science, I think physics as well, something else, like maths.

(Grant, P7 pupil in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

Scientist, we're all science.

Marjorie, mother of Grant, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

Five pupils of the twenty-four interviewed mentioned how their efforts would be viewed. They related their attitude and engagement in learning to 'working hard' to impress. This desire to impress others, especially those adults who they respected or saw as role models, provided the motivation to engage in learning activities. Interpretations included "working hard" at primary to take over the family business and

to impress or please their parents, family members or a teacher. The extracts below exemplify pupils' perspectives of the importance of teachers' views of their efforts.

Well if you work hard ... if you are moving up to the (associated secondary) the teachers might think, oh, he's really smart so... he'll have a good job.

(Grant, P7 in a large urban primary – Cluster 1)

I do actually get on with my work quite well; you'll have to talk to my teacher about it to see if it's good work.

(Rachel, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 1)

I think it is because the teachers are relying on you to do well and to just boost your confidence, they are always like in the back of your mind, always be like my teacher's voice like in your head every day [laughs].

(Julian, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Although Rachel does not openly admit to trying to impress her teacher, she does direct the researcher to checking with the teacher, in respect of her attitude and engagement in learning. This demonstrates that she holds her teacher's view in high regard. Julian's response corroborates this, but also implies the long-lasting / permanent effect of teachers' impressions on him.

Parents' views were in accordance with pupils' perspectives in situations where both were interviewed. This was noted for eight parents and their children, across the four participating primary schools in the two clusters. Notably, parents' involvement in helping their child to develop a positive attitude to learning included supervising homework, discussions about progressing to tertiary education, making preparations for tertiary education and discussing career choice. This engagement in their child's education confirms the emphasis placed by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) on the significant influence of parental input in their child's learning at home, on their

educational outcomes. The extract below exemplifies the way in which parents influence their child's attitude to school.

I think because he's got quite a high goal at the end....So to get there, he'd really have to work hard. And I think we've tried to instil in him if you want to do something you have to start now, not when you're leaving school... you have to put the ground work in. Or if you don't, you're going to have to accept something else [a low skilled job].

(Annie, mother of Drew, P7 in small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

This parent also perceives her son's attitude to learning as influenced by his own aspirations as well as a desire to please. A relationship is presented between attitude and engagement in learning and the adults in this learner's life. Similarly, in a few situations in this study, the family's work/study ethic - "as he's seen both his siblings do that", held very strong influence and impacted on the young person's attitude to learning.

He's seen that [his family working hard] and I suppose he feels that that's what you do, you know, you work hard and study...I think he just wants to... probably to go to University as he's seen both his siblings do that.

(Monica, mother of Ralph, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

I would like to see him go on to university, because he's definitely got the ability...he loves maths, so perhaps something down that route, something along those lines. He certainly loves computers as well, so it would be accountancy or ICT, something like that. They've all gone so we think that he will go. We may just be thinking he will do that, you know, but we're not saying you will do that, we'll expect him to do that. We're just letting him find his feet as he goes along. He's not...he's never let us down yet.

(Jenny, mother of Ossie, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 2)

In the extract above, Jenny expresses that they are not dictating to her child that he will go to university. She indicates that they are "...letting him find his feet..." and refers to never being "let down" by her son. Jenny's descriptions, "...he's definitely got the

ability...he loves maths. He certainly loves computers...” indicate her recognition of her son’s interests and abilities. She alludes to a supportive family environment for the formation of her child’s educational and career aspiration. Her comments point to her aspiration for a positive educational outcome for her son.

Marjorie, in the extract below, communicates her expectation of her son by associating how she had been brought up with the way she is raising her own child, in relation to learning. Marjorie’s comment also suggests that she expects to contribute to her child’s learning.

I was brought up with books. My son has also been brought up with books and if there’s a subject, there’s a book on it.

(Marjorie, mother of Grant, P7 pupil in large urban primary - Cluster 1)

In corroboration, Marjorie’s son, Grant, presents a positive perspective of his mother’s efforts as noted in the extract below:

I don’t know, but she’s trying her best to get me to work really hard, to get me as high [achieving as highly] as possible.

(Grant, P7 pupil in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

The data also revealed the major focus or impact of discussion or ‘talking’ with parents, family members and teachers, in helping pupils at the primary/secondary transfer stage to develop a positive attitude to school endeavours. This is evident in the following responses from Frank and Dirk when asked whether they had talked with anyone about their education and career aspirations:

[I talk to] my dad, because I sometimes go and round the sheep with my dad at night and we stop and just take a couple of pictures from the top of the hill... and then we have a bit of a chat about it [the desire to design farm machinery when older], and stuff like that. And I’ll maybe chat to my mum about it at night and stuff.

(Frank, P7 pupil in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

You see, and I'm now talking about going to university [laughs]. They [My parents] said they would help me get ...get me into the college and university...

(Dirk, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

At the time of transition to secondary school, some Primary 7 pupils perceived the encouragement and support of their parents, and parental aspirations, as influencing their attitude to, and their engagement in, learning.

Desire to impress parents, relatives, peers and teachers' motivated some P7 pupils to "work hard".

The family work ethic impacted on some P7 pupils' attitude to learning and their engagement in learning activities.

4.4.1.4 Homework

As indicated in Section 4.3.1, the data showed that twenty of the twenty-four pupils perceived an increase in the quantity of homework in secondary school. Thirteen children believed that an increase in homework in Primary 7 was aimed at making them ready for the workload at secondary school. Previously in Section 4.4, I made links between homework and pupils' attitude to, and engagement in learning. In this study, the data revealed that from some pupils' perspective, time-tabling and planning for the completion of homework indicated readiness (working to achieve compatibility with the new school) in terms of workload, and resilience - their ability to cope, 'stick in' and adjust to the changes required. Ten of the twenty-four children interviewed had no major concerns about homework and had made plans to cope; whilst four others who had plans to cope with the perceived increase in homework in secondary school, described some concern about the quantity of homework.

Table 4.3: P7 pupils’ perceptions about homework

	Perceived an increase in quantity of homework at SS	Perceived an increase in quantity of homework assigned in PS to prepare for SS	No opinion	No concerns but plans to cope	Concerned with plans to cope	Concerned with no plans to cope
Cluster 1 Rural	5	4	1		2	3
Cluster 1 Urban	4	4	2	2	2	2
Cluster 2 Rural	5	2	1	2		3
Cluster 2 Urban	6	3		6		

Note: PS – Primary School SS – Secondary School

Homework appeared to cause some pupils concern; whilst other pupils were quite clear about how they would deal with the quantity given. Responses ranged from doing it promptly - on the night given, to talking with the teacher for an allocation of more time if struggling. George’s and Lynn’s responses exemplify these perspectives:

Well, I’ll try and do like a bit every night or I’ll just do it straight when I get it, or I could just do like some one night and some the next night, and a bit of both on the nights for history and then maths one night and then finish it off the next night to give it a bit of variety and stuff.

(George, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 2)

I think I’ll have time to do it, if like, on the day I got it, if it was say on a Monday, ‘cause I go to athletics on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and Monday nights are just like an easy session so I could just like miss that if I had to, and then I’ve got Wednesday so I should be able to do the homework, but if I need more time I can just say to the teacher.

(Lynn, P7 pupil in large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Certain pupils worried about the quantity of homework. The extracts above indicate that some pupils – aware of their own situations, had already made plans for dealing with an increase in the quantity given at secondary school, whereas others worried but had no

real plans for dealing with the perceived increase in homework. Janet and Josh made the following statements, in this regard:

I've got a thing for leaving homework till the last minute. We get it on a Friday and it's got to be in by Monday and there's [sic] there are lots to do on Saturday, and I end up doing it on Sunday night, so mum says I need to get it sorted out because they [pupils at secondary school] do a lot of homework....

(Janet, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 2)

The homework - I'm a little bit worried about that. You can't really think about it 'because we already get more homework here.

(Josh, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Parental involvement in directing / guiding their child, "...mum says I need to get it sorted out" in readiness for the move to secondary is exemplified in Janet's statement. By contrast, Josh indicates that he had already been made ready by the school for the increase in the quantity of homework in his last year of primary education.

Some Primary 7 pupils perceived an increase in the quantity of homework assigned as preparation by the primary school for an increase in workload/homework at secondary.

Some P7 pupils had already made plans to cope with the perceived increase in homework at secondary school.

4.4.1.5 Summary: Pupils' perceptions - Attitude and engagement

Many pupils associated 'working hard' at this stage with a desire to progress to tertiary education and to a good job in adulthood. Thirteen of the twenty-four Primary 7 pupils expressed a desire to progress to tertiary education. For those pupils who presented the perspective noted as 'working hard', it would appear that this provided pre-transition focus and appeared to be linked to their aspiration for a career, and their view of achievement. The data presented in this section shows that some of the P7 pupil

participants held the perspective that their own attitude impacted on their level of engagement in learning. They believed that their attitude and engagement in learning could affect the choices they are able to make for education beyond secondary school, for a future career, and their life chances. The encouragement, support and aspirations of some parents appeared to influence the child's attitude to learning. Findings were also presented to show that most pupils in this study view attitude to and engagement in learning to be necessary 'ingredients' in achieving in the school setting.

4.5 P7 pupils' perceptions: Aspirations for education and career

The literature review chapter highlighted that, during the high school years, motivational goals develop with experiences of success or failure in school work. Apart from academic achievement, education and career aspirations were found to be important outcomes of achievement goals (Marjoribanks, 2005; Yeung and McInerney, 2005). In this study, I wished to explore whether pupils held aspirations for education and career at the stage of transfer to secondary school.

4.5.1 Overview

Interview questions 8 and 10 elicited data in relation to the subject area that P7 pupils wished to study beyond secondary school.

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Question 8: Do you work hard at school?

Question 9: Do you think it is important to work hard at school?

Question 10: Why is this important to you?

As indicated previously, the data revealed that at the time of transition to secondary school, some P7 interviewees related 'working hard' to their attitude to learning. In

general, several associated working hard with getting a good education – going to college or university. Some had an awareness of the subjects required for entry to college or university and this factor was applied as an indicator of the learner’s education aspiration. Figure 4.4 illustrates P7 pupils’ awareness of the subjects required for their selected course of study.

Table 4.4: P7 pupils’ responses – Aspirations for education

	Desire to attend college or university	Aware of subjects for entry	No desire to attend college or university	Does not mention tertiary education
Cluster 1 Rural	4	1	1	1
Cluster 1 Urban	5	4		1
Cluster 2 Rural	1	0		5
Cluster 2 Urban	4 + 1(Maybe)	2		1
Total	14 (+1 Maybe)	7	1	8

Seven pupils who expressed a desire to attend college or university also possessed a general awareness of the subjects required for entry to the course they wished to study, as the response from Dirk who wished to study architecture, exemplifies:

[In order to do this degree, you need]Graphics design, maths and it’s science, but I can’t remember just now, it’s numbers and there’s also design.

Dirk, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 1)

Dirk showed some uncertainty about entry requirements to study Graphics Design; he had a general awareness which may have been developed through his family environment. Whilst most of the pupils who wished to progress to tertiary education and who knew the subjects required were informed by discussions with parents, family members, peers or teachers, Forbes had additionally carried out a search of the internet, demonstrating active engagement in constructing knowledge to decide his career path. His statement indicates his potential to influence his peers:

I’ve looked on the internet to see what you need to get for a job, I’ve talked to my mum and dad about it, and I’ve talked to my friends about what they want to be as well.

(Forbes. Primary 7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

The data also revealed that at the transition stage, pupils' interpretations of a desire to study at tertiary level, and their awareness of subjects required for entry to college and university were generally based on a degree of knowledge of the job they aspired to in the future. Interview Questions 11 and 12 of the pupils' schedule were asked to discover P7 learners' perceptions of whether there is a relationship between their attitude to and engagement in learning, and their aspirations for education and career.

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Question 11: Do you think it is important to have a job when you are older?

Question 12: Have you thought about what job you would like to do when you are older?

In analysing the data, it emerged that some pupils had a general idea of the job they wished to do when older. Here, I present findings in relation to the degree to which pupils were certain of the career they wished to pursue, at this stage of transition to secondary school. There were three categories of pupils:

- Pupils certain of a career path;
- Pupils who were uncertain of a career path – the pupil had two jobs in mind (real and 'dream job') or said they changed their mind frequently and
- Pupils with no clear idea of a career path.

Table 4.5 illustrates P7 pupils' responses in terms of aspiration for career.

Table 4.5: P7 pupils' responses – Aspirations for career

	Certain of career	Uncertain of career	No idea of career	Does not mention career
Cluster 1 Rural	2	1	1	2
Cluster 1 Urban	1	4	1	0
Cluster 2 Rural	2	1	1	2
Cluster 2 Urban	4	2	0	0
Total	9	8	3	4

4.5.1.1 Certain of career

Nine of the twenty-four Primary 7 pupils interviewed said that they were certain of the job they wished to do when older. The responses below exemplify pupils' expressions of aspiring to a career.

I want to design like farm machinery...like on the computer before it gets made, and so you like the make the bonnet and you make the cab and wheels and stuff like that, then you put them through to another office and it gets made. I'd quite like to do that.

(Frank, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 1)

I want to go to Art College and design cards for cartoons and stuff like that.

(Calum, P7 in a large primary in an urban area in Cluster 1)

I want to get a good job when I'm older. I want to be an archaeologist – human archaeologist.

(James, P7 in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster 1)

I want to be a doctor, so I need to stick in and everything.

(Janet, P7 girl in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster 2)

It is noteworthy that these responses indicated a very specific job or career. This was the case for all pupils who seemed to be certain of the job they wished to do when older. Frank appears to have given his chosen career much thought and is able to explain technologically how the designs for his farm machinery might be produced. James, from the small rural primary in Cluster 1, is very specific about his career, making mention of the specialism within the field that he wishes to study. A degree of commitment to the career selected is inherent in all responses above. However, this was lacking in responses from interviewees who were less certain.

4.5.1.2 Uncertain of career

Eight pupils were uncertain about the job they wished to do when they become adults. In the small primary in a rural area in Cluster 1, it became evident from responses that pupils were encouraged to indicate through discussion with their class-committed headteacher what they really wished to pursue as a career (a ‘real job’). I noted that at this school, pupils indicated two jobs that they wished to do when grown up. Two selections were suggested (a ‘real’ job and a ‘dream’ job) by the headteacher to encourage pupils to aspire to tertiary education and career, beyond the opportunities available in their rural locality. This was integral to the ‘moving up to secondary school programme’ in which the school engaged all their Primary 7 pupils. Frank and James who were mentioned in the section above had selected only one job. Responses below typify pupils’ expressions of uncertainty in choosing a career at this stage in their education:

I’ve thought about it, but I haven’t really decided yet. I used to want to be a biologist and then I wanted to be a doctor, and that’s all.

(Ralph, P7 boy in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster1)

Oh, I don’t know. I keep chopping and changing....Ah, um, eh, policeman – changed my mind; stuntman – changed my mind...

(Josh, P7 in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster 1)

I might do the same as my mum and be a beauty therapist.

(Elsbeth, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Notably, in the large primary in an urban area in this cluster, it emerged that there were no specific discussions between teachers and pupils, nor programmes in place to facilitate making selections or thinking about a “real” job and a “dream” job before the move to secondary. However, four of the six interviewees indicated that they had two jobs in mind, whilst one pupil was certain of his choice.

[I have] two choices. I want to be an architect or someone that coaches dolphins... works with dolphins at water parks.

(Dirk, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

I want to be a forensic scientist or an optician.

(Grant, P7 in large urban primary P7)

Yeah. I want to be a beautician or an artist.

(Cathy, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

In the small primary in a rural area in Cluster 2, two pupils were certain of a career, one had selected two possibilities and one had nothing in mind and two others did not mention a career; whilst in the large urban primary, four were certain and two had selected two possibilities.

4.5.1.3 No idea of career

In general, it would appear that the majority of pupils in this study, at the stage of transfer to secondary school, had some idea of the job they wished to do when older. Of the twenty-four primary pupils interviewed, nine were certain and eight were uncertain, with two jobs in mind; however, four pupils made no mention of career and three stated clearly that they did not know yet.

Now that is a hard one, I don't really know yet.

(Rachel, P7 girl in small primary in a rural area in Cluster 1)

Another pupil in this school alludes to his stage of development:

No, because I'm still a child. You can think about it when you're older...but I'm only a child. It's far, far away.

(Josh, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Aspiration for career appeared to influence pupils' attitude to and engagement in learning activities. Across the two clusters, seventeen of the twenty- four children had some idea of a career they wished to pursue. Of these, eight expressed uncertainty, presenting two jobs – a real job and a 'dream job', while nine indicated a specific job. Fourteen of these seventeen pupils – whether certain or uncertain of a specific job, indicated that aspiring to a career helped to "motivate" and keep them focused at school, as the responses below exemplify:

Yeah, 'cos [because] you've got to work to get it so it can make you kinda [kind of] motivated to work harder.

(George, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Yeah, 'cause [because] I want to be a teacher... and I think I really want to do this. Then I have to work really hard and keep it [chosen career] in my head.

(Lynn, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Yeah, I work really, really hard. I want to do it [chosen career]. I want to know how to get it.

(Candice, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

Yeah, it does [knowing the job she aspires to]. I work all the time. I just try and work my best.

(Cathy, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 1)

Expressed with less certainty, the quote below is a response from one pupil who stated that aspiring to tertiary education or to a career "might" influence her attitude to school work.

Well, I think it might make me work a bit harder.

(Rachel, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Remarkably, one P7 girl indicated a desire for a career as a lifestyle choice, alluding to contributing to family circumstances in adulthood and a supportive role to her spouse.

Yeah, because if you don't have a job, you won't be able to make money and you can't, if you've got a husband, you can't let him do all the work, you've got to go to work as well.

(Henrietta, P7 in a large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Seventeen of twenty-four Primary 7 pupils interviewed had some idea of the job they wished to do when older - ranging from being quite clear to having two in mind.

Fourteen of Primary 7 pupils interviewed held the perception that aspiration for tertiary education and / or career helped to motivate and keep them focused - influenced their attitude to, and engagement in, learning activities.

4.6 Involvement of parents, family members, teachers and peers

Data analysis revealed that various actors in pupils' educational life – parents, peers and education staff - can help pupils maintain a positive attitude to school endeavours. It emerged that family background and the home environment in relation to work/study ethic impact on pupils involved in primary/secondary transition. I will show that there appears to be an element of “focus” for those pupils whose parents are actively involved in supporting their efforts and aspirations for education and career. The participants' views – pupils and parents - will be prevalent in this, as in the other sections of this chapter.

Research Objective 2: To discover learners' views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school and whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

Questions from the pupil interview schedule:

Question 11: Do you think it is important to have a job when you are older?

Question 12: Have you thought about what job you would like to do when you are older?

Question 13: Have you talked about this with any adults or friends/peers?

Questions from the parents' interview schedule:

Question 11: Has (your child) talked about the kind of job he/she hopes to do when grown up?

Question 12: What kind of job would you like him/her to aspire to when he/she has grown up to feel he/she has achieved his/her potential?

Most of the parents interviewed held aspirations for their child to progress to tertiary education. They also seemed to hold high aspirations for their children in relation to career and these tended to corroborate their children's perspectives in these areas. Involvement of parents ranged from discussions about tertiary education and career, making plans for each of these aspects or an indication of parents' expectations with regard to tertiary education and career. Rachel's response demonstrates this, as she talks about a collective decision:

We [She and her mum] decided that I might want to go to college and university.

(Rachel, P7 girl in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

In interview, pupils' interpretations described a degree of commitment to their education and career aspiration. Engagement in discussion with peers, parents or school staff was used as the indicator of commitment or earnestness of desire for the aspiration held at the time of transition to secondary school. The extracts below present interpretations in this regard:

Yeah, I've talked to my teacher. I've talked to my Mum and my Dad. I've talked to my cousins and basically all my family.

(Cathy, P7 in a large primary in an urban area in Cluster 1)

[I want to be] a forensic scientist... Yeah, I've talked about it with my mum and dad, and we watch quite a lot of those kind of shows, so that's good, 'cos [because], like, at the start, like, there's a murder and that, and I always try to work out who done it, and then...

(Grant, P7 in a large primary in an urban area in Cluster 1)

The following extracts from interviews with parents indicate engagement in aspiration-oriented discussion with their child, and show a clear knowledge of their child's aspirations for education and career.

Career aspirations, now then, we've talked about education... erm, has he talked about the kind of job he wants to do when he's grown up? He wants to be a forensic scientist. Where this has come from I don't know.

(Marjorie, mother of Grant, P7 pupil in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

He's determined that he wants to do architecture. That's what he's determined to do. Whether it's - he's a great one for building Lego Connects, always has been from a tot and he still does. And I think he has it into his head that he's a fantastic structural engineer, one of these things that he has it into his head that that's what he would like to do.

(Millicent, mother of Dirk, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

In both the small schools, statements were made which support pupils' engagement in discussion with parents, peers and teachers about their education and career aspirations.

Yes, talked about it quite a lot with my parents...Um, hmm, some of my friends as well...Em, the headteacher as well...

(James, P7 pupil in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster 1)

The influence of parental involvement in motivating their children to aspire through supporting their career aspirations and providing guidance in achieving them is evident in the next two transcript extracts below:

He'd like to be, I think, the new one at the moment is an architect... archaeologist, I should say. So to get there, he'd really have to work hard. And I think we've tried to instil in him if you want to do something you have to start now, not when you're leaving school, decide you want to be an archaeologist, you have to put the ground work in. Or if you don't, you're going to have to accept something else. So it's his decision if he puts the work in, he'll achieve his goal and if he doesn't, he won't.

(Ashleigh, mother of James, P7 pupil in small rural primary in Cluster 1)

I've talked about it with my mum, but she said if you want that job, you're going to have to stick in and work as hard as you can to get it. And I said well I'll try my hardest.

(Candice, P7 in a small primary in a rural area in Cluster 2)

In Section 4.5.1.1, it was indicated that it was clear that Janet wants to become a doctor; however, she recognises her special talent for swimming and the expectations of her peers and coach in fulfilling her potential in this aspect.

My friends are more expecting me to not become...I'm not like sensible, but I think that they're not expecting me to have a high profession. They think I'll just do sport all my life. I want to do that. I want to play for Scotland, but...swimming and I swim for (names town), my coach (says) I've got a good chance of making it to the Commonwealth.

(Janet, P7 in small rural primary in Cluster 2)

The extract below evidences that supportive discussions about career choice take place between Janet and her mother. Ability and potential to achieve through an alternative path are described by parent and child; nevertheless, a more academic career is favoured

by both. A perception of achievement through financial reward is evident in both their statements.

I think she can be encouraged. As long as it's encouraged it's feasible, do you know, and I felt that that was the one doubt... She was being pushed and pushed, but the reality of seven sessions of two and a half hours a session to me was far too much for her, especially at quarter to six in the morning and then she's coming in to do a full day. I'm all for encouraging them, but I just felt it was taken to a level that we were saying, you know, as a parent, if she's got the talent, you want to encourage it but you've got to be realistic. ...So she's just started talking about doctors and GPs and things and I think she's realised that that's good money.

Where she gets good money, she can do anything that she wants to, which is fine.

(Georgia, mother of Janet, P7 in a small rural primary in Cluster 2)

As indicated previously in this section, the data revealed that some parents were making preparations in order to support pupils in achieving their aspiration goals. Participants interpreted preparations in terms of parents providing support through encouragement and / or making funding arrangements for college or university.

They're getting me to practise...well, my Mum gets me to do her hair nice and my Dad lets me cut his hair.

(Cathy, P7 girl in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

The influence or impact of the family environment, expectations and work / study ethic on some children's education and career aspiration is evidenced in the following two extracts:

My mum is a scientist. My brother is a scientist. Erm, we're all [into] science. So it wasn't a surprise to say I want to be a forensic scientist. Oh, I want to be a scientist. My cousin's a scientist. My other cousin's a pharmacist. We're all...

(Dirk, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

I'm a scientist. Scientists, we're all in science. Erm, so a forensic scientist, that, it wasn't the science bit that concerned me, it was the forensic, why he wants to do forensic science as opposed to being, I don't know, a doctor or an optician or a pharmacist. You know, we're all in science. Forensic scientist is what he wants to be. It's still science of some description.

(Millicent, mother of Dirk, P7 in large urban primary in Cluster 1)

Millicent corroborates her son's description of the family's influence on his education and career aspirations. This concurs with DeWitt *et al.* (2013) that parental attitudes to science may encourage science-related aspirations. The significant impact of certain families' high expectations and perception of achievement through education and career on some children's motivation and career choice is noteworthy.

The influence of social capital on making children think (or not) about a career at the stage of transition to secondary school is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.

Parental involvement / support and the family work / study ethic are a strong influence on pupils' attitude to and engagement in learning and their aspirations for tertiary education and career.

For certain Primary 7 pupils, the involvement of parents and the family work/study ethic provided a focus / motivation in the pre-transition phase to secondary school.

4.7 S1 students' perceptions

In this study, across both secondary schools, the S1 participants were not the same set of pupils having transferred and followed up from P7. They were a new cohort of participants, providing reflections of their first year in secondary school. The data for analysis was generated from transcripts of semi-structured interviews with eleven S1

students. The questions within the S1 interview schedule were first asked in preparatory group discussions at each of the two participating secondary schools and then used in the one-to-one interviews with the same participants. The data elicited from the S1 students represented the following key interpretations, approximately one year after beginning secondary school: their post-transitional experiences in terms of how they coped with the move – in particular homework; their aspirations for education and career; and how aspirations for education and career might have influenced their attitudes, engagement and commitment to learning - at the time of primary / secondary transition.

Therefore, this section presents data to reflect S1 students' post-transitional perceptions: their views in relation to how they coped with the move and continued to make progress in learning at the point of primary/secondary transfer, and perspectives of their attitude to, and engagement in learning. I will also present perspectives in relation to their aspirations for tertiary education and career, one year after beginning secondary school, and the influence of parental involvement, evidenced through support for their child's education and career aspirations. In this regard, the data analyses grids which categorise the descriptions of Secondary 1 students in Clusters 1 and 2 are presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7.

Table 4.6 Data Analysis Chart for Secondary School - Cluster 1

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Enya	Pupil 2 Josie	Pupil 3 Lenore	Pupil 4 Maurice	Pupil 5 Mac	Pupil 6 Sonny
Emotions at transfer		<i>Worries</i>	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Was worried at first about bullying and cried but there was no bullying
Expectations	Preparations	<i>Induction days</i>	Would like more than two induction days					
		<i>Support through the move</i>						
		<i>Settling in – one year on</i>	It's been really good. You get to the point of thinking about what you want to do when you are older. Having a wider range of subjects to choose from than at primary is good.	Really enjoyed it Better than primary Really like all the new subjects Meeting new people New friends	Much better than primary school Better lessons A lot of clubs Lots more people A lot more to do	Enjoyed S1 Getting different teachers for different subjects	It's been great. I love learning and having new experiences. It's been really worthwhile.	Enjoyed subjects

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Enya	Pupil 2 Josie	Pupil 3 Lenore	Pupil 4 Maurice	Pupil 5 Mac	Pupil 6 Sonny
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		Grades affect choice of university, then jobs	Earn good money		Get into university or college	To get the best grades; Loves learning	Get a good report; Get good jobs
	Working hard to impress people		✓ (teachers)		✓ (teachers)			
		<i>Coping with quantity of homework</i>	No problems	No problems	No problems	No problems	No problems	No problems
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	<i>Desire to attend university or college</i>	Get PhD in Analytic Chemistry at Strathclyde	College in London	Edinburgh University	Not sure which yet	Uni in England	Not sure yet
		<i>Aware of subjects for entry</i>	✓	x	x	x	✓	x
	Aspiration for career	<i>Clear idea of career path</i>	Forensics		Acting		Politics	
		<i>Uncertain of career path (2 jobs in mind)</i>		✓ Childcare or Acting				
		<i>No idea of career path</i>				✓		✓

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Enya	Pupil 2 Josie	Pupil 3 Lenore	Pupil 4 Maurice	Pupil 5 Mac	Pupil 6 Sonny
Parents / Family / Teacher / Peers Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations	<i>Discusses aspirations for education and career with parents, family, teacher, peers</i>	Parents, Career Advisor	Mum, English Teacher, Friends	Parents Friend Guidance Teacher	Parents	Parents Friends	x
		<i>Parents support decision</i>	✓	✓ (will support choice)	x	Not yet – no decision	✓ (though they think chances slim)	x
		<i>Plans in place for funding tertiary education</i>					✓ (parents are saving)	x
Notes			Made career choice from young age, Knowing helps keep focus.	Working harder in secondary than in primary			Thinks aspiring to a job keeps focus	Has given no thought to attending college/university. Has not thought about career

Table 4.7 Data Analysis Chart for Secondary School - Cluster 2

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Valerie	Pupil 2 Cookie	Pupil 3 Derek	Pupil 4 Juliette	Pupil 5 Shelley	Pupil 6 Nil
Emotions at transfer		<i>Worries Concerns</i>	Worried about getting bullied	Worried about getting lots of homework	Worried about getting lost. Got lost twice.	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	Did not refer to having worries or concerns	
Expectations	Preparations	<i>Induction days</i>						
		<i>Support through the move</i>		Some teachers aren't as nice as primary.		I like some of the teachers but some others I can't stand.		
		<i>Settling in one year on</i>		Better than primary Secondary is more organised.		Really enjoyed it	Enjoyed it Prefer high school	

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Valerie	Pupil 2 Cookie	Pupil 3 Derek	Pupil 4 Juliette	Pupil 5 Shelley	Pupil 6 Nil
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		To get good job	To get on in life – get a job	To get good grades	To get good job; Nice house; Earn money	To get into a better S2 stream; To earn money	
	Working hard to impress people							
		<i>Coping with quantity of homework</i>	Wrote it in diary but forgot on two occasions	Try to get it in on time but can forget	Not at all (too much so hand gets sore)	No problems	No problems	
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	<i>Desire to attend university or college</i>	College	Not sure	x	University	University	
		<i>Aware of subjects for entry</i>	✓			✓	x	
	Aspiration for career	<i>Clear idea of career path</i>	Beautician		Work on farm	Midwife	Primary teacher	
		<i>Uncertain of career path (2 jobs in mind)</i>		Special Needs Teacher or Social Worker				
		<i>No idea of career path</i>						

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Valerie	Pupil 2 Cookie	Pupil 3 Derek	Pupil 4 Juliette	Pupil 5 Shelley	Pupil 6 Nil
Parents / Family / Teacher / Peers Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations	<i>Discusses aspirations for education and career with parents, family, teacher, peers</i>	Peers	Parents	Parents	Parents	Mum	
		<i>Parents support decision</i>		✓ (will support choice)	✓	✓	✓	
		<i>Plans in place for funding tertiary education</i>				✓		
Notes						Deceased aunt left money for tertiary education		Audio unusable – distorted and unclear

4.7.1 S1 students' reflections - Emotions at transfer

In Chapter 2, it was established that an investigation of pupils' expectations of transition in Glasgow, revealed 66% of the pupils stopped being concerned about the move within the first month post-transition (Graham and Hill, 2003). A minority (2%) were still concerned about friendship and school work. This research exercise explored S1 students' reflections of their emotions at transfer to gain an understanding of: 1) their post-transitional interpretations of their success in 'settling in' (Section 4.7.2); 2) their perspectives in relation to whether their post-transitional experience impacted on their attitude and engagement in learning (Section 4.7.3), and 3) their aspirations for education and career (Sections 4.7.4).

It should be noted that the S1 cohort from the two secondary schools were not followed across transition and are different individuals from the pre-transitional pupils in this study. This element of the research involved twelve S1 participants; however, the audio for one student was distorted and unusable, thus, the interpretations of eleven students were included in analysis. The S1 students gave views of their post-transitional experience – their first year in secondary school. Their reflections / interpretations described whether they had had initial worries or concerns, and their enjoyment of the year. The following questions were asked to elicit the data:

Research Aim 1: To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives of attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.

Question 1: Have you had a successful S1 year?

Question 2: What worries / concerns did you have about moving to secondary school?

One student in Cluster 1 stated that they had initially worried about bullying but then had no problems. In the secondary school in Cluster 2, three S1 students described

initial worry / concern. One had worried about the amount of homework, one about bullying and the other worried about getting lost. Valerie one of the two who had worried at first about bullying, reported no problems during the first year of secondary school.

Valerie *In case, like, you got bullied.*

EG *And were you bullied?*

Valerie *No.*

Initially, Derek had worried about getting lost, was lost twice but indicated this was no longer a concern.

Derek *It was more like you were rushed and in case people are going to a different class.*

EG *And did you get lost?*

Derek *I got lost twice.*

Limited information was gleaned in relation to this aspect of the study - possibly due to the small number of S1 participants; however, the responses above exemplify the interpretations of the four participants who had mentioned initial concerns or worries. The descriptions provided by these S1 students indicate that the concerns held when they began secondary school were no longer present at the end of the first year.

A few S1 respondees indicated initial concerns before beginning secondary school; however, they had no problems with the issue in their first year.

4.7.2 S1 students' perceptions - Expectations

Chapter 2 considered learners' expectations in terms of their perceptions of their abilities and competencies to make adjustments in the new school. New entrants to secondary school are required to adjust to the rules and routines and a perceived increase in workload as it relates to the quantity and level of difficulty of class work and homework,

which will be dealt with in Section 4.7.3.1. S1 students' interpretations of their expectations in terms of the move to secondary school were investigated in relation to readiness (compatibility with the new school) and resilience (ability to cope / stick in). Questions 3, 4 and 5 were asked in the interview to gather information about S1 students' perspectives in this regard. In general, the researcher found that the students in Cluster 2 were less articulate than those who were interviewed in Cluster 1.

Research Aim 2: To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.

Question 3: How have you coped with the move to secondary school?

Question 4: Do you feel that you were supported through your transfer/move to secondary?

Question 5: Who helped you to settle in? How did they help?

In the secondary school in Cluster 1, although one student indicated that he had initially worried about bullying, all of the six stated that they had enjoyed the first year; whilst three in Cluster 2 indicated enjoyment of the year. References to having made new friends and getting different subjects were provided as reasons for having enjoyed the first year. Examples which typify S1 students' descriptions about enjoying their first year are noted below.

I've really enjoyed it. I think it's much better than primary school... Especially like all the new subjects that we don't really get as much as in primary school, meeting new people, new friends.

(Josie - S1, Cluster 1)

I liked getting different teachers for different subjects.

(Maurice - S2, Cluster 1)

It's better than just having one teacher, but some of them aren't as nice as primary teachers. They are just... they are not as nice to you.

(Cookie - S1, Cluster 2)

However, Cookie's response suggests that although her first year experience of secondary had been positive, primary staff were more supportive. In corroboration, Valerie commented on the level of difficulty of class work and indicated that secondary teachers "just let you get on with it", and Juliette makes a strong statement in terms of being able to tolerate some secondary teachers.

Well, sometimes the work was hard and some teachers just let you get on with it.

(Valerie - S, Cluster 2)

I like some of the teachers but some others I can't stand.

(Juliette - S1, Cluster 2)

None of the eleven S1 students made reference to support by secondary staff; however one pupil in Cluster 1 aligns enjoyment of the first year to having different teachers. In general they indicated that they would like more induction days.

The majority of S1 participants had enjoyed their first year at secondary school. They aligned this to having made new friends and different subjects taught by different teachers.

Some S1 participants found secondary teachers less supportive than those in their primary school.

4.7.3 S1 students' perceptions - Attitude and engagement

In order to generate discussion, Questions 10 - 12 were asked to elicit information about S1 students' attitude to, and engagement in learning. In general, and in line with the perspectives of the P7 participants, S1 students described three key perspectives about their attitude and engagement in learning: working hard as important for getting a good education, linked to going to college or university; getting a good education related to better chances at securing a good job and better chances later on in life, and the influence of the support of parents and family members.

Research objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Question 10: Did you work hard in S1?

Question 11: Do you think it is important to work hard at secondary school?

Question 12: Why is this important to you?

In the secondary setting in this study, pupil interviewees generally related their attitude and engagement in academic endeavours to their aspirations for tertiary education and career. One year post transfer to secondary school, one of the six S1 students in Cluster 1 indicated that she worked hard to please the teachers. The other five students expressed the view that they 'worked hard' in order to get good grades or a good report, to get to university or college, to secure good jobs in the future and to earn money in order to look after themselves. These reasons for 'working hard' in S1 were replicated by all of the five pupils interviewed in Cluster 2. One pupil indicated a desire to progress to a better stream in S2 classes. At this stage of their secondary education, the majority of interviewees made clear links between effort and achievement.

Responses from Mac, an S1 pupil in Cluster 1 and Juliette, S2 in Cluster 2 exemplify interviewees' reasons for continuing to work hard post transfer:

...because if you want to achieve something, you've got to work hard for it, and you've got to be prepared to put all your talents and skills into achieving it, so if you don't do that, then you might as well... because if you want to get the best out of what you do, you've got to...well, I think... you've got to like put in all the work...

(Mac – S1, Cluster 1)

To get a good job and that and...so you can have a nice house and you just don't have to look...asking your mum and dad for money all the time.

(Juliette - S1, Cluster 2)

Almost all Secondary 1 pupil interviewees indicated that they “worked hard” to get good grades or a good report.

They associated getting good grades with progressing to university or college and securing good jobs in the future.

The majority of Secondary 1 pupil interviewees related attitude to and engagement in learning to achievement.

4.7.3.1 S1 students’ perceptions: Attitude and Engagement - Homework

It would appear that homework was not a cause of concern for the majority pupils who had transferred from the feeder primaries to one of the associated secondaries in the study, one year earlier. Of the eleven S1 pupils interviewed, none of the six S1 pupils in Cluster 1 expressed that the quantity of homework presented a problem, whilst three of five in Cluster 2 indicated that they were inconsistent in completing homework assignments and one pupil said that she had missed it on two occasions:

Well, I usually get it done in the time we need to do it, but sometimes I can forget and... you get in trouble for that.

(Cookie - S1, Cluster 2)

Yeah, not all of it [the assigned homework]. It looks like a lot of writing and I sometimes...my hand it goes sore.

(Derek - S1, Cluster 2)

The majority of S1 participants indicated that they experienced no difficulty completing the quantity of homework assigned at secondary school.

4.7.4 S1 students’ perceptions: Aspirations for education and career

Chapter 2 explored the relationship between the development of high school students’ motivational goals as linked to experiences of success or failure in school work (Marjoribanks, 2005; Yeung and McInerney, 2005). In this study, I wished to explore

whether pupils held aspirations for education and career before and after transfer to secondary school. In line with the analysis of data gathered from P7 pupils, awareness of subjects required for entry to their desired course of study at tertiary level, and the degree of certainty that the students themselves held with regard to the job they wished to do when older, were used as indicators of aspiration for further education and career.

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Question 13: Do you think it is important to have a job/career when you are older?

Question 14: Have you thought about what job you would like to do when you are older?

Question 16: Does this [having education and career aspirations] help to keep you focused when working on assignments?

Four of the six S1 students in Cluster 1 were certain about the university at which they wished to study. Mac, an S1 pupil in this Cluster, was also quite clear about his aspirations for tertiary education and a future career, as were two other S1s interviewed in Cluster 1. These pupils were also certain of the university that they wished to attend. However, two pupils who were interviewed stated that they were uncertain about whether they wished to attend college or university (at the time of interview) or about what job they wished to do in the future. One of them - Maurice, although he expressed that it is important to work hard at secondary school, exemplifies this uncertainty.

I haven't really thought about it [a career] much... Nothing really. Nothing that's really plausible at the moment.

(Maurice - S1, Cluster 1)

In Cluster 2, three of the five interviewees indicated a desire for tertiary education and four knew what job they aspired to in the future. One pupil – Cookie, was uncertain with two possible choices of career in mind - special needs teacher or social worker.

One pupil, Derek who was certain that he did not want to attend college, indicated his desire to work on a farm.

I want to be a midwife.

(Juliette - S1, Cluster 2)

Yeah, I'd like to be a primary school teacher.

(Shelley – S1, Cluster 2)

I don't want to go to college...Yeah, well; I would like to work on a farm.

(Derek – S1, Cluster 2)

The majority of the eleven Secondary 1 pupil interviewees were certain of the career they wished to pursue and were aware of the subjects required for entry to their chosen course at university or college.

4.7.5 S1 students' perceptions: Involvement of parents, family members, teachers and peers

Research Objective 2: To discover views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school and whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

Question 15: Have you talked about this with any adults or friends/peers?

Notably, all but one S1 student (Maurice – see extract below) explained that they had parents' support for their aspirations. Parental support ranged from discussions to making plans and arranging funding for university. The significance of the association between social capital and the young person's aspirations was revealed in pupils' descriptions in this secondary school, in particular. Mac's parents, although they were not in agreement with his choice of a career as a politician, were supportive and making financial preparations, whilst inheritance money was being directed at funding tertiary education in Juliette's case:

...They would support me in whatever I did, but they have their doubts about it, but I think it's because politicians are probably one of the least popular jobs... Well, obviously I've got the exams in the next couple of years, so I would aim to get the best exam [results] in the courses that I have achieved [covered], and my parents are also setting out an amount of money for like my university education. And also I'm going to try and apply for a scholarship to get into my chosen university...

(Mac - S1, Cluster 1)

Yes, when my auntie died she left us [money] for me...because I want to go to uni [university] when I'm eighteen. I want to get into college and that.

(Juliette - S1, Cluster 2)

Maurice's description below seems to suggest that he has associated the level (or lack) of support from his parents with his own uncertainty about a career.

Well I don't know that yet... They're [his parents] not acting as if, you know...

They just like, you know...I'm trying to see what I want to do.

(Maurice – S1, Cluster 1)

Generally, pupils indicated parents, teachers (in particular, career guidance staff in Cluster 1) and peers as people with whom they had discussions regarding their aspirations for future education and career.

Yeah, I do talk with my friend.

(Lenore, S1 – Cluster 1)

Yeah, because I have a group of friends who are quite interested in politics, and so obviously I talk with them.

(Mac, S1 – Cluster 1)

I told her [guidance teacher], that's what I wanted to get into. My parents always just said, "Go with what interests you and just don't let anything stop you."

(Enya, S1 – Cluster 1)

Notably, in the secondary school in Cluster 1, half of the students interviewed referred to career-focused discussions with guidance staff and teachers, resulting in clearer aspirational descriptions of destinations for their tertiary education; whereas, those in Cluster 2 made no reference to having discussed aspirations with school staff, as noted in Shelley's response.

Just my mum really, we don't really talk about it at school. Probably, when you go [higher] up [the school] you'll talk about that.

(Shelley – S1, Cluster 2)

The description given by Valerie, S1 student, indicates she has not yet had a discussion with her mother but also evidences a lack of career-oriented discussion with guidance staff in the Cluster 2 secondary school. Earlier in the conversation, this student had indicated a desire to become a beautician.

EG: *Have you talked to anyone about what you want to do for a job when you're older?*

VG: *I haven't told mum yet.*

EG: *And have you had a chance to discuss it in your school with anybody, other girls or friends?*

VG: *Just friends.*

EG: *What about teachers, have you had a chance to say to the teachers what you want to do when you're older?*

VG: *No.*

EG: *Would you like a chance to say to your teachers what you'd like to do when you're older?*

VG: *I'm not really bothered.*

It can be assumed that Valerie was not concerned about engaging in career-oriented discussion with school staff – at the time of the interview. In general, secondary school staff in Cluster 2 had not engaged the students interviewed in this type of discussion, in their first year post-transition. It is noteworthy, that the S1 students in both clusters volunteered to participate in the study; however, the students in Cluster 1 were more articulate in discussing their education and career aspirations with the researcher.

Almost all S1 participants believed they had their parents' support for their aspiration for tertiary education and career, which ranged from aspiration focused discussion to arranging funding.

4.8 Educators' perceptions

This section presents data in relation to educators' perceptions of the impact of transition on students' progress in learning. The literature review chapter established that there is variance between primary and secondary teachers' expectations of pupils' learning across primary-secondary school transition. It was suggested that P7 teachers worked pupils hard in preparation for a perceived increase in level of difficulty of the tasks at secondary school (Fouracre, 1993) and that secondary teachers' expectations are associated with their perceptions of the child in transition - in terms of social characteristics, performance and behaviour (Galton *et al.*, 1999; Graham and Hill, 2003). In this study, school management staff and teachers' descriptions related their expectations to students' readiness for secondary school, in terms of their motivation to learn, and progress in learning in line with the secondary curriculum.

The wording and focus of questions within the interview schedules, which were used to elicit information from staff in education, were similar (Appendices G, H, K, L and M). They were drafted to elicit perspectives about: the participant's responsibilities for transition; expectations and the transition process; aspirations, engagement and children and young people's attitude to learning. Their responses outlined their interpretations

of students' attitude to, and engagement in learning, and the influence of parents and the family work/study ethic. The perspectives of the home-link worker are included in this section.

4.8.1 Educators' perceptions: Expectations – Readiness and resilience

Chapter 2 explored the concept of a lowering of expectations of receiving school in relation to the child's performance (McGee *et al.*, 2003). The following questions from the interview schedules were asked to elicit data.

Research Aim 1: To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.

Research Aim 2: To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.

Question 1: Is transfer / transition to secondary school a particular interest of yours? Please expand on your experience /work on transition.

Question 2: What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition?

Question 3: How do you keep up-to date with emerging data on transfer / transition?

Question 5: What arrangements are there at this school to facilitate the personal/social/emotional aspects of transition?

When questioned about their interest and specific responsibilities for transition, educators described arrangements for transfer, pastoral concerns and making learners ready for the changes in the secondary school setting. In general, responses from the six management staff referred to attendance at meetings, transfer arrangements and information shared between the primary and secondary school. Their responses are exemplified below.

I'm responsible for primary-secondary liaison so obviously transfers are a major element of that. We have a fairly extensive programme of primary-secondary liaison and in particular in the transition year. The exchange of information is ongoing at this time.

(Mrs Grant, Depute Headteacher of secondary in Cluster 1)

My main involvement with transition is attending primary secondary liaison meetings and discussing with the other head teachers the model of the high school cluster and how we could improve transition from primary to secondary... We know the children really well. Once the decisions are made about what school the children are actually moving to, then at that point - if we feel that there are children that are going to need support in the transition process, they are flagged up and we start to talk to the staff at the receiving school.

(Mrs Lane, Headteacher of the large, urban primary in Cluster 2)

Mrs Lane's comment suggests that in her school, the transition process only began when the receiving school for the child had been identified. It would appear that in her feeder primary, the identification of children requiring support in the move, and transition-focused discussion with secondary staff can only begin at that point; whilst Mrs Wright's comment below presents the perspective that the primary school provided the opportunity for the secondary to begin to engage in transition-focused discussion with the children.

We facilitate the secondary coming in to talk to the children and allay their fears.

(Mrs Wright, Headteacher of the small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

Responses from the primary school Headteachers did not indicate pro-active steps to keep abreast of information related to their role for transition. In general, their action to keep informed about the specific issues related to transition was not outward-looking. Their descriptions focused on information sent to the primary by the receiving secondary.

Just by whatever's coming into school, whether it's coming in from the authority, whether it's something that has come up at a primary/secondary liaison meeting.

(Mrs Lane, Headteacher of the large, urban primary in Cluster 2)

I would say that's not the focus. I think we tend to get involved in the nitty gritty of our own children and about how they are progressing, and as I say, we get the initial report, a copy of it back, so I'm always interested to know how they do.

(Mrs Wright, Headteacher of the small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

It is notable that both schools fed into the same associated secondary. Two home-link workers – one for each cluster, participated in the study. The home-link worker in Cluster 2 gave a response that indicated her input with children and families had not been transition focused in the large, urban primary school.

They chose P6 and 7 for the referrals coming through. That was to be the focus. Now it didn't need to be transition.

(Mrs McLeary, home-link worker in Cluster 2)

She had; however, engaged in one discussion which focused on routines in the secondary school, with the children in the small, rural primary. In contrast Mrs Wilson, the home-link worker in Cluster 1 had engaged in transition-focused discussion and activity with all the P7 pupils in the small, rural primary to prepare them for the move to secondary school.

A transition pack bought. This pack was bought for vulnerable children but it was done for them all. And that has been fantastic!

(Mrs Wilson, home-link worker in Cluster 1)

However, she had no input with those in the large, urban primary in this cluster. This was corroborated by the data gleaned from the interviews with the children. The difference in the deployment of the home-link worker within and across feeder primaries in both clusters, has been noted previously in this chapter. Primary teachers'

descriptions focused how they deal with the pastoral aspects of the move. They presented interpretations of a responsibility for the personal, social and emotional dimensions.

I think getting them prepared mentally for the transition, but making sure that the staff when they get there are ready for them as individuals. We do that a lot through the PSD [Personal, Social Development] lesson and it links in with the health. We have done things in class in circle times so if you can give them the confidence so they know they can do these things.

(Mrs Carter, Teacher in the small, rural primary in Cluster 2)

There's a circle time programme that they follow that is specifically about transition - about making new friends and finding out what life's going to be like there.

(Mrs Norris, Teacher in the large, urban primary in Cluster 1)

In comparison, secondary teachers' descriptions focused on their subject and presented a perspective regarding the variance in curricular expectations across the sectors. Mr McIntosh's response below exemplifies the interpretations provided by the secondary teachers.

I would say it's to get...sometimes you find their enthusiasm for maths has wavered a little bit by the end of primary. And we have found that, if – no disrespect to primary school teachers – but sometimes they're not comfortable with teaching mathematics, particularly when they get to level E and level F, where we are coming to more complex stuff.

(Mr McIntosh, Principal Teacher of maths in secondary, Cluster 2)

In terms of arrangements to facilitate the personal, social and emotional aspects of transition, descriptions from participants in the secondary schools in both clusters were presented in relation to arranging induction days and visits. In Cluster 1, P7 pupils were taught science in the secondary setting and participated in inter-sports events in the

primary. Secondary teachers believed that these arrangements prepared children for beginning secondary education.

I mean, we have the induction days in June, which is Thursday and Friday of the last week, and there's [there are] informal exchanges of information to support all of that as well. There's also primary... inter-primary sports and there's a modern languages, I should have mentioned the curricular links right at the beginning.

Mr Plumber, Principal Teacher of Math in secondary, Cluster 1)

As previously indicated, the home-link worker in Cluster 2 did not address the personal, social and emotional aspect with the children in either participating school; whilst the key worker in Cluster 1 dealt with these issues with the children in the small, rural primary school, but not in the large, urban primary. In both clusters, the teachers in both primaries engaged in discussions with the children to address their worries and concerns about transition.

<p>The perspectives of staff in education corroborated the children's views in terms of arrangements for transition and deployment of the home-link worker.</p>

4.8.2 Educators' perceptions: Attitude, engagement, education and career aspirations

In this study, staff perspectives of pupils' motivation to achieve their educational and career aspirations - after transition to secondary school, were sought. I have presented data from the sectors – primary and secondary, together in order to gain insight into commonality / differences in perspectives.

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Research Objective 2: To discover views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school and whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

To elicit information, the following questions from the primary educators' interview schedule were asked:

Question 8: In your opinion, how do pupils' attitudes to learning influence engagement and academic progress?

Question 9: Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?

Question 11: What strategies do you employ to maintain pupils' academic progress at transfer / transition?

From the secondary educators' interview schedule, questions to elicit data were:

Question 8: Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, do pupils' aspirations influence engagement?

Question 9: Drawing from your experience, how do pupils' attitudes to learning impact on engagement and academic progress?

Question 10: Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?

Question 11: What arrangements are there to assist pupils in achieving their specific educational goals?

The data revealed that education staff in both the primary and secondary sectors felt that pupils might be motivated to learn and to achieve if they held an awareness of staff expectations of their academic endeavours. It became apparent that the strategy for sharing these expectations was by way of discussions between pupils and staff:

And they know that... I keep telling them they are wonderful and they can do great things...It's a drip feed thing. The more you say, I'm sure the more it sticks.

(Mrs Wright, Headteacher of small rural primary in Cluster 2)

I think because the way that I teach, the children are very aware of my expectations for them, and the ways that I think, the way forward and how to

improve and the problems, we discuss problems that we have. We look at ways to try and make life easier for both them and me. We do discuss.

(Mrs McDonald, Headteacher/Class Teacher, small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Extracts from the transcripts of both class committed headteachers in the small rural primaries exemplify their conviction that setting and sharing expectations can influence pupils' self-belief in their ability. Mrs McDonald underlines that involving pupils as active participants in finding solutions for their improvement is a crucial element. The Principal Teacher of English in the associated secondary in Cluster 1 corroborates that encouraging pupils and sharing her expectations with them can develop their self-belief.

Then I would say, "This is what I'm expecting and I know you can all do it" and I say that from the heart and I tell them the truth and that... which makes them feel they can do it.

(Mrs Brown, Principal Teacher of English in secondary school, Cluster 1)

However, the Maths teacher in the secondary school in Cluster 2 highlighted that there might be differences – although subject focused, regarding expectations from the different perspectives of pupils and staff:

Yeah. I think sometimes what pupils expect is slightly different, what they think is enough is not what we consider to be enough effort at all, sort of work towards a subject.

(Mr McIntosh, Principal Teacher of Maths in secondary, Cluster 2)

The literature review explored the concept of providing opportunities to succeed in order to motivate learners. Agreeing expectations through presenting goals and tasks that are realistic and achievable is indicated as a technique for motivating learners by a member of the school management team of one of the secondary schools:

Children need to have the bar set at an appropriate high level for them and they need to know that you genuinely believe that they can attain that and possibly more. It's about sending more subtle signals to children that you genuinely believe that they can do it. In many ways, it's not about the words that you give

them, it's about the tasks you put in front of them. They see your expectations but then rise...their expectations of themselves will rise and therefore one hopes that aspirations will do that for them.

(Mrs Grant, Depute Headteacher in secondary in Cluster1)

Mrs Grant corroborates the view that developing pupils' self-belief through the provision of attainable goals can improve expectations and develop aspirations. However, although the class-committed headteacher in a small rural primary in Cluster 1 explains that for pupils, achievement can encourage raised expectations, she expresses clearly the view that influencing motivation to learn through relationship building with pupils is easier to achieve in the primary sector. She also highlights the importance of parental support in providing and upholding realistic expectations:

So this side [the primary children], I always feel are much easier for schools to motivate to learn because the children themselves build up the rapport with the staff so even though at home there's [sic] no expectations, the children themselves see that they can achieve and [this] makes them have expectations for themselves. But the other ones [whose parents' expectations may be too high], I find they're the ones who are much harder to keep going because they can never reach these high expectations that their parents have.

(Mrs McDonald, HT/CT small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Management and teaching staff also expressed the view that there was a role for schools in developing pupils' aspirations, particularly for those pupils whose parents/ families found it difficult to foster their children's aspirations. However, the data revealed that opinions differ in relation to how realistic parents' expectations of their children might be. The extracts above and below demonstrate the differing perspectives of management staff in the small rural schools in the two clusters regarding parents' expectations:

I think it's important that they [the children] do have high aspirations. Having said that, how you engender that in certain children if you don't get the support and the backup from the family? It is very difficult.

(Mrs Wright, HT in small rural primary in Cluster 2)

Although school management and teaching staff were clear that high expectations and holding aspirations could keep pupils focussed across transfer to secondary school, there were differences in the perspectives of education staff regarding whether pupils held realistic aspirations for tertiary education and career at this stage:

Lots of children will tell you that they want to be firemen or they want to be doctors and that can change from day to day. So there are relatively few in my experience who know right from the word go, that that's what they're going to pursue and that, you know, becomes their motivation, if you like, for moving right throughout the school.

(Mrs Grant, secondary Depute Head in Cluster 1)

Mrs Grant provides a view that many children can be uncertain about their career. She suggests that when aspirations are unrealistic, they may be unuseful in relation to providing focus throughout school. She indicates that few are certain and it would be difficult to comment on this aspect in relation to providing motivation or focus throughout school. Mrs Grant's description indicates her belief that children's educational and career aspirations can change over time. In the extract below, Mrs McDonald seems to link aspirations and expectations. She uses the word 'aspirations' to describe the child's expectations of the primary school and preparation for the move to secondary. Her interpretation positions 'aspirations' as a description of expectations. She refers to the "high parental expectations" of the year group. However, it is unclear whether her interpretation pertains to parental expectations of their children's school endeavours, their expectations of the school or indeed their aspirations for their children's career.

I think, yes, they have aspirations. I would say yes, we welcome their aspirations of what they expect from Anytown Primary, and what they can take to Sunnyside High, and sustain. I think they're quite immature in that a lot of their expectations are not realistic. And this particular year group is a year group who have a lot of high parental expectations.

(Mrs McDonald, HT/CT small rural primary in Cluster 1)

Notably, this last extract is drawn from the interview transcript of the Headteacher in the small rural school in Cluster 1, who actively promoted to her Primary 7 pupils the selection of two possible jobs (real and dream). The influence of parents and families, in particular in relation to work/study ethic, was explored previously in this chapter. The Maths teacher in the secondary school in Cluster 1 indicates the importance of this aspect in the development of pupils' aspirations:

It's[about] aspirations... their families have been high achieving parents and have lots of qualifications... the next generation of kids coming in tend to have, not always, but tend to have similar aspirations.

(Mr Plumber, Principal Teacher of Maths in secondary, Cluster 1)

In the extract above, the teacher's interpretation implies that a child's potential, source of aspiration and successful outcomes are the result of the social capital in the family. This fits with the thinking of proponents of social capital (Hogan, 2001; Reay, 2003; Schlee *et al.*, 2008) that the quality of social capital within families can impact on the child's educational outcomes. In section 4.6, transcript extracts from Dirk, Primary 7 pupil and his mother, Millicent, evidence the significant influence of social capital on the child's goals for further education and career. The home-link worker for Cluster 2, another key member of education staff with a responsibility for transition to secondary school, corroborated this teacher's view but also expressed her own perspective on the importance of working with parents and on the impact of negative school experiences on the development of aspirations of both parents and their children:

I think it all comes from the home. You've got to get the home on side. If parents have had negative experiences [of schooling], that's where the trouble really begins. And it's about saying things are different now, as in it's saying parents have a say; although they always have, but possibly they've never had the confidence to go on. And it's about saying, 'I'll speak to you. I'll take that concern forward about your child. And if parents never went to school themselves, or had poor attendance, that is a cycle.

(Mrs McLeary, Home-Link Worker for Cluster2)

The data revealed that education staff – both management and teaching - believed that having defined aspirations can provide focus for pupils across primary –secondary transfer. Headteachers in the two large urban primaries revealed their perspectives regarding pupils' aspirations for education and career and indicated the impact of these elements on attitude to learning, engagement and academic progress. Mr James perceived a relationship between peer group quality and gender with negative impact on some boys' attitude to learning, academic progress and aspiration – despite input from partner agencies to address the issue of their lack of engagement.

It's critical, it's absolutely critical. We, unfortunately, have a small focus of boys in the current P7 who we have identified for a number of years as facing challenges in their academic progress and much of this has to do with attitude and aspiration and street cred [credibility], we think. They haven't fully engaged in the process and we have tried all manner of approaches to deal with this, all the educational psychologists, parents, we've provided extra support in the writing process and we've made some impact, but a number of these children have not attained levels that we feel they may have attained had they different attitudes.

(Mr James, Headteacher of the large urban primary in Cluster 1)

For those children who are disengaged post-transfer to secondary school, Mrs Lane expressed an expectation for continuity of effort on the part of the secondary – “*high expectations of what the secondary will provide*”. Her comments imply a corporate

parenting role for educators and decision-makers in education.

I think if they[the children] are not focussed on what they are doing, if they are not going [to secondary]with a very positive attitude [to learning], then I think we need to have high expectations of what the secondary school will provide for them. Because they leave us, or I would like to think they leave us with high aspirations for themselves.

(Mrs Lane, Headteacher of the large urban primary in Cluster 2)

Her perception that the children leave primary school with high aspirations is corroborated by the principal teacher of Maths in the receiving, associated secondary in this cluster who indicated that aspirations can provide a focus across primary-secondary transfer. However, in the last sentence of the extract below, Mr McIntosh explained that certain children may not do well in the performance-oriented setting of the secondary sector. He suggested a relationship between lower ability and lack of motivation and / or career oriented focus:

I would say it's very important...if they want to achieve in their life, they generally, sort of, can try and focus on that. If they know where they want to go, they're more focused on getting there. If they don't have a sort of goal, some of them will just work anyway because they will understand that things are important and they'll decide later on in life what they want to do. But if they are - maybe towards the lower end of the ability, if they don't know what they want to do, they're not as focused at times.

(Mr McIntosh, Principal Teacher of maths in secondary, Cluster 2)

In this section, I explored participants' views of aspirations. Educators in the research exercise expressed that the family environment - including work ethic, can influence children's attitude and engagement in academic endeavours. It became evident in all the establishments engaged in the study that their interpretations were grounded in the belief that pupils' efforts at school and their aspirations were based on the support and resources of their family members. However, educators noted that the family work ethic may lead to some parents holding unrealistic expectations of - and aspirations for, their

child. From the perspective of some staff, sharing their own expectations of academic endeavours with learners was another influence on attitude to learning. They also believed that peers can influence attitude to learning.

Almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that developing learners' self-belief can motivate them to achieve.

Almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that learners can be motivated if they held an awareness of staff's expectations of their academic endeavours.

Staff recognised a relationship between some learners' aspirations and high achieving parents, in that these children / young people often aspire to careers similar to their parents.

Educators – both management and teachers, involved in the study believed they have a part to play; however they recognise the key role of parents and family members in developing pupils' aspirations. They believed that - for some children, aspirations could maintain focus in learning pre- and post-transfer to secondary school.

Primary teachers involved in the study believed it is easier to motivate pupils in their sector.

Educators recognised that some parents may have overly optimistic expectations, and hold unrealistic aspirations for their child's education and career.

School management, primary teachers and home / school link staff perceived a lack of parental / family support as inhibiting the development of positive attitudes to the child's learning and formation of aspirations.

4.9 Summary: Perceptions – Attitude, engagement, expectations and aspirations

In this study, I set out to discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transfer/transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours. I also wished to glean learners' views of achievement and whether there is a relationship between pupils' education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff – management, teaching

and home link workers. Given that the duration of the transition may vary from one individual to another (Elder, 2007), perspectives were also gleaned from students who were about to complete their first year of secondary education.

Perspectives regarding aspirations for tertiary education and career, and whether aspirations can motivate learners, were investigated. Learners' interpretations of the relationship between their attitude to and engagement in learning, and their aspirations for tertiary education and career in the last year of their primary were explored for P7 pupils and for S1 students. Expectations were explored in the context of the interpretations of learners, educators – management and teaching staff (in both the primary and secondary sectors), and parents, in respect of the learners' abilities and competencies to cope with the change, and make progress in learning in the new educational setting. 'Readiness' (achieving compatibility with the new school) and 'resilience' (ability to cope / 'stick in') were considered in terms of: interpretations of the preparations to support the development of learners' ability and competency to deal with a perceived increase in the quantity, and level of difficulty, of the work / homework at secondary school; and steps taken to address learners' emotions at the point of transition to secondary school. Parents' and family members' involvement, support and work/study ethic were noted as impacting on children and young people's attitude, engagement and aspirations for tertiary education and career, in some family circumstances. This was noted in the eight participating families - where both the child and mother were interviewed. In four of the eight, there was evidence of an alignment of pupils' and parents' aspirations - in terms of education beyond secondary school, and career. These children wished to progress to the same careers as their parents. Children's aspirations were supported by their parents in the other four families.

The data revealed that the majority of P7 and S1 pupils had aspirations for education at tertiary level and/or for a future career. They seemed to associate aspiration for tertiary education and career with why it is important to 'work hard' at school - their interpretation / perception of attitude to and engagement in school endeavours. The

majority of pupils and students interviewed, who expressed a desire for tertiary education also explained that education at this level would increase their potential for securing better career choices and life chances. Perspectives drawn from data analysis (for each theme/code and sub-code) were presented in the box at the end of each relevant section in this chapter. These related to perceptions about attitude, engagement, expectations and aspirations for education and career at primary/secondary transition. In Section 4.9.1 below, generic perspectives are drawn together under the research aims/objectives and the research questions. I then provide an outline of how these generic perspectives inform the key findings from the study. In this way, I aim to illustrate the degree to which the objectives of this research exercise have been met.

4.9.1 Perspectives - Aspirations

Research Objective 1: To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils’ attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.

Research Objective 2: To discover views of achievement pre and post transition to secondary school and whether there is a relationship between pupils’ education and career aspirations and those held for pupils by parents and school staff.

Research Question 1: What are pupils’ education and career aspirations before and after transition from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1) in a Scottish local authority?

Figure 4.1: Perspectives - Aspirations



Figure 4.1 illustrates the pathway from the data to the findings, in relation to perspectives about aspirations. The perceptions gleaned are outlined below. Most of the Primary 7 pupils interviewed had some idea of the job they wished to do when older - ranging from being quite clear to having two in mind. The majority perceived that attendance at college or university would increase their chance at securing a good job and improve life chances. Prior to their transition to secondary school, some Primary 7 pupils perceived the encouragement and support of their parents, and parental aspirations, as influencing their attitude to, and their engagement in, learning. Parental involvement / support and the family work / study ethic were perceived as strong influences on some pupils' attitude to and engagement in learning and their aspirations for tertiary education and career. For certain Primary 7 pupils, the involvement of parents and the family work/study ethic provided a focus / motivation to learn before transition to secondary school.

The majority of the eleven Secondary 1 pupil interviewees were certain of the career they wished to pursue, and were aware of the subjects required for entry to their chosen course at university or college. Almost all believed they had their parents' support, which ranged from aspiration-focused discussion to arranging funding, to enable them to achieve their tertiary education and career aspiration. Staff recognised a relationship between some learners' aspirations and high achieving parents, in that these children / young people often aspired to careers similar to their parents. Some educators in this study recognised that certain parents held overly high or unrealistic expectations and aspirations for their children. They also perceived a lack of parental / family support as inhibiting the development of aspirations and a positive attitude to learning.

To sum up, the majority of Primary 7 pupils and Secondary 1 students held aspirations for tertiary education and for a career. Some Primary 7 pupils, who seemed more uncertain, had two career choices in mind before transfer to secondary school. Some of the children and young people in both sectors demonstrated an awareness of the subjects required for their course of study at tertiary level, and felt that having aspirations for

education and career provided focus for their academic endeavours. In corroboration, some staff interviewed in both sectors thought that some pupils had clear aspirations for education and career, which provided them with the focus required through school. Primary management and teaching staff believed that pupils leave for secondary with generally high aspirations and in both sectors; staff believed that the development of aspirations can be engendered through parents' influences. Additionally, staff had noticed that in some families, pupils' aspirations can be similar to the education and career achievements of their parents and other family members.

***Key Finding 1:** Most of the Primary 7 pupils and S1 students interviewed held an aspiration for education beyond secondary school, and had an idea of a career they wished to pursue. The majority, who held an aspiration for tertiary education, believed that this would increase their chance at securing a good job and improve opportunities later in life.*

***Key Finding 2:** Parental involvement / support and the family work / study ethic are strong influences on pupils' attitude to, and engagement in learning, and on their aspirations for tertiary education and career.*

***Key Findings 3 / 8:** The influence of social capital (the workings of relationships among proximal social structures) on making children think (or not) about a career, before and after transition to secondary school, is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.*

4.9.2 Perspectives – Attitude and engagement

Research Aim 1: To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.

Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of pupils transferring to secondary education on how education and career aspirations influence attitude to, and engagement in, school endeavours?

Figure 4.2 Perspectives - Attitude and engagement

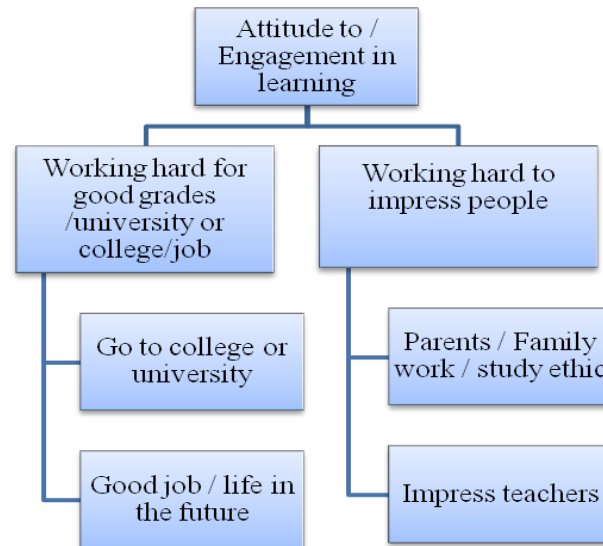


Figure 4.2 illustrates the pathway from the data to the findings, in relation to perspectives of attitude and engagement.

Some Primary 7 pupils perceived “working hard” at primary school as an important element in getting a good education and associated this with going to college or university. The majority believed that potential to do well later in life (get a good job and afford a good lifestyle is improved through hard work at primary school. They agreed that aspiration for tertiary education and / or career appeared to influence their attitude to, and engagement in, learning activities.

A desire to impress parents, relatives and teachers motivated some P7 pupils to “work hard” and for some, the family work/study ethic impacted on attitude to learning and engagement in learning activities. Prior to transition to secondary school, some Primary 7 pupils perceived the encouragement and support of their parents, and parental aspirations, as influencing their attitude to, and their engagement in learning. Parental involvement / support and the family work / study ethic were perceived as strong influences on pupils’ attitude to and engagement in learning, and their aspirations for tertiary education and career. For certain Primary 7 pupils, the involvement of parents

and the family work/study ethic appeared to provide a focus / motivation before transition to secondary school.

Almost all Secondary 1 student interviewees indicated that they “worked hard” to get good grades or a good report. This was associated with progressing to university or college, and securing good jobs in the future. The majority of the eleven Secondary 1 student interviewees were certain of the career they wished to pursue, and were aware of the subjects required for entry to their chosen course at university or college. These students aligned their attitude and engagement in learning with achievement.

In summary, the majority of Primary 7 and almost all Secondary 1 interviewees perceived that ‘working hard’ at primary school equated to getting a good education, which they associated with attendance at college or university, and as a result - increased potential. They aligned potential with securing a good job and improved choice of career. For all pupils and students interviewed, who presented these perspectives, it would appear that their aspirations for tertiary education and career provided a focus for ‘working hard’ at school. Generally, these pupils/students believed that their aspirations for tertiary education and career influenced or impacted positively their attitude and engagement in academic endeavours. They indicated that they were supported in their aspirations by their parents’ and family’s involvement. In some cases, the family work / study ethic impacted significantly on the child’s / young person’s aspirations, in that ideas for tertiary education and future career were similar to their parents’ / family members’.

Key Finding 4: *The majority of Primary 7 pupils and S1 students believed that aspiration for tertiary education and / or career influenced their attitude to and engagement in learning activities. They associated “working hard” at primary and secondary school with increased potential to secure a career and afford a good lifestyle.*

Key Finding 5: *Children and young people placed parents and family members foremost with regard to influencing their attitude and engagement in school endeavours, and their education and career aspirations.*

4.9.3 Perspectives: Expectations (Readiness and Resilience)

Research Aim 1: To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.

Research Aim 2: To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.

Research Question 3: What are learners' expectations of various actors - parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education - in helping them to achieve these aspirations, and what are actors' expectations of children in transition to secondary school?

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the pathways from the data to the findings, with regard to perspectives as they relate to being ready for secondary school, and developing ability to cope and make adjustments in the new school setting.

Figure 4.3 Primary 7 pupils' pre-transitional emotions

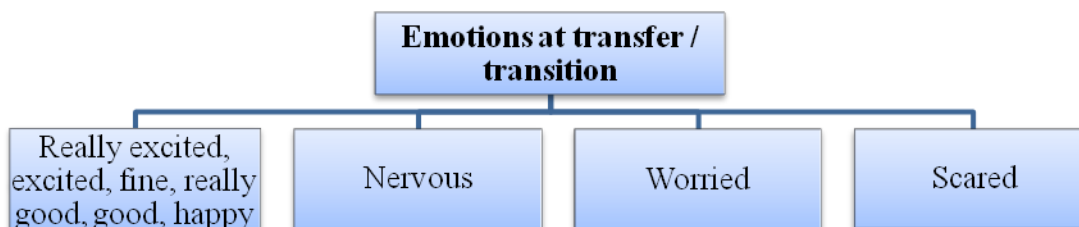
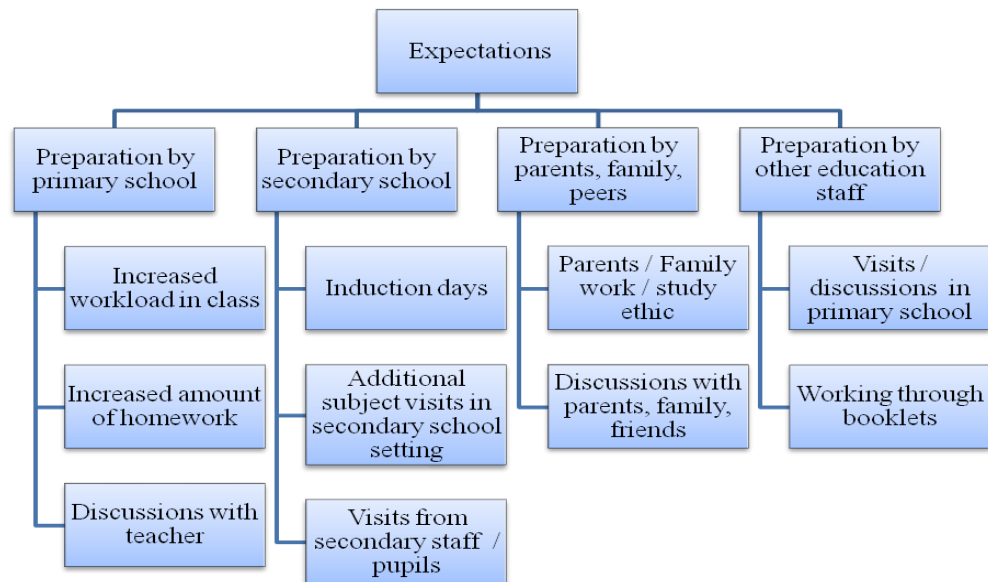


Figure 4.3 illustrates P7 pupils' emotions before the move to secondary school.

Despite steps taken by the primary and secondary schools to ease transition, some Primary 7 pupils still had concerns or worried about the move. They appeared to value the discussions with parents and relatives about how to cope with aspects of the move, in particular those about which they were nervous. For some P7 pupils, their perspective of the move as being a positive or challenging experience related to a concern about their ability to adjust and “fit in” their new educational setting. However, some S1 respondees who indicated initial concern about bullying before they started secondary school, had no problems with this issue in their first year. The majority had enjoyed their first year at secondary school and aligned this to having made new friends, and having different subjects taught by different teachers. Some S1 participants had found secondary teachers less supportive than those in their primary school.

Figure 4.4: Perspectives – Expectations (Readiness and Resilience)



Some of Primary 7 pupils perceived an increase in workload, either in class work and / or home work - including level of difficulty, as preparation by the primary school for the move to secondary school. Several had already made plans to cope with the perceived increase in homework at secondary school. However, the majority of S1 participants indicated that they experienced no difficulty completing the quantity of homework assigned at secondary school.

The participating primary schools' strategies for engaging P7 pupils in discussions about transition varied in terms of format and frequency, within schools and across the two clusters. P7 pupils perceived the efforts of primary teaching staff (discussions and learning activities about responsibility, teamwork, healthy lifestyles and drugs awareness) as preparation for secondary school and beyond. Differences existed in the primary schools' deployment of the home link worker, in supporting P7 pupils' transition to the associated secondary, within the same cluster. The range of tasks deployed to the home-link worker to support Primary 7 children's transition from the feeder primaries to the associated secondary varied across the primary schools within the same cluster. Pupils' enjoyment and engagement in actively constructing their pre-transitional experiences were facilitated where the home link worker had established a relationship through several focused P7 class visits, and through the use of transition focused tasks and games.

Almost all P7 pupils and the majority of S1 students believed they had their parents' support for their aspiration for tertiary education and career, which ranged from aspiration focused discussion to arranging funding. The influence of social capital on making children think (or not) about a career before and after transition to secondary school is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.

Almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that developing learners' self-belief can motivate them to achieve. Almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that

learners can be motivated if they held an awareness of staff's expectations of their academic endeavours. In general, staff recognised a relationship between some learners' aspirations and high achieving parents, in that these children / young people often aspire to careers similar to their parents. The educators – both management and teachers, involved in the study believed they have a role in developing pupils' / students' aspirations. They believed that aspirations could help to maintain focus in learning when pupils transfer to secondary school. They agreed that aspirations should be realistic and perceived peer influence and an anti-work culture as inhibitive to positive attitudes to learning. One secondary teacher suggested there is a relationship between some students' lower ability and a lack of motivation or career-oriented focus, in the performance driven setting of the secondary sector. Primary teachers involved in the study believed it is easier to motivate pupils in their sector.

To summarise, Primary 7 pupils indicated that they engaged in discussion with parents, family members, staff and peers about their aspirations for education and career. In Cluster 1, Secondary 1 students had been involved in discussions about career with guidance staff; however, Secondary 1 students in Cluster 2 had not and one student mentioned that career guidance should begin at the start of their secondary education. Parents and family members were placed at the forefront in respect of influencing pupils' / students' attitude and engagement in learning, as well as their education and career aspirations. This was achieved through discursive support and, in some instances, through planning, preparations and making Primary 7 pupils and Secondary 1 students aware that funds were being set aside for their tertiary education.

Generally, Primary 7 pupils believed that education in their last year of primary school prepared them for adulthood and for life. In the primary school, management and teaching staff tried to engender positive attitudes to school through positive comments to pupils. In both clusters involved in the study and in both sectors – primary and secondary, teachers shared their expectations with pupils / students, believing that they are motivated to learn when they understand the expectations of their academic efforts.

One secondary staff member believed that there might be a difference between students' and teachers' expectations in terms of learner effort and standard of performance in the first year of secondary school.

Other issues emerged regarding learners' expectations of the transitional experience to secondary school. Along with education staff (management, teachers, guidance / pupil support staff and home-link workers) parents, family members and peers were also influential in helping pupils in transition to secondary school cope with the social/emotional aspects of the move. Resources, such as booklets dedicated to preparing pupils for transfer and transition to secondary school, differed in focus and content across the primaries in Cluster 1, whilst the deployment of home/school staff with a remit for transition differed across primaries within the cluster - ranging from focused input to none at all.

It was noted that some Primary 7 pupils held the perspective that an increased quantity of homework / workload was employed by primary teachers in preparing them for secondary school. Their interpretations, in this respect, varied between different classes within the same school, and from one school to another within the same cluster. However, eight of the eleven Secondary 1 pupils interviewed indicated that the quantity of homework was not an issue.

Key Finding 6: *Some learners' aspirational goals were influenced by the involvement of parents, family and teachers. In general, they expected support from their parents to achieve their aspirational goals. S1 students appreciated aspiration focused discussion about career choice with guidance staff at an early stage in their secondary education.*

Key Finding 7: *Primary 7 pupils perceived a role for parents and teachers in making them ready for secondary school. Parents, family members and friends supported the pre-transitional child through discussions about the move. In general, staff in education perceived their input (making arrangements, talks / discussions, work to build children's confidence to cope with the move and induction days) as preparation for secondary*

school. However, there was an absence of written policies on transition and inconsistent practices between different schools - within and between clusters.

Findings 8 / 3: *The influence of social capital (the workings of relationships among proximal social structures) on making children think (or not) about a career, before and after transition to secondary school, is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.*

Key Finding 9: *Some parents and almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, expected learners to develop self-belief in their abilities. Almost all teaching staff - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that learners can be motivated if they held an awareness of staff expectations of their academic endeavours*

To sum up, participants' interpretations were extracted from the data collected, were analysed within themes / codes and the findings of the research were presented in this chapter. The research aims of discovering and developing knowledge of different perspectives before and after transition from primary to secondary school, and investigating perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff were linked to the findings in this chapter. In addition, participants' perspectives were further linked to the research questions, with the aim of establishing the extent to which the research aims were met, and to provide clarity and coherence from the raw data to the key findings. The findings are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings

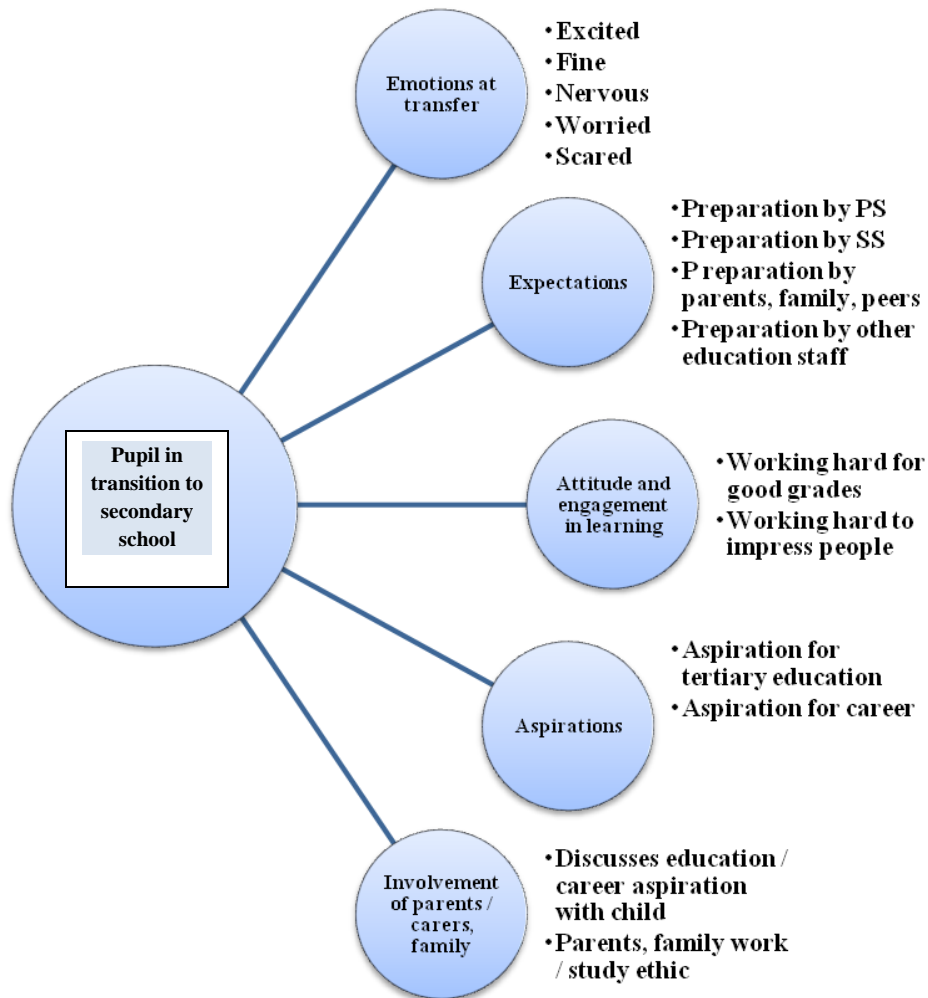
This thesis examined the understanding and experiences of the move to secondary school of pre-and post-transitional students. The perspectives of parents and education staff in both sectors – management, teachers and home link workers were also explored. In addition, the thesis examined participants’ perceptions of how aspirations for tertiary education and career can impact on a learner’s attitude and engagement in academic endeavours.

The review of the literature and earlier studies explored in Chapter 2 established that the transfer and transition from primary school to secondary education is one of the most difficult periods in a pupil’s academic career and that this still presents a problem for some learners. Key studies providing evidence of a post-transitional decline in academic attainment, and concepts in relation to the transition to secondary school were examined in this thesis. In order to improve Scottish education and to address the ‘hiatus’ or dip in academic achievement across primary/secondary transfer, it has been advised that focus is maintained on learners’ performance in the Primary 6 /7 and Secondary 1 /2 stages (HMIE, 2006; 2009). Based on the growing emphasis for educators to address the post-transitional decline in learners’ attainment, this chapter will discuss the findings of this research in light of the learners’ beliefs of how having aspirations for further education and career can impact on their attitude and engagement in learning pre and post primary / secondary school transition.

5.1 Overview

Figure 5.1 illustrates the key themes and sub-themes which emerged from the literature and the research data. The findings from the study will be discussed in terms of the research aims / objectives and the key themes and sub-themes, later in this chapter.

Figure 5.1: Key themes and sub-themes relating to the findings



Note: PS – primary school

SS – secondary school

The findings relate to the perspectives of the respondents in the sample in this study. However, they may indicate some P7 pupils’ and S1 students’ perceptions about their pre- and post-transitional experience in schools across Scotland, in a general sense. Each theme and sub-theme in this study is important to the continuing professional learning and development of practitioners and decision makers in education, in that they can facilitate raising awareness and understanding of the issues, and consequently, the development of reflective practice in transition planning, and in working with pupils

preparing to move to secondary school. Nevertheless, as researcher, I am aware that there are limitations in respect of the study (dealt with in Chapter 6: Section 6.3), and that individual schools, groups of schools and education authorities may already have strategies in place that successfully address many of the issues identified. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that many pupils make a successful transfer and transition to secondary school. The findings, which are based on participants' perceptions, are discussed in relation to the research aims, the key themes and sub-themes below.

5.2 Emotions at the time of transition

Research Aim 1: *To discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school.*

Although the majority of the S1 participants responded that they had enjoyed their first year at secondary school, and a minority explained that they experienced no difficulty with their initial worries or concerns, this study found that despite steps taken to ease the transition from primary to secondary school, by both the primary and secondary sectors, many Primary 7 pupils still had concerns or worried about the move. It must be noted that there were different cohorts of P7 and S1 participants.

In Chapter 2, I put forward that the move from primary to secondary school might be perceived as a time of transformation in educational life, when the pupil in transition progresses through the changes required for 'settling in' and performing academically at secondary school. The "settling in" process often commences with visits: transferring pupils to the secondary school; to the primary by secondary staff and with designated induction days. In the context of primary/secondary school transition, 'an induction period' can be defined as the time and planned learning and teaching activities organised for pre-transitional primary pupils, which is experienced in either the primary or secondary setting. The findings in this study highlight that several Primary 7 pupils experience negative pre-transition emotions or ambiguity of emotions. This concurs with

the findings of Graham and Hill (2003) and implies that specific attention still requires to be directed at the personal / emotional dimension of the move to secondary school.

Pupils transferring to secondary school provided interpretations that described barriers to settling in at the start of their secondary education. In their perspective, immediate barriers to settling in to their new environment were presented as their worries and concerns. Crucially, concern about belonging and fitting in was mentioned foremost by P7 participants, exceeding other concerns, such as academic success. Foremost was getting lost - related to the larger size of the building, establishing relationships with new entrants and staff, and that teachers and routines may not be as presented at induction days. Other concerns raised were linked to their expectations of negative behaviour from secondary pupils such as pranks and bullying, as presented by their peers. This finding confirms those of Pratt and George (2005), who found that pupils experience stress, associated with school transfer, peer acceptance and teacher expectations.

The efforts of education staff (management, guidance / pupil support, and teachers) and home-link workers, other agents such as parents and family members and peers were presented as influential in helping pupils to cope with the move to secondary school. Nevertheless, the evidence from this study suggests that despite initiatives and efforts to ease the social / emotional aspects of transition across the primary / secondary sectors, some pupils still begin their secondary education from a position of unrelatedness with the new setting, in concurrence with de Bruyn (2005). This also concurs with the concept of “loss” (Muldoon, 2007), which was described by many pupil participants in terms of needing to establish new relationships with peers and secondary staff, and in having to familiarise in a new physical environment. Based on these findings, it can be suggested that these elements can have implications for “settling in” and performing academically, immediately upon entry to secondary school. The finding, therefore, draws together and confirms, that some pupils perceive the move to secondary school as an ‘ebbing away’ of support and distancing (Muldoon, 2007) in the context of the more complex social setting of the secondary school when compared to the familiarity of primary school setting (de Bruyn, 2005). This establishes a case for support in relation

to these aspects of “loss” and “unrelatedness” for some pupils, but highlights particular relevance for pupils in transition from small, rural schools to the secondary. Children in such situations may not be transferring with a supportive network of peers and, subsequently, may experience difficulty in establishing new friendships.

A key finding from this research is the absence of written policies in any of the six participating educational establishments – primary and secondary. Amidst the focus on transitional issues within academic research – and at national and local authority level, the research also revealed inconsistencies in the practices of the schools, both within and between clusters. Results emerging from this study draw attention to the issue that the deployment of personnel and resources dedicated to preparing pupils and supporting transition to secondary school differ in focus and content, at individual school level and in feeder primaries within the same cluster of schools. The deployment of home/school staff (the home-link worker) with a remit for delivering specific transition programmes differed across cluster primaries and ranged from limited to focused input. This finding raises a question about consistency of approach for pupils from feeder primaries transferring to the same associated secondary school. An aspect of commonality of approach in both clusters was that both home-link workers in this study worked to deliver enhanced transition programmes for vulnerable pupils, on an individual basis. However, this study evidences that there are some pupils who may not be considered vulnerable - in terms of family circumstances, but who may be positioned to lose ground at the start of their secondary education as a result of social / emotional unreadiness.

It is reasonable to suggest that a transferring pupil’s perception of the move as being a positive or negative experience may be dependent on their perception of their own ability to settle in to their new educational setting, and linked to their self-efficacy - *ability and effort to influence or control events and circumstances* that affect them (Bandura, 1995). The *Transition to School: Position Statement* (ETC Research Group, 2011) makes reference to early childhood and the first educational transition in terms of ‘opportunities, aspirations, expectations and entitlements’. For continuity for the

learner, the educational entitlements around the transition to school and the inherent emphasis on children's well-being, learning and development should also apply in the context of context of primary/secondary transition.

This thesis underlines that primary / secondary school transition is about change. The research enquiry found that pupils making the move from primary to secondary school were indeed aware themselves that it is a time of change. Some P7 pupils recognised this and referred to transition as a time of growing up – not just in preparation for secondary school but for adulthood. Their emotions at the primary / secondary transition stage are in keeping with any change – nervousness in relation to settling in and anxiety about forming positive relationships with peers and staff, and about workload - homework, in particular. In this study, all Primary 7 pupil participants in one rural, primary school spoke favourably of the transitional programme through which they engaged in games and activities, working with their peers and the home link worker to discuss their emotions, worries, routines and expectations concerned with the move. Opportunities were provided for pupils in transition to consider how to cope with or negotiate this change and contrasted with the one-off discussion or the completion of booklets employed for pupils in the other three primaries. This suggests that delivery of a comprehensive programme which incorporates opportunities for transitional pupils to actively and collaboratively construct coping mechanisms, and which facilitates the development of resilience – the ability to “stick in” or “bounce back” (Vogler et al., 2008) may be a crucial element in pupils' negotiation of their new educational environment. Such a programme can impact positively on the socio-emotional experience of the move to secondary school.

5.3 Preparedness for secondary school: Readiness and resilience

Research Aim 2: *To investigate perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts - learners, parents and education staff.*

In Chapter 2, I suggested that resilience – the child’s ability to cope with key life changes (Vogler *et al.*, 2008) - might be a quality required for a successful primary/secondary transition. In this regard, the study found that perceptions of being prepared or “readiness” – the compatibility between the child and the new establishment (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007) and “resilience” (Vogler *et al.*, 2008) can be related to the concepts of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) and social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990; Hogan, 2001; Schlee *et al.*, 2008). The study found that from the perspectives of pupil participants, their parents and teachers, the condition of readiness and the quality of resilience were crucial elements in making the move to secondary school. Notably in this study, P7 pupils who demonstrated “readiness” and “resilience” appeared to be those who had plans for dealing with the emotional / social elements of the move, and for coping with the perceived increase in class work and homework; and amongst the S1 pupils – those who had successfully actioned their plans. This study found that these pupils / young people were forward-looking, prepared and had coped with the move, with some already having clear aspirations for tertiary education and future career.

Transition arrangements such as induction programmes and teachers’ and pupils’ programmes of visits were perceived by pupils as making them ready for secondary school. Staff in both education sectors – primary and secondary, aligned their transition arrangements with being proactive in making pupils ‘ready’. The results from this research evidence that some of the children in transition were positioned in the passive role of being provided with information with regard to adults’ expectations of their behaviour and routines in the secondary school. This concurs with thinking by Mayall (1994) that controls initiated by adults are evident in the school setting, and by Fabian and Dunlop (2007) that in negotiating a position in the new secondary school setting the child must adjust / alter behaviour to fit the agendas of adults. Notably, as previously indicated in this chapter, active construction by pupils in relation to being ‘ready’ was evidenced in one small, rural primary school, where this was facilitated by the home link worker through a programme of visits and games. A relationship had been established with the P7 pupils and the programme of games offered over several visits provided

opportunities to explore issues and discuss solutions with transferring peers. This finding highlights role of the child in transition and confirms the requirement for educational establishments to recognise that children should be positioned as active contributors to their experience. The finding concurs with the claim by Woodhead (2006) that the child should be involved in making meaning, and in participating in emerging and on-going interactions in their social world.

Workload, in particular homework, was perceived to be a cause of worry or concern by some pupils and students, on both sides of the transfer to secondary school. This study found differences in pupils' perceptions regarding primary teachers' approaches to make them ready for secondary by increasing the quantity of homework or the workload in class. These differences were revealed in different classes within the same school, and from one primary school to another within the same cluster. Additionally, students who had completed their first year in secondary education presented differences in their capacity to manage or cope with the quantity of homework assigned. This finding highlights the requirement for collaborative efforts by teaching staff at the primary – secondary transition stage, in delivering on pupils' expectations, in maintaining academic progress and in facilitating the development of pupils' ability to accept responsibility for their own learning. It is in accordance with findings by Graham and Hill (2003)'s study, which established that managing learning and homework across a wider range of subjects proved difficult for some pupils and that it is at transition, particularly at primary / secondary transfer, that pupils' uncertainty with regard to expectations may become evident. Therefore, "readiness" was found to be related to a pupil's self-efficacy, as indicated previously, in terms of having plans to manage or cope, with particular regard to home work. This research finding revealed that some P7 pupils had specific strategies in mind to help them cope with the perceived increase in workload and was corroborated by all S1 pupils in one secondary school where none of the six interviewed indicated that homework was an issue. They had taken action in line with their plans to cope. In contrast, three of the five S1 pupils interviewed in the other secondary experienced difficulty completing the amount of homework assigned.

Another finding of this study is the influence of parental involvement and parents' / the family's work ethic on pupils' readiness for secondary school in relation to the perceived increase in workload. Results of the research evidence that some parents were involved in helping their children cope, through discussion and active allocation of specific time to complete assignments. This indicates the impact of social capital in terms of the relationships and resources within the child's proximal social structures, such as the family environment and establishes its influence on a learner's adjustment to the new secondary school setting, and on their commitment to learning before and after primary / secondary transition. Thus, these key elements can be factors which a learner requires in negotiating their position at the beginning of their secondary education. This indicates and confirms the impact of a learner's self-efficacy – *their ability and effort to influence or control events and circumstances that affect them* (Bandura, 1995) and their social capital – *the intricacy of relationships among proximal social structures* (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990; Schlee *et al.*, 2008), on their primary / secondary transition experience. The research highlights the significant influence of self-efficacy and social capital on attitude to and engagement in learning and on the development of a learner's aspirations.

5.4 Attitude and engagement in learning

Research Objective 1: *To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.*

This study found links between a pupil's attitude and engagement in learning and their aspirations. "Working hard" reflected attitude to and engagement in learning, from pupil interviewees' perspectives. In the literature review chapter, engagement was defined as pupil-initiated effort in learning activities that effect achievement (McGee *et al.*, 2003; de Bruyn, 2005; Yeung and McInerney, 2005), and I explored the concept that engagement is an indication of students' preparedness to make the investments necessary for learning to take place. I suggested that if engagement levels decline upon entry to

secondary education, then it would be reasonable to conceive that achievement levels might also decline. This research enquiry found that pupils in transition believed that their attitude – “working hard”, and their engagement in learning activities were related to their aspirations. This concurs with findings by Yeung and McInerney (2005) that desire for further education after high school and career aspirations are an additional driving force, impacting on student motivation and academic achievement. The study also gives an indication of a link with self-efficacy - that a learner with high efficacy beliefs will work more readily, harder and persist for longer when difficulties are encountered than those who doubt their abilities (Zimmerman, 1995). This confirms that pupils can actively construct knowledge, self-regulate and take appropriate action (Bandura, 1995) to manage primary / secondary transition.

In Chapter 2, I suggested that differences in teachers’ perceptions and interpretations or misinterpretations of pupils’ attitudes might impact on their performance. The study points to the role of staff in both the primary and secondary sectors as vital in developing and maintaining students’ positive attitudes and engagement in learning before and after transfer to the new secondary school setting and, in maintaining pupils’ motivation and helping them to develop a positive perception of themselves as learners. There are, therefore, implications for providing continuity in the curriculum and in learning and teaching methodologies, as well as in practices that shape pupils’ attitudes to learning, their engagement and their aspirations. This corroborates the claim by Boyd *et al.* (2007) that time for dialogue among teachers and sharing understanding about pedagogy can address continuity across primary / secondary transition.

Crucially, according to educators and some transferring P7 interviewees, parents and family members were at the forefront in respect of influencing their attitude to and engagement in school endeavours, as well as their education and career aspirations. Presence of aspiration, as influenced by the family environment, also emerged from the data for most of the S1 participants, who had completed their first year in secondary school. It was found that they also aspired to progress to tertiary education and to an

identified career. When examined within the theme *attitude and engagement*, the majority of P7 and S1 pupils interviewed believed that ‘working hard’ at school is linked to getting a good education. In the context of aspirations, getting a good education equated with going to college or university which resulted in improved *potential - the capacity to secure better choices of career and better chances in life*. This perspective indicated that certain pupils had high aspirations for tertiary education and future career. For those pupils who presented these perspectives, it would appear that this aspiration provided a focus across primary / secondary transition. These findings confirm the relationship between social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990) and academic outcomes (Schlee *et al.*, 2008), as evidenced by the influence of parental involvement and the family environment on pupils’ attitude to and engagement in learning and aspirations for education beyond secondary school and future career (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). The study also reveals that for some pupils, the presence of these aspirations motivated them to “work hard” across primary / secondary transition, in concurrence with findings by Yeung and McInerney (2005).

In this research enquiry, the relationship between the perception of attitude to learning, attending some form of tertiary education and increased potential was strongly linked to social capital as it relates to the family circumstances in terms of the quantity and quality of parents’ resources and the learner’s academic outcomes (Schlee *et al.*, 2008). Pupil participants’ attitude to learning and aspirations were corroborated by their parents and evidenced through the family’s influences - financial, human and social capital (Coleman, 1988), and work / study ethic. A few pupils in this research enquiry aspired to tertiary education and / or future career in the same field as a parent or family member. In these cases in this study, their social capital indicated degree of preparedness or capacity to fulfil aspirational path and ranged from supportive discussions, family work / study ethic to making plans and having financial arrangements in place.

The transferring pupils' 'personal resources' - the prior experiences that the pupils bring to the new stage of schooling and the nature of their experiences, are also crucial to the outcome of the transition for that individual. For some pupils in this study, those who held clear aspirations for tertiary education and career, as well as having parental support, the beginnings of a trajectory were evident. They positioned their attitude and engagement in school endeavours as "steps" towards the next stage. For those pupils who presented this perspective, it would appear that focus is provided across primary / secondary transition. These findings in this study confirm and build on the concept that transition may be conceived as a trajectory – acceptance that change can propel an individual forward, and concurs with Elder (1994)'s life course theory and the inherent trajectorial quality that can impact on an individual's developmental pathways, structured through institutions and organisations.

5.5 Aspirations for education and career

Research Objective 1: *To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.*

The study exposes a need for those involved in education - policy and decision-makers, management and teachers - to engage in professional learning to develop knowledge and reflective practice about the relationships between goal theory, pupils' self-concept, attitude to learning and aspirations. Such knowledge may be crucial in planning strategies to address the decline or dip in academic performance (Galton *et al.* 1999, 2003; OFSTED, 2002; Graham and Hill, 2003; Bryan and Treanor, 2007; Estyn, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008) when learners make the transition to secondary education. As explored in the literature review, *goal theory* (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Yeung and McInerney, 2005; Barker *et al.*, 2006) is concerned with *why students decide to engage in academic tasks* and *student self-concept – evaluations of self*, attempts to explain how motivation, engagement and achievement might be related. This study evidences that pupil motivation and views of achievement are linked to education and

career aspirations (see **Finding 1**). It highlights the impact of having aspirations for the future – for higher education and career, on attitude to and engagement in learning activities. The presence of education and career aspirations seemed to serve as a driving force or indeed provide a sense of purpose or direction for individuals desiring to achieve. Pupil participants on both sides of the primary / secondary transitional experience in this study reported that having aspirations kept them focused. Notably, a degree of commitment was evidenced, in that some of the P7 and S1 pupils in this study had some knowledge or awareness of subject requirements to progress to tertiary education and their chosen future career (see **Findings 1 and 4**). They expressed that this was the reason they were motivated (*worked hard at school*) – to get a good job and be able to look after themselves. For these pupils in the study, their aspirations were the goals that kept them motivated and engaged through school.

A suggestion that emerged from one secondary pupil in one cluster was that discussions about career are left too late and should be initiated in the first year of secondary. The study evidences that no aspiration focused discussions regarding education or career had taken place between pupils and guidance staff in this particular cluster. By contrast, all pupils in the other participating secondary school in the study had engaged in education and career aspiration oriented discussion with guidance staff. Four of six S1 participants in this school were able to specifically name the university they aspired to attend – evidence of becoming more decisive regarding this aspiration in comparison to P7 pupils who gave an indication of what they wished to study, or to do as a job in adult life. Several P7 and S1 interviewees stated that their aspiration “keeps them going”. This finding confirms the concepts put forward by Yeung and McInerney (2005) - that pupil motivation, engagement and achievement are associated, and by Barker *et al.* (2006) that student motivation is concerned with the interrelatedness between goals and academic self-concept. Building on these concepts, I put forward at this juncture, an idea based on the findings of this study that - in the context of education and career, *aspiration is the ambition, objective or goal held and perceived by an individual as a measure of success and which drives actions towards achievement of that goal*. It is noteworthy that Dewitt

et al. (2013, p.1055) suggest that careers education should begin earlier - possibly at the primary school stage.

In the literature review chapter, I suggested that stimulating, motivating and assisting pupils in developing positive attitudes to learning may be particularly necessary before and after transition and transfer in order to maintain motivation and levels of engagement. I also put forward that a pupil's own perspective of achievement can impact on their attitude to learning, motivation, engagement, expectations and aspirations for future education and career. Attitude and engagement in learning activities and motivations to achieve were different for individual pupils engaged in the pre and post primary/secondary transitional process in this study. Some pupils "worked hard" to increase their potential in securing better life chances - university places, good jobs and "nice" lifestyles. Others "worked hard" to impress people – mainly their parents and teachers; whilst a few in both the primary and secondary sectors "worked hard" because of their love of learning. Notably, although many P7 pupils and S1 students aspired to tertiary education, there were no links made between attending college or university and love of learning.

The study revealed that management and teaching staff of participating schools, in both the primary and secondary sectors, perceived that when pupils held aspirations (for tertiary education and a career), this provided them with a focus through school. This finding corroborated the perspectives of the pupils. In general, educators also perceived that certain pupils' aspirations tended to link closely to their parents' achievements in respect of education and career. However, some education staff believed that parents' expectations and support differed from too high expectations of pupils' efforts to none at all. These issues will be discussed in detail in Section 5.6 of this chapter.

5.6 Developing positive attitudes: The impact of parental involvement in negotiating the move to secondary school

Research Objective 1: *To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.*

In the literature review chapter, I explored the thinking that social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1989, 1990; Schlee *et al.*, 2008), as it relates to the child's family circumstances can impact on academic outcomes. I suggested that family circumstances with parental expectations and aspirations for their child can impact on the child's own aspirations and educational outcomes, and put forward that support given to the child by the family at the stage of moving to secondary school can be crucial to a successful transition. As discussed previously in this chapter, the research exercise found that a learner's social capital in terms of positive parental support and the family work/study ethic impacted on pupils' attitude to learning and engagement in learning activities. This was evident through awareness by pupils, and their parents, of the child's aspirational goals and through the communication of parental expectations and aspirations for their children's future. In some instances, P7 and S1 pupils who aspired to tertiary education and career were aware that parents were making plans in order to make their aspirations achievable - setting aside funds or discussing possible colleges or universities. Parental support, expectations and aspirations for their children were communicated to their child through discussion. Therefore, in respect of aspiration for education beyond secondary school, this finding concurs with Coleman (1988)'s concept regarding the three aspects of family influences - financial, human (the resources parents use to create a positive learning environment) and social capital. This involvement and support of parents and family members appeared to contribute to the development of a positive attitude to learning and also concurs with the claim by Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) that formulating a constructive perception of transition may depend on whether change has taken place in the direction that others expect.

The research enquiry also revealed findings that a successful primary-secondary transition depends essentially on the child's internal qualities, family environment (work / study ethic), professionals in education and transition oriented school systems. It has been suggested that the majority of schools enjoy purposeful relations and encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school (HMIE Report: *Improving Scottish Education*, 2006). This study revealed that parental involvement in children's learning reached beyond this relationship with schools to impact positively on pupils' aspirations through direct interaction, communication of their expectations and support of their child's aspirations. Readiness - the condition of being prepared - for the move to secondary school was evident through these parental involvement strategies and establishes the association between social capital and impact on children's educational outcomes (Schlee *et al.*, 2008).

There was confirmation that the parents in this study were involved in helping their child cope with the social / emotional aspects of the transition to secondary school. It also became apparent that these parents significantly influenced readiness for the transition through impact on the child's attitude and engagement in academic endeavours, and the formulation of their aspirations for tertiary education and career. Parental expectations were communicated through talks / chats about topics which ranged from sharing personal experiences of moving to secondary school; indicating what would be acceptable behaviour and planning for the completion of a perceived increase in workload at the secondary stage, including homework. In corroboration, more than half of those pupils involved indicated that their parents supported their aspiration for tertiary education and career and this seemed to impact positively on their attitude to learning, and on engagement in academic efforts before and after transition to secondary school. The study revealed that perceptions of pupils' "readiness" – being prepared and achieving compatibility with the new educational setting, related to parental support, guidance and the family work ethic. This is in accordance with the claim by Fabian and Dunlop (2007) that readiness is a condition of the family. Findings from the study imply that inadequate parental support might impact negatively on the child in transition

to secondary school. Therefore, it is apparent that more in-depth involvement of parents early in the preparation for the move to secondary would be beneficial in effecting a more positive transitional experience for the child.

In the literature review chapter, I highlighted that parent role strain predicts both engagement and achievement (de Bruyn, 2005). The study revealed that this might be manifested through the involvement (directly or indirectly) of parents in the formation of pupils' attitudes and engagement in school endeavours. Notably, in this study, parents and family members were at the forefront in respect of influencing pupils' attitude and engagement in learning, as well as their education and career aspirations; whilst the involvement of peers emerged as facilitating discussions about aspirations but not in providing advice. This highlights the influence of social networks on the child in transition, and concurs with Bronfenbrenner (1994)'s theory of social embeddedness, in particular, the proximal processes which operate in the immediate environment of the microsystem to create and maintain development. The study revealed that the family environment - with specific reference to work/study ethic, had a strong impact on pupils' attitude and engagement. This was particularly evident in the families involved when the child's motivation, view of achievement and aspirations were in accordance with their parents' perspectives and expectations.

The research also exposed a relationship between certain pupils' and their parents' education and career aspirations, producing evidence that the expectations of parents and the family work / study ethic impacted on these pupils' attitude and engagement at the P7 stage of their education before transition to secondary school, to the extent that they aspired to tertiary education and career choices similar to their parents / family members. This was particularly notable where science was indicated as the pre-transitional learner's educational and career aspiration, and concurs with the finding of DeWitt *et al.* (2013) that parental attitudes to science may encourage students' science-related aspirations.

All the parents interviewed in this study appeared to take an interest in their child's education. However, educators highlighted that this is an aspect of their work that can prove challenging, with efforts to engage parents in their child's education and in the life of the school, tending to attract the same parents. Indeed, this may be the reason that the parents in this study volunteered to participate – their perception of involvement as beneficial - to their child's education, the life of the school and on any emergent impact on policy and practice.

5.7 The role of professionals in education

Research Objective 1: *To discover whether education and career aspirations influence pupils' attitudes – before and after transition to secondary, and how this might affect their engagement in school endeavours.*

The research highlighted the importance of educators' role as vital actors who might affect pupils' engagement – either positively or negatively, and emphasises the significance of the relationship between teachers and pupils in relation to developing attitudes to learning, engagement and achievement and indeed, the expectations of primary/secondary transitional pupils. In this study, pupils generally commented on the support from education staff in both the primary and secondary education sectors. One pupil notably expressed that he would always hear his primary teacher's voice “in his head”. However, there was difference in the levels of support from education staff.

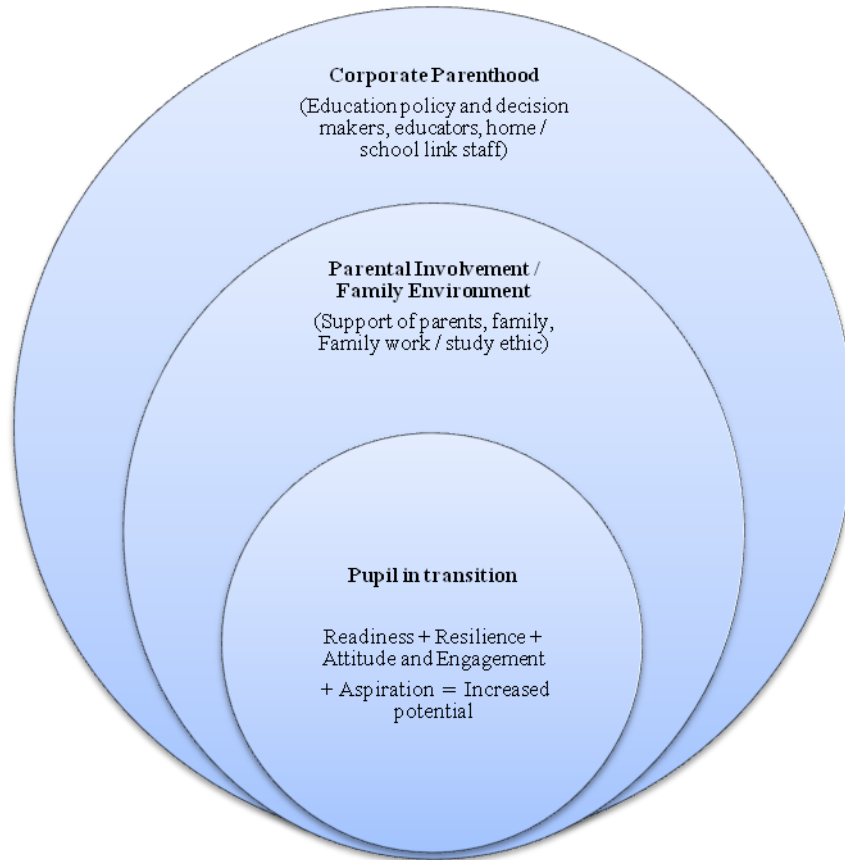
In Chapter 2, I suggested that the child's own ability to bounce back and ‘stick in’ can assist in securing successful school transition. Primary 7 pupils' perceptions of their pre-transitional experience with the secondary school ranged from visits from secondary school management, teaching staff and pupils to the completion of transition booklets. They perceived difficulty in establishing relationships with a larger number of teaching staff. One pupil anticipated a negative change in the personalities of secondary staff post induction days and transfer. This indicates that for some pre-transitional pupils, their perceptions might influence their ability to settle in and perform academically,

immediately on commencing secondary school confirms findings by de Bruyn (2005) that post transfer, the new school environment (teacher and school strain) can have a negative impact on commitment to learning.

The research findings evidence that there is a relationship between pupils' attitude and engagement in learning and their aspirations for tertiary education and career (**Finding 4**), and highlights the perception that parental involvement and support are crucial in influencing pupils' attitude to learning and, in sustaining positive attitudes before and after the move to secondary school (**Findings 2, 3/8, 5 and 6**). The research also revealed that a few children were unclear or had no idea about their educational or career aspirations. It may be that these children were not yet at an appropriate stage of development, or their lack of clarity may have been the result of a less supportive family environment to facilitate the formation of aspirations. Baker *et al.* (2014) highlight the inhibitive nature of an absence of opportunities. This is in accordance with the ETC Research Group (2011) who point to the importance of the "opportunities" afforded through the early childhood transition to school for educators to: recognise each child's competencies, interests and abilities, and to work in collaboration with families, communities and professionals to support learning and development. This outlook can apply to the primary/secondary transitional phase.

The findings highlight the important role of professionals in education in facilitating successful primary / secondary school transitions for pupils; in helping to develop positive attitudes to learning; in developing children's self-efficacy; their concept of themselves as learners and in facilitating the development of aspirations for all learners, particularly those for whom this element of parental influence is not present (**Findings 6, 7 and 9**). Figure 5.2 presents a model which visualises how the key findings from the study conceptualise the relationship between aspirations for education and career and the transitional primary / secondary learners' attitude and engagement in school endeavours. The model suggests a corporate parenting role for educators.

Figure 5.2 Influencing pupils' commitment to learning pre- and post-transition



Drawn from the perspectives of participants in this study, the model conceptualises the relationship between aspirations for education and career and, the pre-transitional and post-transitional post learners' attitude to, and engagement in academic endeavours. It positions the pupil in transition at the centre of supportive networks that influence: learners' transitional experience; their attitude to and engagement in learning and the development of their aspirations. Central to the concept presented is the idea that, from pupils' perspectives they require to be *ready* - self-efficacious or self-regulating and able to make adjustments socially, emotionally and in coping with perceived increase in workload / homework in their new educational setting. The exploration of the literature and research enquiry highlighted the importance of learners' involvement in actively constructing the experience to acquire the condition of "readiness" for the move. The quality of "resilience" (the child's ability to "stick in" and "bounce back" in negotiating

new relationships with peers, and adults, and the new routines in their new learning environment) was also explored in the literature review. The research enquiry provided evidence that parents, family members, peers and educators offered support to help learners' - before transition, to manage / cope with the changes inherent in the move to secondary school. The model conceptualises these perceptions. The factors of the child's pre-disposition, and family influences, should be recognised as elements that can impact on the development of resilience. It is vital that educators recognise the condition of "readiness" and the quality of "resilience" in preparing pupils moving to secondary education.

The model highlights the impact of social capital - through the influence of parents and family members - as foremost in developing learners' positive *attitudes* to learning and their willingness to *engage* in academic endeavours. The model, drawing from the perspectives gleaned in this study, puts forward the concept that parental involvement and the family work / study ethic can provide a supportive network, which can motivate children to engage in academic endeavours before and after primary secondary transition and, in the development of aspirations for education beyond secondary school and to future career.

The key role of education policy and decision makers, educators and staff who maintain links between school and the home, in supporting the development of learners' aspirational goals and in increasing their potential for better life chances in the future, is conceptualised through the model. It implies that the contribution of corporate parenthood is crucial, and conceptualises this role as inclusive, positioned for working with parents and the child, to facilitate development of aspirations and potential for all, including those children for whom there may be a lack of the positive influence, and support of parental involvement and family environment.

The model concurs with findings by Yeung and McInerney (2005) that educational aspirations strengthen a pupil's desire for lifelong learning and career aspirations, and

which may push the student to work hard for better employment opportunities. It builds on this concept by making clear the influential role of parents and educators in developing learners' aspirations.

5.8 The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was outlined in Section 2.10 (Figure: 2.6). The framework was complex in that it drew from, and attempted to unify key theories and concepts from several existing studies related to transition. It highlighted the interaction between two transitional issues that require negotiation by the child – the social / emotional, and the commitment to learning aspects of the move to secondary school, which might conceivably impact on progress in learning post-transfer.

In Chapter 2, I suggested that as individuals may experience, internalise and progress through transition and success in different ways, three crucial factors are essential for a successful primary / secondary transition - the individual's pre-disposition (Schaffer, 1996), resilience (Vogler *et al.*, 2008) and the family environment / parental involvement or support, as evidenced through social capital (Schlee *et al.*, 2008). The study highlighted the need for the child to be actively involved in formulating their pre-transitional experience. It revealed the role of parents in helping their child cope with the move to secondary school, and the impact of parents and the family work / study ethic in shaping attitude to learning, and education and career oriented aspirations. Consequently, I put forward that these last elements - pre-disposition, resilience and parental involvement / family environment - can influence how the child copes with the move. These build on, and are additional to, the five aspects put forward by Evangelou *et al.* (2008) as necessary ingredients for a successful transition: establishing friendships and developing self-esteem and confidence; settling well into secondary school; improved interest in school and school work and settling well into the new routines and curriculum continuity.

The literature review, data analysis process and discussion of the findings examined how primary / secondary transition fits with the ecological concept of social embeddedness and the social ties and networks that shape the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The quality of "resilience" was explored as it related to the learner's ability to cope (Mann, 2004; Boyden and Mann 2005; Vogler *et al.*, 2008) with the changes inherent in the move to secondary school. Data analysis revealed that learner's experience of transition included negotiation of a new identity, fitting with concepts of identity, agency and structure (Mayall, 1994; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007). The thesis explored the issue of readiness and confirmed that actors' perception of a successful transition was based on an expectation that the learners made the adjustments required to cope in the new educational setting (Dockett *et al.*, 2002; Fabian and Dunlop 2007; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

In conceptualising the relationship between attitude to and engagement in learning, and aspirations for education beyond secondary school and for future career, the thesis explored the perspectives of learners on both sides of primary / secondary transition, along with professionals in education – management, teachers and home link workers. According to Yeung and McInerney (2005), goal orientations have been found to positively relate to aspiration outcomes; whilst motivation was perceived to predict educational outcomes (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000, 2002; Yeung and McInerney, 2005). The research enquiry found that learner's attitude to learning and engagement in academic endeavours was related to their aspirations, and that the influence of social capital through parental involvement, support and the family work / study ethic impacted on attitude to and engagement in learning, and on the development of aspirations for education beyond secondary school and on future career. This thesis suggests a corporate parenting role for educators in developing the aspirations of learners.

5.9 Summary

This qualitative study set out to explore interpretations and perspectives in relation to the move from primary to secondary school. It aimed to discover and develop knowledge of different perspectives of pupils' pre- and post- transitional experience from primary to secondary school. The findings in this study emphasise that specific attention still needs to be directed at the personal / emotional dimension of the transition to secondary school. The research highlights that readiness and resilience - the child's ability to cope and respond positively to change within social settings, depends on 'who' the child is and how he/she develops. These states of readiness and resilience are influenced or shaped by interactions with significant others in the young person's life, in particular parents and family members.

The study also underlined that the success of primary / secondary transition extends beyond easing or controlling the situational change or smoothing the transfer. Findings from this study present a case for a requirement for better understanding of how the child progresses emotionally and socially between different stages of their education. The research enquiry revealed that the learners require support in negotiating the perceived demands of the new and different context that is the secondary education setting. This implies that the ecological context of the young person - their separate and rapidly changing social and educational environments, the extent to which pupils transferring to secondary school perceive themselves as active participants, and the degree to which they are involved in negotiating this transition should receive consideration by educators in both the primary and secondary sectors.

The data showed that expectations were perceived by learners in terms of "readiness" for the move to secondary school. Readiness was interpreted by pupils as the condition of being prepared – socially, emotionally and for the perceived increase in workload - in particular homework at secondary school. Support to cope with the move was perceived as crucial in helping pupils in transition to secondary school cope with the social/emotional aspects of the move; whilst pre- and post-transitional readiness to learn

was evidenced through positive attitudes to school endeavours. The expectations of all actors (the children, along with their parents, professionals in the educational setting – management, teachers and home link staff, and peers) were central to shaping the perceptions of pupils' primary to secondary school pre-transitional experience.

The study also aimed to explore perceptions of how aspirations for tertiary education and career impact on a learner's attitude and engagement in academic endeavours. The research generated findings which demonstrated a perceived relationship or association between pupils' attitude to and engagement in learning activities, expectations and aspirations to education beyond secondary school, and to future career. This concurs with Baker *et al.* (2014) that aspirations can affect students' commitments and investment in education. The positive impact of parental involvement in preparing their children for the move to secondary school was revealed; whilst parental expectations and the family environment, in particular the work / study ethic appeared to positively influence some Primary 7 pupils' and S1 students attitude to and engagement in school endeavours.

This study has achieved success to the extent that it has met the research aims of: 1) discovering and developing knowledge of different perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after transition from primary to secondary school, and 2) investigating perspectives of pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences from different cohorts – learners, parents and education staff. It has achieved originality in that it can evidence unification of several concepts in this examination of the relationship between attitude to and engagement in learning, expectations and aspirations; the significant impact of parental involvement in influencing children's aspirations and the role of educators as corporate parents in developing aspirations. The next chapter will draw conclusions from the research enquiry. It will provide recommendations for the development of professional knowledge and understanding of the issues related to primary / secondary transition, implications for professional practice and for further research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

In this last chapter, I summarise the key features of the study. The contribution made to professional knowledge and the implications for change in professional practice with regard to primary / secondary transition will be discussed. The limitations of the study are outlined, with reflection on the research process, and the chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

6.1 Contribution to professional knowledge

The aim of exploring perspectives and interpretations on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations before and after the move from primary to secondary school is laudable, given the emphasis placed by policy, decision makers and educators on this aspect of a child's education. This study aimed to discover and develop knowledge of perspectives on pupils' pre-transitional and post-transitional experiences, and to explore perceptions of how having aspirations for tertiary education and career might impact on a learner's attitude and engagement in academic endeavours, before and after transfer to secondary school. The study avoids generalisation from the data collected, given the small sample size. However, it provides noteworthy revelations regarding perceptions and understandings of having aspirations for education beyond secondary school - and for future career, on pre- and post-transitional learners' school endeavours. The research aims were achieved to the extent that research outcomes evidence perspectives that pupils' attitude to and engagement in learning might be influenced by the presence of aspiration for education beyond the secondary setting, and for future career. In consequence, this section considers the key findings in relation to perspectives of attitude, engagement, expectations and aspirations for education and career before and after primary/secondary transition, in terms of contribution to professional knowledge.

Research Question 1: What are pupils' education and career aspirations before and after transition from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1) in a Scottish local authority?

Key Finding 1: *Most of the Primary 7 pupils and S1 students interviewed held an aspiration for education beyond secondary school, and had an idea of a career they wished to pursue. The majority, who held an aspiration for tertiary education, believed that this would increase their chance at securing a good job and improve opportunities later in life.*

Key Finding 2: *Parental involvement / support and the family work / study ethic are strong influences on pupils' attitude to, and engagement in learning, and on their aspirations for tertiary education and career.*

Key Findings 3 / 8: *The influence of social capital (the workings of relationships among proximal social structures) on making children think (or not) about a career, before and after transition to secondary school, is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.*

The study revealed that the majority of the P7 children interviewed held aspirations for education beyond secondary school and for career in the future, *before* primary /secondary transition and that S1 students held aspirations *after* transition. Degree of commitment to achieving aspirational goals was evidenced by learners' awareness of entry requirements for their selected course of study at tertiary level. P7 pupils and S1 students perceived a relationship between having aspirational goals and increasing potential for better life chances. Some children were clear about their aspirations for education and career, cognisant of the course they wished to study at tertiary level and their future career, whilst others were uncertain with two jobs in mind. However, a few did not wish to study beyond secondary school nor had an idea of a career for the future. This suggests that whilst the perception of learners having aspirations before and after transition might be positioned positively, an alternative viewpoint is that there may be negative aspects for some children. One interpretation could be that children and young people in the pre- and post-transitional phases of the move to secondary school

may not be at the appropriate stage of development to determine educational and career aspirations (Hegna, 2014). Another view is that children may feel pressured by parents who hold overly high expectations of their abilities and school endeavours, and / or whose aspirations for their child may be unrealistic. Nevertheless, in concurrence with Schlee *et al.* (2008) and DeWitt *et al.* (2013), the findings confirm that social capital, in terms of parental involvement and family influences, is a strong indicator of whether children held aspirations for tertiary education and future career. The revelation of the significant impact of the influence of parents and family members on the development of learners' aspirations before and after *moving to secondary school* is a noteworthy contribution to professional knowledge.

Research Question 2: What are the perspectives of pupils transferring to secondary education on how education and career aspirations influence attitude to and engagement in school endeavours?

Key Finding 4: *The majority of Primary 7 pupils and S1 students believed that aspiration for tertiary education and / or career influenced their attitude to and engagement in learning activities. They associated “working hard” at primary and secondary school with increased potential to secure a career and afford a good lifestyle.*

Key Finding 5: *Children and young people placed parents and family members foremost with regard to influencing their attitude and engagement in school endeavours, and their education and career aspirations.*

Overall, the research enquiry provided evidence of a perceived relationship between the presence of aspirations for education beyond secondary school and for future career, and learners' attitude to learning and engagement in school endeavours. Firstly, all the pupil / student participants who described a desire to attend college or university expressed that their aspiration was a source of motivation to “work hard” at school. This indicated that their aspirations influenced their attitude and engagement in learning activities and confirms the impact of education and career aspirations on pupils' / students' motivation and academic achievement (Yeung and McInerney, 2005; Baker *et al.*, 2014), before and

after primary/secondary transition. Teaching staff, in both sectors, corroborated the view that aspirations can be a driving force influencing learners' academic endeavours. However, along with home/school link staff, they generally perceived an impact, in terms of parents' and family influences, on pupils' motivation in academic efforts. This perception indicates the belief - by professionals in education - that social capital is related to educational outcomes.

The findings of this research have contributed to professional knowledge through confirmation and corroboration of the perspectives of learners, educators and home/school link staff, with regard to the influence of parental involvement in developing children's aspirations. Additionally, another contribution to professional knowledge is the revelation that P7 pupils and S1 students perceive a relationship between having education and career aspirations and maintaining motivation in academic endeavours pre- and post- primary / secondary transition.

Research Question 3: What are learners' expectations of various actors - parents, teachers, other staff and decision-makers in education - in helping them to achieve these aspirations, and what are actors' expectations of children at the time of transition to secondary school?

Learners' expectations of actors: achieving aspirations

Key Finding 6: Some learners' aspirational goals were influenced by the involvement of parents, family and teachers. In general, they expected support from their parents to achieve their aspirational goals. Secondary 1 students appreciated aspiration focused discussion about career choice with guidance staff at an early stage in their secondary education.

Actors' expectations of learners in transition to secondary school

Key Finding 7: Primary 7 pupils perceived a role for parents and teachers in making them ready for secondary school. Parents, family members and friends supported the pre-transitional child through discussions about the move. In general, staff in education

perceived their input (making arrangements, talks / discussions, work to build children's confidence to cope with the move and induction days) as preparation for secondary school. There was an absence of written policies on transition and inconsistent practices between different schools - within and between clusters.

Findings 8 / 3: *The influence of social capital (the workings of relationships among proximal social structures) on making children think (or not) about a career, before and after transition to secondary school, is evident through parental support and the family work ethic.*

Key Finding 9: *Some parents and almost all teaching staff interviewed - in both the primary and secondary sectors, expected learners to develop self-belief in their abilities. Almost all teaching staff - in both the primary and secondary sectors, believed that learners can be motivated if they held an awareness of staff expectations of their academic endeavours*

As indicated previously in this chapter, the study revealed the perception of a relationship between learners' attitude to and engagement in learning, expectations and aspirations. The research evidenced that the perception of this relationship appeared to influence pre-transitional learners' commitment to learning, as they made the move to secondary school. Whilst it can be argued that - in educational debates and policy on reducing inequality of educational access and outcomes, there is a tendency to focus on "poverty of aspirations" (Baker *et al.*, 2014), the *Transition to School: Position Statement* (ETC Research Group, 2011), highlights the opportunities that can be facilitated within educational transitions to recognise and contribute to the formation of the aspirations of children, families, communities, educators and policy makers.

The study also confirmed that for certain participants, their perspectives of achievement were influenced by the family work / study ethic. This has highlighted the significance of parental involvement in terms of: supporting their child to cope with the move; parental expectations of their child's academic efforts and parental aspirations for their child's education and future career. As such, parental involvement and expectations

were found to be foremost in terms of influencing learners' attitude to and engagement in learning as they prepared to make the move to secondary school. This suggests that for some children in transition, parents' expectations and the family's influence impacted on their commitment to learning and contributed to effecting continued academic effort when they begin secondary school.

In general, professionals in education (management, teachers and home link staff) - and to a lesser extent, peers perceived their support as contributing to shaping pre-transitional learners' perceptions of their own ability to cope with this transition. In this study, the condition of readiness and the quality of resilience were associated with the move to secondary school. Readiness was perceived by all participants – Primary 7 pupils, professionals in education and parents - as a condition necessary in becoming compatible with the secondary school – in terms of workload and adjusting to new routines, and being socially / emotionally ready. Resilience was perceived as learners' ability to 'bounce back' and 'stick in' when negotiating identity, in establishing new relationships and in engaging in learning in the new educational setting of the secondary school. However the findings of this study confirm a degree of passivity on the part of learners in developing readiness and resilience for the move. There was evidence of learners' active involvement in a specific programme to develop these crucial aspects in only one of the four participating primary schools. Thus, the findings of this study identify the importance of developing professional knowledge and understanding in relation to learners' readiness and resilience in the transfer to secondary. It highlights the importance of learners' active construction in being ready and in negotiating their transitional experience. Such knowledge can help to maintain academic performance across primary / secondary transition. Table 6.1 presents a model for transition-focused professional learning for educators in relation to learners' readiness and resilience in the transition to secondary school.

Table 6.1: Developing learners’ readiness and resilience for primary / secondary school transition

Readiness and resilience		
Expectations	Action	Agents
Social / emotional “readiness”	Support for learners to cope with the move - talking about emotions, establishing new friendships and relationships with staff <i>RQ 3: Finding 7</i>	Parents, educators – management and teachers, home link staff and peers
	Appropriate and consistent deployment of resources <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	Primary and secondary school management
	Appropriate and consistent employment of strategies to prepare learners <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	Primary and secondary school management, teachers and home link staff
	Engage learners in discussion regarding expectations <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	The learner, parents, educators – management and teachers, home link staff and peers
“Readiness” for new educational setting and routines	Support learners to cope with the move – talk about routines <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	Parents, primary and secondary school management, teachers and home link staff
	Support learners to cope with the move – induction, time spent in the secondary setting <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	Primary and secondary school management, teachers and home link staff
	Engage learners in discussion regarding expectations <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	The learner, parents, educators – management and teachers, home link staff and peers
“Readiness” to commit to learning Positive attitudes and engagement in learning	Prepare learners to cope with perceived increase in workload / homework <i>RQ3: Finding 7</i>	The learner, educators and parents
	The impact of a positive family work / study ethic <i>RQs 1, 2 & 3: Findings 2 & 5</i>	Parents and the family environment
	Engage learners in discussion regarding expectations and aspirations <i>RQs 1, 2 & 3: Findings 2, 3/8, 5, 6 & 9</i>	The learner, parents, educators – management and teachers, home link staff and peers
Resilience	Discussions to develop learners’ ability to make adjustments (‘bounce back’ / ‘stick in’) <i>RQ3: Findings 7 & 9</i>	Parents, primary and secondary school management, teachers and home link staff

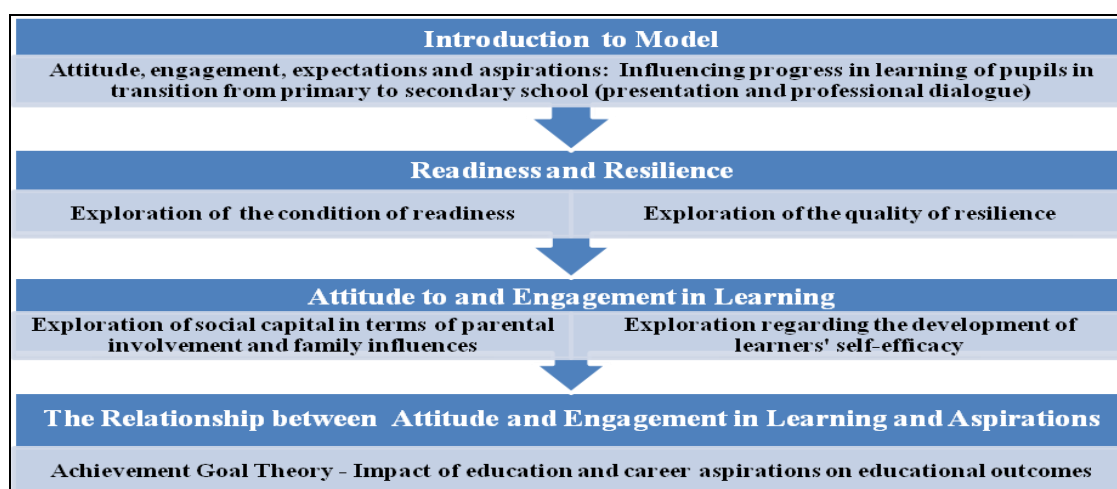
One aim of the study was to explore learners' perspectives of their experience and interpretations of the impact of attitude and engagement in learning, expectations and aspirations on progress in learning pre and post transition to secondary school. Table 6.1 provides a structure for professional learning, which details explicitly the specific aspects requiring attention in preparing pupils for transition. It highlights the essential elements that should be integral in developing educators' knowledge and understanding - in both the primary and secondary sectors - in making learners ready for the move to secondary school. It is important that educators and decision makers are informed of the complex issues that impact on the child in transition to secondary school, and the influence of these issues on learners' academic performance at this crucial stage in education, so that theory can be linked to practice. The results of the study suggest that it is important to raise educators' awareness that primary-secondary transition is still a difficult matter for some children, and that success in its negotiation depends on the impact of the individual child's readiness for (compatibility with) the new educational setting - with the new physical environment, establishing new relationships and compliance with new routines.

In addition, the study highlights the requirement for the development of educators' knowledge regarding learners' motivation - and goal theory, in relation to the formation of learners' aspirations. There is evidence from this study which confirms that some learners' motivation is associated with the expectations of significant others (parents and educators). In this regard, and in concurrence with Evangelou *et al.* (2008), it is important to raise educator's awareness that parents' expectations are aligned with their perceptions of preparing the child for the workload at secondary. Awareness raising and reflection, in respect of educators' differing expectations of learners' performance in subject areas - across the primary and receiving secondary school (Graham and Hill, 2003; McGee *et al.*, 2003) is also crucial. Additionally, professional learning which facilitates educators' exploration of how learners in transition align expectations with their perceptions of their own abilities and competencies will be helpful in developing a better understanding of the child in transition. This will be useful in informing

decision-making regarding strategies to ease transition, and to encourage pupils to commit to learning, before and after the move to secondary school.

It is vital, therefore, that transition-focused continuing professional learning for educators – management and teaching staff - develop knowledge and understanding with regard to: the relationship between pupils’ attitude to and engagement in learning; awareness of the influence of the expectations of various actors (parents and educators) on the learner’s academic performance; the influence of parental involvement and the family environment on aspirations and the impact of these vital aspects on primary / secondary transition. A key finding of this research was the absence of written policy and inconsistencies in transition related practices within and between schools and clusters. Differences in practice were evident in the deployment of personnel such as guidance and home link staff, and in methodology or approaches – specifically, the active involvement of the learners. The study highlights the importance of prioritising strategies and actions to improve practice within educational systems and schools. This suggests that transition-focused developments in schools and clusters can be designed, from an informed position, in relation to the issues outlined. Figure 6.1 provides a framework which may be used in designing professional learning for practitioners and those entering the teaching profession.

Figure 6.1: Transition to secondary school: A framework for professional learning



Bearing in mind that pupils / students are individuals who have developed differently with very diverse actors and experiences shaping and forming their view of the world, including their perceptions of achievement, it is reasonable to conceive that educators and decision-makers in education require an improved understanding of the relationship between motivation and goals in order to plan for raising pupils' achievement and levels of attainment. Whilst planning may already exist within other local authorities, clusters and schools, with strategies and actions that draw on pupils' interests, strengths and aspirations to ensure progression in learning before and after transfer to secondary school, it should be considered that the profession might benefit from further research regarding the levels of knowledge that educators hold in this area and whether this focus can secure increased levels of pupil attainment.

6.2 Implications for professional practice

Crucially, the results of this study evidence that transition activities should continue to meet pupils' pastoral needs – emotional and social, but that it is equally important to address learners' progress in learning before and after transfer to secondary school. This study highlights that there are differences in the preparation of pupils for transition to secondary school, with varying outcomes for the learners. This was evident at all levels within the participating clusters in this study – in the primary school, across feeder primaries and across the two secondaries. A perception existed amongst P7 pupils in transition that primary teachers used an increase in homework/workload as a strategy to prepare them for the move. The deployment of home-link staff and the use of resources to aid transition varied significantly – across classes within the same school in one cluster and across primary schools – rural and urban, within each of the two clusters. If cluster working is to effectively facilitate transition from primary to secondary school, then primaries must ensure that within schools, strategies, such as using an increase in home-work /workload in order to prepare pupils for the move to associated secondaries, are shared by class teachers. In addition, collegial sharing and agreement of strategies and transition-focused programmes may be required, so that all Primary 7 pupils in

transition to an associated secondary school, within the cluster, benefit from shared expectations in the preparation of pupils. This seems to indicate that cluster working should be focused with a strategic plan that addresses all aspects of transition: continuity - in terms of the social and emotional contexts, and progression in academic performance. As such, cluster working, whereby management from primaries and their associated secondary meet and plan for pupils' transition, can be a positive move positioned for ameliorating the dip in academic progress through improved transition from P7 to S1.

Schools working in a cluster - primaries and associated secondary - should reach agreement with regard to strategies on which to focus, based on the individual needs of pupils, and not just on the generic needs of the transferring group. The significant influence of personal resources, social capital and parental involvement in shaping attitude to learning and in forming aspirations was evidenced; this subsequently, highlights the corporate parenting role of professionals in education – decision makers, management and teachers, and home link staff, in supporting the development of aspirations, particularly for learners in certain family environments where children are presented with barriers to their learning.

The research highlights corroboration of perspectives that aspirations for further education and future career can impact positively on some learners' attitude to and engagement in learning before and after the transition to secondary school. In considering future career, notably, many pupils at both the P7 and S1 stages in this study had an idea of a career to which they aspired, whilst other P7 participants aspired to two possible jobs. By contrast, a few pupils had no idea of the job they wished to do when older. Learners' awareness of the subjects required for entry to their chosen course of study at college or university at the time of transfer to secondary school evidenced to a certain extent their commitment to "working hard" to achieve education and career aspirations. There was further confirmation of commitment to "working hard" from the majority of student participants in one secondary school who, one year after they had

made the move to secondary school, had specified their aspiration for tertiary education and career with a clear choice of university. Those learners holding aspiration for education beyond secondary school and for a career perceived that this provided a focus through primary school and across the transition to secondary school. Educators – both management and teaching staff, in primary and secondary corroborated this thinking with their belief that aspirations can provide focus for pupils. This was confirmed in one secondary school, where S1 students engaged in aspiration-focused discussions with the guidance teacher. In the other secondary, it was suggested that such discussions about further education and career - with career guidance staff - should begin sooner, in the first year of secondary school. This suggests a change may be required in professional practice to provide earlier opportunities for learners' engagement in aspiration-focused discussions. However, a good knowledge of the learners - and the method or approach used to facilitate the conversation, would be important to avoid alienating those who are not at an appropriate stage of development.

The transition from primary to secondary school has been placed firmly on the Scottish education agenda. The results of this study evidences corroboration of perspectives that there is a relationship between attitude to learning, engagement in learning, expectations and aspirations. As indicated in the literature review and the discussion of findings in this thesis, successful transition from primary to secondary education is about pupils' positive academic progress and continuity in academic performance, as well as their personal, social and emotional development. Essential to continuity and progression in learning, pupils require to be *motivated -stimulated and enthused* - by the learning activity, and *engaged - actively seeking to learn* - in order to achieve.

The family environment and parental involvement emerged in this study as foremost in the formulation of positive attitudes to academic endeavours; however, this study revealed that some pupils may not have aspirations for education and career at the stage of transfer to secondary school. Results of the study evidence that the expectations and involvement of parents and other family members impact on pupils' attitude at transfer

to secondary school and subsequently, on their focus on academic endeavours at the time of primary / secondary transition. It also highlighted that parents, family members and educators play a part in influencing pupils' aspirations for education and career. In several circumstances in this study, a learner's positive attitude developed as a result of the family work / study ethic. This raises a question whether teachers in Scottish education can help and encourage pupils to aspire – to think about their goals for the future and set achievable targets to attain them.

The study evidences corroboration of pupils', parents' and educators' perspectives that a focus on aspirations might encourage and develop positive attitudes to learning and foster engagement in school endeavours. In primary schools, the approach to discussing aspirations with transferring pupils varied and although secondary staff deemed it crucial that pupils held high aspirations in order to focus their academic endeavours, there was no planned direct engagement in aspiration-focused discussion with S1 pupils in one secondary. On the part of educators, therefore, it would appear that a change in practice is required with regard to discussing educational and career aspirations with students at an earlier stage in their secondary education. Thus, the research provided evidence for the corporate parenting role of professionals working in education in helping, supporting and preparing pupils for transition to secondary school. This role may be fundamental and has implications for professional practice and the development of learners' aspirational goals for further education and career, particularly in family environments where such support is not evident. Nevertheless, it must be considered that there may be a negative impact of holding aspirations at such an early age and stage, on some children. Whether making early decisions or holding aspirations for education and career would serve to fix children's views of their abilities and competencies and / or limit their perceptions of what they are capable of achieving, is worthy of consideration. It may be self-limiting to ask a child to identify with a perception of an adult self.

6.3 Limitations and reflection

There were several limitations to this study. With hindsight and in relation to the research design, Research Question 3 addressed two different and separate elements: 1) learners' expectations of actors in helping them achieve their aspirations, and 2) actors' expectations of learners in transition to secondary school. I have considered that data analysis may have been a more workable and coherent process had these two aspects been addressed separately. This could be taken as my inexperience as a researcher. In terms of the study methodology, several issues require consideration. Upon reflection, the range of issues related to a study of transition is huge and the information gathered was extensive. Although the coding framework was useful in the data analysis process to reduce and minimise the breadth of the information gathered - and an indication given of data excluded for analysis, I am aware that within the parameters of a part-time doctoral thesis, analysis was limited in terms of time and possibly research skills. Analysis of participants' interpretations was from the position of a lone researcher. A group of researchers examining the same material may have applied a different approach and collaborative analyses may have revealed different findings.

In addition, the sample was small as the study was carried out in four primary schools and two secondary schools, in one local education authority. That is not to say that a larger sample would have guaranteed representativeness. The sample size was determined by the research methodology (Cohen *et al.*, 2005, pp. 93-95), as well as factors such as time and the part-time nature of this doctoral study. However, this was a qualitative study and I was seeking to achieve validation through corroboration of data. Another aspect is that there were inconsistencies in terms of how participants were selected. There were only six children in each of the two small rural primary schools. All agreed to participate. Selection was arranged on a 'first come' basis in the two large primaries and the secondaries. Consequently, the study is limited to the perceptions of participants included in analysis. Some might question the reliability of the assumptions made as the study was not longitudinal. Whilst the research did not follow the same cohort of children before and after the move to secondary school, it did draw

on different participants' perspectives on attitudes, engagement, expectations and aspirations, pre- and post transition. It was not a study of transition. However, it is conceivable that different cohorts of children may have different transitional experiences. In this regard, the pre-transitional views of P7 children and the post-transitional perspectives of S1 students may be different in a study which followed the same children across the sectors.

For this study, there may also be limitations in terms of the interpretations offered during the interviews and, as a result, the generic perspectives drawn up from the research. It is conceivable that some children and young people may have held pre-conceived ideas of how the information might be used, particularly as the interviews took place in the schools. As such, it can be argued that the children and young people interviewed might have provided descriptions that may have been "guarded", based on the influence that the interview situation may have had on their responses (Oppenheim, 2004). They may have given answers that felt I wanted to hear, or that their parents and teachers might approve of. Another consideration is that some children may have been less able to articulate their views and this may have affected the quality of the data collected.

It has been noted that some children and young people may describe "ambitious educational aspirations" which are "assertions of a 'good' identity that students hope to realise" (Baker *et al.*, 2014, p.4). This study found that many of the pupils in the sample at the Primary 7 stage - and most at the S1, aspired to tertiary education and career. However, it should not be assumed that all pupils at the stage of transfer to secondary school should have aspirations for education and career. Aspirations can change as children and young people progress through the education system (Hegna, 2014). It is reasonable to suggest that the individual's stage of development might impact on their skills in negotiating position in the new educational setting and in accepting the trajectorial aspects of the transitional experience. It should be considered that whilst children interact with parents and family members, as they grow and develop they experience new and different environments and relationships with peers, community

members, educators and other professionals, who may influence the formation of their attitudes and educational and occupational aspirations (ETC Research Group, 2011).

As indicated previously in this chapter, some children were uncertain, whilst a few had no idea of a career for the future. It can be interpreted that asking children to consider educational and career aspirations at an early stage might be limiting. However, it is noteworthy that links have been made between early aspirations and later educational and career decisions by Dewitt *et al.* (2013) who suggest it may be appropriate that careers education begins at the primary school stage and whose work highlight the importance of parental attitude as an important factor influencing children's aspirations and choices.

In respect of parents' perspectives, the research methodology may have facilitated participation from only those parents who normally would show an interest in matters concerning the school. To this end, the research may have excluded alternative views from those who may not perceive achievement in terms of tertiary education and / or career. It was also noted that some participants used the words 'expectations' and 'aspirations' interchangeably. Upon reflection, whilst the terms are defined within the literature review chapter of this thesis – as they pertain to the research, they should have been clarified for participants within the interview briefing to ensure that the questions elicited clear responses. Nevertheless, the study has revealed the perspectives of different actors on the role of aspirations - and uniquely, compares pupils' aspirations with those of their parents. It reveals the inconsistencies in the practice of different schools, both within and between clusters, and outlines a suggested framework for teachers' professional development with regard to primary/secondary transition.

6.4 Recommendations

This study finds corroboration of perspectives that educational and career aspirations and the expectations and involvement of parents / family members can motivate some

pupils to engage in school endeavours before and after primary / secondary transition. The results of this study suggest that identification and acknowledgement of a learner's education and career aspirations at the crucial point of transition to secondary school might secure continued engagement in learning. As such, I would recommend as follows:

6.4.1 Recommendations for professional practice

As a result of the information that has emerged from this research enquiry in respect of the relationship between attitude to learning, the influence of expectations and aspirations for education beyond secondary school, and future career on some pupils' engagement in learning before and after primary / secondary school transition, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Educators' participation – both primary and secondary, in professional learning programmes that focus on learners' motivation and achievement goal theory;
2. Transition-focused discussions that involve pupil, parents/carers and relevant teacher during the last year of primary education and the first year at secondary school, as required to meet the needs of individual learners;
3. There is earlier discussion with S1 pupils regarding their education and career aspirations;
4. Continuous evaluation and re-assessment of how effectively cluster working procedures facilitate primary / secondary transition – in terms of meeting learners', parents' and teachers' expectations.

6.4.2 Recommendations for further research

1. Further research into primary/secondary transition in all-through schools to explore the impact of the process and whether these educational establishments generate a positive experience for more pupils, than that from separate primary and secondary schools
2. A longitudinal study of learners' primary/secondary transitional experiences, following the same cohort of P7 pupils across primary/secondary transition to the end of their third year in secondary school to discover the role of expectations, how they relate to aspirations for tertiary education and career and to their commitment to learning.
3. A longitudinal study to discover whether having / not having education and career aspirations, at the stage of primary / secondary transition, might impact on an individual's perception of their educational and / or career achievements in later life.

6.5 Endnote

The findings of this study highlights that there are still issues associated with the transition from primary to secondary school. This thesis moves thinking forward through the unification of the concepts and theories explored in the literature, and which emerged in the data analysis process. This thesis found that the conditions of readiness and resilience were required in the move to secondary school. I have suggested that, in deciding and planning strategy - and actions, to ameliorate the "hiatus" (decline or dip) in pupils' progress in learning, which is inherent in the move to secondary school, it is important that educators develop knowledge and understanding of the very complex nature of this transition. I have positioned this professional learning as a requirement in helping and supporting each pupil in transition to secondary education to achieve their best educational outcomes.

The study reveals participants' belief that there are links between attitude to and engagement in learning, expectations and aspirations. A general perspective was presented - that aspirations for education beyond secondary school and for a future career provides can facilitate pupils' engagement in learning before and after primary / secondary transition. This thesis highlights foremost, the influence of parents' involvement and the family environment - in particular the family work / study ethic, in the development of children's aspirations. It postulated that professionals in education – policy, decision-makers, school management, teachers and home / school link staff have a corporate parenting role in supporting children to develop aspirations.

References

- Abell, J. & Myers, G. (2008). Analysing research interviews. In M. Wodak. (Ed.). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. (pp. 145 - 161). Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Alderson, P. (2008) Young children's rights: Exploring beliefs, principles and practice. *Children in charge*, 13, (2nd ed.). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K. & Nihlen, A. S. (2007). Merging educational practice and research: A new paradigm. In *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research*. (2nd ed.). (pp.17 – 57). California: Sage Publications.
- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K. & Nihlen, A. S. (2007). What is action research? In *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 1- 14). California: Sage Publications.
- Baker, W., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E. C. & Taggart, B. (2014). Aspirations, education and inequality in England: Insights from the Effective Provision of Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project. *Oxford Review of Education*. 40 (5). 525 – 542.
- Bandura, A. (1995) *Self-Efficacy in changing societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, K. L., Dowson, M. & McInerney, D. M. (2006). *Unifying the literature on students' academic motivation: A multidimensional and hierarchical representation of students' goals and academic self-concept*. Retrieved December 29, 2010, from <http://www.self.ox.ac.uk/Conferences/2006/barker2.pdf>
- Bazeley, P. (2007). Making data records. In P. Bazeley. (Ed.). *Qualitative data analysis with Nvivo*. (pp. 39-58). London: Sage Publications.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). Perspectives: qualitative computing and Nvivo. In P. Bazeley. (Ed.). *Qualitative data analysis with Nvivo*. (pp. 1–20). London: Sage Publications.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). Starting a project. In P. Bazeley (Ed.). *Qualitative data analysis with Nvivo*. (pp. 21–38). London: Sage Publications.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). Working with data. In P. Bazeley (Ed.). *Qualitative data analysis with Nvivo*. (pp. 59-98). London: Sage Publications.

- Birley, G. & Moreland, N. (1998). Research methodologies. *A practical guide to academic research*. (pp. 28-39). London: Kogan Page.
- Black, P. & Williams, D. (1998). *Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment*. Retrieved November 27, 2010, from http://www.rappsproject.org/RAPPS/Formative_Assessment.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage Publications.
- Boyd, B. (2005). *Primary-secondary transition: An introduction to the issues*. Paisley: Hodder & Gibson.
- Boyd, B., Dunlop, A. W., Mitchell, J., Logue, J., Gavienas, E., Seagraves, L., Clinton, C. & Deuchar, R. (2007). *Curriculum architecture: A literature review*. Report for the Scottish Executive Education Department to inform the implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence. Retrieved January 04, 2010, from <http://www.strath.ac.uk>
- Boyden, J. & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations. In M. Unger, (Ed.). *Handbook for working with children and youth. Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts*. (pp. 3 – 25). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Braund, M., & Driver, M. (2002). *Moving to the big school: What do pupils think about science practical work pre- and post-transfer?* Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Exeter. Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/edu/projs/STAY>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International Encyclopaedia of Education* (Vol. 3). (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Bryan, R. & Treanor, M. (2007). *Evaluation of pilots to improve primary to secondary school transitions*. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>
- Bryne, B. (2004). Qualitative interviewing. In C. Seale. (Ed.). *Researching society and culture* (2nd ed.). (pp. 179–192). London: Sage Publications.
- Campbell, C. C. (1997). *Endless education: main currents in the education system of modern Trinidad and Tobago 1939-1986*. Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies.

- Casanova, P. F., Cruz García-Linares, M., de la Torre M. J., & de la Villa Carpio M. (2005). Influence of family and socio-demographic variables on students with low academic achievement. *Journal of Education Psychology*, 4, 423-435.
- Christie, D. (2001). Primary education in Scotland. In P. Foley., J. Roche & S. Tucker. (Eds.). *Children in society: contemporary theory, policy and practice*. (pp. 151-159). The Open University.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). Interviews. In *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.). (pp. 266-292). London and New York: Routedledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). Research design issues: Planning research. In *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.) (pp. 73-90). London and New York: Routedledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). Sampling. In *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.). (pp. 92-104). London and New York: Routedledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). The nature of inquiry. In *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.). (pp. 3-44). London and New York: Routedledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). Validity and reliability. In *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.). (pp. 105-132). London and New York: Routedledge Falmer.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94
- Coleman, J. S. (1989). The family, the community, and the future of education. In W. Weston (Ed.). *Education and the American Family* (pp.168–185). New York: New York University Press.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social capital*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- De Bruyn, E. H. (2005). Role strain, engagement and academic achievement in early adolescence. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 1, 15-27. Retrieved July 19, 2006, from <http://www.metapress.com>
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

- Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupils' achievements and adjustment: A literature review*. Research Report No. 443. Retrieved March 11, 2012, from <http://www.dfes.go.uk/research>
- DeWitt, J., Osborne, J., Archer, L., Dillon, J., Willis, B. & Wong, B. (2013). Young children's aspirations in science: The unequivocal, the uncertain and the unthinkable. *International Journal of Science Education*, 35(6) 1037-1063. Retrieved June 14, 2015, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2011.608197>
- Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2007a). Children's transition to school: Changing expectations. In Dunlop, A. W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.). *Informing transitions in the early years: Research, policy and practice*. (pp. 92-103). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2007b). *Transitions to school: Perceptions, expectations, experiences*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Eccles, J. S. & Midgley, C. (1989). Stage / environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for early adolescents. In Ames, R. E. & Ames, C. (Eds.). *Research on motivation in education*. (pp. 139 – 186) New York: Academic Press.
- Eccles, J. S. & Midgley, C. (1990). Changes in academic motivation and self-perception during early adolescence. In Montemayor, R., Adams, G. R. & Gullotta, T. P. (Eds.). *From childhood to adolescence: A transitional period? Advances in adolescent development*. (pp. 134 – 152) London: Sage Publications Ltd. Retrieved May 6, 2015, from <http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/garp/articles/eccles90g.pdf>
- Eccles, J. S. & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 109 – 132.
- Ecclestone, K. (2007). *Lost and found in transition: the implications of 'identity', 'agency' and 'structure' for educational goals and practices*. Paper presented at the Researching Transitions in Life-Long Learning Conference", University of Stirling. Retrieved October, 02, 2010, from http://crl.gcal.ac.uk/docs/Conf07/keynote_ecclestone.doc
- Ecclestone, K. (2007). *Managing educational transitions: implications for policy and practice*. Paper presented at the 'Transforming transitions', International Transitions Research Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. April 11-13, 2007.

- Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group. (2011). *Transition to school: Position statement*. Albury-Wodonga: Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education, Charles Sturt University. Retrieved May 14, 2015, from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ripple/publications/index.htm>
- Elder, G. H. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(1), 4 – 15. Retrieved November 20, 2010, from <http://www.colorado.edu/ibs>
- Elder, G. H. (1998). The life course as developmental theory: *Child Development*, 69(1)1-12.
- Elder, G. H., Johnson, M. K. & Crosnoe, R. (2003) The emergence and development of life course theory. In Mortimer, J. T. & Shanahan, M. J. (Eds). *Handbook of the lifecourse*. (pp. 3-22). New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.
- Elder, G. H. (2007). Bringing context to human development: A tribute to Urie Bronfenbrenner. Keynote at ‘Transforming Transitions’, International Transitions Research Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. April 11-13, 2007.
- Evangelou et al. (2008). *What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?* Research Report No. DCSF-RR019. Department for children, schools and families. University of London.
- Fabian, H. (2002). *Children Starting School: A guide to successful transitions and transfers for teachers and assistants*. London, UK: David Fulton Publishers.
- Fabian H. (2007) Informing transitions. In Dunlop, A. W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.). *Informing transitions in the early years: Research, policy and practice*. (pp. 3-20). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Fabian, H. & Dunlop, A. W. (2007). Outcomes of good practice in transition processes for children entering primary school. *Early Childhood Development*. Working Paper 42. Bernard van Leer Foundation. The Hague, Netherlands.
- Fenzel, L. M. (2000). Prospective study of changes in global self-worth and strain during the transition to middle school. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 20, 93-116.
- Fink, A. (2005). Reviewing the literature: Why? For whom? How? In *Conducting research literature reviews: From internet to paper*. (2nd ed.) (pp. 3-13). London: Sage.

- Fouracre, S. (1993). Pupils' expectations of the transition from primary to secondary school. *Research in Education*, 53, Glasgow: The Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Frank, K. A. & Yasimoto, J. Y. (1998). Linking action to social structure with a system: Social capital within and between subgroups. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 642-686.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Cook, T. D., Eccles, J., Elder, G. H., & Sameroff, A. (2000). (Eds.). *Managing to make it. Urban families and adolescent success*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Galton, M., Comber, C. & Pell, T. (2002). The consequences of transfer for pupils: Attitudes and attainment. In M. Hargreaves. (Ed.). *Transfer from the primary classroom: 20 years on* (pp. 131 - 158). London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Galton, M., Gray, J. & Rudduck, J. (1999). *The impact of school transitions and transfers on pupil progress and attainment: A review*. Research Report 131. Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.slamnet.org.uk>
- Galton, M., Gray, J. & Rudduck, J. (2003). *Transfer and transitions in the middle years of schooling (7-14): Continuities and discontinuities in learning*. Research Report RR443. Retrieved February 02, 2008, from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research>
- Galton, M. & Hargreaves, L. (2002). Transfer: a future agenda. In L. Hargreaves & M. Galton (Eds.) *Transfer from the primary classroom: 20 years on* (pp. 185 - 202). London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Gibbons, S. & Telhaj, S. (2006). *Peer effects and pupil attainment: Evidence from secondary school transition*. Research Report. London: Centre for the Economics of Education.
- Gibson, W. & Brown, A. ((2009). *Working with qualitative data*. London: Sage.
- Gnaldi, M., Schagen, I., Twist, L. & Morrison, J. (2005). Attitude items and low ability students: The need for a cautious approach to interpretation. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 2, 103-113.
- Graham, C. & Hill, M. (2003). *The transition to secondary school*. Research Report. Glasgow Centre for the Child & Society. University of Glasgow.
- Greenbank, P. (2003) The role of values in educational research: The case for reflexivity. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(6), 791 – 801.

- Griebel, W. & Berwanger, D. (2006). Transition from primary school to secondary school in Germany. *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood*, 2, 32-38.
- Hargreaves, L. & Pell, T. (2002). Patterns of pupil behaviour in the transfer schools. In L. Hargreaves & M. Galton (Eds.) *Transfer from the primary classroom: 20 years on* (pp. 159 - 184). London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Hart, C. (1998). Argumentation analysis. In *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. (pp. 79-108). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (1998). Classifying and reading research. In *Doing a literature review. Releasing the social science research imagination*. (pp. 44-78). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (1998). Organising and expressing ideas. In *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. (pp.109-143). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (1998). The literature review in research. In: *Doing a literature review. Releasing the social science research imagination*. (pp. 1-25). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (2001). Finding journal articles. In *Doing a literature search: A comprehensive guide for the social sciences*. (pp.79-93). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (2001). The purpose of searching the literature. In *Doing a literature search: A comprehensive guide for the social sciences*. (pp. 2-21). London: Sage.
- Hart, C. (2001). Using the internet for literature searching. In *Doing a literature search: A comprehensive guide for the social sciences*. (pp.128-143). London: Sage.
- Hegna, K. (2014). Changing educational aspirations in the choice of and transition to post-compulsory schooling—a three-wave longitudinal study of Oslo youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(5), 592-613.
- Herr, K. & Anderson, G. L. (2005). The continuum of positionality in action research. In *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hitchcock, G. & Hughes, D. (1995). *Research and the teacher*. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- HM Inspectorate of Education. (2002). *Changing schools: Evaluation of the effectiveness of transfer arrangements at age 11*. Edinburgh.
- HM Inspectorate of Education. (2004). *The sum of its parts? The development of integrated community schools in Scotland*. Edinburgh.

- HM Inspectorate of Education. (2006). *How Good Is Our School? - The Journey to Excellence*. Edinburgh.
- HM Inspectorate of Education. (2006). *Improving Scottish Education*. Edinburgh.
- HM Inspectorate of Education. (2009). *Improving Scottish Education: A report by HMIE on Inspection and Review 2005 – 2008*. Livingston.
- HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. (2008). *The impact of transition plans: An evaluation of the use of transition plans by primary-secondary school partnerships to improve the quality of learning and standards*. Retrieved February 21, 2009, from <http://www.estyn.gov.uk>
- Hogan, M. J. (2001). Social capital: potential in family social sciences. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 30, 151–155.
- Jacobs, N. H., D. (2005). Do parents make a difference to children's academic achievement? Differences between parents of higher and lower achieving students. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 4, 431-448.
- James, A. & Prout, A., (1997). *Constructing and re-constructing childhood. Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Jindal-Snape, D. & Foggie, J. (2008). A holistic approach to primary-secondary transitions. *Improving schools*. 11(1) 5 – 18. Retrieved December 31, 2010, from <http://www.imp.sagepub.com/content/11/1/5>
- Jindal-Snape, D. (2010) *Educational transitions: Moving stories from around the world*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kärkkäinen, R. & Rätty, H. (2010). Parents' and teachers' views of the child's academic potential. *Journal of Educational Studies*. 36, 2, 229–232, Department of Psychology, University of Joensuu, Finland. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. Retrieved November 28, 2010, from <http://www.tandfonline.com>
- Keddie, A. (2006). Pedagogies and critical reflection; key understandings for transformative gender justice. *Gender and Education*, 18, 99–114.
- Krzyzanowski, M. (2008). Analysing focus group discussions. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyzanowski (Eds.). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. (pp. 162 – 181). Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications.
- London, N. A. (1989). Selecting students for secondary education in a developing society: The case of Trinidad and Tobago. *McGill Journal of Education*, 24(3), 281 – 292. Retrieved December 21, 2010, from <http://mje.mcgill.ca/index.php/MJE/article/view/7880/5809>
- Marjoribanks, K. (2003). Family background, individual and environmental influences, aspirations and young adults' educational attainment: A follow-up study [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 2/3, 233 – 242. Retrieved July 19, 2006, from <http://www.metapress.com>
- Marjoribanks, K. (2005). Family environments and children's outcomes [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 6, 647-657.
- Mann, G. (2004). Separated children. Care and support in context. In J. Boyden & J. de Berry (Eds.). *Children and youth on the front line, Ethnography, armed conflict and displacement*. (pp. 3-22). Oxford: Berghahn.
- Margetts, K. (2002). Transition to school: Complexity and diversity. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*. 10(2),103-114.
- Margetts, K. (2007). Understanding and supporting children: Shaping transition processes. In Dunlop, A. W. & Fabian, H. (Eds.). *Informing transitions in the early years: Research, policy and practice*. (pp.107-119). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Mayall, B. (1994). Children in action at home and at school. In B. Mayall (Ed.). *Children's childhoods observed and experienced*. (pp. 114 – 127). London and New York: Falmer Press
- McGee, C., Ward, R., Gibbons, J. & Harlow, A. (2003). *Transition to secondary school: a literature review* [Electronic Version]. Research Report. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from [http:// www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)
- MacKenzie, J. (2010). *Family learning: Engaging with parents*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. A. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis*. (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

- Monk, J. & Silman, C. (2011). Active learning: reflections on research into children's learning and development. In J. Monk & C. Silman. (Eds.). *Active learning in primary classrooms: A case study approach*. (pp. 15 – 29). Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman.
- Muldoon, J. (2007). Losing more than they gain? Reflections on children's experience of transition to secondary school. In *Transforming Transitions*. International Transitions Research Conference Proceedings. Glasgow, University of Strathclyde.
- Murdoch, K. & Wilson, J. (2008). All together now: Helping students to work collaboratively. In K. Murdoch & J. Wilson. (Eds.). *Creating a learner-centred primary classroom: Learner-centred strategic teaching*. (pp. 24 – 34). London: Routledge.
- Niemi, N. (2005). The emperor has no clothes: examining the impossible relationship between gendered and academic identities in middle school students. *Gender and Education, 17*, 483–497.
- Oberhuber, F. & Krzyzanowski, M. (2008). Discourse analysis and ethnography. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyzanowski (Eds.). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. (pp. 182 - 203). Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. (2002). *Changing schools: Evaluation of the effectiveness of transfer arrangements at age 11*. Retrieved February 20, 2008, from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>
- Opie, C. (2004) (Eds.). *Doing educational research: A guide to first time researchers*. London: Sage Publications
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). Statistical analysis. In *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (pp. 279 - 290). London and New York: Continuum.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). Standardised interviews. In *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (pp. 81 - 99). London and New York: Continuum.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). The exploratory interview. In *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (pp. 65 - 80). London and New York: Continuum.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). Some basic measurement theory. In *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (pp. 150 173). London and New York: Continuum.

- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). Data processing. In *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (pp. 261 - 278). London and New York: Continuum.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *The programme for international student assessment (PISA)*.
- Pooley, J. A., Cohen, L. & Pike, L. T. (2005). Can sense of community inform social capital? *The Social Science Journal*. 42, 71–79. Retrieved January, 12, 2012, from [http:// www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)
- Pratt, S. & George, R. (2005) Transferring friendships: Girls’ and boys’ friendships in the transition from primary to secondary school. *Children & Society*, 19(1), 16 – 26.
- Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (2004). (Eds.). Focus group and interaction. In *Focus Group Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (2004). (Eds.). Producing participation. In *Focus Group Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Punch, S. (2003). “You’d better talk to my son because he knows more than me.”: Primary education and youth transitions in rural Bolivia. Paper presented at an inter-disciplinary research symposium. *Uncertain transitions: Youth in a comparative perspective*, University of Edinburgh, June 27, 2003.
- Punch, K. F. (2005). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. (2nd Ed.). London: Sage
- Reay, D. (2003). The limits of ‘choice’: Children and inner city schooling. *Sociology*. 37(1), 121 – 142.
- Reeves, J. (2008). Between a rock and a hard place? Curriculum for Excellence and the quality initiative in Scottish schools. Ambiguities in theory and practice. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 55(2), 135-154. Retrieved November 20, 2011, from: <http://www.ser.stir.ac.uk/pdf/99.pdf>
- Renold, E. (2004). ‘Other’ boys; negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school. *Gender and Education*, 2, 247–264.
- Sammons, P., Power, S., Robertson, P., Campbell, C., Elliot, K. & Whitty, G. (2002). *Evaluating the new community schools initiative in Scotland*. Institute of Education, University of London.
- Schaffer, R. (1996). Social experience and its aftermath. In *Social Development*. (pp. 361 – 396). Blackwell Publishers.

- Schlee, B. M., Mullis, A. K. & Shriner, M. (2008). Parents' social and resource capital: Predictors of academic achievement during early childhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31, 227–234. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
- Schnepf, S. V. (2002). *A sorting hat that fails? The transition from primary to secondary school in Germany*. Innocenti Working Paper No. 92. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.
- Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2004). Ethics and educational research. In *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. (pp. 127 – 134). London: Continuum.
- Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2004). Interview methods. In *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. (pp. 108 - 116). London: Continuum.
- Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2004). Observation. In *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. (pp. 99 – 107). London: Continuum.
- Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2004). Qualitative research design, case study and theory building. In *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. (pp. 84 – 98). London: Continuum.
- Scottish Centre for Research in Education. (1993). *Pupils' expectations of the transition from primary to secondary school*.
- Scottish Executive Education Department. (2000) *5-14 National Guidelines: The structure and balance of the curriculum*. Learning and Teaching Scotland. Glasgow.
- Scottish Executive Education Department. (2003). *Key findings from the national evaluation of the new community schools pilot programme in Scotland*. Edinburgh.
- Scottish Executive Education Department. (2004). *A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group*. Edinburgh.
- Scottish Executive. (2006). *Closing the Opportunity Gap (CtOG) Programme: Scoping work for design of impact assessment*. Retrieved April 21, 2012, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>
- Scottish Executive. (2006) *Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006: Guidance*. Edinburgh.

- Scottish Executive Education Department. (2007). Transitions Evaluation. *Insight 36*.
- Seale, C. (Ed.). (2004). Coding and analyzing data. In *Researching society and culture* (2nd ed.). (pp. 305-321). London: Sage.
- Seale, C. (2005). Using computers to analyse qualitative data. In D. Silverman (Ed.). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 118 – 206). London: Sage Publications.
- Shepherd, J. & Roker, D. (2005). *An evaluation of a 'transition to secondary school' project run by the National Pyramid Trust*. Retrieved March 4, 2012, from <http://www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk>
- Silverman, D. (2005). Quality in qualitative research. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 209 - 223). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2005). The research experience 11. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 43 - 63). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2005). Using theories. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 95 - 106). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2005). What counts as originality. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 67 - 73). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2005). What you can (and can't) do with qualitative research. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 5- 14). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2011) Designing a research project. In *Interpreting qualitative data* (4th ed.). pp. 27 – 56. London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2011) Focus Groups. In *Interpreting qualitative data*. (4th ed.). pp. 207 – 228. London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D (2013). Collecting your data. In *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook* (4th ed.). pp.199 – 229. London: Sage Publications.
- Stemler, S. E., Elliot, J. G., Grigorenko, E. L. & Sternberg, R.J. (2006). There's more to teaching than instruction: seven strategies for dealing with the practical side of teaching [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 32(1), 101-118. Retrieved July 19, 2006, from <http://www.metapress.com>

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative: techniques for developing grounded theory*. (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Terry, M. (2006). *The ecological paradigm*. Retrieved April 19, 2008, from <http://www.literacy.kent.edu/cra/2006.mterry>
- Tett, L. (2005). Inter-agency partnerships and integrated community schools. A Scottish perspective. *Support for Learning*, 20(4), 157 – 161.
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2008). *The National Strategies. Strengthening transfers and transitions: Partnerships for progress*. Retrieved September 11, 2010, from <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>
- The Scottish Government (2007). *Closing the Opportunity Gap (CtOG) Programme: Phase 1 Evaluation*. Retrieved April 21, 2012, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>
- Tobbell, J. (2003). Students' experiences of the transition from primary to secondary school. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 20(4), 4–14.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C. M., Moon, T. R., Brimijoin, K., Conover, L. A. & Reynolds, T. (2003). Differentiating instruction in response to student readiness, interest and learning profile in academically diverse classrooms: a review of literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 27(2/3) 119 – 145. Retrieved December 29, 2010, from <http://www.etseo.org/info/raas>
- Topping, K. J., Thurston, A., Tomlie, A., Christie, D., Murray, P., & Karragianidou, E. (2007). *Group work: Transition into secondary*. The Scottish Government. Social Research.
- Van Houtte, M. (2004). Gender context of the school and study culture, or how the presence of girls affects the achievement of boys [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 4, 409 – 423.
- Vogler, P., Crivello, G., & Woodhead, M. (2008). *Early childhood transitions research: a review of concepts, theory, and practice*. Working Paper No. 48. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation. Retrieved September 26, 2010, from http://www.bernardvanleer.org/Early_childhood_transitions_research_A_review_of_concepts_theory_and_practice

- West, P., Sweeting, H. & Young, R. (2010). Transition matters: pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research papers in education: Policy and practice*, 25(1), 21-50 Retrieved November 28, 2010, from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713707783>
- Whitelaw, S., Milosevic, L. & Daniels, S. (2000). Gender, behaviour and achievement: a preliminary study of pupils' perceptions and attitudes [Electronic version]. *Gender and Education*, 12, 87-113.
- Wigfield, A. & Eccles, J. S. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 68-81.
- Wigfield, A. & Eccles, J. S. (2002). The development of competence beliefs, expectancies for success, and achievement values from childhood through adolescence. In A. Wigfield & J. S. Eccles (Eds.). *Development of achievement motivation*. Maryland and Michigan: Academic Press.
- Wilkinson, S. (2004) Focus Group Research In D. Silverman (Ed.). *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice* (2nd ed) California: Sage.
- Woodhead, M. (2006). Changing perspectives on early childhood: Theory, research and policy. Background paper prepared for the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*. Paris: UNESCO
- Yaqub, S. (2002). "Poor children grow into poor adults": Harmful mechanisms or over-deterministic theory? *Journal of International Development*, 14,1081 – 1093.
- Yeung, A. S. & McInerney, D. M. (2005). Students' school motivation and aspiration over high school years [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 25(5), 537-554. Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.metapress.com>
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research. Design and methods* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage
- Zeedyk, M., S., Gallacher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B. & Lindsay, K. (2003). *Negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school: Perceptions of pupils, parents and teachers*. Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.spi.sagepub.com/cgi>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1995). Self-efficacy and educational development. In A. Bandura (Ed.). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Research project introductory leaflet

This project is conducted by
Elizabeth Gair: Postgraduate Doctoral
Student
University of Strathclyde

The research project is supervised by
Dr. Daniela Sime: Lecturer
Department of Educational and
Professional Studies University of
Strathclyde

For further information about this
research project,
please contact:

Elizabeth Gair
Telephone:



Moving to Secondary School

Expectations and experiences at
transfer from primary to secondary
education

Research project information for school staff and parents

What is the project about?

The research project will involve young people from P7, S1 and S3 from one urban and one rural cluster of schools. The study will focus on of young people’s opinions and experiences of transfer / transition from primary to secondary school.

The project will also explore views and experiences of parents and staff.

Who will be involved and how will information be gathered?

Headteachers, teachers and home/school staff

Interviews will be conducted with Headteachers of participating schools. Teaching staff - 2 secondary, 1 from each primary and the school/home link worker will also be invited to interview.

Aims of the project

- To examine how pupils’ aspirations and attitudes to learning influence school efforts.
-
- To evaluate differences in opinions / perceptions of achievement.
-
- To explore expectations of education in helping young people to achieve their goals.

Pupils

Parents’/ carers’ written consent will be sought for their children to participate in the project.

Pupils will be invited, after giving their own written consent, to engage in group discussions and interviews about their hopes for the future, their efforts at school and their opinions of achievement. This will take place in a comfortable setting in the school. Discussion will be guided by pre-set questions.

The researcher will also seek verbal consent before beginning group discussion and interviews.

Expected Outcomes

The study will provide information about pupils' aspirations and their views of achievement in a changing society. This information will assist educators in maintaining pupils' interest, enjoyment and engagement in school endeavours.

Parents

Parents of participating schools will be invited, through random selection at parents’ evenings, to a brief one-to-one interview to discover their own opinions of achievement and expectations of their child's/children 's school endeavours at transfer to secondary school.

Research project information for pupils

What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet gives you some information about a project I am doing in your school. I would like to talk to children and young people about the work they do in primary and secondary school and about what they would like to do when they have left school. I need your help to find out how you feel the activities you do at school will help you to achieve your goals for the future.

Why should I take part?

You might want to take part in the project because:

- It is a chance to say what you think;
- I will listen to what you have to say;
- You will help us to know more about the kind of work you would like to do when you are older;
- Adults who work with children and young people in schools will learn about how to improve what we do to help you achieve your goals.

Who am I?

My name is Elizabeth Gair. I have experience working with children and I have worked on projects with children before. I would like to hear what children and young people have to say and I think you would enjoy talking to me.

I want to organise meetings with children from your class to talk about your school experiences. I would also like to speak to you once on your own. We will do this in your school. I hope this will be fun for you.

How can I take part?

You will need to let me know you want to take part and your parents will have to agree with this. I will send a letter home to explain about the project and to ask if it is alright for you to get involved.

It is up to you to decide if you wish to take part, but your parents / carers also need to agree.

What is this project about?

The project is about children and young people and their experiences in P7 of primary school, S1 and S3 of secondary school.

It is especially about young people aged 10 to 14 yrs and what they think or remember about moving to secondary school.

What are the meetings like?

The meeting will take place in school and will last about 45 minutes. There will be about six children in the group, boys and girls.

The interview will last about 20 to 30 minutes. We will chat in more detail about what you experience at school.

I might write down and may also tape what you say so that I can remember later on. You may write down things as well, if you want.

Consent Form for Headteachers

Moving to Secondary School

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above research.

The research project will take place over a 4-month period and aims to investigate the impact of children’s and young people’s aspirations and attitudes to learning on engagement and achievement. The study will focus on primary/secondary transfer. The findings will be disseminated through conferences, colloquia and academic journals.

Data for the study will be collected by:

- Interviewing adults who interact with children and young people in the school setting;
- Focus group discussions and interviews with 36 children and young people from 2 clusters of schools - one from a rural and the other from an urban setting and
- Interviewing parents / carers.

The research will be conducted in line with the Ethical Guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) available at www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html.

Additionally, written and verbal consent will be sought from participants prior to commencement of group discussions and interviews. Recordings will not be shared with any individual with the exception of the research supervisor. Participants will be made anonymous – when writing up results of the study, pseudonyms will be used to protect identities. Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of schools.

If you understand the information detailed above and wish to be involved in the study, please complete and return the form in the envelope provided.

Moving to Secondary School

I agree for my school to be involved in the ‘Moving to Secondary School’ research project.

I agree to be interviewed as part of the above research project.

I understand that opinions expressed during the interview may be cited in reports and academic publications but that my identity will be protected by a pseudonym. I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time.

Name

School

Print please

Signature

Job Title

Date

Consent Form for Staff

Moving to Secondary School

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above research.

The research project will take place over a 4-month period and aims to investigate the impact of children’s and young people’s aspirations and attitudes to learning on engagement and achievement. The study will focus on primary/secondary transfer. The findings will be disseminated through conferences, colloquia and academic journals.

Data for the study will be collected by:

- Interviewing adults who interact with children and young people in the school setting;
- Focus group discussions and interviews with 36 children and young people from 2 clusters of schools - one from a rural and the other from an urban setting and
- Interviewing parents / carers.

The research will be conducted in line with the Ethical Guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) available at www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html.

Additionally, written and verbal consent will be sought from participants prior to commencement of group discussions and interviews. Recordings will not be shared with any individual with the exception of the research supervisor. Participants will be made anonymous – when writing up results of the study, pseudonyms will be used to protect identities. Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of schools.

If you understand the information detailed above and wish to be involved in the study, please complete and return the form in the envelope provided.

Moving to Secondary School

I agree to be interviewed as part of the above research project.

I understand that opinions expressed during the interview may be cited in reports and academic publications but that my identity will be protected by a pseudonym. I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time.

Name School

Print please

Signature Job Title

Date

Consent Form for Parent (s) / Carer (s)

Moving to Secondary School

I have read / been made aware of the content of the information leaflet for the research project. I understand that this is a project about children's experiences of moving from primary to secondary school.

I understand that what my child says during group discussion and interview will not be discussed with the teachers or anyone else. The researcher will not identify my child in any reports about this study.

I also understand that my child will be asked if he/she wants to participate before every group discussion and interview and they can stop at any time without any problems.

I agree to my child's participation in the research project.

Child's Name
.....

Please print

Parent (s) / Carer (s) Name
.....

Please print

Parent (s) / Carer (s) Signature
.....

Consent Form for Children and Young People

Moving to Secondary School

I would like to take part in the project about children's experiences of moving from primary to secondary schools.

I understand that I will have to talk about:

- What I would like to do in the future;
- What I think about the work I do at primary / secondary school;
- How I get on with schoolwork, the teachers and my classmates.
-

I understand that what I say will be recorded on tape but only the researcher will listen to this.

I understand that the information I give may be used in reports about the project but my name will not be mentioned.

Everything I say will be used anonymously. This means that no one will know my name. However, if I tell the researcher that I am at risk or harm, she might need to tell some other people, in order to help me.

If you would like to participate, please complete and return this form in the envelope provided to your school office.

Write your name here
.....

What is your age?
.....

Date

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Primary Headteacher Schedule: June 2007

Background

1. Is transfer / transition to secondary school a particular interest of yours? Please expand on your experience /work on transition.
2. What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition?
3. How do you keep up-to date with emerging data on transfer / transition?

The transition process

4. What arrangements are there at your school to facilitate the personal aspect of transition?
5. What arrangements are there to facilitate the social aspect of transition?
6. What arrangements are there to facilitate the emotional aspect of transition?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

7. Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, how important are pupils' aspirations for their engagement?
8. In your opinion, how do pupils' attitudes to learning influence engagement and academic progress?
9. Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?
10. What strategies do you employ to sustain enjoyment across transition?
11. What strategies do you employ to maintain pupils' academic progress at transfer / transition?

Expectations at transition

12. What arrangements are there to assist pupils in achieving their specific goals and in transferring this information to the receiving secondary school?
13. Do transfer arrangements at your school offer pupils opportunities to think about their aspirations for the future, their interests or special talents / strengths?
14. What opportunities do pupils have to discuss their strengths and concerns at transition time?
15. How do you involve the following stakeholders in the transition process?
 - pupils
 - parents
 - the receiving secondary school
 - partner agencies
16. Would you say that pupils' opinions of achievement are in keeping with the school's?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Teachers' Schedule: June 2007

Background

1. Is transfer / transition to secondary school a particular interest of yours? Please expand on your experience /work on transition.
2. What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition?
3. How do you keep up-to date with emerging data on transfer / transition?

The transition process

4. What arrangements are there at your school to facilitate the personal aspect of transition?
5. What arrangements are there to facilitate the social aspect of transition?
6. What arrangements are there to facilitate the emotional aspect of transition?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

7. Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, how important are pupils' aspirations for their engagement?
8. In your opinion, how do pupils' attitudes to learning influence engagement and academic progress?
9. Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?
10. What strategies do you employ to sustain enjoyment across transition?
11. What strategies do you employ to maintain pupils' academic progress at transfer / transition?
12. Have you noticed any change in pupils' attitude to learning and / or academic attainment at this time?

Expectations at transition

13. What arrangements are there to assist pupils in achieving their specific goals and in transferring this information to the receiving secondary school?
14. Do transfer arrangements at your school offer pupils opportunities to think about their aspirations for the future, their interests or special talents / strengths?
15. What opportunities do pupils have to discuss their strengths and concerns at transition time?
16. How do you involve the following stakeholders in the transition process?

(Prompt: Comment on the personal/social/emotional aspect and on maintaining academic progress.)

- pupils
 - parents
 - the receiving secondary school
 - partner agencies
17. Would you say that pupils' opinions of achievement are in keeping with the school's?

**Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer
from primary to secondary education**

Primary 7 Pupils' Schedule: June 2007

Pupil's Name:

Background

1. How do you feel about moving to secondary school?
2. Have you been thinking and talking with anyone about your move to secondary school?

The transition process (Pupils' experiences)

3. Have you been prepared for going to secondary school?
4. How have you been prepared?
5. Have you any worries / concerns about going to secondary school?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

Educational aspirations

6. Do you enjoy being in the P7 class at school?
7. What do you especially enjoy?
8. Do you work hard at school?
9. Do you think it is important to work hard at school?
10. Why is this important to you?

Career aspirations

11. Do you think it is important to have a job when you are older?
12. Have you thought about what job you would like to do when you are older?
13. Have you talked about this with any adults or friends/peers?
14. How do you think your school helps you to prepare for when you are grown up?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Parents' Schedule: June 2007

Name

Parent's

Pupil's

Background

1. Will be attending the associated Secondary school?
2. Has been talking about moving to secondary school?
3. How does ----- feel about moving to secondary school?
4. Do you feel that P7 experience has helped to prepare him/her for secondary school?

The transition process (Parents' experiences)

3. How have you been involved by the primary school in preparing your child for going to secondary school?
4. How have you been involved by the secondary school in preparing your child for the move?
5. Have you any worries / concerns about your child going to secondary school?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

Educational aspirations

6. Has enjoyed being in the P7 class at school?
7. Has Any special talents or interests?
8. Do you feel that works hard at school?
9. Is it important that works hard at school?
10. Why is this important to you?

Career aspirations

11. Has talked about the kind of job he/she hopes to do when grown up?
12. What kind of job would you like to aspire to when he/she has grown up to feel he/she has achieved his/her potential?

Expectations of education

14. Do you feel that the primary school experience has helped to prepare for the future?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Home Link Workers' Schedule: June 2007

Background

1. Is transfer / transition to secondary school a particular interest of yours? Please expand on your experience /work on transition.
2. What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition?
3. How do you keep up-to date with emerging data / resources on transfer / transition?

The transition process

4. How does the work that you do facilitate the personal aspect of transition?
5. How does the work that you do facilitate the social aspect of transition?
6. How does the work that you do facilitate the emotional aspect of transition?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

7. Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, how important are pupils' aspirations for their engagement?
8. In your opinion, how do pupils' attitudes to learning influence engagement and academic progress?
9. Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?
10. What strategies do you employ to sustain enjoyment across transition?
11. What strategies do you employ to maintain pupils' academic progress at transfer / transition?
12. Have you noticed any change in pupils' attitude to learning and / or academic attainment at this time?

Expectations at transition

13. How do you involve the following stakeholders in the transition process?
 - pupils
 - parents
 - the receiving secondary school
 - partner agencies
14. Does the work that you do with the children offer opportunities to think about their aspirations for the future, their interests or special talents / strengths?
15. Would you say that pupils' opinions of achievement are in keeping with the school's?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Secondary Senior Management Schedule: June 2007

Background

1. Is transfer / transition to secondary school of particular interest to you? Please expand on your experience /work with transition. **Do / Have you taught at S1 stage?**
2. What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition to secondary?
3. How do you keep up-to date with emerging data on transfer / transition?
4. How do you use the subject specific information about each pupil transferred by the primary school?

The transition process

5. What arrangements are there at this school to facilitate the personal / social / emotional aspect of transition?
6. What strategies do you employ to facilitate maintaining pupils' academic progress at transfer / transition?
7. How do you involve the following stakeholders in the transition process?
 - pupils
 - parents
 - the primary school
 - partner agencies

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

Educational aspirations

8. Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, do pupils' aspirations influence engagement?
9. Drawing from your experience, how do pupils' attitudes to learning impact on engagement and academic progress?
10. Can you provide any evidence / examples of this?
11. What arrangements are there to assist pupils in achieving their specific educational goals?

Career aspirations

12. Does a pre-transfer discussion take place with each pupil and the primary teacher regarding pupils' particular strengths, interests and aspirations for the future?
13. How does the school use this information?
14. Do you feel that the arrangements at your school help to prepare each transferring individual for their future with some consideration given to their aspirations and interests or special talents / strengths?
15. Please comment on the impact of the above on pupils' academic attainment.
16. Would you say that pupils' opinions of achievement are in keep with educators' / the school's?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

Secondary Teachers' Schedule: June 2007

Background

1. Please provide some background about your experience /work teaching first year secondary.
2. What are your specific responsibilities regarding transition?
3. How do you keep up-to date with emerging data on transfer / transition?
4. How do you use data transferred by the primary school?

The transition process

5. What strategies do you employ to facilitate maintaining pupils' academic progress in your subject at the beginning of their secondary education?
6. At primary school, pupils work at their own pace and are tested when ready, do the transfer arrangements at this school take account of this and if so, how?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

Educational aspirations

6. Engagement may be defined as efforts that pupils invest in learning and academic tasks. In your opinion, how important are pupils' aspirations for their engagement in your subject?
7. In your opinion, what are the factors that influence pupils' attitude to learning?
8. How do you assist pupils in achieving their specific learning goals/targets in your subject?

Career aspirations

9. Do you feel that the arrangements at your school help to prepare each transferring individual for their future with some consideration given to their aspirations and interests or special talents / strengths?
10. Please comment on the impact of the above on pupils' academic attainment in your subject.
11. Would you say that pupils' opinions of achievement are in keeping with educators' / the school's?

Moving to Secondary School: Expectations and experiences at transition / transfer from primary to secondary education

S1 Pupils' Schedule: June 2007

Name

Background

1. Have you had a successful S1 year?
2. What worries / concerns did you have about moving to secondary school?
3. How have you coped with the move to secondary school?

The transition process

4. Do you feel that you were supported through your transfer/move to secondary?
5. Who helped you to settle in? How did they help?
6. Have you had opportunities to think or talk about any problems you may have had since moving to secondary?

Aspirations, engagement, attitudes to learning and academic attainment

Educational aspirations

6. Have you enjoyed being in S1 at this school?
7. What did you especially enjoy?
8. Have you had opportunities to think or talk about your special interests or talents since moving to secondary?
9. Do you feel you were given opportunities to use your special talents or interests?
10. Did you work hard in S1?
11. Do you think it is important to work hard at secondary school?
12. Why is this important to you?

Career aspirations

13. Do you think it is important to have a job/career when you are older?
14. Have you thought about what job you would like to do when you are older?
15. Have you talked about this with any adults or friends/peers?
16. Does this help to keep you focused when working on assignments?
17. How does your school help you to prepare for your future / when you are an adult?

Appendix O

Data Analysis Chart: Primary 7 Pupils (Cluster 1 Urban)

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Anne	Pupil 2 Cathy	Pupil 3 Dirk	Pupil 4 Grant	Pupil 5 Calum	Pupil 6 Lucy	
Emotions at transfer		Excited Fine Nervous Worried Scared	Nervous	Fine; Concerned about fitting in; Bullying	Excited	Fine	Really good but worried about image (too short)	Nervous; Worried about stricter teachers at secondary; Possibility of getting lost	
Expectations	Preparation by PS	Increased workload / level of difficulty in class		✓	✓	✓		✓ Tries to complete to catch up with peers	
		Increased amount of homework	✓		✓	✓		✓	
		Discussions with teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓ Teaches discipline	✓	Listens to career aspirations	
	Preparation by SS	Induction days							
		Subject visits in SS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Visits from secondary staff / pupils							
	Preparation by parents, family, peers	Discussions with parents, family members, peers		Parents	Parents				
		Parents', family work / study ethic					✓		

	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Anne	Pupil 2 Cathy	Pupil 3 Dirk	Pupil 4 Grant	Pupil 5 Calum	Pupil 6 Lucy
	Preparation by other education staff	Visits, discussions in primary school						
		Working through booklets	✓	✓			✓	
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		✓	✓	✓		x (love of learning)	To catch up with peers
	Working hard to impress people					✓		
		Plans for coping with increased quantity of homework	✓	x	✓	✓	✓ (although no opinion on increase)	x
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	Desire to attend university or college	✓	✓	✓	✓ (university named)	✓	
		Aware of subjects for entry	✓	✓ (for both career choices)	✓ (for both career choices)	✓ (for both career choices)		
	Aspiration for career	Clear idea of career path	✓					
		Uncertain of career path		beautician or artist	architect or dolphin coach	forensic scientist or optician		actress or singer
		No idea of career path					✓	

	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Anne	Pupil 2 Cathy	Pupil 3 Dirk	Pupil 4 Grant	Pupil 5 Calum	Pupil 6 Lucy
Parents / Family Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations with child	Aware of aspirations for education and career	✓	✓	✓	✓		
		Holds aspirat-ions of child's education and career /Support-ive of child's decision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
		Plans in place for funding tertiary education			✓		✓	
	Parents' / Family work / study ethic	Child's aspirations in line with parents' / family achievements				✓		
Notes								Spent much of interview talking about worries

NB: PS – primary school P7 –primary 7 SS – secondary school/staff HLW – home link worker

Data Analysis Chart: Primary 7 Pupils (Cluster 2 Rural)

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Janet	Pupil 2 Ossie	Pupil 3 Candice	Pupil 4 Joan	Pupil 5 Drew	Pupil 6 Jack
Emotions at transfer		Excited Fine Nervous Worried Scared	Nervous about making friends and possibility of getting lost; Scared	Excited	Nervous about making friends and possibility of getting lost; Worried	Excited but concerned about bullying	Fine (growing up)	Nervous About name calling
Expectations	Preparation by PS	Increased workload / level of difficulty in class						
		Increased amount of homework	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
		Discussions with teacher	✓ Shapes view of the future	✓ Personal development	✓	✓ Teaches responsibility	✓ Teaches responsibility	✓
	Preparation by SS	Induction days						
		Subject visits in SS	x	x	x	x	x	x
		Visits from secondary staff / pupils	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Preparation by parents, family, peers	Discussions with parents, family members, peers						

		Descriptions	Pupil 1 Janet	Pupil 2 Ossie	Pupil 3 Candice	Pupil 4 Joan	Pupil 5 Drew	Pupil 6 Jack
		Parents', family work / study ethic						
	Preparation by other education staff	Visits, discussions in primary school	HLW	HLW	HLW		HLW	HLW
		Working through booklets						
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		✓	✓	Can't work harder	✓	✓	
	Working hard to impress people			✓ To be finished first	Teacher says can't work harder	✓		✓
		Plans for coping with increased quantity of homework	✓ No plans to cope	Not worried	✓ No plans to cope		Not worried	✓ No plans to cope
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	Desire to attend university or college			✓			
		Aware of subjects for entry			x			

	Sub-codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 Janet	Pupil 2 Ossie	Pupil 3 Candice	Pupil 4 Joan	Pupil 5 Drew	Pupil 6 Jack
	Aspiration for career	Clear idea of career path	✓			✓		
		Uncertain of career path			dancer or work with animals			
		No idea of career path		✓			x	x
Parents / Family Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations with child	Aware of aspirations for education and career	✓		✓	✓		
		Holds aspirations of child's education and career /Supportive of child's decision	✓					
		Plans in place for funding tertiary education						
	Parents' / Family work / study ethic	Child's aspirations in line with parents' / family achievements						
Notes			Indicates Nervous disposition like rest of family		Perceives achievement as catching up	Perceives secondary teachers as being nice for induction only		

Data Analysis Chart: Primary 7 Pupils (Cluster 2 Urban)

Source Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes / Codes	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 George	Pupil 2 Elspeth	Pupil 3 Forbes	Pupil 4 Julian	Pupil 5 Lynn	Pupil 6 Henrietta
Emotions at transfer		Excited Fine Nervous Worried Scared	Really excited; Nervous; Scared about getting lost, bullying, pranks	Happy but concerned about getting lost	Quite excited	Excited but a bit nervous	Quite good But concerned about bullying	Excited
Expectations	Preparation by PS	Increased workload / level of difficulty in class					✓	
		Increased amount of homework	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x
		Discussions with teacher	✓ Teaches about good health teamwork	✓ Teaches about health	✓ ‘Circle Time’; Teaches value of hard work	✓ ‘Circle Time’; Drugs awareness	✓ ‘Circle Time’; Advice for future; Teaches about health	✓ ‘Circle Time’; Teaches responsibility
	Preparation by SS	Induction days						
		Subject visits in SS						
		Visits from secondary staff / pupils	✓			✓		✓

	Sub-Codes	Descriptions	Pupil 1 George	Pupil 2 Elspeth	Pupil 3 Forbes	Pupil 4 Julian	Pupil 5 Lynn	Pupil 6 Henrietta
	Preparation by parents, family, peers	Discussions with parents, family members, peers	Parents Peers	Parents Cousins	Parents Cousins	Parents (ensure homework is done well and in time)	Parents Peers	Parents Family members
		Parents', family work / study ethic				✓		
	Preparation by other education staff	Visits, discussions in primary school						
		Working through booklets						
Attitude to / Engagement in learning	Working hard for good grades for university / a better job/pay/ life		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (and to learn more)	To learn To support husband
	Working hard to impress people					✓		
		Plans for coping with increased quantity of homework	✓	Not worried	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aspirations	Aspiration for tertiary education	Desire to attend university or college	✓	Maybe	✓	✓		✓

		Descriptions	Pupil 1 George	Pupil 2 Elspeth	Pupil 3 Forbes	Pupil 4 Julian	Pupil 5 Lynn	Pupil 6 Henrietta
		Aware of subjects for entry			✓	✓		
	Aspiration for career	Clear idea of career path		Beauty therapist (like mum)	Paleontologist	Animal Medical Care		Business woman
		Uncertain of career path	✓				Teacher or hairdresser	
		No idea of career path						
Parents / Family Involvement	Discusses education / career aspirations with child	Aware of aspirations for education and career	✓	No	✓	✓		
		Holds aspirations of child's education and career /Supportive of child's decision			✓			
		Plans in place for funding tertiary education			✓			
	Parents' / Family work / study ethic	Child's aspirations in line with parents' / family achievements		✓		✓ (will take over family business)		

			Pupil 1 George	Pupil 2 Elspeth	Pupil 3 Forbes	Pupil 4 Julian	Pupil 5 Lynn	Pupil 6 Henrietta
Notes			Primary teacher had shared own transfer experience		Searched internet re: subjects for entry to course of study			

NB: PS – primary school P7 –primary 7 SS – secondary school/staff HLW – home link worker

Data Analysis Chart – Professionals in Education (Management)

Source: Semi-structured Interviews

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Arrangements / Preparation for transition						
Personal, Social, Emotional (Fears of bullying, establishing new relationships, getting lost) Discusses problems and strategies to cope	Whole group PSE programme Pupils with identified need with HLW Transition programme with HLW for all pupils	Pupils with identified need with HLW	Pupils with identified need with HLW	Sporting activities with other primaries Pupils with identified need with HLW Circle time	HT discussion with secondary staff. Pupils with identified need with HLW	
New Routines Discusses new routines, timetables	Transition programme with HLW	PS HT / CT talks with P7 pupils	Guidance staff visit to primary	SS HT visits P 7 pupils	PS HT talks with P7 pupils SS HT visits P 7 pupils	

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Induction						
Letters to parents from secondary	✓	✓	Sent at various times in the year.	✓	✓	✓
Programme delivered in secondary	Thinking Science but children do not meet up or work with pupils from other feeder schools	Thinking Science	Thinking Science from September to June gives a chance to build friendships.			
Visits to secondary / Open Events	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Secondary staff visits to primary	Guidance staff visit to primary	✓	Guidance staff visit to primary	Block of science taught by SS CT in primary setting SS HT visits to talk to the children	Subject block taught by SS CT in the primary setting.	
Transition booklets provided by secondary school						✓

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Attitude to/ engagement in academic endeavours						
Strategies to maintain academic performance	Achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children Circle time discussion with whole group	Achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children	Achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children	Achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children	Look at achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children	Look at achievement levels sent to secondary Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children
Setting targets for improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Work to change attitudes	✓	✓		✓		

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
<p>Aspirations for tertiary education and career</p> <p>Providing focus in academic efforts</p>	<p>Discusses aspirations for education and career with pupils</p>	<p>States this is crucial but finds it challenging with certain pupils where there is no support of family</p>	<p>Discussions through which pupils indicate areas of interest for education and career. Some children come knowing what they want to do.</p> <p>Subject choices made early - at end of S1 and further choices years 3,4 and 5</p> <p>Flexible approach to change as aspirations change.</p>	<p>States this is crucial but finds it challenging with certain pupils where there is no support of family</p>	<p>Children have high aspirations when they leave primary.</p>	<p>States this is crucial.</p>

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Perspectives of involvement of parents						
Parents have aspirations for their child's education and career	Certain parents value education In some instances, these can be set too high.	Certain parents value education	Home situation Parents' experience of education	Certain parents value education	Certain parents value education	Certain parents value education
Expectations						
Pupils ready to cope with level of work	Children are used to change Staff visits to the primary	Difficult to achieve with certain pupils	Staff visits to the primary	Staff visits to the primary	Staff visits to the primary	Staff visits to the primary Setting out booklet sent to primary to improve layout so that pupils develop knowledge about process

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Pupils to be able to “stick in”	Discusses strengths Discussions to develop self-belief	Very much reflective of their parents’ expectations Discussions to develop self-belief	Discusses strengths Communicating to the students a genuine belief in their ability to achieve	Discussions to develop self-belief, although difficult for pupils where there is inadequate parental support.	PS HT talks with P7 pupils.	Discusses with pupils relevance of subject to life skills.
Pupils to be motivated as a result of sharing expectations	✓	Working to pupils’ interests	Learning groups organised according to shared interests.	✓	Working to pupils’ interests	
Pupils need to have expectations of themselves	✓	Very much reflective of their parents’ expectations	Their expectations of themselves rise if teachers’ expectations are set high	Reflective of their parents’ expectations		Sometimes what pupils expect is different from what teachers expect.

Management (Primary / Secondary)	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	JJ-HT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	AG-Depute Head Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	DL-HT Cluster 2 Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Notes	Perspective differs with that of SS Depute Head re: Thinking Science and opportunities to build friendships		Perspective differs with that of rural PS HT re: Thinking Science and opportunities to build friendships		PS HT has high expectations of secondary provision for children's education.	

NB: PS – primary school P7 –primary 7 SS – secondary school/staff CT - class teacher HLW – home link worker

Data Analysis Chart – Professionals in Education (Teachers)

Source: Semi-structured Interviews

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Arrangements / Preparation for transition						
Personal, Social, Emotional (Fears of bullying, establishing new relationships, getting lost) Discusses problems and strategies to cope	Whole group PSE programme Pupils with identified need with HLW Transition programme with HLW for all pupils	Talk with each pupil but no specific arrangements or programme for dealing with this		Sporting activities with other primaries Pupils with identified need with HLW Circle time	Talk with each pupil but no specific arrangements or programme for dealing with this	
New Routines Discusses new routines, timetables	Transition programme with HLW	Circle time		SS HT visits P 7 pupils	SS HT visit	
Induction						
Letters to parents from secondary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Programme delivered in secondary	Thinking Science but children do not meet up or work with pupils from other feeder schools	Thinking Science once a month				
Visits to secondary / Open Events	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Secondary staff visits to primary	Guidance staff visit to primary	Guidance staff visit to primary		Block of science taught by SS CT in primary setting SS HT visits to talk to the children	✓	
Transition booklets provided by secondary school						✓

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Attitude to/ engagement in academic endeavours						
Strategies to maintain academic performance	<p>Achievement levels sent to secondary</p> <p>Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs</p> <p>Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children</p> <p>Circle time discussion with whole group</p>	<p>Achievement levels sent to secondary</p> <p>Make lessons briefer.</p> <p>Use of the computer</p> <p>Paired working</p>	<p>Look at achievement levels sent to secondary; however,</p> <p>It's a fresh start</p> <p>Maths setting from S1</p> <p>Discussion with PS teachers/Shared booklet about expectations regarding levels</p>	<p>Achievement levels sent to secondary</p> <p>Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs</p> <p>Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children</p>	<p>Achievement levels sent to secondary</p>	<p>Look at achievement levels sent to secondary</p> <p>Support by secondary for pupils with additional needs</p> <p>Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children</p>

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Setting targets for improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓		Challenging with certain pupils
Work to change attitudes	✓	Challenging with certain pupils	✓	✓	✓	
Aspirations for tertiary education and career Providing focus in academic efforts	Discusses aspirations for education and career with pupils	Discussions about aspirations for education and career SS guidance staff	Encourage children whose parents may not give support to develop aspirations	States this is crucial but finds it challenging with certain pupils where there is no support of family	Discussions with pupils	States this is crucial.
Perspectives of involvement of parents						
Parents have aspirations for their child's education and career	Certain parents value education In some instances, these can be set too high.	Pupils' fears communicated through parents	High achieving parents with high aspirations influence their child's aspirations in that the child tends to have similar aspirations	Certain parents value education	Certain parents value education	Certain parents value education

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Expectations						
Pupils ready to cope with level of work	Children are used to change Staff visits to the primary	Tells the children they need to be ready	Discussions with pupils about expectations	Staff visits to the primary	General preparation for secondary school	Staff visits to the primary Setting out booklet sent to primary to improve layout so that pupils develop knowledge about process
Pupils to be able to “stick in”	Discusses strengths Discussions to develop self-belief		Discussions to develop self-belief Depends on personality	Discussions to develop self-belief, although difficult for pupils where there is inadequate parental support.	General discussions to develop self-belief on day-to-day basis	Discusses with pupils relevance of subject to life skills.
Pupils to be motivated as a result of sharing expectations	✓	Challenging with certain pupils	✓	✓	✓	

Primary / Secondary Teachers	NM-HT/CT Cluster 1 Rural Primary	MN-CT Cluster 1 Urban Primary	WP-Maths GB-English Cluster 1 Secondary	SW-HT/CT Cluster 2 Rural Primary	GE-CT Class E JR-CT Class R Cluster 2 Urban Primary	JM-PTMaths Cluster 2 Secondary
Pupils need to have expectations of themselves	✓			Reflective of their parents' expectations		Sometimes what pupils expect is different from what teachers expect.
Notes	Perspective differs with that of SS Depute Head re: Thinking Science and opportunities to build friendships		Learners also grouped according to interests for some subjects – drama, art			

NB: PS – primary school P7 –primary 7 SS – secondary school/staff CT - class teacher HLW – home link worker

Data Analysis Chart – Professionals in Education: Home Link Workers

Source: Semi-structured Interviews

Home Link Workers	Descriptions	KW-HLW Cluster 1	MMcL-HLW Cluster 2
Arrangements / Preparation for transition			
Personal, Social, Emotional (Fears of bullying, establishing new relationships, getting lost) Discusses problems and strategies to cope	Whole P7 group	✓	
	Transition programme with all P7 pupils	✓	
	Work with individual pupils who have additional support needs or those who are more vulnerable	✓	✓
New Routines Discusses new routines, timetables	Transition programme with all P7 pupils	✓	
	Work with individual pupils who have additional support needs or those who are more vulnerable	✓	✓
Induction			
Programme delivered in secondary	Accompanying pupils who receive an enhanced transition	✓	✓
Visits to secondary / Open Events	Accompanying pupils who receive an enhanced transition Continuing to have input with parents whose child receive an enhanced transition	✓	✓
Attitude to/ engagement in academic endeavours			
Strategies to maintain academic performance	Involvement in Multi-agency Transition Group to provide enhanced transition for vulnerable children	✓	✓
Aspirations for tertiary education and career Providing focus in academic efforts	Believes this depends on parents' support and family environment	✓	✓

Home Link Workers	Descriptions	KW-HLW Cluster 1	MMcL-HLW Cluster 2
Perspectives of involvement of parents			
Parents have aspirations for their child's education and career	Believes this depends on parents' support and family environment	✓	✓
Expectations	Provides information regarding routines and timetables to all P7 children	✓	✓
Notes			

NB: P7 –primary 7 HLW – home link worker

Data Analysis Chart – Parents (Clusters 1 and 2)

Source: Semi-structured Interviews

Parents	AM-C1R FAM1	ML-C1R FAM2	DM-C1U FAM1	MM-C1U FAM2	GL-CR2 FAM1	JS-CR2 FAM2	IP-CU2 FAM1	JH-CU2 FAM2
Arrangements / Preparation for transition								
Personal, Social, Emotional (Fears of bullying, establishing new relationships, getting lost) Discusses problems and strategies to cope	Size of building, getting bus on time, getting to classes on time	Son has no worries or concerns about the move.	“Anything he has been scared or nervous about has been explained/ shown to him.”	Excited but nervous. Talks with son.	No major fears. Discusses being ready; e.g. taking PE kit.	States son has no worries or concerns. Parent is concerned about son travelling to school on the bus and fitting in secondary. Talks with son.	States daughter has no worries. Parent is excited but worried for daughter.	Parent states that she is quite worried and that son is laid back. Talks with son.
Perceived increase in workload / homework Discusses strategies to cope	Talks about it but believes son will cope as he works hard.	Talks about it but feels son is very able and has own strategies to cope.	Talks about getting homework done to a good standard – not leaving it till the morning.	“They have a goal to meet with homework. I let him get on with it. I always check it.”	Daughter encouraged to get it done in good time.	Son does it immediately.	Child knows it is a “job that needs doing.”	Does not mention.

Parents	AM-C1R FAM1	ML-C1R FAM2	DM-C1U FAM1	MM-C1U FAM2	GL-CR2 FAM1	JS-CR2 FAM2	IP-CU2 FAM1	JH-CU2 FAM2
Attitude to/ engagement in academic endeavours								
Encouragement to “work hard”	“He does his best - he likes to please.” “Instilled in him if he wants to do well he has to work hard now”	“He has a strong work ethic.”	“He works hard. It is important to work hard.”	“He tries really hard to please.	States this is important.	“We have always encouraged him. He has always worked hard.”	“She wants to do everything the way the teachers told her to do it.”	“He can be motivated for short periods of time.”
Aspirations for tertiary education and career Discusses aspirations for education and career with child	“He has a high goal.” He wants to be an archaeologist.”	“He mentioned wanting to become a doctor.”	Aware son wants to become a forensic scientist.	“He wants to do architecture. I said it is awful hard work. He says he will be fine.”	“She is talking about being a doctor”	Not sure what son wants to do.	Aware daughter wants to become a teacher.	“He wants to be an archaeologist or palaeontologist
Perspectives of involvement								
Parents have aspirations for their child’s education and career	“If he’s a dustbin man, you’d be upset”		“We are all scientists”	“If they have worked hard, they could move on. They won’t have to stay in – town”	“We discuss money with her in the sense of how much we earn. Where she gets good money, she can do anything she wants.”	“I would like to see him go to university. He has ability.”	“I don’t mind what she does as long as she is doing what she wants.”	“I don’t mind what he does as long as he is happy.”

	AM-C1R FAM1	ML-C1R FAM2	DM-C1U FAM1	MM-C1U FAM2	GL-CR2 FAM1	JS-CR2 FAM2	IP-CU2 FAM1	JH-CU2 FAM2
Child's aspirations for education and career similar to parents' / family members'	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	Does not mention.
Comments on own / family work/study ethic		“He just wants to go to university. He’s seen both his siblings do that.” “We have a strong work ethic in the home.”	“Our family has worked hard. It’s the way I, my Mum and Dad were brought up. The kids are brought up the same”		Comments suggest amount of money earned is important.	“He will go to university because his cousins have all gone, so far.”		
Expectations								
Expects child to be ready to cope with level of work at secondary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	States son does his best.
Expects child to be able to “stick in”	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	As above
Expects child to work hard to achieve potential	✓	Mentions tertiary achievements of family members	“I feel he could achieve his potential – as a scientist.”	“If you want to clean the streets and that makes you happy, you can do it. As long as they are happy and healthy.”	“It is important she reaches what she wants.”	“He has never let us down yet.”	“As long as she does her best to fulfil what she wants to do.”	“He tries to the best of his ability.”

	AM-C1R FAM1	ML-C1R FAM2	DM-C1U FAM1	MM-C1U FAM2	GL-CR2 FAM1	JS-CR2 FAM2	IP-CU2 FAM1	JH-CU2 FAM2
Notes	Aware of preparation with HLW Told son if he does not work hard he would not achieve goal	Aware of preparation with HLW Son plays several instruments. Mother mentions that musical talent runs in the family	All family members (mother's side), including grand-parents, cousins, siblings are scientists. States father's side of family are "incredible" musicians and son's hobby is music.					

C1R – Cluster 1 Rural C1U – Cluster 1 Urban C2R – Cluster 2 Rural C2U – Cluster 2 Urban FAM – Family HLW – home link worker

Interview Transcript: JM-P7boy-C1R (FAM1)

EG How do you feel about moving to secondary school?

JM I feel quite excited.

EG Do you want to tell me what you feel excited about?

JM Meeting new people and seeing the different classes (undecipherable) in the (names secondary school) and then going down town after October, I think.

EG Oh, you're allowed to go into the town after October.

JM Yeah, yeah.

EG And you're going to the (associated high school), are you?

JM Yes, yes.

EG Right, anything else that's exciting for you?

JM Not really, no ..I'll stick with my old friends ... sometimes ...

EG And are you talking about the friends that are back here at (names current primary)?

JM Yes, yes.

EG A wee bit concerned about that?

JM Yes.

EG Ok, we'll talk that. Can you remind me? You say that you've been thinking and talking with folk about the move to secondary school. Who have you been talking with about moving to secondary?

JM I've been talking with my parents, Mum and Dad. I've been talking to a friend, Z----- (names friend) who moved up last year, and, em, just a few people – Mrs M (Headteacher), as well. Some of the staff here at the school.

EG Um, hmm, so you've had a good deal of discussion about moving to secondary school, yeah.

JM Yes.

EG And you're feeling quite excited and positive about the move.

JM Yes.

EG So the next question – have you been prepared, have you had special work done with you for going to secondary school?

JM Yes, K's (names home-link worker) been coming and doing transition work.

EG K, the Home Link Worker.

JM Yes.

EG And did you have any work done by the secondary school on ...

JM Yes, a man from the department came in and talked to us about it.

EG Um, hmm.

JM And we've been going up to the (associated high school) for Thinking Science and we've just been up on Friday for the Science Challenge.

EG Umm, so you get up there lots, do you?

JM Yes.

EG So you'd be familiar with some aspects of, of you know, the building and were you able to make friends with other people from other schools when you went along.

JM Yes.

EG Ok, now let's talk about the worries or concerns about going to secondary and you've said you're quite excited – any worries or concerns at all?

JM Just like...wee things. I don't really know why but it's just, it's much bigger and a lot bigger people in it.

EG Um, hmm.

JM I'm worried I might get picked on.

EG Did K ----- discuss with you what you should do if you felt in a position where you felt threatened or you felt this is a bit like bullying – do you know what to do?

JM Yes

EG Does it help to know that?

JM Yes.

EG But still the concern, it's still there. Just that, why is the concern still there do you think, if K..... did the work with you?

JM I don't really know because we did it when we went to Choices for Life.

EG Right, it's not a bad thing, J....., to be aware that you might be approached by people like that but through your Choices for Life and the work that K's done with you, do you feel you know how to say no to these people?

JM Yes.

EG They've given you strategies. They've told you ways to deal with people like that and if those ways aren't working, you know, you keep doing everything, following the advice that K..... gave and that you got from the Choices for Life and if people are still persisting, do you think you know what to do?

JM Yes, go to a teacher or a guidance teacher, something like that and complain to them.

EG And does that make you feel better.

JM Yes.

EG That's good because I think it would be awful if you didn't know at all that you could do.

JM Um, hmm.

EG Good, right, now let's talk about working at school. Are you happy to talk about that?

JM Yes.

EG Ok, right, I'll ask the same question I asked earlier. Do you enjoy being in the Primary 7 class in this school?

JM Yes.

EG Uh, huh. What do you especially enjoy?

JM (Undecipherable)... and when we go up to secondary we'll be the little ones again.

EG Um, hmm, and that's a wee bit worrying for you.

JM Uh, huh.

EG Would you say you have special talents or special interests, subjects that you are especially good at?

JM Yes.

EG Tell me about them.

JM I'm good at goal-keeping in football and rugby.

EG Uh, huh, good.

JM I'm also into history and I've got quite a few books about history and things as well.

EG Umm, brilliant, uh huh. And do you feel that - maybe you could tell me, does the secondary school know about these things that you are interested in. Did you have a chance to .. ?

JM Yes, we did have a worksheet ... which asked us like what we're interested in and what we'd like to do and things?

EG Like a job.

JM Yes.

EG Wow! And you had a chance to tell that already.

JM Um, hmm.

EG Ok, that's good. Well, we'll have a chance to talk about that a little bit later on.

EG Can you tell me now then, do you work hard at school?

JM Yes, try my best.

EG Do you feel that it's important for you to work hard at school?

JM Um, hmm.

EG Can you tell me why? Why is this important to you?

JM Well, because I want to get a good job when I'm older.

EG Can we go back then to what you said about the importance of working hard and getting a good job? Have you thought about..? Do you think it's important to have a job when you're older?

JM Yes, because you can buy yourself a nice flat or something like that or a car or get an even better job after that

EG Yes, ok, do you want to go to university yourself?

JM Yes.

EG Ok and what, have you thought about the sort of job you'd want to do when you're older?

JM Yes, got a few in mind.

EG Oh, tell me about them.

JM First, I want to be an archaeologist – human archaeologist.

EG Umm.

JM And study the past and all that ... and I want to be a farm contractor in the summer, sort of thing...

EG And do you know if you have to go to university to study these things – archaeology or..?

JM I think you need to go for archaeology. You have to ... I think you have to do very well in history.

EG Uh, huh.

JM And Geography, that sort of thing.

EG Good.

JM Maths as well.

EG Uh, huh.

JM Languages.

EG Um, hmm. I'll just make a note here. Is that OK?

JM Yes

EG Have you talked about wanting to become an archaeologist or farmer? Have you talked about it with any adults or friends?

JM Yes, talked about it quite a lot with my parents.

EG Uh, huh, so they know.

JM Um, hmm, some of my friends as well.

EG Um, hmm.

JM Em, Mrs M (Headteacher) as well, but I just, I don't know if I want to be a full-time year-round farmer because it's a bit ... I just want to be like a part-time summer contractor person.

EG Ah, right, and do you think preparations are being made for you to become an archaeologist? Are mum and dad making - thinking about it?

JM Yes, kind of.

EG Um, hmm.

JM Just like to encourage me, sort of thing.

EG Umm, good, to stick in at school?

JM Yes.

EG Good. And how do you think your school helps you to prepare for when you're grown up?

JM Well, I think, em, Mrs M (Headteacher) has been helping a lot and K ... (home-link worker) coming to do the transition work. I think that's helped quite a bit and also em, school councils as well and that helps a bit as well with groupwork.

EG Good, that's brilliant. I enjoyed having that discussion with you. Is there any thing else, any comments that you want to make on, maybe your future, and /or how you feel about learning and working hard at school? Any other comments that you want to make?

JM Em, I don't think so. No.

EG Ok, good. Did you enjoy that discussion?

JM Yes.

EG Did it help to kind of focus your thinking?

JM Yes.

EG Brilliant. I enjoyed discussing that with you J..... Thanks very much.

Interview Transcript: GSM-P7boy-C1U (FAM1)

EG: So G----- I'm going to start with the same question you had this morning. How do you feel about moving to secondary school?

GSM: Fine really.

EG: No worries?

GSM: Well, I did start worrying about it because we have this French teacher and we don't really, like, understand her because she goes all French.

EG: Do you mean she speaks French all the time?

GSM: Yeah, she speaks French quite a lot of the time.

EG: Maybe she wants you to become quite accustomed to hearing it and then you'll be speaking French all the time like her, in a couple of year's time.

GSM: Aha.

EG: Have you been thinking of talking with anyone about moving to secondary?

GSM: Just my maths teacher, my mum, friends here.

EG: That's good. Do you feel you've been prepared by this school for going to secondary school?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: In what ways would you say?

GSM: We've gone to the (associated secondary school) for science and we've, we've done the open evening.

EG: What about your worries and concerns about going to secondary?

GSM: Just probably, they were, just it is quite a lot of work, there's quite a lot of homework as well.

EG: So have you thought about how you might deal with the homework issue?

GSM: Well when I get home I'll probably get some tea and then do my homework right away.

EG: So you have a kind of plan already...?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: You are thinking in terms of planning how you would do it?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Good. What about the workload, because you'll have lots of different subjects?

GSM: I'll probably, probably do quite a lot on the weekends...because all the assignments that we have to do, like projects and whatever.

EG: So do you feel that you'll be able to do it?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: I hear you have a big project to do at the school. How did that turn out?

GSM: I got an A.

EG: Wow, that's super. So how do you feel about having lots of different teachers?

GSM: That's fine really.

EG: No problem?

GSM: Aha.

EG: Now let's talk about how you get on with your work then, would you say that you enjoy being in the Primary 7 class?

GSM: Yes.

EG: What do you especially enjoy?

GSM: I normally like going on the big school trips because we get Choices for Life in Glasgow and anything like that, yeah big school trips and different new experiences as well.

EG: What about subjects? Have you got a special one that you enjoy?

GSM: Yeah I probably enjoy science and I've got a plan because my mum's an optician so she can help me quite a lot and my Nana was a biology teacher in an academy as well but somewhere else in England.

EG: What about special talents and interests then?

GSM: Well, I'm not, I'm kind of active and I'm really good at sports.

EG: Anything that you're especially good at?

GSM: Well, I was in the after-school band, and I won quite a lot of races as well and I like football, cycling. I like reading books as well.

EG: So do you spend lots of time reading?

GSM: Yeah and I normally spend quite a lot of time reading at home as well.

EG: That's good. Do you work hard at school?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Do you think it's important that you work hard?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Why would you say that?

GSM: Well if you work hard you might get good grades, if you are moving up to the (associated secondary) the teachers might think, oh he's really smart so he'll be... he'll have a good job.

EG: So you're working hard. Do you think it's important for you to have a job when you're older?

GSM: Yes.

EG: And have you thought about what kind of job you might like to have?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: What are you going to do?

GSM: I want to be a forensic scientist or an optician.

EG: An optician, like mum?

GSM: Yes.

EG: Have you talked with any others or friends about this?

GSM: I talked to my mum and family about it and they think it's good.

EG: And they think it's a good idea?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Do you think mum is making preparations for you so that you can have this kind of job when you're older?

GSM: I don't know, but she's trying her best to get me to work really hard, to get me as high as possible.

EG: Do you know what subjects you need to study to be a forensic scientist? What do you need to be good at school to...?

GSM: Science. I don't know what else.

EG: And an optician?

GSM: Science, I think physics as well, something else, like maths.

EG: Where would you go off to study to be a forensic scientist or an optician?

GSM: Glasgow.

EG: You'd go to Glasgow University?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Oh right, and mum knows you want to go to Glasgow University?

GSM: Yeah.

EG: Great. Are they making plans for you to go to Glasgow University?

GSM: I don't know yet.

EG: Last question. How do you think your school helps to prepare you for when you're grown up?

GSM: Well, I think they prepare me quite well and getting all my experiences of what it's like and when you're in the academy you get work experience where they help you with what you can get.

EG: Good. Okay. Will you be going down to mum's for your experience?

GSM: I don't know, probably, I don't know yet.

EG: Okay G----- thank you, I enjoyed speaking to you and I've got lots of information there.