

The University of Strathclyde
Department of Educational Support and Guidance

Count me in!
Involving children in their
Individualised Educational
Programmes

By Sarah Colquhoun

A thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2006

“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 3.51. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any of the material contained in, or derived from this thesis.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would very much like to extend my gratitude to the teachers, professionals and pupils, who gave up their time and adopted new approaches in their classroom practice to participate in my study. Without their co-operation and support, it would have not been possible to complete this study.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Gilbert MacKay for his continuing support, encouragement and guidance throughout this study and indeed for his encouragement to embark on this study in the first place.

Lastly and most importantly, I would like to thank my family, who have always given me their support and encouragement. Particular thanks go to my mother, whose support has been invaluable.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
ABSTRACT	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	2
PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT	3
RATIONALE	4
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
THEORIES AND MODELS OF DISABILITY	9
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION	16
INDIVIDUALISED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES (IEPs)	24
The historical development of the IEP process	24
Factors influencing the development of IEPs	29
INVOLVING CHILDREN	37
Legislation	37
Involving children in the IEP process	44
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	51
WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH?	51
RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS	58
TEACHER RESEARCH	64
ACTION RESEARCH	66
Advantages and disadvantages of action research	68
ETHICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH	71
Research with adults	71
Research with children	76
Power relationships	81
Reflexivity	85
MODELS OF ACTION RESEARCH	88

PROVISIONS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS	99
CHAPTER 4: CYCLE 1	105
PLANNING	105
ACTION	106
Tools of research	107
Sampling strategies	116
The pilot study	119
The structured interview	120
ANALYSING THE DATA	121
Documents	121
Structured interviews	124
REFLECTION	127
CHAPTER 5: CYCLE 2	129
PLANNING	129
ACTION	130
Nominal group technique	131
EVALUATION	136
The experimental approach	136
The quasi-experiment	137
Written response from the class teacher of the experimental group	145
REFLECTION	149
CHAPTER 6: CYCLE 3	151
PLANNING	151
ACTION	152
Group interviews	152
Group interviews with children	154
Written response from a class teacher of a mainstream class	173
REFLECTION	175
CHAPTER 7: CYCLE 4	177
PLANNING	177
ACTION	178

EVALUATION	179
Written responses	179
Comparing numbers	184
REFLECTION	186
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	187
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY	187
IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	190
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE	195
CONCLUSION	197
REFERENCES	199
APPENDIX A: LETTERS OF CONSENT	239
APPENDIX B: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR PUPILS (PILOT STUDY)	241
APPENDIX C: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR PUPILS	242
APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF NOTES ON OBSERVED BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN DURING THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	243
APPENDIX E: IEP WORKBOOK	245
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHER OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP	254
APPENDIX G: WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM TEACHER OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP	255
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION	257
APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION	259
APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHER	284
APPENDIX K: WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM MAINSTREAM TEACHER	286

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN IEP REVIEW MEETINGS	288
APPENDIX M: WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN IEP REVIEW MEETINGS	290
APPENDIX N: EXAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS USED FOR THE WRITTEN RESPONSES	294

List of tables

Table 1: Core principles of the emancipatory research paradigm	15
Table 2: Definitions of feeble-minded, imbeciles and idiots	19
Table 3: Essential elements of an IEP as mandated by PL94-142	25
Table 4: Individual educational plan: Ideals and realities	28
Table 5: Examples of an IEP	30
Table 6: Key issues for debate identified by Banks et al.'s (2001) study	36
Table 7: The ladder of participation	46
Table 8: Characteristics of scientific research	52
Table 9: Characteristics of qualitative research	57
Table 10: Weaknesses of qualitative research	58
Table 11: Rules of research	70
Table 12: The principal types of triangulation used in research	101
Table 13: Criteria for differentiating between constructive information and non constructive information	114
Table 14: Typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry	118
Table 15: Description of pupils involved in the pilot study	119
Table 16: Description of pupils involved in the study	121
Table 17: Advantages and limitations of the open-ended note-taking and categorisation methods	122
Table 18: Scores for structured interview	125
Table 19: The relative strengths of NGT, brainstorming, Delphi and focus group	132
Table 20: Members of the nominal group	134
Table 21: Items generated by the nominal group.	135
Table 22: Items and the number of votes they received	135
Table 23: Description of pupils involved in the quasi-experiment	139
Table 24: Post-test scores	141
Table 25: Mann-Whitney test results	141
Table 26: Summary of relative merits of interview versus questionnaire	146
Table 27: Group members	164
Table 28: Observational checklist used to assess client participation at IPP meetings	185

List of figures

Figure 1: Relationship between developmental theories and research, educational policy and practice and socio-political requirements	8
Figure 2: The transactional model of disability	12
Figure 3: Social research and social policy	14
Figure 4: Ladder of participation	47
Figure 5: Degrees of participation	48
Figure 6: The relationship between educational research and policy and practice	60
Figure 7: The relationship between socio-political factors and educational research	61
Figure 8: The relationship between educational research, policy and practice, and socio-political and economic factors	62
Figure 9: Kurt Lewin's model of action research as interpreted by Kemmis (1980)	89
Figure 10: A revised version of Lewin's model of action research	90
Figure 11: Action research in action	92
Figure 12: The cyclical process in action research	93
Figure 13: Proposed cycles of research	94
Figure 14: The four cycles of my research	96
Figure 15: Cycle 1	105
Figure 16: Children's scores	126
Figure 17: Cycle 2	129
Figure 18: The experimental design	139
Figure 19: Pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group	142
Figure 20: Pre-test and post-test scores for the control group	142
Figure 21: The constant comparative method	147
Figure 22: The data analysis spiral	147
Figure 23: Cycle 3	151
Figure 24: Cycle 4	177

ABSTRACT

Using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation and Treseder's (1997) degrees of participation, this study looks at ways of increasing the involvement of children with learning disabilities in their individualised educational programmes (IEPs).

It adopts an action research model, consisting of four cycles of research. Each cycle feeds directly into classroom practice and is designed to increase the children's participation in the IEP process. The study uses a variety of data collection methods. Throughout the research process, these methods are re-negotiated with the participants in order to take into account pragmatic and ethical issues.

The study suggests a number of interventions and strategies to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets, to involve them in the setting of their targets and to help them to participate in the IEP review meetings. However, it also concludes that the structure and procedures of such meetings need to change to enable children with learning difficulties to play an active and meaningful role. In addition, it maintains that if this group of children are going to be meaningfully and actively involved in decision-making processes, researchers need to adopt an expanded social model of disability and develop and explore more effective ways of communicating with them. If this does not happen there is a danger that their voices will be silenced or ignored.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and its subsequent ratification by the United Kingdom Government in December 1991, has led to the acceptance of children as people, entitled to human rights. These rights incorporate not only basic rights of survival, development and protection, but also civil rights such as the right to freedom of expression, religion, conscience, association, information, physical integrity and participation in decisions on matters of concern to them (Lansdown, 1995). It is the latter with which this study is concerned.

In this introductory chapter I begin by outlining the study's purpose and aims. The following section describes my personal background and involvement in the study and briefly discusses how this has influenced my research. I conclude the chapter by providing a rationale for the study.

Chapter 2 surveys the relevant literature. It consists of two parts. The first part looks at theories and models of disability and the development of special education, focusing on Scotland. The second part focuses on individualised educational programmes (IEPs) and the IEP process. It traces the historical development of (IEPs) and looks at factors influencing that development. The final section of part two looks at children's involvement in decision-making processes, focusing on their involvement in the formulation and implementation of their own IEPs.

Chapter 3 consists of two parts. It begins by looking at the nature of educational research. Then it considers how the positivistic approach influenced educational research and how in recent decades educational researchers have adopted more qualitative approaches. It then examines the complex relationship between educational research, policy and practice and socio-political and economic factors, echoing themes first introduced in Chapter 2. The following section looks at teacher research as a possible solution to the problem of the relationship between educational

research and practice. It focuses on action research as this is the type of research used in my study. Finally, it looks at the ethics of social research and considers ethical difficulties surrounding my research.

The second part of Chapter 3 provides detailed information about my research design. In this chapter I describe how I investigated the topic and why particular methods and techniques were employed.

Chapters 4-7 describe the four cycles of my research. Each chapter begins with an account of my plan of action. I also provide a rationale for the tools of research employed in each of the cycles. In addition, each chapter explains how the data was analysed and considers the findings. In the final section of each chapter I reflect on the next cycle of research.

The final chapter looks at the implications of the study for theory, research methodology and practice.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to increase pupil involvement in the IEP process in a department of special education in a mainstream primary school. Its objectives were as follows:

- i) To find out the extent to which the pupils are currently involved in the IEP process from the perspective of the pupils themselves and their teachers.
- ii) To increase pupil involvement in the IEP process by designing and implementing facilitating strategies.

The questions it posed were as follows:

- a) How are pupils presently involved in the IEP process?
- b) What knowledge and understanding do pupils have of the IEP process?

- c) How can the school increase pupils' knowledge, understanding and participation in the IEP process?

- d) How successful have the strategies been in increasing pupil involvement in the IEP process?

Davis, Watson and Cunningham-Burley (2003) recommend that researchers, involved in research with children, adopt a reflexive approach. Part of this approach requires researchers to take into account their personal experiences as the values they acquire throughout their lives influence both the research and interpretation processes. This reflexive approach is discussed more fully in Chapter 3. However, the following section looks at my personal involvement in the study.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

My interest in children with additional support needs stems from having a sister who has cerebral palsy. Jennifer has profound physical and intellectual disabilities. She has no speech but communicates through eye pointing, vocalisations and facial expressions. Although Jennifer has severe communication impairments, she is capable of making choices about activities and events in which she wants to participate. My experiences of living with a sister who has severe disabilities has led me to believe that all children are capable of taking part in decision-making processes which affect their lives.

In my teens I became a helper in a play scheme in which my sister took part and in my fourth year at secondary school I attended a work placement at a special school. These experiences resulted in me wanting to become a teacher of children with additional support needs. During my university holidays I worked in a respite care unit for children with disabilities, as well as a residential unit for children with autism. In addition, as part of my university course, I opted to take the Special Educational Needs (SEN) elective in my fourth year.

On completing the four year primary education course at Strathclyde University, I was offered a job in a department of special education (DSE), attached to a mainstream school. In this post I wrote and implemented IEPs for the children in my class. In writing these IEPs various concerns arose in my mind. I began to question the effectiveness of IEPs in raising the attainment of the pupils in the department. This made me begin to think about different ways of formulating and implementing IEPs so as to increase their effectiveness. I found that IEPs tended to be written and not referred to again until they were due to be evaluated. Furthermore, conversations with colleagues seemed to suggest that the format of IEPs varied greatly in terms of content, range and practice. In addition, they were rarely regarded as working documents but rather as extra paperwork for teachers. Thus I decided to explore the effectiveness of IEPs for planning, monitoring, assessing and evaluating the provision for children with additional support needs from the perspectives of the practitioners, parents/carers and pupils. However, with the publication of Banks, Baynes, Dyson, Kane, Millward, Riddell and Wilson's (2001) study I found that the topic of my original study had been largely addressed. Therefore, I decided to look at some of the issues highlighted in their report. As the report found that there was a need for greater involvement of pupils in the formulation and review of IEPs, I chose to investigate ways of increasing pupil involvement in the IEP process. Although the Education (Scotland) Act of 2003 introduced a Co-ordinated Support Plan for children with additional support needs, IEPs still remain. In the course of working on my study, I moved jobs and became an integrating teacher in a department of special education, helping pupils to integrate into mainstream classes. I am currently employed as a class teacher in a department of special education, attached to a mainstream primary school. Thus this topic is relevant to my post.

RATIONALE

I work in an education authority which has departments of special education within mainstream schools. Teachers in these departments are staff of the whole school and pupils are included in mainstream school and classes where appropriate. During the course of this study I worked as an integration teacher in a department of special

education. My role was to facilitate integration and social inclusion in the school, as well as supporting pupils in mainstream classes if required.

In the department staff are encouraged to read over reports with the children and this includes IEPs. Some teachers have the children's targets displayed on charts in the classrooms but there are no specific guidelines or strategies for encouraging pupils to take part in the IEP process. The department also tries to involve pupils in the review process but has encountered some problems. Some parents do not want their children to attend the meetings, sometimes professionals outside education become alarmed if it is proposed that children attend, and sometimes the pupils themselves do not want to be involved. The head of department is keen to increase the children's involvement in the IEP process as she feels it will help them "be aware of what is planned for them at FNA (Future Needs Assessment) and Leaver's Reviews." Therefore, I decided to look at ways of increasing pupil involvement in the IEP process in our department.

As well as having a personal interest in the topic, my study is also related to current international and national documents (see Chapter 2). In 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 recognises children's right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account. Two years later, in December 1999, the United Kingdom Government agreed to be bound by the Convention. Although the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act recognised the right of children to be consulted on matters relating to them, schools were exempt (Griffiths, Cunningham & Dick, no date) However, educational reports such as the Effective Provision for Special Education (EPSEN) (SOEID, 1994) and policy documents (SOEID Circular 4/96, SOEID, 1998) stress the importance of involving children in decisions about their education (see Chapter 2). Despite these developments, reports and research (the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1995; Tisdall, 1996; Davis & Watson, 2000; Banks et al., 2001) found that children's involvement in decision-making processes was minimal. Davis and Watson (2000) in their study conclude that:

...although legislation and guidance is important, it will only afford disabled children protection when combined with more local innovation. This should encourage adults and children to understand their interdependencies, act in more equitable ways, and, practise better forms of dialogue and communication.

(Davis & Watson, 2000, p. 213)

This is what my study aimed to do. It aimed to increase children's involvement in decisions about their education by increasing their participation in the IEP process at the school in which I teach, using Arnstein's (1969) and Hart's (1992) ladders of participation and Treseder's (1997) degrees of participation (see Chapter 2, Figures 4 & 5, pp. 47 & 48). Although it is what Davis and Watson (2000) refer to as a "local innovation", its findings and methodology may be useful to other teachers of children with additional support needs.

My study also involved consulting children directly and involving them in my research. This is a relatively new development in the United Kingdom, especially with children with disabilities (Ward, 1997). In the past, research has tended to focus on adult perceptions of children's feelings, thoughts and needs. However, more recent research (Menke, 1987; Tackett, Kerr & Helmstader, 1990; Ennett, De Vellis, Erp, Kredih, Warren & Wilhelm, 1991) has shown that adults view events and situations differently from children and are therefore not capable of assuming children's perspectives. In addition, some researchers argue that children and adults live in different worlds and therefore the researcher's task is to find ways of bridging the gap (Ritala-Koskinen, 1994). My study involved devising techniques to include children with additional support needs more fully in the research process. I hope that these ideas will be useful to other researchers, contribute to our expertise in involving children with learning disabilities in research and lead to better practice.

My study also involved action research. Vulliamy and Webb (1992) argue that traditionally research in special education has been dominated by psychologists and positivism. This, they claim, has added little to "our understanding of the realities of

teaching and learning in the natural settings of ordinary or special schools” (p. 2) and made little impact on practice. They believe that teacher research is particularly relevant to research in special education where teachers are involved with children with often unique learning difficulties. They point out that most studies of special education use either qualitative or quantitative methods and are carried out by researchers not directly involved in special education. They also see teacher research as a way of increasing the relevance of research to practice (Corrie & Zaklukiewicz, 1985). Indeed, Elliott (1993) argues that:

Action research integrates teaching and teacher development, curriculum development and evaluation, research and philosophical reflection, into a unified conception of a reflective educational practice.

(Elliott, 1993, p. 54)

He maintains that action research, by developing teachers’ capacity for discrimination and judgement, improves practice and the development of teachers in their professional role. Thus these researchers argue that teacher research can contribute to policy-making, practice and professional development (Vulliamy & Webb, 1991, 1992). I hope that my study will contribute to my personal and professional development, change classroom practice and influence departmental policy.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is concerned with increasing children's involvement in the IEP process. International and national documents produced towards the end of the twentieth century advocate that children should be consulted and involved in the planning and development of services which they use. Indeed there is legislation in Scotland which emphasises the importance of involving children with additional support needs in discussions about their education. However, children with disabilities have not always been perceived as active social agents, capable of making choices and decisions. Davis and Watson (2002) maintain that children with disabilities have tended to be portrayed as passive, vulnerable, incompetent and dependent in much of educational, social and medical research and that this image is further reinforced by both popular media and promotional literature used by charities. Therefore the first part of this chapter, by looking at theories and models of disability and tracing the historical development of special education, attempts to illustrate how current understandings of disability and children with disabilities are historically contingent, unstable and intertwined with the complex relationship between theories and research, policy and practice and socio-political requirements (Figure 1).

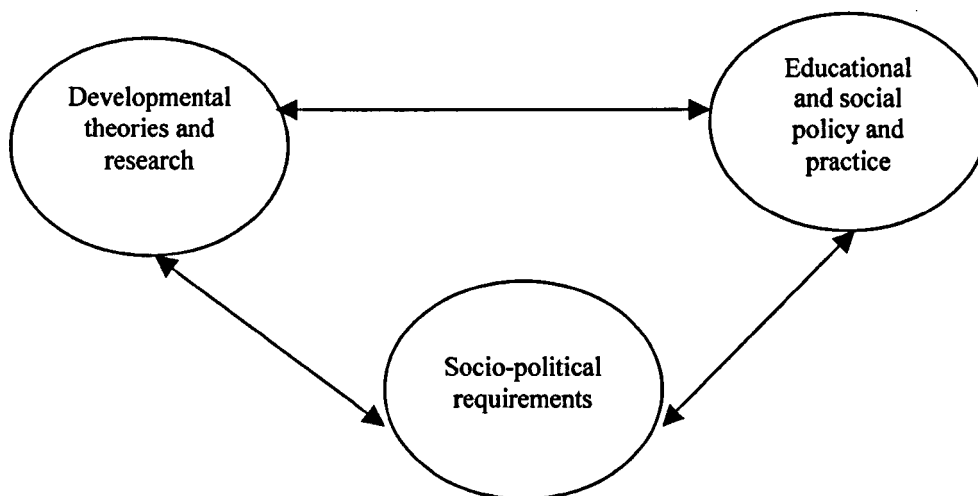


Figure 1: Relationship between developmental theories and research, educational policy and practice and socio-political requirements

Having made the assumption that all children with disabilities are capable of taking part in decision-making processes when participation is properly planned, the second part of the chapter focuses on the IEP process. It traces the historical development of IEPs and looks at factors influencing that development. The final section of part two looks at children's involvement in decision-making processes, focusing on their involvement in the formulation and implementation of their own IEPs.

THEORIES AND MODELS OF DISABILITY

The traditional model of disability is the medical model. This model is rooted in the work of Parsons (1951), an American sociologist. Parsons argued that the "normal" state of well-being in Western developed societies is "good health", therefore sickness and impairments are deviations from "normality". He suggested that when people become ill, they should adopt a temporary sick role and seek help from medical professionals who will help them to gain their former status. However, in the case of people with disabilities, the sick role is permanent. Therefore they must accept dependency and give over their lives to medical experts who will alleviate their "abhorrent and undesirable situation" and help them to make the most of their abilities. This medical model of disability locates the problem of disability in the physical or mental impairment of the individual and views the problems that people with disabilities encounter as the direct and inevitable result of impairment. It is based on the personal tragedy theory (Oliver, 1990) which views disability as a tragedy and people with disabilities as the victims of tragic events who need to be compensated for their afflictions and if unable to be "cured", removed from society, or assisted to achieve "normality" and return to a non-disabled society through rehabilitation processes. This model has been criticised for viewing people with disabilities as unable to play a full role in society and for marginalising and segregating people with disabilities.

Focusing on children with disabilities, this model pathologises children who fail to achieve certain developmental milestones and age related targets. Their abilities are measured for "normality" and little account is taken of the social context or social relationships. Thus their impairment excludes them from taking part in "normal"

childhood and decision-making processes on the grounds of incompetence. The latter has led to debates surrounding issues such as who should decide competency, what criteria should be used, where and how should competency be assessed and over what time scale (Davis & Watson, 2000). However, the medical model has not gone unchallenged.

During the 1960s and 1970s people with disabilities began to protest against their incarceration in residential institutions and the discrimination they encountered (Barnes, Oliver & Barton, 2002). They criticised the medical model for ignoring the disabling effects of society and for failing to consider people with disabilities' viewpoints and experiences. This led to the rejection of the medical model and the re-defining of the terms impairment and disability. Impairment was defined as "lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body" and disability as "the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities" (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1975, pp. 3-4). It also generated a new approach to theory and practice — the social model of disability. Underpinning this model is the theory of social oppression. This theory maintains that, in our society, disability is a form of social oppression (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1998, 1999). The social model sees disability as resulting, not from impairment, but from within society and its social organisation:

It does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure that the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation.

(Oliver, 1996, p. 32)

However, the social model has been criticised for excluding the impaired body (Crow, 1996; Hughes, 1999) and for ignoring the importance of impairment (Corker

& French, 1999); for neglecting issues of gender (Morris 1991, 1996), race (Stuart, 1992; Begum, Hill & Stevens, 1994), sexuality (Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells & Davies, 1996) and age (Zarb & Oliver, 1992; Robinson & Stalker, 1998); for devaluing the role of cultural processes (Barnes, 1991; 1996) and discourses of disability (Corker, 1998; Corker & French, 1999) and for failing to include all aspects of disability (Chappell, 1998; Goodley, 2001). These criticisms have resulted in different social models of disability. For example, some models emphasise structural and material conditions and are concerned with institutional barriers. Others focus on disabling attitudes and representations (Priestley, 1998). Furthermore, some writers (Thomas, 1999, 2002; Thomas & Corker, 2002) have re-defined disability, viewing it as a social relationship between people:

A form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being.

(Thomas & Corker, 2002, pp. 19-20)

This definition not only allows the consideration of “restrictions of “doing” (what people with disabilities do or are prevented from doing) and “being” (who people with disabilities are, how they feel), but also recognises that some restrictions of activity are caused by illness or impairment — “impairment effects” (Thomas, 2002).

Focusing on the competence of children with disabilities, the social model allows incompetence to be re-defined as “not something natural or innate but [as] socially produced” (Cockburn, 1998, p. 109). Proponents of this viewpoint (Priestley, 1998; Shakespeare & Watson, 1998) argue that competence is not fixed and the competency of children with disabilities cannot be judged by ablest test criteria as much of the testing is centred around Anglo-centric notions of normality which do not take into account culture and social context (Woodhead, 1998; Alderson, 2000; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). Indeed the work of Margaret Donaldson (1978) suggests that when the context of a test is changed, children are observed to demonstrate more logical thinking and sophisticated reasoning than Piaget (1973)

claimed in his work on the development of children’s cognitive abilities. Similarly, Vygotsky’s (1962) research suggests that studies of children’s thinking have often ignored the social construction of knowledge and the impact of the presence of an adult researcher and other children on the child being assessed. Thus these studies question whether there can be such a thing as an objective test of competency. However, whilst acknowledging that the social model of disability “has obvious political potency”, Davis and Watson (2002) argue that “its material basis creates barriers to the investigation of the lives of disabled children” (p. 171). They contend that the social model views people with disabilities as a homogeneous group and that this masks the diversity of the lives of people with disabilities. All of the above arguments have resulted in some writers proposing a new model of disability — the transactional model (Dryden, 2000; Llewellyn & Hughes, 2000; Haddow, 2004).

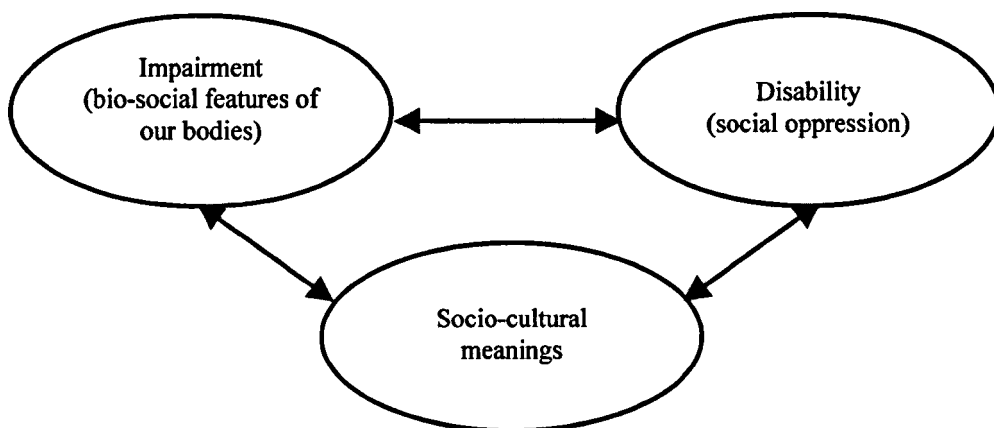


Figure 2: The transactional model of disability

This model (Figure 2) views disability as the result of a large number of interacting variables and advocates looking at impairment and disability from different levels of analysis — the personal, interpersonal and societal level. It adopts Thomas’ social relational definition of disability, which allows both restrictions of being and doing to be considered, as well as impairment effects. It also views impairment and disability as discrete entities but acknowledges that they are also capable of interacting. However, it is careful not to focus exclusively on structural and environmental factors. Whilst it recognizes that people with disabilities are embedded in a complex network of social structures and relationships which partly determine their lives, it

also views them as agents, capable of changing the world and other people's perceptions of them:

It cannot be denied that the physical, material and social organisation of our society promotes inequalities, and withholds rights and resources to some groups... [and] that this should be an important topic for researchers to investigate. However, this [reduces] the importance of people as social actors, reifying the role of structure and ignoring the diverse ways in which individuals and social groups relate to and resist such structures.

(Davis, 2000, p. 196)

The model also takes into account Thomas and Corker's (2002) argument that we need to look at modes of communication, language and discourse as impairment and disability are given meaning through the discourses we live with in our cultures. This stresses the importance of the interactive relationship between people with disabilities and non-disabled people and recognizes that both groups' interpretations and meanings of impairment and disability can be deconstructed and changed, which hopefully will influence attitudes, policies and practices. Thus the model views impairment and disability as the consequences of social meaning interrelated within social structures, with the environment viewed as an interactive structure in which individuals act as active synthesisers of information (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000, p. 161). However, proponents of this model emphasise that it cannot provide a full explanation of every aspect of disability, arguing that it can only be regarded as a tool for increasing understanding of disability. These views are similar to those expressed by Davis and Watson (2002) who point out that children with disabilities live in a society whose physical environment, cultural values and social interactions and relationships create an image of what children with disabilities should be. However, these structures and values can be changed:

Structure, culture and agency are fused in every social setting. This fusion is not fixed in either time, place or person; it is fluid and open to change and, as such, so are disabled children.

(Davis & Watson, 2002, p. 170)

These models of disability discussed above not only influence our understanding and perceptions of children with disabilities, they also influence research methods as each model is associated with distinctive ways of carrying out research (Figure 3). The medical model is associated with the social engineering approach which assumes that given the facts, “changes will occur for the better” (Oliver, 1992, p. 18). In contrast, the interpretive paradigm adopts an enlightenment model, viewing disability as a social problem, not an individual one. This has tended to be the model adopted by researchers conducting research associated with learning disabilities. Such research (Chappell, 1998; Goodley & Moore, 2000) aims to empathise with people’s experiences and suggest service changes to improve people with disabilities’ lives. It tends to favour participatory research which involves the researcher working in partnership with people with learning disabilities and including them in the research process in a meaningful way (Zarb, 1992). The role of the researcher is to share his or her expertise with the participants.

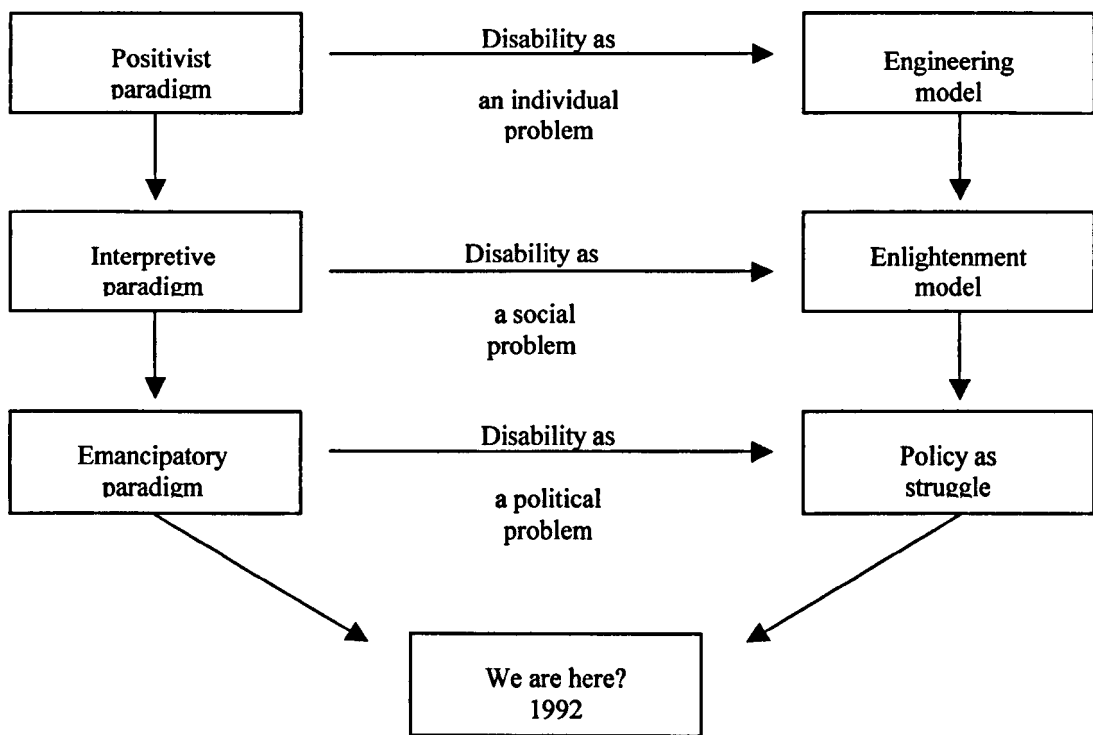


Figure 3: Social research and social policy

Source: Oliver, 1992, p.108

Oliver (1992), however, criticises this research for failing to have any major impact on services for people with disabilities and for failing to make a direct link between research and policy. He argues that participatory research alienates people with disabilities from research processes and only adds to their social oppression (Abberley, 1997). He favours emancipatory research (Table 1) which is founded on the social model of disability. In emancipatory research people with disabilities are in control of all aspects of the research process — from the formulation of questions to the dissemination of the findings. The researcher is accountable to people with disabilities and their organisations, with research being viewed as political action. However, Riddell, Wilkinson and Baron (1998) argue that it is difficult to fulfil all the principles of emancipatory research in studies involving people with learning disabilities:

The expertise of the researcher... is not transmissible to some people with cognitive impairments; the involvement of people... may similarly be limited; current models... suggest that the pulls either to the trivial or to the professionally stage managed are hard to resist!
(Riddell et al., 1998, pp. 81-82)

Table 1: Core principles of the emancipatory research paradigm

-
1. The adoption of a social model of disablement as the epistemological basis for research production
 2. The surrender of claims to objectivity through overt political commitment to the struggles of disabled people for self-emancipation
 3. The willingness only to undertake research where it will be of practical benefit to the self-empowerment of disabled people and/or the removal of disabling barriers
 4. The evolution of control over research production to ensure full accountability to disabled people and their organizations
 5. Giving voice to the personal as political whilst endeavouring to collectivize the political commonality of individual experiences
 6. The willingness to adopt a plurality of methods for data collection and analysis in response to the changing needs of disabled people
-

Source: Stone and Priestley, 1996, p. 706

Kiernan (1999) argues that participatory research is a pragmatic approach which has had an impact on policies and services for people with disabilities. In addition,

Chappell, Goodley and Lawthom (2001) argue that participatory research can be an important way of enabling people with learning disabilities to increase their involvement in research processes (see March, Steingold, Justice & Mitchell, 1997; People First, 1994). Following in the footsteps of writers (James & Prout, 1990; Christensen & James, 2000; Davis & Watson, 2002) from the new social studies of childhood, this study adopts a theoretical approach which aims to collect and interpret the views of children and work with children so as to involve them and include them in the processes of change. Like Riddell et al. (1998), I believe that it is not always possible to adopt the principles of the emancipatory research paradigm with people with learning disabilities. This issue is revisited towards the end of the chapter and methodological and ethical issues surrounding research with children with learning disabilities is further discussed in Chapter 3

The following section traces the historical development of special education, focusing on Scotland, and attempts to show how theories of development and learning and socio-political factors have influenced policy-making, practice and the provision of education for children with disabilities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ryan and Thomas (1985) maintain that up until the twentieth century learning difficulties in children were regarded as mainly due to “intrinsic causes” or “morbid heredity.”

There can be no doubt of the great part played by heredity in the genesis of idiocy. Idiots frequently are born in families in which there is a decided neurotic tendency, as manifested by the appearance of insanity, imbecility, or epilepsy among the members.

(Ireland, 1897, cited in Ryan & Thomas, 1985, p. 86)

Nevertheless, it was also recognised that idiots could also be born to intelligent parents. However, Willis argued that this was the result of parental behaviour:

Parents (to paraphrase Willis) might do too much studying and reading, causing them to be “weakly prolific”, too much energy being directed to the mind as opposed to the body. Or there may be “somatic insults” to the bodies of parents through intemperance, drunkenness, effeminacy, luxury or excessive youth or age.

(Ryan & Thomas, 1985, p. 84)

As well as attributing idiocy to parental defects and behaviour (Shuttleworth, 1895; Bateman, 1897), some medical professionals (Langdon-Down, 1866; Tredgold, 1908) compared idiots to primitive non-European people. Idiots were regarded as unfinished or degenerate descendants of primitive forms of human kind:

The Mongolian type of idiocy occurs in more than 10 per cent of the cases which are presented to me. They are always congenital idiots, and never result from accidents after uterine life. They are, for the most part, instances of degeneracy arising from tuberculosis in the parents.

(Down, 1866, cited in Potts, 1984, p. 9)

These ideas were linked to British colonisation and a growing interest in the biological evolution of the human race (Darwin, 1859). Indeed, influenced by his cousin Darwin’s theories, Francis Galton (1869, 1883) devised intelligence tests based on the assumption that intelligence is a fixed and innate capacity. He founded the Eugenics Movement which aimed to improve the hereditary stock of the human race by selective breeding. Their influence continued into the twentieth century as illustrated by their presentation of a Sterilization Bill in the House of Commons in 1931. This Bill was intended to discourage “parenthood on the part of the feeble-minded or other degenerate types” (Lowe, 1979, cited in Potts, 1984, p. 21). Supporters of the Eugenics Movement also argued that nature, not nurture, was the driving force in human development and so opposed special education for some defective groups. For example, children with profound learning difficulties were excluded from the system of special schools which was set up in 1906 (see Table 2,

p. 19). Indeed, it was not until 1974 that such children were regarded as “educable” in Scotland.

This emphasis on a biological basis for physical and intellectual disabilities in children resulted in a high level of input from the medical profession in terms of definitions and treatment:

Subnormality means a state of arrested and incomplete development of mind ...of a nature and degree which is susceptible to medical treatment or other special care or training of the patient.

(Mental Health Act, 1959, cited in Ryan & Thomas, p. 89)

Potts (1984) argues that the identification of people with mental and physical disabilities with the poor, coupled with beliefs about the causes of impairments and disabilities, meant that only Christian organisations or medical pioneers were interested in them in the nineteenth century. Thus before the middle of the nineteenth century the majority of people considered incapable of benefiting from education became the responsibility of parish councils for placement in institutions.

The religious beliefs and medical backgrounds of the first pioneers of special education in the nineteenth century influenced early forms of special education. Medical pioneers such as Itard (see Lane, 1976), Seguin (1846, 1866) and Guggenbuhl (see Kanner, 1964) believed that idiocy could be cured or alleviated. They set up programmes of education, taking the optimistic view that these children could be improved. These beliefs reflect the associationalist view of learning rather than the rationalist one expressed by the Eugenics Movement. However, Itard, Seguin and Guggenbuhl’s ideas were criticised and discredited (see Binet & Simon, 1914; Kanner, 1964) and towards the end of the nineteenth century pessimistic ideas about intellectual impairments became dominant again.

In 1889 the Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb and Others of the UK (Egerton Commission) identified three categories of “mentally handicapped” children: “idiots”, “imbeciles” and “feeble-minded” (Table 2, p. 19).

Table 2: Definitions of feeble-minded, imbeciles and idiots

“Feeble-minded” or “mentally defective” — Children who were capable of being educated and who “not being imbecile, and not being merely dull or backward, are defective, that is to say... by reason of mental or physical defect are incapable of receiving benefit from the instruction in ordinary elementary schools but are not incapable by reason of such defect of receiving benefit from instruction in special classes or schools

“Imbecile” — Children who, because of mental defect, could not be educated to be self-supporting and were unable “to receive proper benefit from instruction in the special classes” (Report of the Departmental Committee of the Education Department on Defective and Epileptic Children, in Potts et al., 1982, p. 13). However, they were regarded as “educable” but only in special classes which concentrated on sensory, perceptual and physical development, physical education and the improvement of speech, rather than reading, writing and arithmetic. These children were to be educated in institutions.

“Idiots” – Children not considered to be educable or trainable.

(The Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb and Others of the UK, 1889 and the Report of the Departmental Committee of the Education Department on Defective and Epileptic Children, 1898)

“Feeble-minded” and “imbecile” children were regarded as educable or trainable in special schools or classes. However, “idiots” were considered to be uneducable and therefore were to remain in institutions or asylums. Solity (1993) argues that this report, together with the extension of elementary education in the 1870s, the “payment by results” scheme and the emergence of intelligence testing as a “scientific” instrument for measuring and predicting children’s learning potential, provided the impetus to governments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to set up special segregated provision for children with “mental handicaps”. Prior to this governments had relied on private and voluntary initiatives such as provision for “imbeciles” at Baldovan in Dundee and “defectives” in Edinburgh. However, by the 1890s Darwin’s theory of evolution was becoming popular, the

Eugenics Movement was gathering strength and early disasters in the Boer War resulted in legislation to improve school children's health and well-being with the state taking a leading role (Sutherland, 1985). At the same time pressure was increasing for state provision for children with "mental handicaps" and in Scotland school boards were officially allowed to provide education for "defective" children in 1906 (Education of Defective Children (Scotland) Act). Although this Act provided a grant to authorities, relatively few used their powers (HMSO, 1910) and it was not until 1913 that authorities were obliged to educate such children (Mental Deficiency (Scotland) Act, 1913).

With the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, the desire to implement initiatives in special education came to a halt. After the war there was a post-war economic boom but by 1920 the economy was beginning to collapse and the country sank into a depression. This resulted in government reluctance to implement initiatives in education, as illustrated by their failure to implement much of the 1918 Education Act and the recommendations of the Wood Committee (1929). It was not until after the Second World War, that the government attempted to formulate national policies on special education. In England and Wales, the 1944 Education Act introduced new categories into special education, two of which, the educationally sub-normal-mild (ESN-M) and the educationally sub-normal-severe (ESN-S) resulted in a large number of schools being built in the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1970s many of these schools followed a curriculum based on behavioural teaching techniques (Burland, 1979; Jones, 1979) or on studies of children's development, particularly in language (Gillham, 1979) and thinking and understanding (Kiernan, Jordan & Saunders, 1978). In Scotland the Education (Scotland) Act of 1945 required Scottish education authorities to make provision for "ineducable but trainable mental defectives" in "occupational centres". Those who were considered to be untrainable were referred to the local health authority for placement in a "day centre". In 1968 responsibility for these day centres was transferred to social work departments. It was not until 1974, with the introduction of the Education (Mentally Handicapped Children) (Scotland) Act that all children were regarded as educable, with education being seen as a right.

This brief discussion of the historical development of special education has shown that the educational, political and economic climate of the early part of the twentieth century led to segregated forms of special education (Solity, 1993). The difficulties and problems children experienced were seen to arise because of the characteristics of the child — there was something wrong with the child. This medical model of disability (see also pp. 9-10) views the problems which children with disabilities experience as the direct result of their individual physical, sensory and intellectual impairment; there is little recognition of the role of society in creating these problems. This model dominated thinking in the 1950s and 1960s and was adopted by various disciplines and institutions in society, such as psychology (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000), education (French, 1994) and social work (Oliver & Sapey, 1999). Swann (1984) argues that this thinking, along with developmental psychology and behaviourism offered “explanations of human actions in terms of facts about the individual” and isolated “children from their social context” (p. 37). He contends that:

...any educational theory ... [should] be concerned with children’s actions in their social context, for children always and only do things in the context of a family, a neighbourhood, a school, a social class, a culture. Education is an intervention in the relationship between children and their social context. This is as true of a child learning to play the piano as it is of a mentally handicapped child learning to talk, play games or use money. Indeed, the more handicapped children are, the more obviously their education is an introduction to social institutions.

(Swann, 1984, p. 38)

In 1980 the Education (Scotland) Act was introduced. It aimed to break away from the categorisation of children. Whereas previous legislation (Regulations of 1954) had defined difficulties in terms of the characteristics of individual children, this Act described special needs in terms of the educational provision required to meet the child’s needs:

A child has special educational needs if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special provision to be made for him.

(Newell, 1983, p. 23)

The Act envisaged the term “learning difficulty” as being applied to a child who has:

...a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of that age, or has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of that age.

(Education (Scotland) Act, 1981)

The Act also promoted integration and the involvement of parents as partners in their children’s education. These principles have been echoed more recently in international statements of inclusion such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and in national policies such as the Children (Scotland) Act (1995), Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs (HMI, 1994) and Special Educational Needs in Scotland (The Scottish Office, 1998). However, despite this rhetoric, segregated provision for children with special educational needs in Scotland still exists. Furthermore, both Brennan (1974) and Swann (1984) argue that the behavioural model is still influential in special education as regards curriculum development:

The techniques of modern curriculum development and design have not been widely applied to the curriculum for slow learners... the technique is outlined as the reduction of general curriculum aims to the statements of behavioural objectives at intermediate and terminal points in the curricular process...

(Brennan, 1974, p. 96)

Goddard (1997) concurs with this, arguing that Individual Educational Plans/Programmes (IEPs) are “inextricably linked with a curriculum based on the behavioural objectives model” (p. 170). He maintains that behaviourism fragments learning and pupils’ experiences:

The model is linear, hierarchical and reductionistic, adopting a step-by-step approach to learning, and embracing a product ideology.

(Goddard, 1997, p. 170)

Like Iano (1996) and Nind and Hewett (1994), he argues that behavioural methods and baseline assessments do not increase efficiency in learning. His arguments are supported by Forness (1988) and Poplin (1988), who both argue that the behavioural model has failed to produce effective approaches in special education. Further criticisms come from Wood and Shears (1986) who maintain that the behavioural model results in education being “teacher controlled” (p. 78) and from Rettinger, Waters & Poplin, (1989) who criticise it for failing to appreciate “the subjective, artistic, intrinsic, creative aspects of learning, or trust the integrity of the mind” (p. 312). Goddard (1997) and Nind and Hewett (1994) favour a process model based on social constructivism. This model, as the name suggests, is concerned with processes rather than products. It views learning as:

...a process whereby new meanings are created (constructed) by the learner within the context of her or his current knowledge (p. 404). One of the tenets of constructivist views of learning, is that learners must be “actively involved in the learning process” (p. 411).

(Poplin, 1988b, cited in Goddard, 1997, p. 172)

This model promotes pupil autonomy by encouraging children to learn by constructing their own understanding through “meaningful effective interaction with others” (Watson, 1996, p. 4). Although these social constructivist ideas are not new, in the past they have not featured prominently in special education, being confined

mainly to primary education. However, these ideas are beginning to be used in North America (Poplin, 1995) and the United Kingdom (Booth, Potts, Swann & Masterton, 1992) to look at ways of educating children with special needs. However, behavioural psychology is still very influential in special education. For example, in 1999 the Scottish Executive (SOEID, March 1998) implemented a target-setting initiative which was influenced by behavioural psychology, and aimed to raise the educational attainments of pupils with special educational needs. The development of Individual Education Programmes is the topic of the next section.

INDIVIDUALISED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES (IEPs)

The historical development of the IEP process

IEPs were originally developed in the United States of America in 1977 with the passing of Public Law 94-142 (Abeson & Weintraub, 1977). This law required children with disabilities in the USA to undergo an evaluation process in order to develop an IEP. These IEPs were to be drawn up through a process of consultation and collaboration between class teachers, special education teachers, parents and school principals, with input from relevant specialists such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and so on. These people were to be responsible for devising long-term goals and short-term objectives for pupils with special educational needs based on their strengths and weaknesses. The IEP was not restricted to academic areas but included aspects such as social adjustment, vocational education, physical education and adaptive behaviour (Fiscus & Mandell, 1983). Time lines were also established for the achievement of objectives and regular reviews of progress. In addition, people were identified to take responsibility for implementing and monitoring the plans or programmes. This legislation in the USA was designed to make education services accountable and to ensure that pupils with special educational needs received appropriate educational programmes. Furthermore, it allowed parents to have some input into the process of curriculum adaptation, as well as some say in the setting of priorities for their child's development and education. Table 3 (p. 25) outlines the information IEPs must contain to comply with Public Law 94-142.

The concept of IEPs for children with special educational needs began to be developed by other countries. In Australia, although IEPs were not enshrined in law as in the USA, they were widely used in special education (Ashman & Elkins, 1990). In European countries such as Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Sweden and the Czech Republic, IEP processes are in place, although research has indicated that policies are not always put into practice (Pijl, De Graaf & Emanuelsson, 1998; Da Costa & Rodrigues, 1999). IEPs were introduced into the United Kingdom in 1994, although they were referred to by the Warnock Report (DES, 1978, 11.15: 209) in 1978. The English and Welsh 1993 Education Act and the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Education Needs (DfEE, 1994) stated that in the process of producing an official "statement" an individual education plan should also be drawn up in order to further the education of children with special educational needs (2:93). In Scotland IEPs were recommended in a report by HMIs, "Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs" (ESPEN) (SOED, 1994) and the Manual of Good Practice (SOED, 1998) but unlike the Code in England and Wales, they do not have the force of law. These IEPs were described as:

...written plans outlining the steps to be taken to enable children/young persons with special educational needs to achieve specified targets.
(SOEID, 1998, p. 50)

Table 3: Essential elements of an IEP as mandated by PL94-142

Child's present level of educational performance;
Statement of annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives;
Specific special education and related services to be provided;
Statement on the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular education programs;
Projected dates for initiation and duration of services;
Objective criteria and evaluation procedures for determining whether short-term instructional objectives are being met;
Formal evaluation conducted at least annually.

Source: Rodger, 1995, p. 222

They were to state in detail the short and long term learning goals for children in various curricular areas, link learning targets to the 5–14 programme (SCCC, 1993)

and be regularly reviewed. Guidelines produced by the Scottish Office were issued to schools in order to assist them in producing IEPs (SOEID, 1994, 1998c). The guidelines focused on procedural aspects of drawing up learning programmes for individual children as well as the curriculum (SOEID, 1994, paragraphs 1.8 & 1.9). In 1996 (SOEID, 1996) the Scottish Office described the relationship between Records of Needs and IEPs and in 1998 issued the Manual of Good Practice (SOEID, 1998c). However, in an attempt to raise standards for children with special educational needs, the Scottish Executive announced a new initiative (SOEID, 1999) which linked IEPs to target-setting. IEPs were to be opened for all children in special schools and units as well as for children with Records of Needs in mainstream schools. In addition, children in mainstream schools who required “significant planned intervention” (see SOEID, 1998c) were also to have IEPs. Targets were to be SMART, that is, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and set against an appropriate time-scale. These targets were to be set up in three areas — Communication and Language, Numeracy and Personal and Social Development and be linked to appropriate levels in the 5–14 curriculum and SQA certification. However, it was recognised that some pupils with special educational needs would not be able to achieve targets based on national standards and they were exempt from assessment until they reached Level A. Many of these pupils were already following an adapted 5–14 programme (SOED, 1993) in special schools and units. This programme left assessment “to the discretion of the school in consultation with the parent of the pupil” (SOED, 1991, 16:3). Pupil progress, as regards long-term targets, was to be reviewed annually and reported to the Scottish Executive and education authorities and new targets set. There was an expectation that at least 80% of pupils would achieve at least 80% of their targets. The initiative was phased in but all schools were expected to have devised targets and to have procedures in place to monitor progress by August 2000. However, the Scottish Executive’s initiative has not been without controversy.

The Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS), in response to Scottish Office consultations, argued that target setting would “divert teachers’ attention from teaching and learning and into bureaucratic procedures” (Henderson, June 25, 1999).

This argument was supported by councils, such as East Dumbartonshire, who reported growing demands on teachers and support staff who devise, implement and monitor IEPs:

Time for consultation, target-setting, reviews, discussion with parents, writing of home-school diaries and joint planning with therapists, support staff and school-based staff all place enormous demands on professionals and in particular on their time. Schools have limited resources to facilitate the range of demands created by joined up working...

(TES Scotland, March 10, 2000)

In addition the EIS, questioned the claim that IEPs and the setting of targets would enable staff and senior management to objectively assess, monitor and evaluate provision:

The notion of an 80 per cent benchmark for individual pupils attaining their IEP targets will produce pressure on schools to lower targets. This is not unlike the situation in regard to attendance targets. The objectivity in this process is likely to approximate to nil.

(TES Scotland, June 25, 1999)

Criticisms of the IEPs process linked to target-setting also came from academics (see pp. 28-29).

The evolution of IEPs in Scotland seems to have followed the phases identified by Smith (1990b) and Rodger (1995) (Table 4, p. 28). Smith's first phase, the "normative phase" fits in with the early years of implementation of IEPs in Scotland during which norms and standards were described and guidelines issued. In a review of the IEP process in Scotland, Banks et al. (2001) found that the "key informants" interviewed by them regarded these guidelines as giving IEPs "an official (though non-statutory) status" (p. 22) which was reinforced by education authorities and

inspectors. The “key informants” described the history of IEPs in Scotland as having “developed by stealth” (Banks et al., 2001, p. 22):

...in the sense that they had emerged out of a long history and had only gradually been given a more formal status.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 22)

Table 4: Individual educational plan: Ideals and realities

Proposed Ideals (Desirable Outcomes)	Realities (Problems encountered)
<i>Normative Phase (1975 to early 1980s)</i>	
IEP	
PL 94-142 requirement	Paper compliance
Dynamic process	Static document
Collaborative consultation	Team decision making problems
<i>Analytic Phase (1980s)</i>	
IEP	
Regular and special educator involvement	Limited regular teacher involvement
Parent participation	Limited parent involvement
IEP conferences — collaboration	Lack of training in consultation Meeting procedure problems
IEP content in accord with legal mandate	IEP content found lacking
<i>Technological Reaction Phase (1980s)</i>	
Innovative software to improve technical efficiency	IEPs technically improved but what of implementation?
<i>IEP Quality/Implementation Phase (1990s)</i>	
To identify criteria for quality documents	Criteria for quality documents identified
To improve IEP document quality	Document quality improved via education
Quality document results in classroom implementation	Limited IEP implementation

Source: Rodger, 1995, p. 224

However, after the introduction of target-setting, the majority of the “key informants” viewed IEPs in a different light:

...IEPs were formerly seen by schools as being an aid to child centred education, whereas they now meant “something different” in terms of a new emphasis on accountability.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 22)

The Scottish Executive’s commissioning of Banks et al.’s study suggests that Smith’s (1990b) second phase of IEP development seems to be taking place in Scotland. This phase, the analytical or research phase, involves looking at the role of parents and teachers and other professionals in the IEP process as well as the content and quality of written IEPs (Table 4, p. 28). Before this, Todd (1999) maintains that research on the procedural and educational aspects of IEP development in the United Kingdom had been limited. Banks et al.’s study also suggests that some education authorities have reached Smith’s (1990b) third stage of IEP development — the technological reaction phase (Table 4, p. 28). This phase involves looking at methods of reducing paperwork, time and costs associated with IEPs, usually through the use of computer programmes (Minick & School, 1982; Enell, 1983; Glutting, 1987). This overlap of phases is compatible with Smith’s account as his phases are not separate entities but overlapping. Rodger (1995) proposes a fourth phase — the quality and implementation stage which occurs when concerns arise over quality of provision, cost-effectiveness and accountability. This seems to be the phase of IEP development that Scotland is at. Since beginning this study, the Education (Scotland) Act (2003) has introduced a co-ordinated support plan for children with additional support needs, however, IEPs still remain.

Having traced the historical development of IEPs, the next section looks at some of the influences on the development of IEPs.

Factors influencing the development of IEPs

As already discussed, behavioural psychology has influenced special educational needs policies and practices in the United Kingdom. This influence can also be clearly seen in the development of IEPs linked to target-setting. The behavioural

approach, as described in previous sections, views learning as comprising of a number of tasks which can be broken down into smaller components which can then be taught to children in a sequential manner. The approach maintains that it is possible to identify the “steps” that a pupil needs in order to learn a particular skill. This has resulted in teachers identifying teaching objectives “which specify the particular behaviour that a pupil will master in a particular time to a particular level of success, using predefined materials and methods” (Booth, 1984, p. 34) and involves monitoring and evaluation. These ideas were transferred to the writing of IEPs as shown by the example below of an IEP from the United States of America (Table 5).

Table 5: Examples of an IEP

Annual goal (mandated)

Student will regulate bowel movements and independently toilet self with success by end of year.

Short-term instructional objectives (mandated)

Student will stay on potty chair and perform needed function at least once each day.

Upon entering lavatory, student will respond by preparing for toileting, 95 per cent of the time.

Upon need for toileting, student will independently attend to necessary functions at 99 per cent level.

Implementation objectives (not required)

Upon entering lavatory student will grasp waistband of pants in order to pull them *down to knee level*, 90 per cent criteria level.

Upon entering lavatory student will grasp underpants in order to pull them down, 90 per cent criteria level.

Source: Frymier, 1980, cited in Booth, 1984, p. 34

Whilst this may be an extreme example, it supports Goddard’s (1997) arguments that the behavioural approach is linear and mechanistic. It also highlights the danger of breaking down tasks into component parts. Goddard also criticises IEPs for dictating curriculum content, for using teaching methods which involve teaching to a task, isolating children from one another (Ainscow, 1997), inhibiting collaborative learning and discouraging pupil autonomy. Wood and Shears (1986) concur with

this, arguing that highly structured individual programmes with behavioural objectives represent “teacher control” and do not facilitate learning for education.

Controlling children and “teaching” them so that they achieve the objectives the teacher has set, does not mean education is happening.

(Wood & Shears, 1986, p. 78)

This view is supported by other researchers (Nind & Hewitt, 1994; Hearne & Stone, 1995; Jackman, 1995) who criticise the setting of pre-specified objectives and step-by-step instruction for children with special educational needs:

Time must be allowed for children to respond in any setting, and more attention should be paid to the whole child with less emphasis on specific goals and learning outcomes, which may restrict rather than enhance their development.

(Watson & Fish, 1997, p. 87)

Moreover, Greenhalgh (1996) criticises the behavioural approach for viewing children’s difficulties in terms of individual characteristics (Barton, 1992), rather than the learning environment. This, Dyer (1995) argues, has led to a deficit model based on the child and fails to acknowledge the possible shortcomings of teachers, schools, education authorities and the education system as well as socio-political and economic patterns of disadvantage and inequality (Oliver, 1991; Dyson, 1997).

However, Banks et al. (2001) argue that the behavioural model has been accepted as it offers:

...a “scientific” basis for the educational process which satisfies most constituencies. Schools are given a rationale for their practice, teachers offered a precision with regard to their pedagogy and pupils and parents offered a programme which leads to “usable” and demonstrable skills.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 11)

Keefe (1996) supports this, arguing that IEPs provide information for all the stakeholders in education. School administrators and politicians are given data which enables them to compare schools and produce performance tables and pupils, parents and teachers are given information about pupil progress. Moreover, the behavioural model has also fitted in well with government concerns to provide an appropriate curriculum for children with special educational needs, to regulate special education and make it more accountable (Banks et al., 2001).

When the Labour Government came into power in 1997 it made education, particularly the raising of standards in education, one of its priorities. The Scottish Executive followed Westminster's lead. Towards the end of the 1990s the Scottish Executive, as part of a wider social inclusion programme, sought to raise the educational attainments of pupils with special educational needs and improve the quality of their educational experience.

The Government is committed to developing a more inclusive society where every person has the opportunity to develop their skills and to participate in society to the fullest possible extent. The commitment applies fully to children with special educational needs.

An inclusive society must ensure that the potential of each individual is fully developed through education and that their attainment and achievement are valued and respected.

(SOEID, 1999, A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs, Part 1, p. 2)

To fulfil this commitment, the Scottish Executive produced a document "Setting Targets – Raising Standards in Schools" (SOEID, March 1998) which aimed to raise the attainment of **all** pupils in **all** schools. In the following year they published a paper entitled "Raising Standards — Setting Targets: Targets for pupils with special educational needs (SOEID, February 1999) which emphasised the importance of

pupils with special educational needs achieving the highest possible levels of attainment through:

An appropriate and well-directed focus on setting targets, combined with high quality learning and teaching.

(HMI, 1999, Section 4: Preface, p. v)

However, the Government found that IEPs varied greatly in format, content and availability (Banks et al., 2001) and that there was no established method of collating the attainment of children with special educational needs. This made it difficult to assess the quality of provision. Therefore they decided to set up a target system in which schools were encouraged to specify precisely the learning goals of pupils with special educational needs in the form of IEPs. These IEPs were defined as:

...written plans outlining the steps to be taken in learning and teaching to enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve specified curricular targets.

(SOEID, February 1999, Section 2, p. 2)

Schools were also required to monitor i) children's progress towards the achievement of IEP goals and objectives, ii) the effectiveness of teaching and learning and iii) the effectiveness of provision for special educational needs (A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs, SOEID, 1999). IEPs were also seen as important documents in the target-setting process:

The IEP is the vehicle for planning and delivering an effective curriculum for many pupils with special educational needs. It is therefore an appropriate focus for helping to raise standards. To ensure that schools are setting themselves educational targets which are appropriately challenging and which will contribute to raising standards, rigorous processes for developing IEPs and setting goals for pupils must be in place.

(Raising Standards — Setting Targets: Targets for pupils with special educational needs, SOEID, February 1999, Section 2, p. 2, paragraph 13).

The Scottish Executive was also concerned with providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, whilst at the same time allowing for individual planning. Advice on the curriculum for children with special educational needs was given in the amended 5–14 curriculum (SCCC, 1993) and other documents (SOEID, 1994, 1996b). However, as already discussed, the target-setting guidelines focused on language, numeracy and personal and social development. Nevertheless, according to OFSTED (1997), this tension between setting tightly focused objectives and entitlement to a full curriculum can be overcome by:

...[building] on the curriculum the child is following alongside fellow pupils and should make use of programmes, activities, materials and assessment techniques readily available to a child's teachers.

The plan should be implemented, at least in part, in the normal classroom setting.

(DfEE, 1994, 2:93)

Behind the target-setting initiative was also a growing concern for accountability in special education both from an economic and political viewpoint:

Since the late 1970s, successive governments have been concerned about the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector provision. From a new right economic perspective... there was a belief that the public sector was wasteful and dominated by self-serving professionals (Deakin, 1994). From a social democratic perspective, there is an ongoing concern that, if exclusion is to be tackled, then public spending must achieve best value for money and therefore provision should be informed by evidence-based policy.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 3)

The use of targets within IEPs was seen as a way of measuring the overall efficiency of special education by providing information about the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as checking the appropriate use of resources (Bowers, 1997). However, Goddard (1976a, 1976b) argues that IEPs linked to targets are not an appropriate way of assessing and monitoring educational progress:

Management and control techniques inherent in behaviourist methodology, and the use of related curriculum-based and baseline assessment, do not usually succeed in increasing efficiency in learning (Iano, 1996). Furthermore, progress in education develops in fits and starts, and stages of learning merge into each other and cannot be ticked off by times and dates, nor must progress be plotted in a linear way. An educational curriculum, which is developed rather than delivered, should not be taught, managed or measured in a piecemeal manner, as the proponents of IEPs would have us believe.

(Goddard, 1997, p. 170)

Moreover, as previously stated, many pupils in special schools and units in Scotland follow an adapted 5–14 programme (SOED, 1993) where there is no benchmark specifying the knowledge and skills required at different stages of development. Target-setting for individual pupils is left to the teacher. All this makes it difficult to compare the performance of different types of provision:

...the onus lies entirely with the school, with little or no external moderation, to identify targets, establish success criteria and assess when goals have been achieved, thus limiting opportunities for comparisons of effectiveness between schools and sectors.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 18)

Furthermore, Banks et al.'s study (2001) found no quantitative evidence that IEP targets raise attainment. However, their research did indicate that IEPs linked to targets were focusing attention on teaching and learning goals, thus making teachers

reflect more on classroom practices. Moreover, Rodger (1995), in a review of the IEP process, argues that IEPs have the potential to improve children's educational performance. However, she recognises that the IEP process needs to be improved (Sigafos, Kigner, Holt, Doss & Mustonen, 1992; Sigafos, Elkins, Couzens, Gunn, Roberts & Kerr, 1993; Rodger, Sigafos & Ziviani, 1998; Tod, 1999). Bank et al.'s (2001) report makes several recommendations concerning the effective use of IEPs in Scotland at national, local and school level (pp. 102-105) and identifies key issues for debate (Table 6). Bank et al.'s fourth issue — achieving wide ownership whilst creating manageable systems states that:

Despite the ambition of the Scottish Executive that IEPs should be accessible documents with input from a wide range of sources, it is evident that ownership tends to rest with the teachers in the school... It is important to find ways of involving a wider group of professionals, some of whom have expert knowledge of appropriate teaching methods. It is also important to engage parents and pupils more closely in the process.

(Banks et al., 2001, p. 107)

Table 6: Key issues for debate identified by Banks et al.'s (2001) study

Maintaining curriculum balance
Achieving consistency whilst avoiding over prescription
Maximising the potential of IEPs whilst retaining clearly focused objectives
Achieving wide ownership whilst creating manageable systems
Clarifying the function of IEPs and Records of Needs
Clarifying the responsibilities of the Scottish Executive, Education Authorities and Schools for embedding the initiative

Adapted from Banks et al., 2001, pp. 105-108

The next section looks at pupil involvement in decision-making processes, focusing on IEPs.

INVOLVING CHILDREN

Legislation

Consulting children and involving them in the planning and development of services which they use has been advocated by both international and national documents produced towards the end of the twentieth century. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that:

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a matter consistent with procedural rules of national law.

(United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 12)

This Article declares that all children who are able to express their views must be provided with opportunities to participate in decisions which affect them. This includes decisions which are made within the private sphere of the family, as well as decisions made within public arenas such as health, education and local community care. It also involves decisions affecting children as a whole, as well as the individual child (Lansdown, 1995). Children have the right to be consulted, to express their own views on issues which affect them and to have these views and opinions heard and considered (Morrow & Richards, 1996). They also have the right to challenge decisions made on their behalf. Furthermore, Article 13 states that children have a right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Davis, 1998). In addition, Article 29 stresses that children's education should respect children's cultural identity, language and values (Alderson, 1995). These Articles emphasis the right of children to be social actors in their own lives, not merely passive recipients of adults' decision-making. In 1991 the United Kingdom Government committed itself to implementing all of the Articles of the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, despite being ratified by many countries, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (1995) found that Article 12 was largely un-implemented, despite public policy and rhetoric.

In Scotland, children's rights are acknowledged in a number of Acts, Rules, Regulations and Guidance. For example, the Children (Scotland) Act (1995) contains a specific provision which states:

A person shall, in reaching any major decision which involves his fulfilling a parental responsibility... or his exercising a parental right... have regard so far as practicable to the views (if he wishes to express them) of the child concerned, taking account of the child's age and maturity... and without prejudice to the generality of this subsection a child twelve years of age or more shall be presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to form a view.

(The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995, Section 6)

Although this Act stresses the importance of taking children's views into account, it also contains caveats that can be used as "get out clauses" when it comes to including children. As the above quote illustrates the Act includes provisos such as "taking into account age and maturity". In Scottish Law, a child of twelve years of age is usually deemed of sufficient age and maturity to form an opinion. However, the Act does not exclude participation by younger children. Their views are to be taken into account if they show "sufficient understanding". Further examples of provisos which limit children's involvement in decision-making processes are found in the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act which set up the Children's Hearing system. This Act stipulates that when an issue of "safety" arises, a parent, judge or "safeguarder" can decide what action is in "the child's best interests".

Focusing on education, the Scottish Office of Education and Industry Department (SOEDI) Circular 4/96 (Paragraphs 30 and 81) highlighted the importance of

encouraging children to take part in discussions about educational provision, as well as in assessment and recording processes:

...the feelings of and perception of the child or young person should always be sought and where possible taken into account.

(SOEID Circular 4/96, paragraph 65)

However, schools were given exemption from the Children (Scotland) Act's requirement that they should consult children or take account of their views on everyday matters (Davis & Watson, 2000). As Davis and Watson (2000) point out, schools only have to say whether they consulted children about their development plans, there being no requirement that they should consult children. Moreover, legislation and guidance allows children's views and opinions to be overlooked on the grounds of "safety" and "competency". As Lansdown (1995) points out, despite legislation, children have no formal right to participate in matters concerning their education:

Children neither have the right to participate in individual matters such as school choice, curriculum or appeals over exclusions nor in school policy or administration. There is no requirement to involve children in decisions on, for example, school uniform, arrangements for school meals, supervision in the playground, tackling bullying or discipline.

(Lansdown, 1995, p. 13)

However, she admits that some authorities are now beginning to investigate ways of incorporating the views of young people into the developing, monitoring and evaluation of services.

Turning to children with disabilities, the 1994 HMI Report "Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs" (EPSN), emphasised the importance of involving children with special educational needs in decisions about their education (DfEE,

1994). In addition, “A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs” (SOEID, 1998) states that:

All children and young persons have a right, where appropriate, to participate actively in decisions about their education and welfare; those with communication difficulties are, where necessary, assisted to express their feelings and views and these are valued and respected.

(SOEID, 1998, p. 22)

However, Davis and Watson (2000) point out that most of the guidance and legislation in Scotland regarding the rights of children with disabilities are also covered by a proviso that the children should exhibit competency. Their study shows that children with disabilities are often denied competency, not because they are incapable of making choices, but because their ability to make choices went unrecognised. This is illustrated by the remarks of a care worker:

They find it very difficult to make up their own minds. We have to tell them what they want to do, help them decide.

(Davis & Watson, 2000, p. 214)

In this instance impairment is used to justify the denial of rights. However, their study demonstrates that “children, whatever their impairment, when given the right circumstances, are capable of agency and competency” (Davis & Watson, 2000, p. 223). They further contend that competency and maturity are social constructions “across sites, across people and across belief systems” (p. 220). Therefore we should assume that all children are capable of contributing to discussions about their lives. They suggest that researchers should place more emphasis on developing new techniques and avenues of communication with children with disabilities, rather than looking for a universally accepted criteria by which to assess competency.

Looking at the IEP process, “A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs” (SOEID, 1998) recommends that:

The child/young person should, where possible, be involved in drawing up the IEP, in agreeing learning targets, and in implementing and reviewing the Programme.

(SOEID, 1998, p. 50)

Parents and the child/young person should, where possible, be involved in drawing up the IEP, in agreeing learning targets, and in implementing, monitoring and reviewing the programme.

(Ibid., p. 51)

However, Banks et al.'s study (2001) found that of the four case studies which they identified as exemplifying effective use of IEPs, only one appeared to involve the active engagement of a pupil and that pupil was described as "a very able child with severe visual impairment" (p. 101) who attended a mainstream primary school. Data from the "key informants" who took part in the study, also revealed that whilst it was acknowledged to be good practice to involve pupils in the IEP process, most primary schools, special schools and units do not formerly involve pupils. This was also confirmed by the data from postal surveys sent out to special schools, units and mainstream schools. Their findings showed that primary schools and all-through special schools found it difficult to involve pupils in the IEP process. The reasons cited for this were pupil age, difficulty in communication, lack of ability to understand the process and the extent of the impairment. Russell (1995) suggests that one of the reasons for not consulting and involving children with disabilities is that "not all services understand that disabled children can express a view about their future, nor that they may know most about their condition or their preferred support services or treatments" (p. 54). However, the benefits of involving children and young people in decision-making has been identified by research (Tresiliotis, Borland, Hill & Lammert, 1995; Morris, 1998) and organisations working with young people:

- Empowerment offers children a level of influence and an element of choice about the kind of provision offered by a service. It helps children and young people be clear about and understand their own wants and needs.
- Through empowerment children are encouraged to be active in creating the services they use, rather than being passive consumers of services provided for them. It follows that any such service must be an agent for social change and not one for social control.
- Achieving educational potential.
- In being empowered, young people experience many new aspects of their potential, including the dilemma of responsibility and the ability to prioritise.
- Involving children saves them from unnecessary unhappiness.
- Empowering children to make choices and decisions can help to safeguard them against abuse.
- Empowering children and young people to make decisions increases their independence and employability.
- Positive outcomes are produced through co-operation.
- Supported participation in decision-making forums promotes social skills and personal development.
- Empowerment provides opportunities to acquire the skills of debate, communication, negotiation and individual or group decision-making.
- In itself, it represents the first steps in learning about how individual, group and even national politics work.
- Involving young people empowers them to communicate and extends their communication circle.
- Involvement can prevent behavioural difficulties which may arise when decisions are made without any attempt at securing understanding.
- Greater public involvement produces better public services.
- Children with experience of participation in a safe environment will understand the process of empowerment and be better prepared to participate in decision-making when they have moved into wider society.
- Involvement is a basic democratic right.

- Sounder policies and legislation will result from involving children and young people.
- Involving all young people promotes democracy. The promotion and practice of a service which is open and accountable to its users encourages democratic procedures and respect for the principles of democratic life.
- Full involvement of users in managing services has multiple benefits.
- Kids have great ideas. The process of empowerment impels services to meet changing needs that arise from the everyday interests and problems defined by young people.

(Adapted from Griffiths, Cunningham & Dick, no date, pp. 24-27 & Treseder, 1997, p. 11)

Moreover, the Scottish Office (1998) recognises the importance of involving children with special educational needs in the decision-making process:

The views and aspirations of the individual child or young person with special educational needs are central to determining provision and meeting their requirements. Their self-esteem should be promoted, they should be empowered to participate and encouraged to have high expectations. They must not be regarded as passive recipients of a treatment but active participants in their own learning and development.

(Scottish Office, 1998, cited in Griffiths et al., undated, p. 24)

All this reflects a change in the way children are perceived (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Titterton, 1992). No longer are they seen as passive recipients of events and situations, or as only capable of ego-centric thought. Instead they are regarded as active social agents, capable of forming opinions, making judgements and expressing views.

This view of children as active social agents also supports the idea that children be involved directly in the research process. This in turn has led to more democratic research methods (Roberts, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). No longer is it accepted that

adults can act as proxies for children (Woodhead, 1990) or that data about children can be obtained solely through objective measures (Sinclair, 1996). It is now recognised that research on children and childhood needs to seek the thoughts, feelings and views of children themselves (Backett & Alexander, 1991; Williamson & Butler, 1994); thus acknowledging that children are the most important source of evidence on how they experience life. Nevertheless, often methodological and ethical issues, together with a failure to value children's opinions, have resulted in children being excluded from research and decision-making processes. However, the way we view people with disabilities is changing. The medical model, which encouraged people with disabilities to relinquish responsibilities and normal expectations, is gradually decreasing in influence. Slowly the social model of disability is beginning to influence professional and commonsense definitions of disability, as well as practice and the provision of services. This model has helped people with disabilities' views, opinions and experiences to be recognised and valued. Moreover, as already seen, it has also resulted in a growing recognition that people with disabilities should be included and involved in the research process (Zarb, 1992; Stone & Priestley, 1996).

These changes, along with the view that children are social actors, have led to more research which involves children with disabilities (Alderson, 1995; Beresford, 1997; Davis et al., 2003). However, involvement of children with disabilities in research and decision-making processes is rare and there is very little written material on ways of involving children with multiple impairments in research projects (Cheston, 1994; Ward, 1997).

The following section looks at children's involvement in the IEP process.

Involving children in the IEP process

Various arguments have been put forward for involving pupils in the IEP process. They range from arguments which stress the benefits for pupils:

Involving the learner means making the process of learning accessible and meaningful to them and helping the learner to gain an understanding, and motivation, from knowing where they are trying to get to, *in the longer term*. Pupils will work if they feel there are going to be visible benefits and some will work for benefits that will be seen in the future. Involving the learner also means that the learner begins to take responsibility for their own learning.

(Cornwall & Robertson, 1999, p. 71)

to arguments which benefit staff and the system:

Involving children in their IEPs is a good way of embedding IEPs into the system. If children expect to be involved in their IEP, staff will continue to use them.

(Tod, Castle & Blamires, 1998, p. 65)

Whilst Banks et al.'s (2001) report to the Scottish Executive found that there was a general consensus about the need to involve pupils in the IEP process, there was a general view that pupil involvement was only appropriate for older pupils or pupils who did not have severe learning difficulties and would therefore understand the process. However, Beresford (1997) argues that research has shown that children are mature enough to develop opinions, make judgements and express their views (Stevens, 1982; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988), even about controversial issues (Short, 1988). Children with severe learning difficulties and communication problems have often been excluded from research and decision-making processes because of their cognitive and/or communication impairments. However, Steward, Bussey, Goodman & Saywitz (1993), in a review of literature about the impact of developmental factors on the interviewing process, suggest ways in which cognitive and communication difficulties can be overcome and Beresford (1997), Minkes, Robinson & Weston (1994) and Ward (1997) describe techniques which have been developed so that people with learning and/or communication difficulties are given a voice. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 3, which considers methodological issues.

My study was concerned not only to involve children with learning disabilities and communication problems in the research process but also to increase their involvement in the IEP process.

Treseder (1997) argues that “with the right input from management and staff it is possible to involve children in just about any decision that affects them” (p. 6). He defines involvement as:

...the overall term for children and young people being included in the decision-making process, at any level.

(Treseder, 1997, p. 4)

My study aimed to ascertain the current level of pupil involvement in the IEP process in a department of special education within a mainstream primary school and to look at ways of increasing that involvement. Arnstein (1969) proposes a “ladder of participation” (Table 7 & Figure 4, p. 47) which represents a continuum of empowerment, from people having no power or influence at the bottom rung to full control over the decision-making process at the top rung.

Table 7: The ladder of participation

Rung	Description
Rung 1	No contact is made, decisions are taken without regard to those affected
Rung 2	Information is given to those affected
Rung 3	Consultation is offered — those affected are presented with proposals and asked their views but decision-makers may or may not act upon them, (sometimes the motive for offering consultation is the administrative convenience of removing obstacles to proposals being accepted)
Rung 4	The young person advises — views are requested and may be acted on
Rung 5	Deciding together — proposals may be presented tentatively and modified significantly in the light of views expressed, or proposals may be drawn up jointly from scratch
Rung 6	Acting with delegated authority — people given responsibility and power to act within defined parameters
Rung 7	Control — people given authority and means to define objectives, decide how to meet them.

Adapted from Griffiths et al., no date

At the bottom rung, “no contact”, decisions are made without asking children’s opinions — decisions are made by others. At the second rung, “information”, children are told what will happen, with consultation occurring at the third rung. At this stage children are asked about their views and opinions but their views and opinions may or may not be acted on. At the fourth rung, “advises”, children’s views are requested and processes are established for eliciting their views. However, although the children’s views are seen as important and may be incorporated into the decision-making process, the final decisions are made by others. At the fifth rung, “deciding together”, children are given information so that they will have a full understanding of the process, options and outcomes are explained, the children are educated and supported to express their views and they contribute to management decision-making. At the sixth rung, “delegated authority”, children are given responsibility and power to act within defined areas but the adult retains overall control and provides advice and support. At the seventh rung, “control”, children are given information, support and resources to make their own decisions. Adults are available but do not take charge.

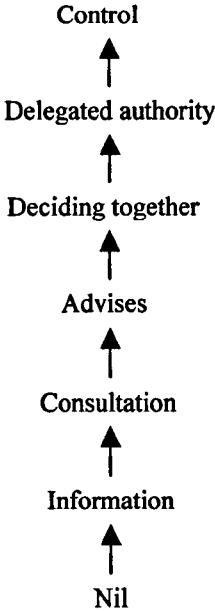


Figure 4: Ladder of participation
Source: Griffiths et al., no date, p. 40

The ladder shows a transfer of power from adults to children and an increase in involvement as children progress up the rungs. It offers children increasing control over what happens to them. Instead of being passive recipients of services who are unaware of what happens to them, through increased involvement they can take control of the decision-making process, as well as responsibility for the decisions made. The ladder also shows how children's increased control comes about by adults gradually sharing and relinquishing their control but also continuing to provide advice and support. However, the ladder of participation has been challenged by Treseder (1997).

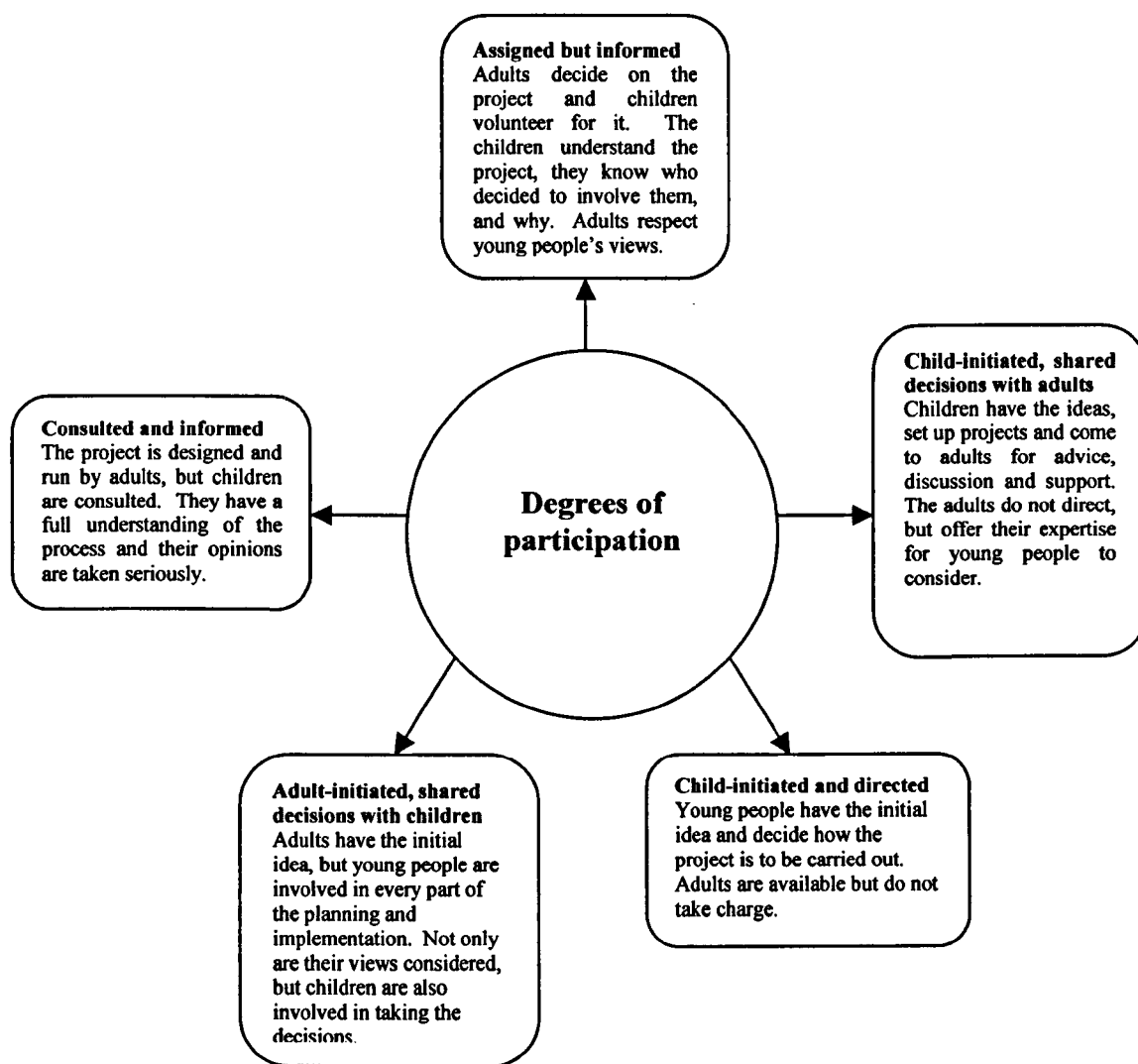


Figure 5: Degrees of participation

Source: Treseder, 1997, p. 7

He argues that the ladder model depicts participation as a progressive hierarchy and limits choices for those who wish to involve children. He criticises the ladder for assuming that the higher rungs are the ultimate goal for all those who wish to empower and involve children in the decision-making processes and that the lower rungs are merely stages on the way to the eventual goal. He contends that the higher rungs may be inappropriate in some contexts. Therefore the rungs of participation should be seen as different, but equal, forms of good practice. Thus it is up to people who wish to involve children to choose the degree of participation which will have the most benefit in their particular context. He favours a circular layout (Figure 5) based on Hart's (1992) ladder of participation which consists of five rungs, ranging from "assigned but informed" on the bottom rung to "child-initiated and directed" at the top rung.

These models were used in my study to establish the pupils' current involvement in the IEP process and to devise strategies to help increase their involvement in the process. The study aimed to increase pupils' involvement in the IEP process to rung 5, "deciding together".

To conclude, I believe that ignoring children's voices is morally wrong and that it is important to involve them in research and decision-making processes which affect their lives. Although children's participation in the decision-making process is increasing, this does not always apply to children with disabilities. In the past people with disabilities:

...were little more than objects of study. Their voice had less legitimacy and less authority than that of the medical, rehabilitation, educational and welfare bureaucracy professionals who studied and worked with them. Generally these experts have been well-meaning people, who have urged compassion and responsibility on societies guilty of cruelty or indifference. But their conceptions of disability and of disabled people gave rise to the development of social policy that imposed, in the name of benign paternalism, bureaucratic manipulation and socio-economic dependence, and ultimately dead-end lives, on people with disabilities.

(Gerber, 1990, p. 4)

However, there is now a growing recognition that users' views are important in developing services and that research about disability must seek to understand the person with disabilities' experiences from their viewpoint. In addition, changing perceptions of the way in which we conceptualise children has led to the expectation that **all** children are capable of participating in research and decision-making processes which concern them. Nevertheless, involving children in these processes raises ethical and methodological issues which must be carefully considered in order to safeguard the children's well-being. Ethical and methodological issues are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins by looking at the nature of educational research. It considers how the positivistic approach influenced educational research and how in recent decades educational researchers have adopted more qualitative approaches. It then examines the complex relationship between educational research, policy and practice and socio-political and economic factors. The third part looks at teacher research as a possible solution to the problem of the relationship between educational research and practice, focusing on action research as this is the type of research used in my study. It also addresses a number of issues surrounding action research, namely, ethical dilemmas, the role of the researcher, reflexivity and issues of validity and reliability.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH?

It is difficult to find a definition of the term “educational research” which would be acceptable by everyone. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, there are disagreements about the meaning of the word “education” (Lovell & Lawson, 1970). Secondly, the term “educational research” is used to describe a wide range of activities such as inquiries designed to contribute to academic and disciplinary knowledge, research carried out to inform policy-making, planning and practice and studies conducted by practitioners to deal with everyday problems that they have encountered. In addition, there is also considerable disagreement about what should and should not count as research. This is discussed more fully below. Furthermore, educational research is also greatly dependent on research in other disciplines. As shown in Chapter 2, (pp. 17-34), educational research relies on findings in human development, psychology, sociology and anthropology. However, Harris (1960) offers the following definition:

Educational research may be defined broadly as any systematic striving for understanding activated by a need or sense difficulty directed towards

some complex educational problem of more than immediate personal concern and stated in problematic form.

(Harris, 1960, p. 1160)

This definition suggests that educational research should be systematic and should arise out of carefully formulated problems. It is associated with a scientific approach to educational research (Table 8).

Table 8: Characteristics of scientific research

The testing of claims against empirical evidence

The provision of an explicit account of the methods of testing, thereby providing the basis for replication

The quantitative measurement of phenomena

Experimental or statistical manipulation of phenomena to test causal hypotheses

A focus on facts rather than values

A concern to maintain objectivity, avoid bias due to personal preferences

(Adapted from Hammersley, Gomm & Woods, 1994, p. 6)

This approach has influenced educational research not only in methodological terms, but in theoretical terms. De Landsheere (1993) claims that educational research originated in the work of nineteenth century psychologists who favoured experimental methods based on explanation, control and prediction. They believed that experimental psychology could provide a theoretical basis for understanding the processes of learning and that through time the social sciences would reach the high levels of explanation, control and prediction achieved by the natural sciences. This led to the development of tests of intelligence (Binet & Simon, 1914; Burt, 1921), personality (Eysenck, 1953; Eysenck & Wilson, 1975) and academic achievement (Cattell, 1965; Weiner, 1979) to provide objective information about pupil characteristics which could then be used to inform educational planning and monitor success. The influence of psychology on educational research can also be seen in the work of Piaget (1962). His theory of cognitive development influenced the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967), progressive ideas in primary education, child centred practices and teaching methods. The influence of psychology on educational

thinking and practice can also be seen in the behaviour-modification programmes (Fink & Hyde, 1985) often used with children with special educational needs. Hammersley et al. (1994) argue that these different theories, each with their own implications for educational practice:

...suggests that the dream of the pioneers of educational research that science would provide a single determinate set of recommendations for the efficient pursuit of education has not come true.

(Hammersley et al., 1994, p. 8)

Lovell and Lawson (1970) argue that this is because there are notable differences between the natural sciences and the social sciences. Firstly, in the natural sciences the researcher has fewer variables with which to contend. Moreover, these variables can often be controlled and objectively measured. In contrast, the social scientist is concerned with complex situations with many variables such as intelligence, temperament, motivation, social relationships and so on. Not only are these variables difficult to assess, but they also interact in complex subtle ways. Secondly, it is not possible to observe directly people's subjective experience and the meanings they attribute to events. Thirdly, experiments in the natural sciences are often replicable. For example, electrons always behave in the same way under certain given conditions. With humans, the situation is different. They are capable of learning from experiences and changing their behaviour. In addition, to some extent, people are unique. Therefore, it is difficult to make general laws about how they will behave in a specific situation. Finally, in the social sciences the researcher's personal and socio-cultural background and beliefs influence the observations they make as well as the ways in which they formulate research questions and carry out studies. The latter has led some writers to acknowledge that educational research includes value judgments:

Thus we can say research [educational] should always denote careful, critical, and exhaustive investigation to discover new facts which will test

a hypothesis, revise accepted conclusions, or contribute positive values to society in general.

(McAshan, 1963, cited in Lovell & Lawson, 1970, p. 22)

This idea of value judgments influencing educational research, policies and practices is discussed more fully below.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that much educational research has been quantitative and has reflected the scientific approach. However, this approach, known as positivism, has not been without its critics. Writers have criticized the positivist approach for its dehumanizing effects (Ions, 1987) and subjectivity (Kierkegaard, 1974), arguing that consciousness plays a central part in human existence:

(O)ur approaches today to the study of man have yielded little, and are essentially dead, because they cling to positivism — that is, to an approach which demands that nothing must be regarded as real which cannot be found by empirical science and rational methods, by “objectivity.” Since the whole problem... belongs to “psychic reality,” to man’s “inner world,” to his moral being, and to the subjective life, there can be no debate unless we are prepared to recognize the bankruptcy of positivism, and the failure of “objectivity” to give an adequate account of existence, and are prepared to find new modes of enquiry.

(Holbrook, 1977, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 25)

Other writers argue that positivism proposes a restricted picture of the nature of human beings (Hampden-Turner, 1970), seeing people as deterministic — products of factors out with their control. In contrast, humanistic psychologists argue that people have the capacity to initiate actions and to some extent create how they will be. These psychologists endeavour to overcome the dehumanizing aspects of positivism by studying the person as a whole, preferring to study individuals rather than groups, thus favouring idiographic approaches to nomothetic ones (Rodgers &

Stevens, 1967). Yet other writers adopt a hermeneutic approach. This approach involves the study of meanings — personal, social, conscious and unconscious and their significance for the people involved. It regards meaning as its central subject matter and uses concepts which are capable of describing the complexity and subtlety of behaviour and experience (Mead, 1934).

Findings from positivistic research have also been criticized for being of little value to practitioners. This is because the more they try to restrict and control variables in experiments, the more likely they are to end up with a “pruned, synthetic version of the whole, a constructed play of puppets in a restricted environment” (Shipman, 1972, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 25). For example, in order to control as many variables as possible subjects of an experiment are often placed in “laboratory” conditions. Whilst this helps to control certain factors, the behaviour of the subjects may be completely different from what it would be in a “normal” context. Thus any findings of the study may only be valid in the context in which the experiment took place and not generalisable to everyday situations. In other words, such studies have low ecological validity.

Questions have also been raised about the positivistic assumption that causes can be identified by the physical and/or statistical manipulation of variables. Critics argue that this approach fails to take into account the social nature of peoples’ lives which involves complex processes of interpretation, negotiation and social interaction, rather than simple mechanical cause-effect relationships. For example, in the 1940s IQ tests in the 11+ examination were thought to predict academic achievement. However, later studies (Watts & Slater, 1950) rejected this idea. Such studies suggested that school progress was not mechanically determined by IQ scores alone, but by other interacting factors such as variations in teaching, school environment, discipline and children’s backgrounds and home conditions.

In addition, the validity of the results of scientific educational research have also been questioned. Writers argue that although quantitative methods and statistical evidence appear to produce objective “hard data,” there are doubts as to whether the

findings accurately represent what they claim to represent. This is highlighted by Mehan (1973) who shows how test questions can be interpreted in ways different from those intended by the researcher:

[In a] language development test, children are presented with a picture of a medieval fortress — complete with moat, drawbridge, and parapets — and three initial consonants; D, C, G. The child is supposed to circle the correct initial consonant. C for “castle” is correct, but many children choose D. After the test, when I asked those children what the name of the building was, they responded “Disneyland.” These children used the same line of reasoning intended by the tester, but they arrived at the wrong substantive answer. The score sheet showing a wrong answer does not document a child’s lack of reasoning ability: it only documents that the child indicated an answer different from the one the tester expected.

(Mehan, 1973, pp. 249-250)

As already seen in Chapter 2, similar criticisms have been made about Piaget’s (1962) interpretations of his findings by Margaret Donaldson (1978) and her colleagues.

These criticisms of quantitative educational research have resulted in an increasing number of educational researchers, over the past forty or fifty years, adopting more qualitative approaches (Table 9, p. 57). Qualitative research in the sociology of education began in Britain in the 1960s (Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970) and spread to other areas such as curriculum evaluation, educational administration and management in the 1970s and 1980s (Hamilton, Jenkins, King, MacDonald & Parlett, 1977). However, in recent years some researchers have argued that all theories and research findings are constructions which reflect the personal and cultural background and development of the theorist or researcher (Stevens & Sapsford, 1984). Therefore, absolute knowledge is not possible as all understanding is always open to revision and reconceptualisation.

Table 9: Characteristics of qualitative research

An exploratory and descriptive focus
A holistic approach
Emergent design
Purposive sample
Data collection in a natural setting
Data collected as words and pictures
Researcher as key instrument of data collection
Qualitative analysis of data collection
Outcome as process rather than product
Early and ongoing inductive analysis of data
Focus on participants' perspectives, their meaning
A case study approach to reporting research outcomes
Use of expressive language
Persuasion by reason

All this suggests that educational research should not confine itself to a single theoretical perspective but should “adopt a “multiple perspective” approach — looking at a range of theories and perspectives” (Stevens & Sapsford, 1984, p. 108). Nor should it confine itself to a single method. Stevens and Sapsford (1984) argue that both qualitative and quantitative methods are needed:

Social scientists have come to abandon the spurious choice between qualitative and quantitative data: they are concerned rather with that combination of both which makes use of the most valuable features of each. The problem becomes one of determining *at which points* they should adopt the one, and at which the other, approach.

(Merton & Kendall, 1946, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 40)

These issues are discussed more fully in the third part of this chapter.

This idea that theories and research findings are constructions has also resulted in debates about the political and educational aspects of educational research. In the

1970s and 1980s educational research was criticized for failing to challenge the political status quo by not questioning dominant views about the character and role of educational research in modern capitalist societies. This resulted in attention being paid to inequalities in education due to social class, gender (Deem, 1980; Kelly, 1986; Arnot & Weiner, 1987), racism (Eggleston, Dunn & Anjali, 1986; Gillborn, 1990) and to different ways of thinking about methods in educational research (Reinharz, 1992).

This section has looked at definitions of educational research and the nature of such research. It has shown that in the past much of educational research has been based on positivism and quantitative research. However, criticisms, in terms of the validity of its findings and political and ethical influences, have resulted in more qualitative research across all fields of educational research. Nevertheless, qualitative studies also have their weaknesses (Table 10). Therefore there is now a greater diversity of approaches to educational research many of which use a multi-method approach.

Table 10: Weaknesses of qualitative research

Findings cannot be generalized — low population validity

Researchers might offer explanations in terms of the situation itself and be unaware of more powerful factors (macro-blindness). They may see everything from the group's perspective

Qualitative research can be time consuming and be a high risk, low-yield enterprise

Qualitative studies are often accused of being impressionistic, subjective, biased, idiosyncratic and lacking in precision

(Adapted from Hammersley et al., 1994, p. 71)

The next part of this chapter considers the relationship between research, educational practice and socio-political priorities.

RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS

There is much disagreement surrounding the role of research in relation to practice. Practitioners are sometimes criticized for ignoring the results of research and for continuing to use discredited teaching techniques:

Few active researchers in developmental psychology would nowadays consider behaviorism to be an adequate theory. Yet, because it has been developed as a useful tool in special education, and incorporated in many programmes devised by applied psychologists, this theoretical inadequacy has not substantially affected its institutionally legitimized role in applied clinical and educational psychology.

(Sinha, 1985, p. 405)

On the other hand, practitioners often view the findings of research as too theoretical and irrelevant to the everyday problems they encounter in schools and classrooms (Shina, 1985). Moreover, sometimes different studies give different advice to practitioners and this advice often does not work. This is partly because research is often affected by social and educational beliefs, practices and problems. In addition, Elliott (1993) argues that teachers often feel threatened by theory as it often questions their professional knowledge and experiences. Despite this, educational research has influenced both policy and practice. As already discussed Piaget's (1962) theory of intellectual development influenced the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) as well as teaching methods. Similarly, research conducted by Margaret Donaldson (1978) has likewise influenced educational practice (see Pollard, 1992). However, the relationship between educational research and policy and practice is not one way. Much of educational research in this country is sponsored. Thus "market forces" affect both the questions asked and the quality of the research. In addition, existing educational policies and practices make it more likely that certain kinds of research will be carried out. For example, in 1972 the Department of Education and Science (DES) called for research into nursery education as it intended to expand nursery places. Similarly, when learning difficulty was viewed in terms of an individual failing, much of the research focused on psychological characteristics of children classified as having "mental handicaps." This in turn led to treatment of individuals rather than looking at how schools and teachers might be failing these children. However, Booth et al. (1985) argue that "the very vagueness and diversity of British educational policy leaves opportunities for innovative work"

(p. 30). They cite Anderson's (1973) study of integration in primary schools and Oswin's study of children in subnormality hospitals (Oswin, 1971) as examples.

The above discussion illustrates that the relationship between educational research and policy and practice is two way (Figure 6).

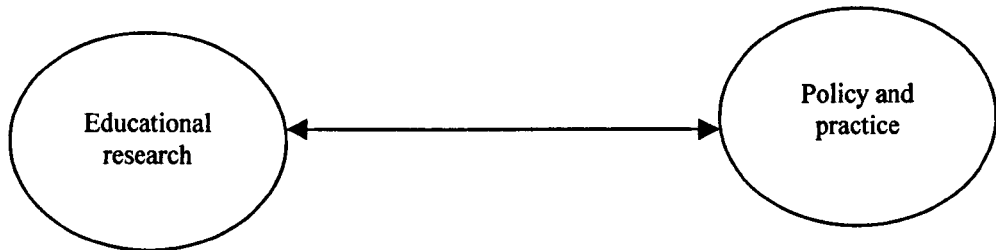


Figure 6: The relationship between educational research and policy and practice

However, the socio-political and economic context also influences educational research. For example, a central concern of society is that children should be able to read and write. Therefore there has been considerable research in recent years on developing literacy skills. Similarly, current social and political pressures to provide equality of opportunity in education for both sexes, ethnic minorities and children with disabilities has resulted in an increase in research in these areas. In addition, Chapter 2 has already shown how particular learning theories are linked to certain kinds of social organization and political systems (pp. 17-42). However, the link is also two way (Figure 7, p. 61). For example, Piaget's theory of child development emphasized that "how" children learn is more important than "what" they learn. This resulted in the idea that the process of learning is more important than the outcomes of learning. Thus the role of education was seen as facilitating children's development rather than the "filling of empty vessels". This in turn led to child-centred educational practices in which the teacher acts as a facilitator, who promotes learning and guides children through the learning process.

However, Figure 7 can be developed further, socio-political and economic factors also influence educational policy and practice. For example, towards the end of the



Figure 7: The relationship between socio-political factors and educational research

nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, pressure for government investigation into standards of care for children with disabilities came from educational authorities, voluntary agencies, professionals and the general public. This, along with mass education for all, the payment by results scheme and the emergence of intelligence testing led to segregated forms of provision for children with disabilities. However, educational policies and practices also influence socio-political and economic priorities. For example, in the late 1960s and 1970s the political right began to challenge “progressivism” which they saw as being influenced by child-centred education. As a result the “Black Papers” advocated traditional, teacher-directed education which aimed to impart knowledge to children through methods that emphasized memory and rote learning and favoured whole-class teaching with children being grouped according to ability. However, these recommendations were not implemented. Similarly, a Scottish report (PDC, 1986) which recommended extending some features of child-centred primary school practice into early secondary schooling was rejected by the government because it was based on the psychology of the individual child and this did not meet the requirements of society “where enterprise and competition must be increasingly valued... [and] be a main determinant of what schools teach” (TESS, 1988, p. 1). Thus Figure 8 (p. 62) illustrates how educational research and practice define and are defined by each other, and that both are influenced by and influence, the socio-political and economic context in which they occur. It also shows the complex relationships between educational research, policy and practice and socio-political and economic factors:

The process is not one of linear order from research to decision, but a disorderly set of interconnections and back-and-forthness that defies neat diagrams.

(Weiss, 1977, cited in Czerniewska, 1985, p. 6)

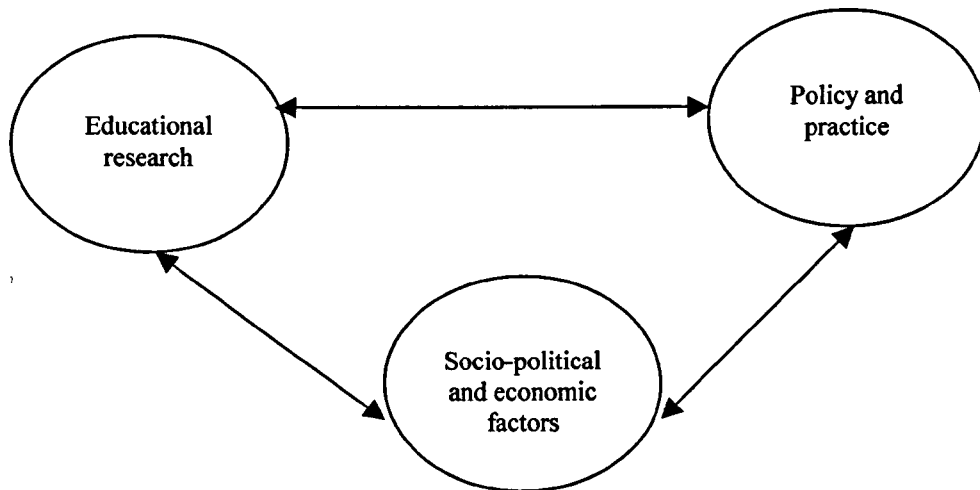


Figure 8: The relationship between educational research, policy and practice, and socio-political and economic factors

However, Booth, Potts & Swann (1985) argue that the impact of educational research on policies and practices has been slight:

It is very uncommon, if not unknown for an educational research project on its own to result in an immediate change of policy. More often, those who seek to promote a particular policy will look for justification from science.

(Booth et al., 1985, p. 30)

Moreover, as already noted, practitioners and researchers themselves are often dubious about the contribution of educational research to solving practical problems:

I have to say... that the great thing about research is that a part of it is rubbish and another part (I will not be specific about the proportions)

leads nowhere and is really indifferent; it is, I am afraid, exceptional to find a piece of research that really hits the nail on the head and tells you pretty clearly what is wrong or should be done.

(Sir William Pile, former Permanent Secretary to the DES, cited in Nisbet & Broadfoot, 1980, pp. 1-2)

If we are to be honest, we may as well begin by admitting that very little of the educational research that is done turns out to have any noticeable impact on the ordinary teacher and his work.

(Tony Becher, Professor of Education, Sussex University, cited in Becher, 1974, p. 41)

Vulliamy and Webb (1992) argue that this is partly due to much educational research in this country being conducted within a positivistic paradigm which seeks generalisable laws. Booth et al. (1985) argue that generalizations are difficult to make in education as teaching practices and policies vary from authority to authority and between schools and teachers. Moreover, children are unique — what is true on average is not what is true in all cases. These writers claim that educational research is only useful if practitioners can see similarities between their own circumstances and those described in the research. Hammersley et al. (1994) argue for an “Aristotelian emphasis on the importance of practical judgment” (p. 24) in educational research. They argue that research cannot provide solutions to practitioners’ problems (the engineering approach) but should aim to provide ideas which are a useful resource for practitioners (the enlightenment model). In addition, research should also stimulate practitioners into thinking about possibilities that had not occurred to them before. During the 1980s this led to an increase in qualitative research, a move from laboratory experiments to studies based in classrooms, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods and teacher-researcher collaboration (Vulliamy & Webb, 1992). However, some writers (Bassey, 1983; Elliott, 1993) argue that teacher research is the only solution to the problem of the relationship between educational research and practice as it involves practitioners in theorizing that is directly related to their work:

We suggest that self-studies be instigated from *inside* the organization and that its members collaborate in the design and execution of the study...

What are envisaged are studies that are locally conceived and managed, that highlight features of current practice and procedures, and that engage all the professional staff as contributors and co-investigators — as observers, rapporteurs, critics, analysts of problems, and as sources for innovative ideas for new procedures. Individuals have special outlooks and have derived knowledge from experience; these are central resources for self-study on the lines suggested here.

One basic premise in what we put forward is that the person on the job knows most about how the job might be done better. They are often in the best position to make, or at least to propose, innovations and reforms. The individuals within the system are inevitably the ones with the most intimate knowledge of its working. Even if recommendations are submitted from an outside body, it is the insiders who ultimately decide which changes to put into effect and with what degree of enthusiasm. Making improvements rests in the end with new behaviour on the part of those engaged in the day-to-day practice . . .

(Parlett & Pocklington, 1983, cited in Booth et al., 1985, p. 35)

In addition, Vulliamy and Webb (1992) argue that teacher based research is particularly suited to special education as teachers are concerned with unique learning difficulties. This is the approach I have adopted for my study.

TEACHER RESEARCH

Vulliamy and Webb (1992) identify three broad approaches to teacher research — the case study approach, evaluation studies and action research. The case study approach is qualitative research and involves:

...the study of a “bounded system” with the focus being either the case or an issue that is illustrated by the case (or cases) (Stake, 1995). A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of this “system,” based on a diverse array of data collection materials, and the researcher situates this system or case within its larger “context” or setting.

(Creswell, 1998, p. 249)

This type of research usually involves interviews, observations, teacher and pupil diaries, questionnaires and analysis of teachers’ and pupils’ written materials.

Evaluation studies involve teachers in playing a major role in evaluating innovations in their classrooms and schools through “illuminative evaluation” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977):

Illuminative evaluation takes account of the wider contexts in which educational programmes function. Its primary concern is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction...

The aims of illuminative evaluation are to study the innovatory programme: how it operates; how it is influenced by the various school situations in which it is applied; what those directly concerned regard as its advantages and disadvantages; and how students’ intellectual tasks and academic experiences are most affected. It aims to discover and document what it is like to be participating in the scheme, whether as teacher or pupil; and, in addition, to discern and discuss the innovations’ most significant features, recurring concomitants and critical processes. In short, it seeks to address and illuminate a complex array of questions.

(Parlett & Hamilton, 1977, p. 10)

This approach offers an alternative to traditional forms of evaluation based on quantitative methods which have been criticized for neglecting the actual processes of innovation, the context in which the innovation occurred and the concerns of the people involved in the innovation (Stenhouse, 1975; Parlett & Hamilton, 1977).

Action research has been defined as:

...small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention.

(Halsey, 1972, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 186)

As this is the type of research used in my study it is discussed in detail below.

ACTION RESEARCH

Action research originated in the United States of America in the 1940s and reached its peak in the 1960s. In this country action research was pioneered by Lawrence Stenhouse in the 1960s and 1970s (see Webb, 1990a). He questioned the traditional relationship between educational research and practice in which practitioners were expected to implement curricula changes and adopt different teaching styles and methods found to be “proven” by academic research. Instead, he urged teachers to test out research findings in their classrooms so that they could be evaluated, refined or rejected. This is similar to Hammersley et al.’s (1994) idea of practical judgment, discussed previously, which involves reflection on practical experience. Stenhouse (1979) also argued that action research should have two aims. Firstly, to contribute to educational practice and secondly, to contribute to “a theory of education and teaching which is accessible to other teachers” (Stenhouse, 1979, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 186).

Denscombe (1998) identifies four defining characteristics of action research.

- Practical. It is aimed at dealing with real-world problems and issues, typically at work and in organizational settings.
- Change. Both as a way of dealing with practical problems and as a means of discovering more about phenomena, change is regarded as an integral part of research.

- Cyclical process. Research involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibilities for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation.
- Participation. Practitioners are the crucial people in the research process. Their participation is active, not passive.

Like Bassey (1981, 1983) and Elliott (1993), he emphasizes the practical nature of action research, describing its aim as the improvement of practice by solving practical problems encountered in classroom situations. However, he emphasizes that action research requires to be “undertaken *as part of practice* rather than a bolt-on addition to it” (p. 59). This is endorsed by Somekh:

Action research [rejects] the concept of a two-stage process in which research is carried out first by researchers and then in a separate second stage the knowledge generated from the research is applied by practitioners. Instead, the two processes of research and action are integrated.

(Somekh, 1995, p. 34)

In addition, action research must also involve the practitioner in investigating his or her own practices with a view to changing these practices. However, in action research change is not wide-spread, as action research focuses on practitioners’ own practice therefore it tends to be localized and small-scale. Action research can take the form of a single teacher acting on his or her own with her own class (Evans, 1992; Hall, 1992); or it may involve the practitioner taking control of the research with the outside expert acting as facilitator (Tanner, 1989; Eames, 1990) or practitioners and researchers working together (Kelly, 1987). Whatever form it takes action research “democratizes” the research process and respects practitioner knowledge. It is controlled by the practitioner, it focuses on teaching and learning or on policies which affect these and one of its main purposes is to improve practice.

However, it also has another important purpose — professional self development. It requires practitioners to investigate and critically reflect on their own practice — to consider their own values, preconceptions and pedagogic theories.

As with other kinds of research, action research involves the identification of a problem, collection of evidence, analysis and interpretation of data and communication of findings to others. It differs from most forms of conventional research in that most of its problems arise from practice rather than theory. In addition, action research often aims to improve practice through a cyclical process (see Figures 9-12, pp. 89-93). Once a problem has been identified some kind of action or intervention is planned, implemented and closely monitored. If the investigation is successful, it might necessitate a change in practice. This in turn may raise new problems which require to be solved and so on.

The next section looks at the strengths and weaknesses of action research.

Advantages and disadvantages of action research

Vulliamy and Webb's (1991, 1992) research into the advantages and disadvantages of teacher research found that such research could make important contributions to personal and professional development, to changing classroom practice as well as influencing school policy. They found that teachers engaged in research gained confidence in their own abilities as teachers and their right to participate in educational debate. They also became more aware of different perspectives and began to question their own assumptions and preconceptions. Furthermore, they became more open to new ideas and developed analytical methods to look at the problems they encountered in their classrooms and schools. Other writers, such as Elliott (1993) and Denscombe (1998), also emphasize the contribution to professional self development of action research. As regards classroom practice, Vulliamy and Webb's study found that many of the teachers felt that teacher research was "a much more powerful stimulus to change than the more traditional forms of INSET where new ideas were presented to them by others" (p. 17). Moreover, Denscombe argues that action research addresses practical problems in a positive

way, with the findings being fed directly back into practice. In addition, it democratizes the research process by acknowledging practitioner knowledge and involving them in the direction, design, development and use of research. Sommer and Wicker (1991) argue that one of the advantages of action research is that the practitioner researcher has “insider knowledge” of the situation and the people involved. As regards school policy, action research was seen by the participants in Vulliamy and Webb’s study as an “important component of a school’s overall management and staff development strategy” (p. 17).

However, action research was also found to have disadvantages by the teachers in Vulliamy and Webb’s study. They saw it as time consuming and with increasing demands on teachers, it could also be stressful. The problem facing the teacher researcher is how to combine a probably demanding workload with systematic and rigorous research. Action research has also faced criticisms from proponents of traditional scientific research (Travers, 1972). These writers argue that action research is situational and specific; its sample is unrepresentative; it has little or no control over independent variables and its findings are not generalisable but restricted to a specific “case.” Furthermore, although the involvement of the practitioner in the research can provide valuable insights, the teacher researcher cannot be entirely detached or impartial. He or she may have preconceptions about issues and solutions and may not recognize important factors because he or she is too caught up in the situation:

The belief that school staffs can identify and plan to alter their own assumptions and power arrangements through a focus on process seems to belie experience. Schools are complex social contexts. There is little time for critical reflection. Their social and political values are often anti-intellectual, anti-democratic and anti-educational. These values are built into the way curriculum is defined, the social organization of classrooms, and administrative theories of schooling. Because of the implicit quality of these values, they are psychologically compelling to participants and the publics of schooling. To consider change as process

without form is to lose sight of the substance that underlines reform and to conserve what is to be changed.

(Popkewitz, 1984, p. 146)

However, Denscombe (1998) argues that this problem can be overcome by the “outsider expert” who can provide an alternative perspective which may help the practitioner gain “new insight” into the problem. Furthermore, whilst acknowledging some of the criticisms of positivistic researchers concerning the generalisability of action research, he contends that action research:

...can draw on existing theories, apply and test research propositions, use suitable methods and, importantly, offer some evaluation of existing knowledge, (without making unwarranted claims). It is the rigour, rather than the size of the project or its purpose, by which the research should be judged.

(Denscombe, 1998, p. 65)

Table 11: Rules of research

-
1. Any research inquiry must be conducted for some clearly defined purpose.
 2. Data should be collected and recorded systematically, so that, if necessary it can be checked by others.
 3. There should be a clear rationale or theory informing the way the data is analysed.
 4. Researchers must critically examine their evidence to make sure it is accurate, representative and reliable.
 5. Researchers must be self-critical and should scrutinize their own assumptions, methods of inquiry and analysis, and ways of presenting their findings.
 6. Researchers should aim to communicate their findings to a wider audience so that they can benefit from the new knowledge.
 7. Researchers should attempt to relate any new knowledge or understanding they gain to both their own personal theories and to publish theories so that the former can be evaluated in terms of its wider conceptual and theoretical context.
-

(Adapted from Bassey, 1990, p. 35)

These arguments are echoed by Bassey (1990) who provides a set of rules to which all research must conform (Table 11, p. 70). I have tried to incorporate these ground rules into my study.

Cohen and Manion (1994) also defend action research from its positivistic opponents:

That the method should be lacking in scientific rigour, however, is not surprising since the very factors which make it distinctively what it is — and therefore of value in certain contexts — are the antithesis of true experimental research.

(Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 193)

They argue that as action research becomes more widely used in schools and becomes “more standardized, less personalized and more “open”” (p. 193), positivistic criticisms will become less valid.

Other writers (Simons, 1978; Elliott, 1993) argue that teachers involved in action research, particularly in their own schools, tend to use quantitative methods, rather than qualitative ones in order “to distance themselves from the potentially disturbing effects interviewing and observing can have on personal relationships in a school” (Simons, 1978, cited in Elliott, 1993, p. 62). This highlights a further disadvantage of action research, namely, that it can be constrained by ethical considerations. This is discussed in the next section.

ETHICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Research with adults

Researchers have a professional responsibility to engage in a search for knowledge and truth. However, they also have a responsibility towards the people they study. They must take into account the effects of their study on the participants and design their research to preserve human dignity. This involves “ethical behaviour”:

...a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the

extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

(Cavan, 1977, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 359)

However, these ideas concerning the search for truth and respect for human dignity can sometimes confront researchers with a dilemma. The way in which this dilemma is resolved usually depends on the background, experience and personal values of individual researchers. Nevertheless, Cohen and Manion (1994) maintain that at all times the welfare of the participants should be paramount, even if it lessens the contribution of the study to our knowledge and understanding of human nature. They also highlight a second source of conflict between ethical absolutists and situational relativists. The former contend that clear, set codes of conduct should guide researchers in their work:

Such principled ethics allow no degree of freedom for ends to justify means or for any positive consequences to qualify instances where the principle is suspended or applied in an altered, watered-down form. In the extreme, there are no extenuating circumstances to be considered or weighed as justifying an abrogation of the ethical standard.

(Zimbardo, 1984, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 362)

In contrast, the relativist view argues that there can be no absolute guidelines and that ethical considerations need to be ongoing throughout the whole research process. Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that researchers need to be responsive to specific situations otherwise any attempts “to legislate... morality could simply degenerate into mindlessness [or] rigidity” (Plummer, 1983, p. 141). However, Plummer points out that without an ethical code ethics may become whatever is convenient for the researcher. Therefore he advocates a middle pathway between the two positions, suggesting that broad guidelines laid down by professional bodies can offer researchers guidance, whilst still leaving them room for personal ethical choice.

Whilst there are no laws concerning research on human beings in the United Kingdom, the European Union expects applicants for research funds on humans to observe the Declaration of Helsinki (1964/1989). This international code on research was drawn up by doctors in response to public concern about the harmful effects of some medical treatments such as Thalidomide and the need for careful research. This code, together with other frameworks in medical ethics, has helped to guide ethical dilemmas in social research.

Robson (1993) defines ethics as “rules of conduct; typically to conformity to a code or set of principles” (p. 29). Such codes have been developed by the British Psychological Society (1991) and the American Psychological Association (1987). Whilst these bodies recommend that ethical practices need to be observed in all research studies, Cohen and Manion (1994) and Kelly’s studies (1987) suggest that ethical issues are especially important in action research as:

Enquiry-based courses... have far-reaching implications for teachers, schools and providing institutions and for the relationships between them. For a student, to subject professional practice (be it one’s own or that of others) to systematic enquiry and to share the results of this scrutiny with a wider audience than simply a course tutor is to open oneself and one’s colleagues to self-doubt and criticism... Schools too may be opened up to more examination than many of their members want and, as a result, internal differences and divisions may be exacerbated.

(Nias, 1988, p. 10)

In action research many sensitive issues can arise as a result of practitioners carrying out research in their own schools. For example, researchers who encourage pupils to offer a critique of their own professional practice, may be accused by their colleagues of “lowering the image of the profession” (see James & Ebbutt, 1980, cited in Elliot, 1993, p. 59), or encouraging pupils to question other teachers’ expertise, teaching methods and practices. Similarly, the sharing of data with colleagues may expose problematic areas of practice and upset colleagues working

within these areas. This may lead to conflicts, tension and be detrimental to staff relationships. Therefore researchers engaged in action research, particularly in their own schools, need to make sure that ethical procedures are carefully followed. Whilst this may not resolve all problems, they show colleagues that the researcher is aware of his or her responsibilities and the consequences of the study. Hopkins (1985) argues that in action research ethical considerations need to go beyond concerns for consent, confidentiality and respect for the participants, they must also specify appropriate ways of working with people in the social organization. With this in mind, Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) have formulated guidelines especially for action researchers:

- **Observe protocol:** Take care to ensure that the relevant persons, committees, and authorities have been consulted, informed and that the necessary permission and approval have been obtained.
- **Involve participants:** Encourage others who have a stake in the improvement you envisage to shape and form the work.
- **Negotiate with those affected:** Not everyone will want to be directly involved; your work should take account of the responsibilities and wishes of others.
- **Report progress:** Keep the work visible and remain open to suggestions so that unforeseen and unseen ramifications can be taken account of; colleagues must have the opportunity to lodge a protest to you.
- **Obtain explicit authorizations:** This applies where you wish to observe your professional colleagues; and where you wish to examine documentation.
- **Negotiate descriptions of people's work:** Always allow those described to challenge those accounts on the grounds of fairness, relevance and accuracy.

- Negotiate accounts of others' points of view: (e.g. in accounts of communication): Always allow those involved in interviews, meetings and written exchanges to require amendments which enhance fairness, relevance and accuracy.
- Obtain explicit authorization before using quotations: Verbatim transcripts, attributed observations, excerpts of audio and video recordings, judgements, conclusions or recommendations in reports (written or to meetings).
- Negotiate reports for various levels of release: Remember that different audiences require different kinds of reports; what is appropriate for an informal verbal report to a faculty meeting may not be appropriate for a staff meeting, a report to council, a journal article, a newspaper, a newsletter to parents; be conservative if you cannot control distribution.
- Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.
- Retain the right to report your work: Provided that those involved are satisfied with the fairness, accuracy and relevance of accounts which pertain to them, and that the accounts do not unnecessarily expose or embarrass those involved, then accounts should not be subject to veto or be sheltered by prohibitions of confidentiality.
- Make your principles of procedure binding and known: All of the people involved in your action research project must agree to the principles before the work begins; others must be aware of their rights in the process.

I have adopted this code of practice in my study for various reasons. Firstly, it shows that I am aware of ethical issues in my research. Secondly, having a code of ethics enabled me to consider alternative ways of doing the research — ways which might be more ethical. Thirdly, a code of ethics made me more aware of the

problems which might arise, thus helping me to anticipate and plan for these eventualities in advance.

Following Kemmis and McTaggart's guidelines, I firstly asked the head teacher of the school and the depute head of the department of special education (DSE) if I could carry out my PhD research at their school. I also provided them with an outline of my research. Having gained their permission, I outlined my study to all the staff (teachers, auxiliaries, classroom assistants) in the DSE at a staff meeting in order to gain their permission, approval, support and co-operation. By doing this I hoped to obtain informed consent or informed refusal from the staff. I was also anxious not to make the staff feel threatened by my study, so I tried to reassure them by giving them guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. I also emphasized their participation and involvement in the study through the nominal group technique, progress reports and respondent validation. I tried to follow Kemmis and McTaggart's guidelines, whilst also recognizing that there can be no rigid rules and that I would have to rely on my own ethical judgment to deal with conflicts as they arose:

Individual circumstances must be the final arbiter... If it appears that the research is going to come into conflict with aspects of school policy, management styles, or individual personalities, it is better to confront the issues head on, consult relevant parties, and make rearrangements in the research design where possible or necessary.

(Hitchcock & Hughes, 1988, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 359)

So far I have considered ethical issues surrounding research with adults. However, my study also involves children with learning difficulties. Therefore I also had to consider ethical issues relating to research with children.

Research with children

Sieber (1993) describes ethics in research as "the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others to promote the good, to be

respectful, and to be fair” (p. 14). Alderson (1995) argues that this emphasis on preventing harm has sometimes resulted in children being over protected, so much so that often their views are not sought and they are excluded from research. She further argues, that as ethics are based on centuries of patriarchal law and philosophy which tend to discriminate against women and children, new strategies need to be developed. Morrows and Richards (1996) concur with this, arguing that in the past adults, parents and researchers have tended not to be respectful of children’s viewpoints (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, they argue that it is the duty of researchers to develop strategies which are fair and respectful to children participating in research. In an overview of ethical issues surrounding social research with children, Morrow and Richards (1996) found that discussions about ethical issues centered around informed consent and protection of participants.

In the United Kingdom, consent is usually taken to mean consent from parents or guardians. In this country, sixteen is seen as the age at which parental consent is unnecessary in terms of medical and dental treatment (Family Law Reform Act, 1968). However, the law over consent with regard to taking part in research is unclear. The criterion seems to be competence rather than age:

Children who are judged to be competent have certain consent rights. Legal views of children’s competence to consent give less emphasis to a stated age of consent, and more emphasis to individual ability or competence, as shown by the Gillock case.

(Alderson, 1995, p. 71)

In the Gillick case (1985) the Law Lords defined a competent child as one who “achieves a sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed,” and also has “sufficient discretion to enable him or her to make a wise choice in his or her own interests” (cited in Beresford, 1997, p. 34).

However, Ward (1997) argues that assessing competence in children is difficult. Often children do not have an understanding of the research process either because of limited cognitive understanding, or lack of experience in taking part in research (Formann & Ladd, 1991; Thompson 1992). Furthermore, assessing competence in children is also made more difficult because adults' own beliefs about children are involved. Alderson (1995) argues that adult ideas surrounding competence in children are still influenced by pre-Victorian theories such as preformationist and predetermined theories, as well as by the work of later theorists such as Piaget (1962) and Kohlberg (1984). Piaget's work suggested that children are ego-centric and unable to appreciate other people's viewpoints. Similarly, Kohlberg's studies suggested that children do not reach moral maturity until their mid teens. Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that:

Conceptualizing children as less competent in this way is unhelpful, and it is important to see it critically, because it has provided teachers and parents (and sociologists) with powerful normative models for what children are (or should be) like. It reflects a cultural reluctance to take children's ideas seriously, which in itself is not surprising, given that — at the macro social level at any rate — adults tend to trivialize and devalue children's acts as a matter of course.

(Morrow & Richards, 1996, p. 98)

However, anthropological and historical studies suggest that from an early age children are capable of making decisions concerning what they want to do. They can also understand the basic elements of the research process and their role within it if this information is presented in an age-appropriate manner (Thompson, 1992).

As regards children with learning difficulties taking part in research, Beresford (1997) argues that the same ethical principles applied to adults should apply to all children taking part in research. However, she recognizes the particular vulnerability of children with learning difficulties because of their cognitive abilities and a lowered sense of autonomy (Biklen & Moseley, 1988). Literature on the

practicalities of obtaining informed consent from children taking part in research is growing (Cavet, 1995; Hill, Laybourn & Borlan, 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Edwards & Alldred, 2001; Christensen & James, 2003). Furthermore, Beresford (1997) argues that it is no longer acceptable to obtain consent to take part in research from a parent or teacher on behalf of the child. Morrow and Richards (1996) concur, arguing that researchers need to explain the purpose and nature of their research in a clear way to the children involved. Care has to be taken to provide age-appropriate information in a form that the participants can understand, so that the children can comprehend what the research involves. Moreover, the children need to understand that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at anytime without recriminations. The power to end participation must be held by the child. In addition, Powell and Vacha-Hasse (1994) point out that it is important that researchers respect the wishes of the children and their parents and maintain confidentiality throughout the entire research process (Ross & Ross, 1984). Disclosure of sensitive information should only be given to others with the child's permission (Beresford, 1997).

My study regarded the children who took part as "social actors with their own distinctive abilities to understand and explain their world" (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998, p. 338). Therefore my first principle of consent was concerned with obtaining agreement from the children to participate in the research. To do this I needed to consider each child's cognitive and linguistic stage of development (Marchant & Page, 1997). I approached the children individually for their consent, I explained the purpose of the research, what it entailed and gave them a chance to reflect on this before committing themselves to taking part. As the majority of the children who took part in the study have learning difficulties and multiple impairments, the information was not provided through written material, but through verbal and non-verbal means of communication such as Makaton/Sign Along and Signed English. The children were also shown the materials I planned to use with them to increase their understanding of and involvement in the IEP process. Parental consent was also obtained from the parents of the children who wished to participate. This was done by sending a letter to the parents informing them of my study and giving them

the opportunity to opt out their children from the study if they so wished (Appendix A, p. 261). This process ensured “active agreement on the part of the child, and passive agreement on the part of the care-takers” (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998, p. 338).

My second principle of consent was that the children’s involvement in the research could be withdrawn at anytime. For example, they could conclude an interview, refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the research process. Therefore I discussed with each child ways in which they would indicate to me how they would initiate breaks, ask for explanations, refuse to answer questions, and close the interaction (Marchant & Page, 1997). I also explained to the children that I would not be angry if they wanted to end the session or withdraw from the study. I also tried to be aware of non-verbal signs which might indicate the children’s desire for a break or to withdraw their consent.

My third principle of consent was that the children should have as much choice as possible over how they participated in the research. However, their sensory impairments and their learning and communication difficulties made it difficult to involve them in all aspects of the research process. Treseder (1997) provides a circular diagram describing degrees of participation in the research process (Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48). His diagram is based on Hart’s (1992) “Ladder of Participation” which places “assigned and informed” on the bottom rung and “child-initiated and directed” on the top. However, as already discussed in the previous chapter, Treseder criticizes this idea for assuming that “child-initiated and directed” participation should be the eventual aim of researchers and those who wish to empower children. He argues that this model overlooks the fact that this aim may not be achievable with certain children and in some contexts. Therefore he prefers a circular model which sees the five degrees of participation as five different, but equal, forms of good practice which can be used in different circumstances and environments. Since the topic of my study was decided by me and the children volunteered to be part of it, their degree of participation in the research process can be described as “assigned but informed” (see Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48).

Having discussed the issue of informed consent, I will now look at the second issue of ethical concern regarding research with children — the protection of participants from harm. Questions arise around the researchers' responsibility for the participants; the abuse of the participants by the researcher; confidentiality and disclosure of information and exploitation of the participants (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). As regards confidentiality and disclosure of information, Alderson (1995) argues that children should be given the same degree of confidentiality and privacy as adult participants. However, she recognizes that in the course of carrying out research with children there is the possibility that they might reveal some information which suggests that they might be at risk. In such a case Alderson advises that if researchers must report a child's confidences, then they should discuss it with the child first (Butler & Williamson, 1994). In addition, if they feel that in the course of their study disclosures of this type are likely to occur, they should set up or co-ordinate some form of support service or counseling to deal with disclosures or requests for help (Rotheram-Borus & Koopman, 1994).

In my study, the children were not asked sensitive questions or asked to describe their feelings or emotions so the issue of disclosure was less likely to occur. However, I needed to be aware of this issue. As Morrow and Richards (1996) argue:

...ethical considerations need to be situational and context specific and, above all, on going throughout the process of research, from inception to dissemination of findings.

(Morrow & Richards, 1996, p. 96)

They also argue that the biggest ethical problem for researchers working with children is the disparity in power and status between adults and children.

Power relationships

Whilst the disparity in power and status is also a problem for researchers working with adults, the disparity between adults' and children's status is greater. Lansdown

(1994) argues that this is because children are dependent on adults because of physical weaknesses and lack of knowledge and experience. In addition, she also argues that children are structurally vulnerable “because of their total lack of political and economic power and their lack of civil rights” (p. 35). This difference in status can result in children regarding adults as experts and giving responses which they think adult researchers might want rather than expressing their own views (Donaldson, 1978; Spencer & Flin, 1991). Similarly, Mahon and Glendinning (1996) claim that the identity of the researchers that children construct, may also influence their responses. Therefore researchers have to consider their role in the research process with children and look at ways of reducing the disparity in power between researcher and participant.

A number of writers have discussed the role that adults should adopt when researching children. Some advocate employing a non-authoritarian role (Corsaro, 1985; Fine, 1987; Mandell, 1991), some a “friends” role (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988), others “the least adult role” (Mandell, 1991) and yet others a detached observer role (Damon, 1977). All of these roles are concerned with changing the power relationships between adult and child so that the researcher can gain access to children’s worlds. These writers argue that such roles provide researchers not only with opportunities to interact with children, but also to empower them (Alderson, 1995). However, some of these researchers (Damon, 1977) contend that adults’ worlds and children’s worlds are so different that adults can only be detached observers, they cannot enter children’s worlds. Furthermore, Fine (1987) and Corsaro (1985) contend that the age difference and authority of adults means that they can never be complete participants in children’s worlds. Other writers, such as Davis et al. (2003), argue that often researchers assume that children are a homogeneous group, whereas, like adults, children actively create their own cultures. This social child perspective maintains that there is no “universal childhood”, but rather a variety of different childhoods (Levin, 1994). Thus they argue that researchers working with children may not only need to bridge the cultural gap between themselves and children, but also have to consider and attempt to

understand the differences within and between different groups of children and different groups of adults involved in the study.

Looking at my study, I felt that I could not adopt a non-authoritarian or “least adult” role because I was already viewed by the children as a figure of authority — a teacher at the school. However, I asked the children for their consent in carrying out the research, assured them of confidentiality and endeavoured to involve them in the research process, in an attempt to minimise the social distance between myself and the children. I also tried to establish a rapport with the children because as Davis asserts:

The child will resist through silence, humour, conflict, or by shutting the gates to their world. That is, children make their own decisions about whether to participate and themselves identify which issues are sensitive during the research process.

(Davis 1998, p.330)

Morrow and Richards (1996) also suggest that the power of adults can be reduced by using a variety of research techniques which allow children to feel part of the research process, or by using children as researchers (Ennew & Morrow, 1994; Alderson, 1995). Thus in my study I used a variety of techniques (see Chapters 4-7) and tried to involve the children in the research process. My experiences, both as a teacher of children with additional support needs and as the sister of a young person with profound physical and intellectual disabilities, have made me realize that research techniques cannot be applied universally to all children. Instead researchers need to choose and devise methods to take into account the children’s cognitive and communication abilities and to question reflexively these methods throughout the whole research process.

Lansdown (1994) identifies a further problem in the relationship between children and researcher. She argues that in this country we are not used to listening and talking to children to find out their views and opinions. In addition, James and Prout

(1995) argue that the way in which researchers view children also influences the way in which they study children and the methods they use, the participants they study and their interpretation of data. She identifies four ways of “seeing” children — the developing child, the adult child, the tribal child and the social child. She criticizes the developing child perspective for undervaluing children’s competence (see discussion of Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s work on pp. 78-79). This has meant that until fairly recently sociology has largely ignored pre-adolescent children (Hill et al., 1996). Although the adult child perspective recognizes children’s competency, it regards children as “competent participants in a shared, but adult centred world” (James, 1995, p. 11). It assumes that children are essentially the same as adults, therefore the same tools of research can be used. However, James criticizes this approach for failing to recognize differences in status between adult researchers and child participants. Sapsford (1984) further argues that this approach has led to a very “adult” conception of childhood. Children’s behaviour is studied and inferences made on the basis of adult subjectivity.

In contrast, the tribal child approach sees children as social actors in their own right (Wartofsky, 1981). However, this perspective tends to view children as having one homogenous voice or culture. It focuses on the common meanings of children (Mandell, 1991) and the common universal laws of childhood (Opie & Opie, 1969, 1991). It sees children as inhabiting a conceptually different world from adults, one in which adults cannot engage. However, unlike the developing child perspective, it recognizes children’s competence. Hardman (1973) argues that although children’s behaviour may seem to be immature and incomprehensible to adults, children are social actors, and like adults, interpret the meaning of social behaviour (Mackay, 1991). Building on this tribal child perspective, some writers have looked at the common meanings and behaviour of groups of children who are differentiated by social structural factors, such as gender (Mauthner, 1997), age (Thorne, 1993) and ethnicity (Maynall, 1994). However, differences within these groups tend not to be explored.

This contrasts with the social child perspective which is concerned with culture and difference. As previously discussed, this perspective recognizes that children do not live as one cultural grouping and that there is no single concept of childhood (Ritala-Koskinen, 1994). It also sees children as competent social actors who possess abilities and skills which enable them to understand and explain their world. Therefore studying children should not be “concerned with what is in the children’s minds... but with the emergent qualities of actions in the here and now” (Sapsford, 1984, p. 78). Thus researchers need to recognize that there are a variety of children’s cultures. Moreover, James and Prout (1990) also argue that researchers need to develop a variety of methods which will enable children to participate in the research process in meaningful ways.

As already stated, these perspectives of children influence researchers’ choice of methods and participants, as well as the ways in which they interpret the data. Therefore Davis (1998) argues that researchers need to question both their methods and the academic and personal assumptions that they bring with them to their research topics. This is discussed in the next section.

Reflexivity

Davis (1998) argues that researchers need to adopt reflexive techniques to help them understand the affect of their own meanings on the research process and to prevent these meanings from influencing their understanding of the people they are studying. He maintains that these meanings are influenced by the language/culture of the researcher’s academic paradigm — the meta-language of sociology (Giddens, 1976, 1987) and the everyday language/culture of the researcher’s personal history and life experiences — the researcher’s cultural prejudice. Davis et al. (2003) argue that the latter affects the way in which researchers communicate with people and react in the research setting. Therefore, they advocate that researchers should consider how their academic preconceptions and their personal culture influences their fieldwork, analysis and interpretations. They describe this approach as reflexivity.

Callaway (1992) sees reflexivity as opening the way “to a more radical consciousness of self” (Davis et al., 2003, p. 201) and Hertz (1997) suggests that reflexivity is achieved:

...through detachment, internal dialogue and constant and intensive scrutiny of the process through which researchers construct and question their interpretations of field experiences.

(Hertz, 1997, p. vii, cited in Davis et al., 2003, p. 202)

Such an approach, according to Davis and his colleagues, enables readers to understand the researcher’s experiences within the context of the research setting. Reflexivity seems to be similar to the “Epoche” process, advocated by researchers such as Maykut and Morehouse (1999), Patton (1990) and Moustakas (1990). This approach also enables researchers to reflect on their own bias and preconceptions surrounding the topic:

Epoche is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Epoche helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension in judgement is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researcher’s personal viewpoint in order to see the experience itself.

(Katz, 1987, pp. 36-37)

In the following section I explore my academic preconceptions about childhood and disability. My personal culture and personal involvement in the study have already been described in Chapter 1 (see pp. 3-4).

Preconceptions

From a childhood research perspective, I approached my study from the position that children are social actors in their own right and create their own child cultures

(Hardman, 1973; Wartofsky, 1983). I believe that children have a right to be heard, to have their views listened to and considered. They should also have the right to play an active part in decision-making processes which affect their lives. I am of the opinion that all children are capable of making choices and that researchers have to develop techniques to communicate with them, especially those with severe cognitive and communication impairments. My sister has profound intellectual and communication impairments. She is unable to use language in any form. She has no speech and is unable to sign or use symbols. She communicates at an early level using signals such as reflex responses, sounds, eye-pointing and facial expressions. Despite her severe communication impairments, she can communicate her needs and wishes, is capable of making choices and having at least some degree of control over her life. Booth and Booth (1996) argue that too often researchers tend to view people with learning difficulties in terms of a deficit model rather than the limitations of their methods:

Such a 'deficit model' of informant response is rooted in a view of disability as a problem of the individual. It serves to legitimate the exclusion of, for example, people with learning difficulties from a participatory role in narrative research in ways that mirror their exclusion from the wider society. The emphasis of research should be on overcoming the barriers that impede the involvement of inarticulate subjects instead of highlighting the difficulties they present.

(Booth & Booth, 1996, p. 67)

Therefore I viewed the children in the department as capable of giving their views and opinions and taking an active part in the IEP process. I rejected the deficit model referred to by Booth and Booth (1996) above. I believe that this medical model of disability, with its focus on impairment has excluded children with disabilities from taking part in 'normal' childhood and characterized them as passive, vulnerable and incompetent social actors. Whilst recognizing that the social model of disability, with its emphasis on the social factors which lead to disability, has enabled researchers to move away from notions of children with disabilities as medically

defined, unchanging individuals; I believe that this model neglects the idea that children with disabilities are capable of affecting the structures surrounding their lives (James & Prout, 1990; Davis et al., 2003). Furthermore, the social model tends to see children with disabilities as a homogeneous group, whereas I view children with disabilities as experiencing diverse lives and actively creating their own individual and personal cultures, within a set of pronounced cultural and structural constraints (Davis et al., 2003). Often children with disabilities have been regarded as a homogeneous group who are incapable of taking part in decision-making or research processes. Morris (1997) argues that frequently children with disabilities have been denied the same rights and choices as other children. Moreover, often they have been prevented from developing social skills and self-confidence because their lives are controlled by others — parents, the medical profession, local authority officials (Tomlinson & Colquhoun, 1995; Anderson & Goodley, 1998). However, research (Clough & Barton, 1998; Christensen & James, 2003) has shown that children with disabilities are social actors and not a homogeneous group.

Having decided to use action research in my study and having considered the ethical problems associated with this kind of research, the next section looks at models of action research.

MODELS OF ACTION RESEARCH

The term “action research” was first used by the social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (see Kemmis, 1980). His model involves a series of steps which involve a cycle of planning, action and evaluation (Figure 9, p. 89).

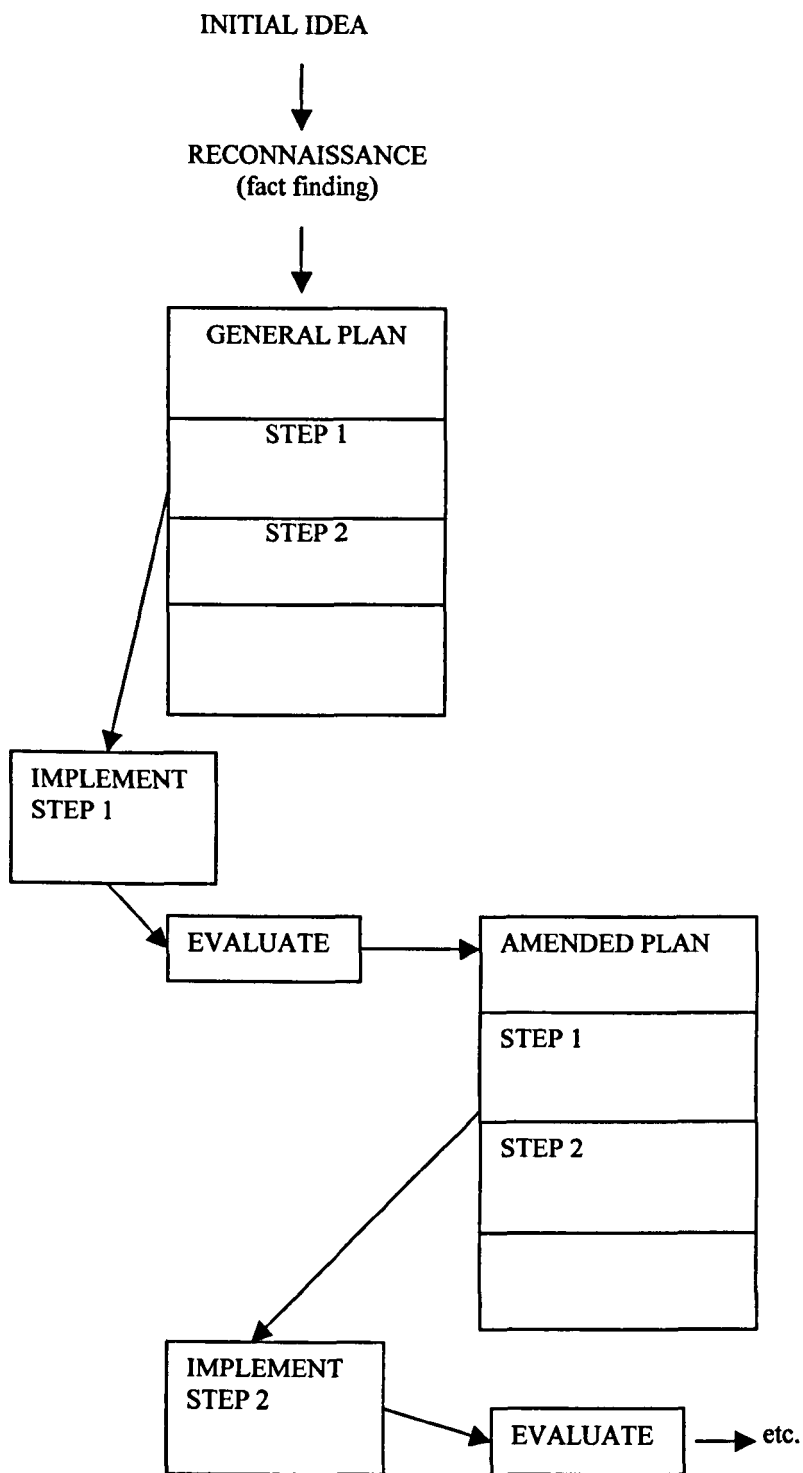


Figure 9: Kurt Lewin's model of action research as interpreted by Kemmis (1980)

Source: Elliott, 1993, p. 70

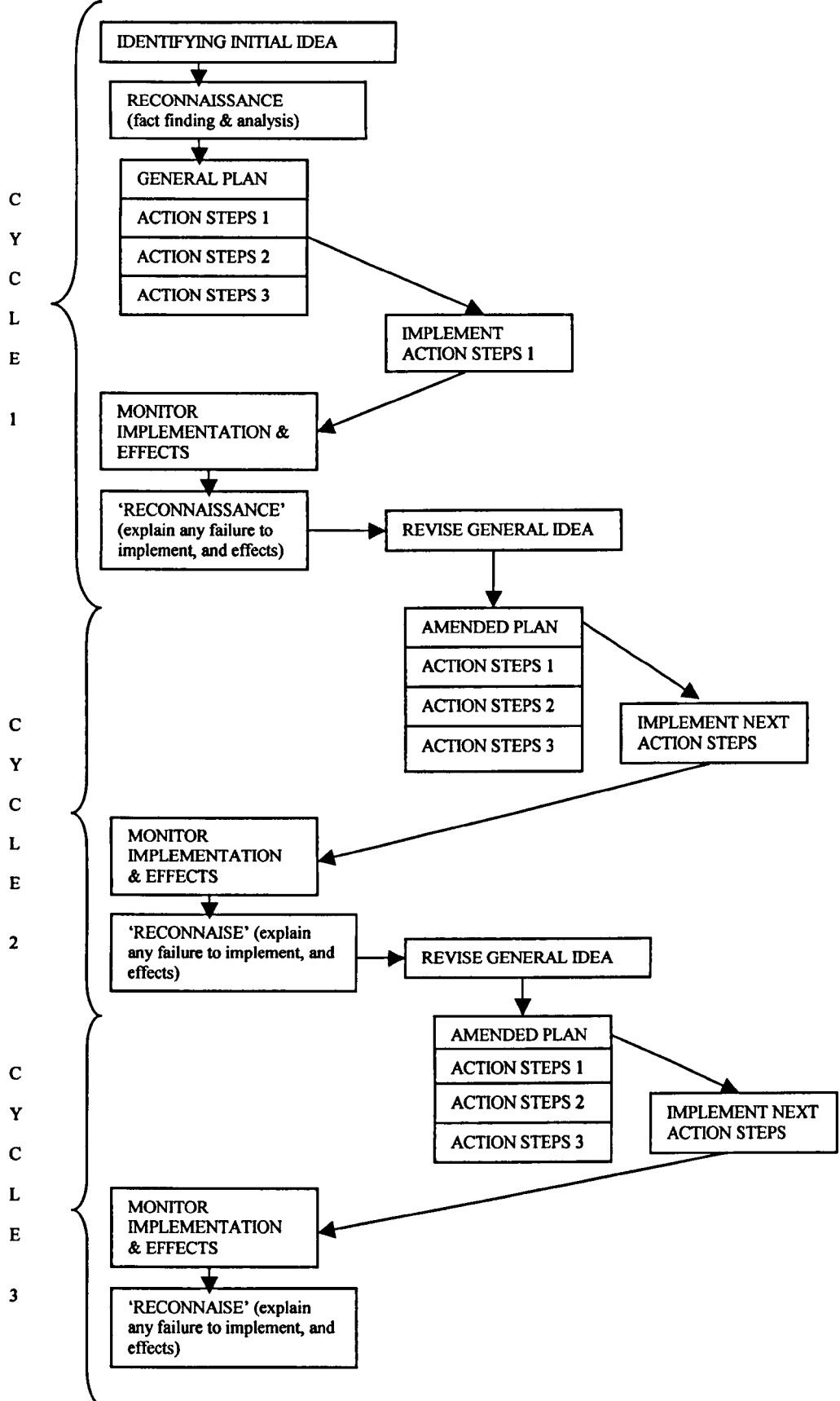


Figure 10: A revised version of Lewin's model of action research

Source: Elliott (1993) p. 71

However, Elliott (1993) criticizes Lewin's model for assuming that the 'general idea' can be fixed in advance, for viewing 'reconnaissance' as fact finding only to be undertaken at the beginning of the first cycle and for regarding 'implementation' as a straight forward process. He maintains that the initial idea should be flexible, rather than fixed, and be capable of modification. He argues that reconnaissance should involve not only fact finding, but analysis, and that reconnaissance should constantly recur in each spiral of activity, rather than only at the beginning. Furthermore, he contends that as implementation of an action step is not always easy, the effects of an action should not be evaluated until the action is monitored to establish the extent to which it has been implemented. In the light of these criticisms, he has elaborated on the spiral of activities proposed in Lewin's model (Figure 10, p. 90).

However, Hopkins (1985) in turn, criticises Elliott's model for being too complex and prescriptive. Like other writers, such as Kemmis and McTaggart (1982), he divides Lewin's action of evaluation into two stages of observation and reflection (Figure 11, p. 92). Like Hopkins, Denscombe's (1998) model emphasizes the cyclical nature of action research, viewing it as an ongoing process which feeds directly into practice (Figure 12, p. 93). Other writers view the stages of action research as spirals (Tripp, 1990; Grbich, 1999) and argue that a single spiral of planning, acting, observing and evaluating does not constitute action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

From the above it can be seen that there are a number of models in action research. However, Cohen and Manion (1994) advocate that researchers devise their own action research models which are "tailor-made to meet the needs of the change situation in question" (p. 198). Therefore I devised the following model of action research to match my circumstances and guide procedures (Figure 14, p. 96-97).

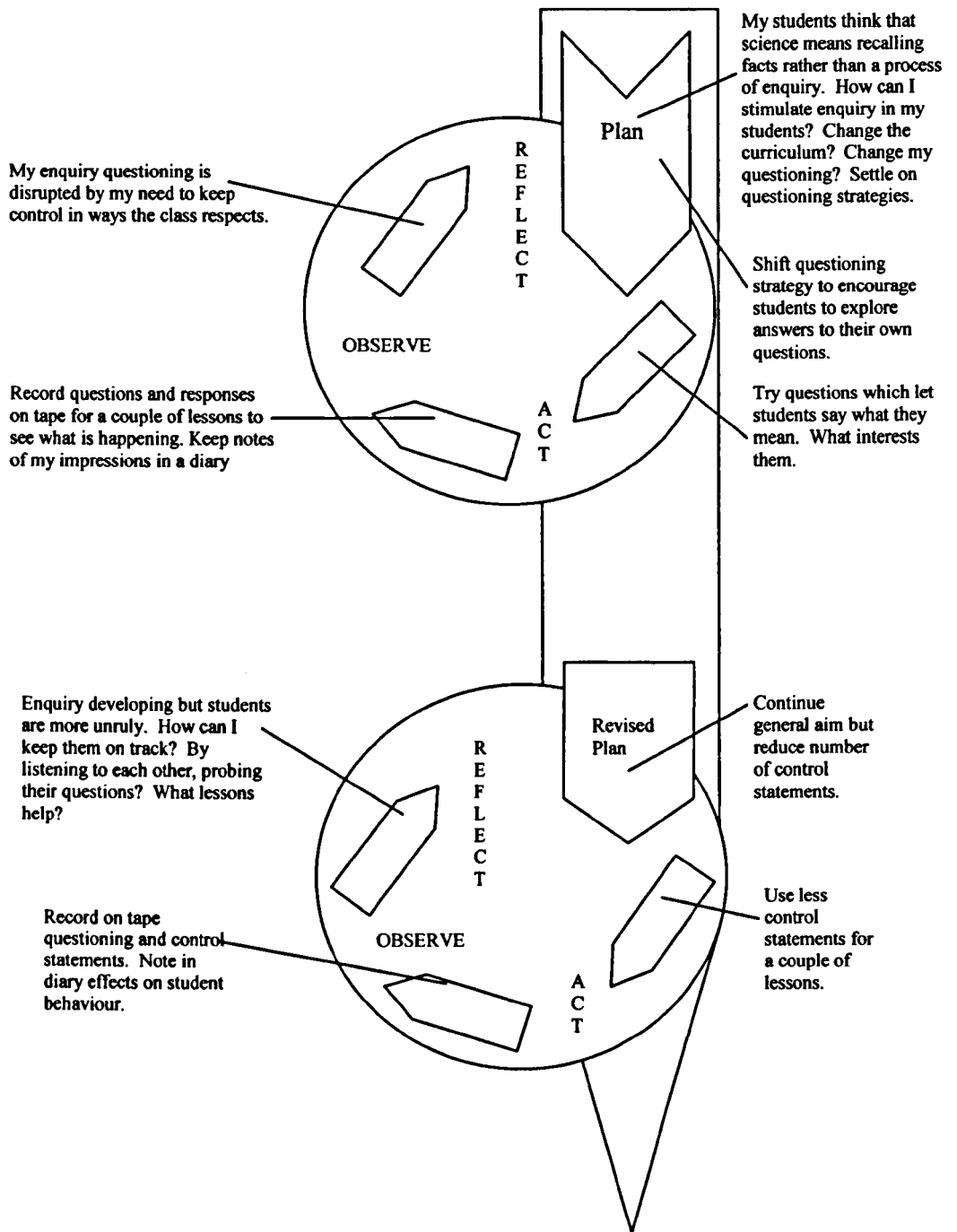


Figure 11: Action research in action
 Adapted from Hopkins, 1985, p. 55

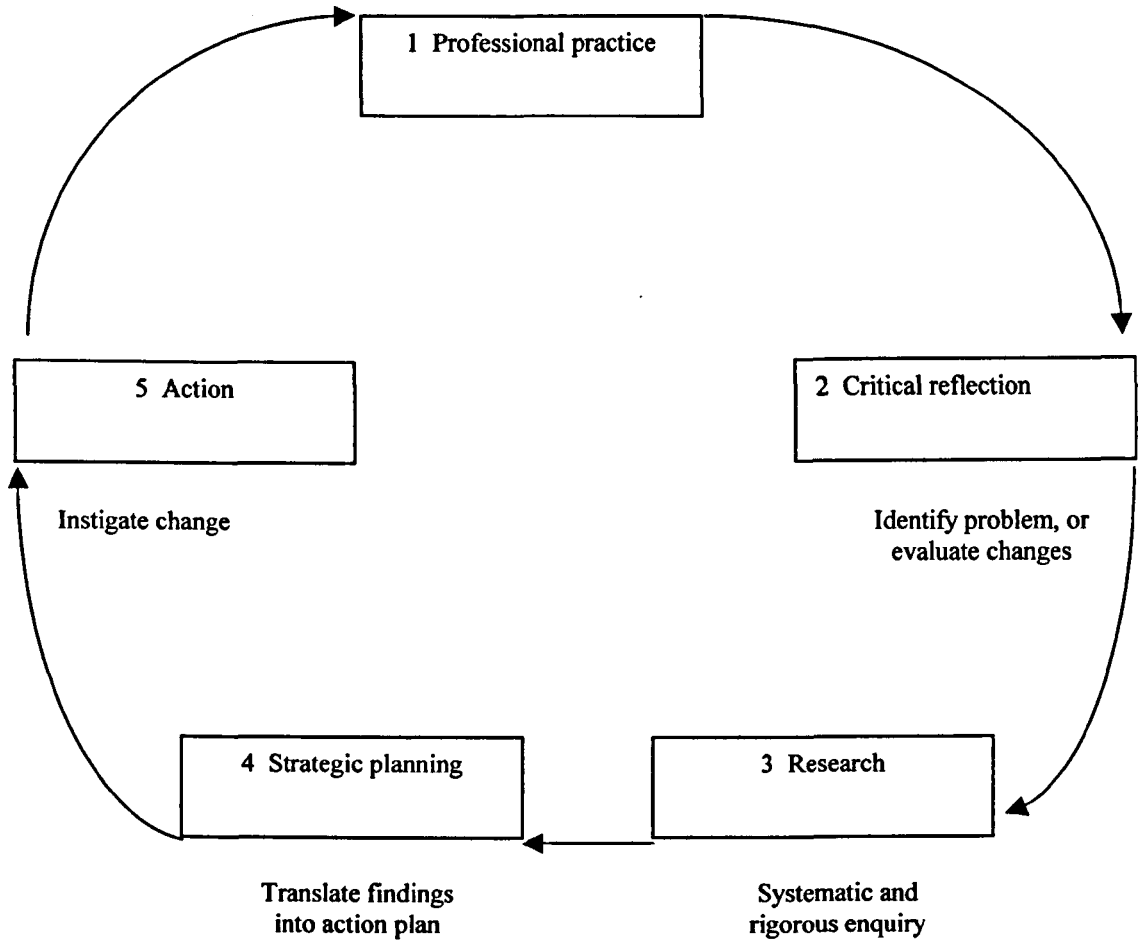


Figure 12: The cyclical process in action research

Source: Denscombe, 1998, p. 60

It consisted of three cycles and involved a quasi-experimental approach, document analysis, focus group discussion with staff, structured individual interviews with children and semi structured individual interviews with both pupils and staff (Figure 14, p. 96-97).

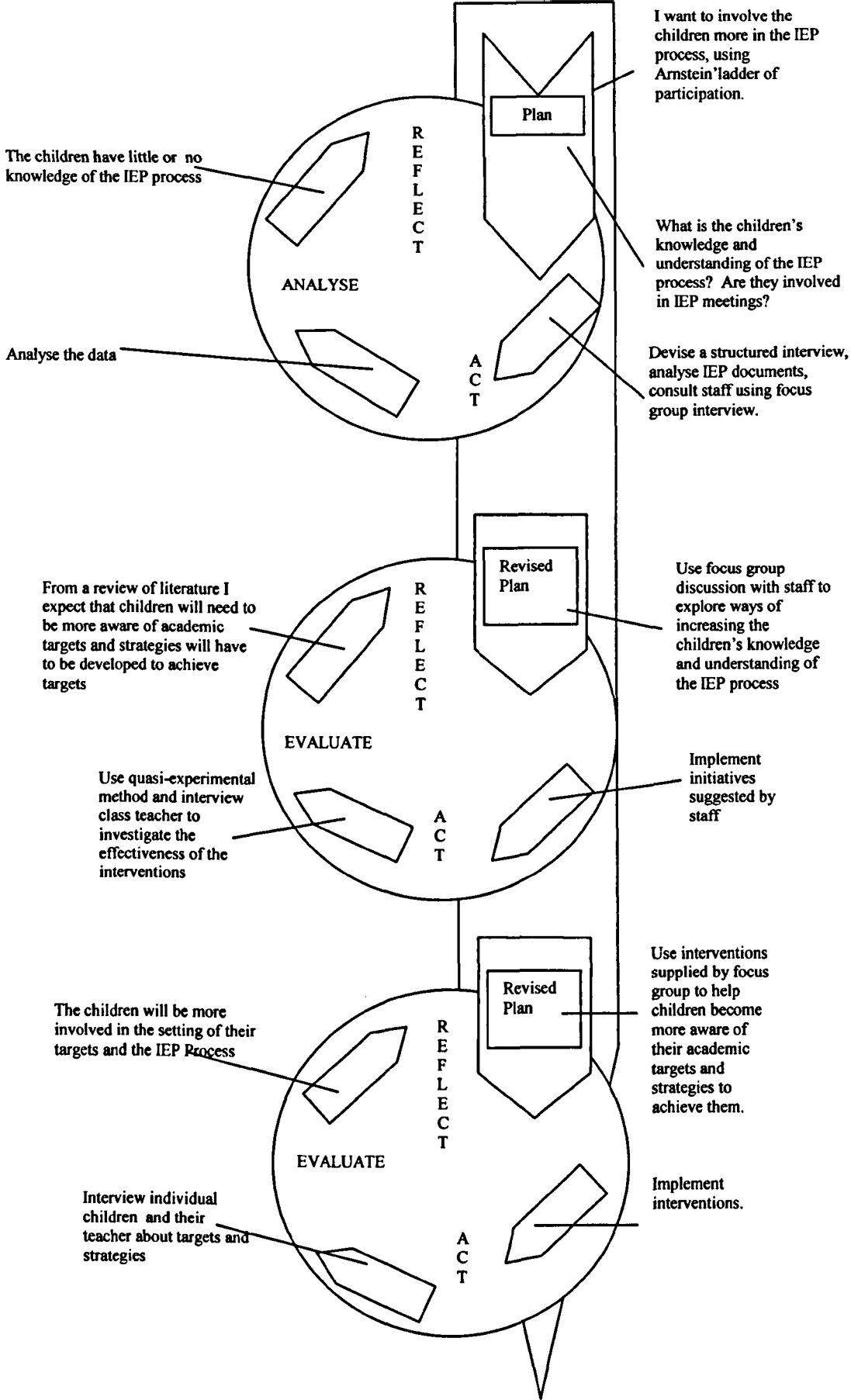
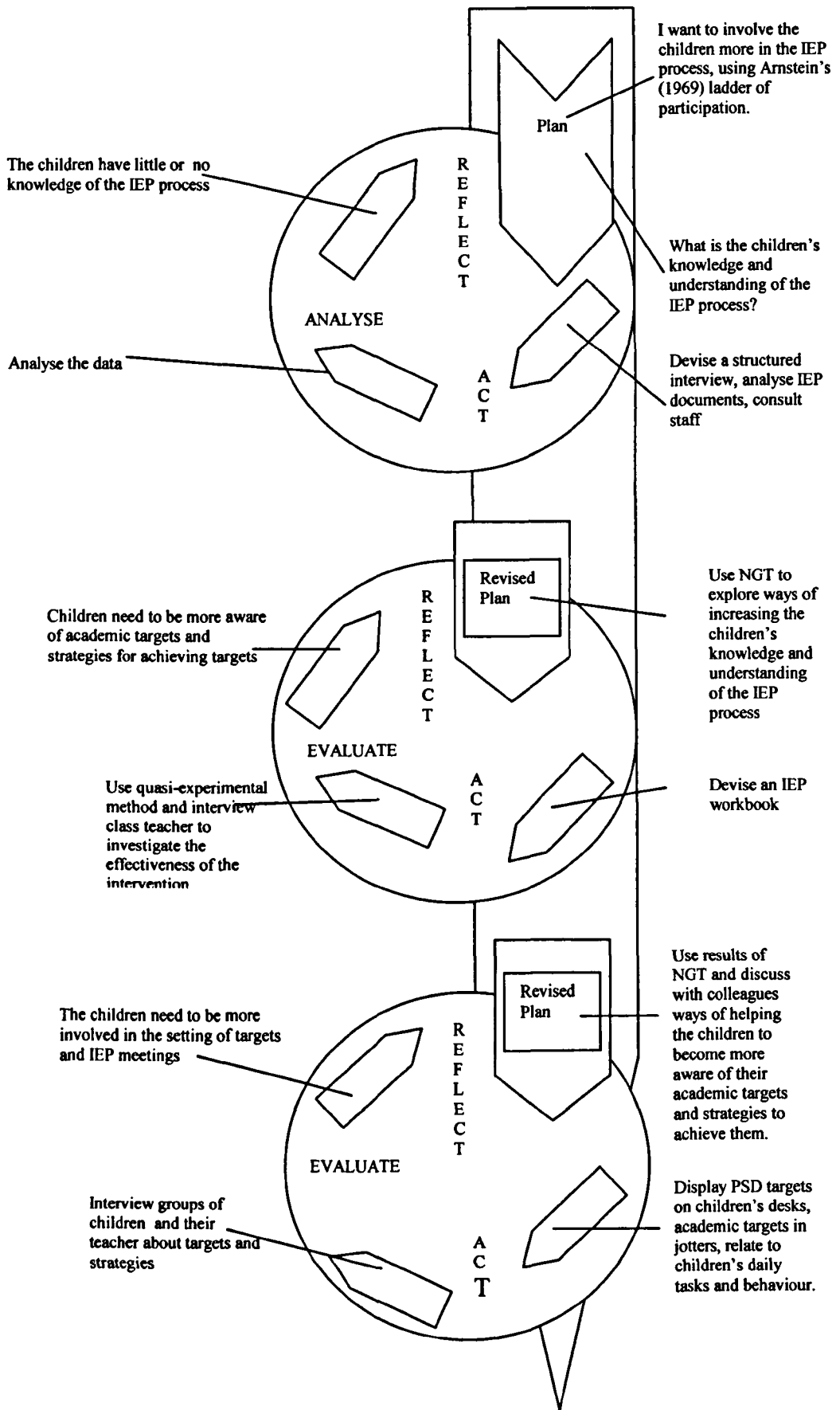


Figure 13: Proposed cycles of research



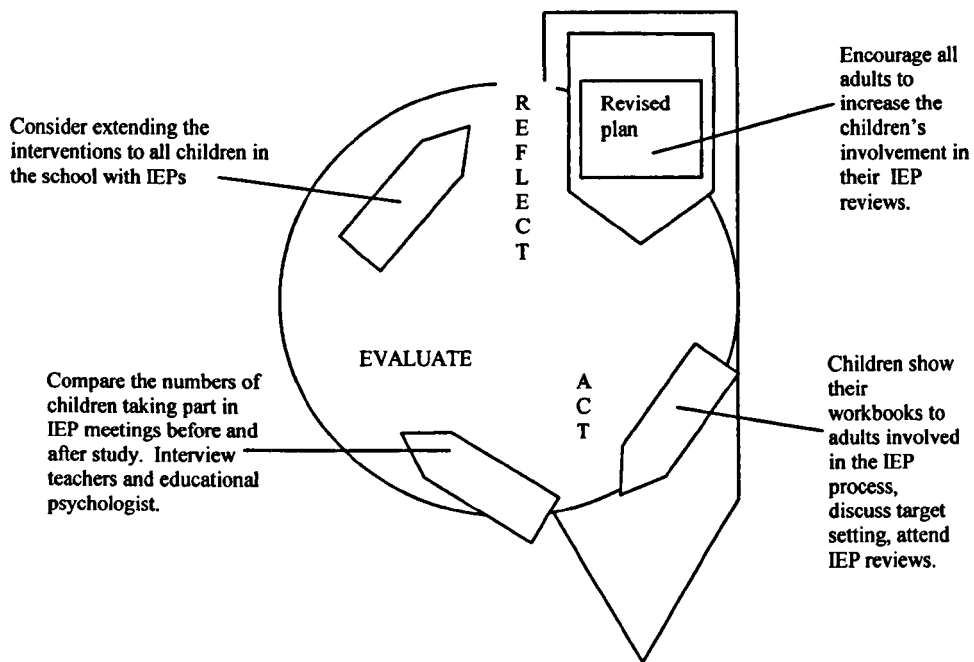


Figure 14: The four cycles of my research

According to Noffke and Stevenson (1995), action research is not characterized by particular methods or techniques of data collection. However, it does involve a spiraling process of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In action research the researcher studies the intentions, consequences and circumstances of the actions he or she has taken and uses this information to influence further action. Ideally, the nature of my research questions should have dictated the methods that I adopted. However, I also had to take account of pragmatic issues such as amount of contact time available for carrying out the study, colleagues' willingness to participate in the research and organizational restrictions. Therefore my choice of data collection methods was influenced by how well they would fit in with other school commitments, the children's abilities and disabilities, as well as ethical issues. Thus I had to change my original research design. This is not surprising as my study adopted a participatory research paradigm in which myself, as researcher, and the participants worked collaboratively in a sustained relationship in order to inform the research process. This method of research incorporates the ideas and expectations of

all persons involved in the situation. In my study the staff monitored their own educational practices and used myself, the researcher, as a sounding-board against which they tried out ideas, explored the reasons for their own practices and engaged in self reflection. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that:

Practical action research maybe a stepping-stone to emancipatory action research in which participants themselves take responsibility for the Socratic role of assisting the group in its collaborative self-reflection.

(Carr & Kemmis, 1986, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 190)

In Cycle one I had intended to use a focus group discussion with the staff to obtain information about the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process, at a department meeting. However, this was not possible, as the department head could allot no time from a staff meetings for this purpose, due to time pressures to complete department development plans. As a result I had to have informal discussions with staff during break and lunchtimes in order to obtain some insight into the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process as perceived by the staff. In addition, I had hoped to look at ways of increasing the children's involvement in the IEP review meetings. However, I realised that for the children to be actively involved in these meetings, they had to gain a knowledge and understanding of their targets and develop skills of decision-making, negotiation and debate. Therefore, I decided to create a fourth cycle of research to address the involvement of pupils in IEP review meetings. In the second cycle of my research, I used NGT instead of a focus group discussion because I was concerned that the departmental head might dominate a group discussion and that the teaching auxiliaries might be reluctant to voice their opinions. Moreover, I had planned to interview the class teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of the IEP workbook, however, the class teacher was reluctant to be involved in an individual interview because of workload pressures and was concerned that this would take up too much of her preparation time. Nevertheless, she offered to provide a written response which she completed in her own time. Therefore, I would argue that if teachers are going to be involved in action research, time should be allocated during the working day to enable them to

engage in the research process. As I had used the NGT in the second cycle of my research to generate ideas which would increase the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets, these ideas were used in the third cycle of my research. I had intended to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions by conducting individual interviews with the children, however, once again time restrictions and organisational considerations meant that I used group interviews to evaluate these interventions. I had planned to interview the children in mixed ability groups in order that less able pupils could be supported by the more able pupils. However, after consulting with the pupils, they expressed a desire to be interviewed in social friendship groups because they felt it would "be embarrassing" otherwise.

Another reason why I had to change my research design is because action research is self-evaluative in that interventions are continuously evaluated in the ongoing situation, with the aim of improving practice in some way or other. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored and by a variety of methods so that feedback is translated into modifications. Therefore, the methods of evaluation and the interventions could not be predicted until data had been gathered. For example, in Cycle two, it was the staff who suggested interventions to increase children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process through the NGT and thus the interventions could not be evaluated until the strategies had been implemented. In this way the research process is democratised.

In Chapters 4-7, at the beginning of each cycle of research, I provide a rationale and description of the methods of data collection I have employed in my study. I also describe the problems I encountered and how I tried to resolve them.

Although action research does not involve a prescriptive methodology (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995), favouring instead methods of data collection thought to be most valuable for the particular situation, it still needs to address issues of validity and reliability. The next section looks at provisions of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which can be used to increase the credibility of research studies.

PROVISIONS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Bassey (1990) insists that all research must be systematic and critical:

When conducting an inquiry data should be collected and recorded systematically, so that, if necessary, it can be checked by others... Researchers must critically examine their evidence to make sure that it is accurate, representative and reliable... Researchers must be self-critical and scrutinize their own assumptions, methods of inquiry and analysis... (Bassey, 1990, p. 35)

Action research is often charged with being biased because it involves the researcher in analyzing his or her own practices. My research starts from my own experiences as a mainstream teacher in a primary school with a DSE, an integrating teacher and a teacher of children with additional support needs. These experiences helped me to define the research questions and the department of special education, in which I worked, provided a source for finding people to take part in my study. By starting from my own experiences it can be argued that I am ignoring the conventional expectation that researchers need to be detached, objective and “value neutral.” Indeed, positivists would argue that personal experiences contaminate objectivity. However, feminist researchers (Hubbard, 1979; Le Moncheck, 1985; Oakley, 1985) challenge these concepts and argue that objectivity does not exist “since as inquiring subject one must assume a perspective from which to launch the inquiry” (Le Moncheck, 1985, p. x). In my study I have tried to present the material objectively, whilst recognising that my study was guided by an explicit perspective.

Faulkner, Swann, Baker, Bird & Carty (1993) show how bias can effect different stages of research and suggest a number of ways of overcoming bias. Firstly, they urge researchers to be aware of their own personal biases and preconceptions. To help with this they suggest that researchers keep a research diary to record personal feelings and reflections on the research process. This, according to Burgess (1984), helps researchers become aware of and overcome personal bias. As already seen,

other researchers use the Epoche process and reflexivity to increase their awareness of how their own biases and preconceptions can influence their research.

As well as employing these techniques to overcome academic and personal assumptions, I have described the actual research process by producing an audit trail which contains interview schedules (Appendices B & C, pp. 263-264; Appendices F, H, J & L, pp. 275, 278, 305, & 309), transcripts of the focus group interviews (Appendix I, p. 280) and paper work pertaining to the data analysis process (Appendix N, p. 315), so that my work can be examined and checked by other researchers.

Faulkner et al. (1993) also describe how piloting can help to reveal sources of bias in research methods and how triangulation can enhance the validity of the data collected. In my study I piloted the structured interview with the pupils and used triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of my study.

Creswell (1998) describes the process of triangulation as being when:

...researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. Typically this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective.

(Creswell, 1998, p. 202)

Other researchers (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995; Parahoo 1997) view triangulation as essential for establishing data trustworthiness in action research. Denzin (1970) has identified six types of triangulation (Table 12, p. 101) and I have used three in my study — combined levels of triangulation, methodological triangulation and investigator triangulation.

Table 12: The principal types of triangulation used in research

1. Time triangulation: this type attempts to take into consideration the factors of change and process by utilizing cross-sectional and longitudinal designs
 2. Space triangulation: this type attempts to overcome the parochialism of studies conducted in the same country or within the same subculture by making use of cross-cultural techniques
 3. Combined levels of triangulation: this type uses more than one level of analysis from the three principal levels used in the social sciences, namely, the individual level, the interactive level (groups), and the level of collectivities (organizational, cultural or societal)
 4. Theoretical triangulation: this type draws upon alternative or competing theories in preference to utilizing one viewpoint only
 5. Investigator triangulation: this type engages more than one observer
 6. Methodological triangulation: this type uses either (a) the same method on different occasions, or (b) different methods on the same object of study
-

Source: Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 236

Combined levels of triangulation involves looking at more than one level of analysis. In my study I looked at how to increase pupil involvement in the IEP process at the individual level and the group or interactive level by using individual and group interviewing techniques with the children, and individual written responses and the nominal group technique with the adults. By doing this I hoped to engage the participants in the research process and to use their knowledge to help devise strategies for increasing pupil involvement in the IEP process.

I also used methodological triangulation — both “within methods” triangulation and “between methods” triangulation (Denzin, 1970). By using the same method on different occasions i.e. interviewing pupils individually to explore their knowledge of the IEP process, I hoped to increase the reliability of my study (Smith, 1975). By using both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the topic i.e. quasi-experiments, analysing documents and interviewing (“between methods” triangulation), I hoped to increase the validity of my findings. Lin (1976) argues that by using multiple methods researchers are more likely to reduce the chances that their findings are attributable to similarities of method. Furthermore, by using both qualitative and quantitative methods I hoped to overcome “method-boundedness,”

whereby researchers use pet methods, either because of familiarity with the technique, or belief that a certain method is superior (Smith, 1975). I agree with Reinharz (1992) that there is no “methodological correctness” and that researchers should develop “original” methods which meet their research questions (Hammersley, 1992a), even if this involves using ideas from other disciplines (Sherif, 1982). This is particularly relevant to my study which involves children with intellectual and communicative impairments and attempts to involve them in the research process.

I also used investigator triangulation in my study. Investigator triangulation uses more than one observer in the research setting. According to Smith (1975), using more than one observer can lead to more valid and reliable data. In my study I used other staff’s observations to increase the trustworthiness of my findings.

Another technique I used to increase the trustworthiness of my study was prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Creswell (1998) sees prolonged engagement and persistent observation in terms of “building trust with participants, learning the culture, and checking for misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by the researcher or informants” (p. 201). My position as integrating teacher in the department of special education meant that I was involved with all of the children on a daily basis. This enabled me to form a relationship with the children and to gauge the methods of data collection to their linguistic and cognitive abilities. Fetterman (1989) argues that it is this working with people day in and day out, for long periods of time which gives this kind of research its “validity and vitality” (p. 46). Titchen (1995) concurs with this, arguing that prolonged and persistent field observation provides rigour in action research.

Another way recommended by Maykut & Morehouse (1999) to increase the credibility of findings is to provide a detailed description of the research process and outcomes. This I have attempted to do in my study by providing clear and detailed information about the purpose and aims of my study (see chapter 1, p. 2), sampling

procedures, methods of data collection and analysis, and findings and outcomes (see Chapters 4-7).

Greenwood (1984) also considers the issues of reliability and validity in action research, arguing that face validity and reliability can be checked in action research by using respondent validation. This involves the researcher in asking the participants to comment on the credibility and interpretations of his or her study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this technique is “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314) and is recommended by other writers (Stake 1995) as a way of ensuring that qualitative research is rigorous. I asked the participants in my study to examine and comment on my findings and interpretations and provide feedback as to their accuracy and credibility. As already discussed, this process also helps to overcome some of the ethical dilemmas faced by researchers conducting research in their own schools.

However, Mischler (1990) takes the idea of respondent validation or member checks further. He proposes that the ultimate test of trustworthiness of a qualitative study is whether the findings of the study are considered so truthful that they are acted upon by other researchers and practitioners. I hope to make my study available to researchers and practitioners working in this field and if they use the findings and find them useful, this will provide a further test of trustworthiness to my study.

Creswell (1998) also recommends negative case analysis as a verification process. This involves the researcher in refining “working hypotheses as the study advances in the light of negative and disconfirming evidence” (p. 202). The cyclic nature of action research seems to fit with this verification process as action research involves an ongoing process, with each cycle or spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting influencing the other.

Another way of increasing the credibility of research is peer review or debriefing. This verification process provides an external check on the research process (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Erlandson,

Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993) in which the peer debriefer goes through the researcher's audit trail and asks questions about methods, meanings and interpretations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the role of the peer debriefer as the "devil's advocate" — the person who questions the researcher's honesty and raises questions of bias when necessary. In my study my supervisors acted as my peer debriefers and regularly reviewed the research process.

I have also used rich, thick description in my study to increase its trustworthiness. Erlandson et al. (1993) argue that rich, thick description enables readers to make decisions regarding transferability of information and findings to other settings "because of shared characteristics" (p. 32). This can only be achieved if the researcher provides rich, descriptive detail of the participants and their experiences as well as the topic under study. I have tried to do this by providing descriptions of the participants and by using quotations from the interviews and written responses in the research report in order to give the reader a better understanding of the participants' feelings, thoughts, actions and meanings.

In addition, as my study was submitted as a doctoral thesis, it has been subjected to an external audit. According to Merriam (1988) and Miles and Huberman (1994), the use of an external auditor, who has no connection with the study, to examine whether the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data, helps to establish the verification and accuracy of research studies.

Having described the ways in which I tried to verify my findings, the following chapters describe the cycles of research and provide a detailed account of the methods employed in my study. By methods I mean the techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering — the tools of research. My aim in doing this is to help the reader understand the inquiry process (Kaplan, 1973) by providing a description of the methods used, discussing their advantages and limitations and the rationale for choosing these particular tools of research. These chapters also discuss the results and findings of each cycle of research.

CHAPTER 4: CYCLE 1

This chapter looks at the first cycle of my research. It consists of four sections which describe the four categories depicted in Figure 17, namely, planning, action, analysing the data and reflection.

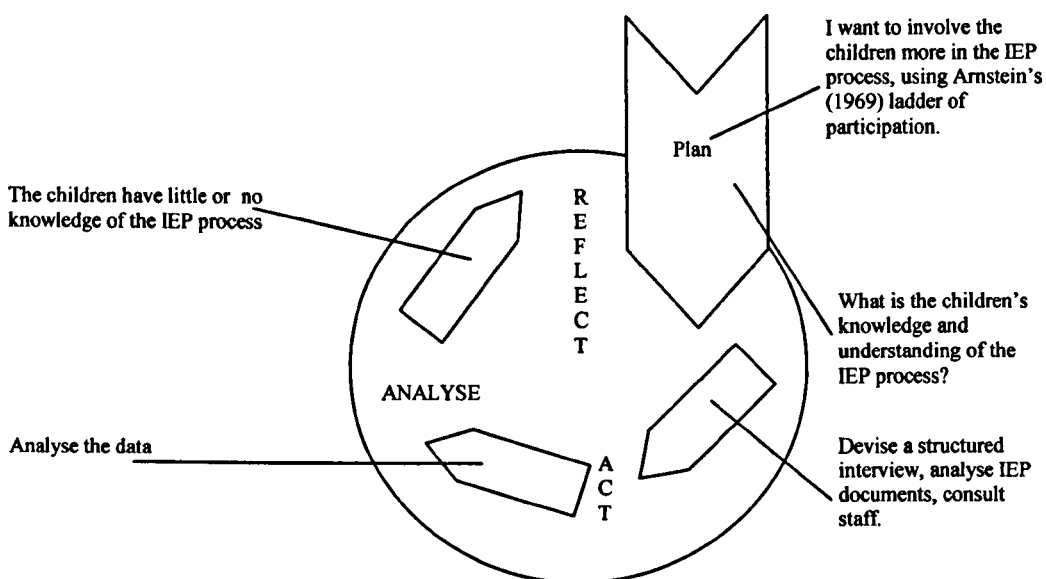


Figure 15: Cycle 1

The first section describes my general plan of action. The following section looks at tools of research and provides a rationale for the tools employed in this first cycle of my study. It also provides an account of sampling strategies used in research and details the samples and procedures used in my study. The third section looks at how I analysed the data and considers the findings. The final section reflects on the next cycle of the research.

PLANNING

The aim of my study was to increase pupil involvement in the IEP process in a department of special education in a mainstream primary school. Having identified the problem the next stage was critical reflection (see Chapter 3, Figure 12, p. 93).

This involved reviewing current research literature to find out what can be learned from other studies (see chapter 2), the consideration of ethical issues (see Chapter 3, pp. 71-87) and the formulation of a general plan of action (see Chapter 3, Figure 14, p. 96-97).

From my review of literature concerned with involving children in decision-making processes, I decided to use Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47) and Treseder's (1997) degrees of participation (Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48) in order to provide a framework for my study. I used these models to assess the current extent of pupil involvement in the IEP process and to help me identify opportunities and devise strategies to increase their involvement in the process. However, firstly I had to find out the children's current knowledge and understanding of their IEPs and the decision-making process. My understanding of the situation, based on my experiences of working with the children and consulting with the staff in the department, was that the children would have little or no knowledge of IEPs and the review process. Therefore some form of intervention would be required to increase their knowledge and understanding.

ACTION

My first task was to gather information about how the IEP process is carried out in the department. I decided to do this by examining the children's IEPs and departmental reports of IEP reviews. I also intended to interview the head of the department about the IEP process, however, she was reluctant to be interviewed and offered instead to provide a written response. As Elliott (1993) and Simons (1978) point out teachers involved in action research, particularly in their own schools, often tend to favour methods which "distance themselves from the potentially disturbing effects interviewing and observing can have on personal relationships in a school" (Simons, 1978, cited in Elliott, 1993, p. 6). I agreed to accept a written response as I had decided to follow Kemmis and McTaggart's (1981) guidelines for action researchers, one of which states that researchers should negotiate with their participants the ways in which they wish to be involved in the research process (see Chapter 3, pp.74-76). This is one of the disadvantages of action research in that

researchers often have to modify their plan of action to fit in with participants' wishes and organizational procedures. I also talked informally with the other teachers and classroom assistants in the department about the children's involvement in the IEP process.

My second task was to investigate the children's current knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. Informal conversations with the staff indicated that pupils would probably be on the first rung of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47) — “the child/young person finds himself/herself in situations which have been decided by others” (Griffiths et al., no date, p. 42). To test this out I devised a structured interview (see Appendices B & C, pp. 263-264), with smiley faces responses.

The next section looks in detail at the tools of research I have employed in this cycle, namely, document analysis and individual interviews.

Tools of research

Document Analysis

Document analysis can be undertaken by a researcher for many reasons. Perhaps the purpose is for background information or for evidence to prove a hypothesis. There are many types of documentation a researcher may use. Although most are in written forms, documentation may also include visual sources such as pictures or artefacts and even sounds, such as music. Types of written documentary evidence include books, journals, web site pages, the internet, newspapers, magazines, records, letters, memos, diaries, government publications and official statistics. Bell (1993) identifies two components of document analysis. Firstly, external criticism which is concerned with whether or not the document is genuine and authentic. This involves discovering whether or not the author did write the document in question. Secondly, and more relevantly to most research projects, is internal criticism where more meticulous analysis is used. Bell advises that the following questions should be addressed in order to assess a document's credibility, representativeness and meaning.

1. What kind of document is it? A statute? A policy paper? A set of minutes? A letter from a long correspondence? How many copies are there?
2. What does it actually say? Are the terms used employed in the same way as you would use them? Documents such as statutes or legal papers may employ a specialized language which must be mastered, and private correspondence may use terms in an idiosyncratic way that also needs to be understood (Kitson Clark, 1967; 64-65).
3. Who produced it? What was its purpose? Did the author aim to inform, command, remind (as in a memorandum) or to have some other effect on the reader? (Travers 1964: 120)
4. When and in what circumstances was it produced? How did it come to existence?
5. Is it typical or exceptional of its type?
6. Is it complete? Has it been altered or edited? It may be that there is more chance of completeness if it is published a long time after the event it describes.

(Bell, 1993, p. 71)

In addition to assessing the content of the documents, Bell also emphasizes the importance of examining the author, as this can be a vital clue in establishing whether the main features of the documents are fact or bias. Again, Bell provides a series of questions which the researcher should ask in reference to the author.

1. What is known about the author's social background, political views, aims and past experience?
2. Did the author experience or observe what is being described? If so, was he or she an expert on what was being witnessed and a trained observer of the events described?
3. Did the author habitually tell the truth or exaggerate, distort or omit (Travers 1964, 119-20)?

4. How long after the event did the author produce the document? Is it possible that memory played tricks?
(Bell, 1993, pp. 71–72)

Establishing an author's bias, can allow the researcher to draw useful inferences and gain further insights, however this has to be analysed cautiously, bearing in mind the unsound evidence. In addition to being aware of author bias, it is important too, however more difficult, that the researcher is aware of his or her own bias. All documents therefore should be rigorously analysed, even if they support the researcher's hypothesis. Moreover, the researcher should endeavour to remain as objective as possible throughout the process.

Document analysis is used by many researchers as it provides easy access to data. Documents store large amounts of information and on the whole access to them is relatively easy and inexpensive and therefore cost-effective. Furthermore, there is a permanence of data which allows others to check it and open it to public scrutiny. However, it is important to remember that researchers must gauge the credibility of the document by evaluating the source and the procedures used to produce the data. In addition, documents are usually secondary data which have been produced for a purpose other than that of research. Finally, documents, rather than providing an objective picture of reality, can give inaccurate interpretations of events as they can contain bias.

I analysed the children's IEPs to see if the targets specified for the children matched those given by the children in their responses to the structured interview. According to Cohen and Manion (1994), studies have shown (see Cannell & Kahn, 1968) that one of the problems surrounding the interview as a research technique is invalidity. They suggest that one way of overcoming this is to:

...compare the interview measure with another measure that has already been shown to be valid. This kind of comparison is known as "convergent validity." If the two measures agree, it can be assumed that

the validity of the interview is comparable with the proven validity of the other measure.

(Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 281)

Thus I used document analysis to measure the validity of the children's responses to the structured interview. My reasons for choosing a structured interview are detailed below in the following section which looks at interviews as a research technique.

Interviews

Interviews are a direct verbal interaction between the interviewer, who is seeking information and the interviewee who is supplying information. They are described as being:

a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.

(Cannell & Kahn, 1968, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 271)

In general, interviews allow great depth and insight into particular subjects and allow respondents to express emotions, experiences and feelings. However, this in turn can lead to bias and subjectivity. The interview has three main purposes. The first is to gather data pertaining to research objectives. This data may be in relation to knowledge and information, values and preferences, or attitudes and beliefs:

By providing access to what is inside a person's head, [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).

(Tuckman, 1972, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 272)

Secondly, the interview can be used as a method to test a hypothesis or to identify new ones. It can also help to recognize variables and relationships. Finally, it may be used in association with other research methods as means of preparation for a questionnaire, or a follow-up to a questionnaire which may have produced some unexpected responses, or as triangulation to validate research. Interviews can be structured, unstructured, non-directive or focused. They can be conducted with individuals or groups.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are similar, in many ways to questionnaires. This type of interview consists of closed questions which have been carefully worded and ordered in advance. The interviewer sticks rigidly to the interview schedule and the interviewee is therefore limited in their responses. This has many advantages as data is easily analysed and provides quantitative data. This type of interview is mainly connected to social surveys which collect a large volume of data using a wide range of respondents.

There are three main types of interview schedules which are connected with the structured interview. Firstly, there is the schedule containing dichotomous questions which offer the respondent two or three options in answer to a question.

Example: Do you think the level of disability effects the involvement of a child in setting his or her own targets?

Yes No Don't Know

By offering the respondent a limited choice, this type of interview allows the researcher a uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability. Moreover, responses are easily coded. However, the responses may be superficial. Furthermore, the questions may irritate the respondent as perhaps none of the options on offer reflect their opinion, thus resulting in inappropriate responses being given.

The second type of schedule is one that includes open-ended questions. Kerlinger (1970) defines open-ended items as “those that supply a frame of reference for respondents’ answers, but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression” (cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 277). These types of questions are more flexible. They allow the interviewer to probe, thus attaining greater depth and a truer assessment as unexpected responses can be explored. In addition, it allows the respondent’s knowledge to be tested. Moreover, it encourages co-operation between interviewer and interviewee, as well as developing rapport.

The third type of schedule is the scaled one which indicates degrees of agreement or disagreement with a statement.

Example: Children who are involved in their own target setting feel a greater sense of ownership of their IEP.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

This type of schedule can be used in conjunction with open-ended questions as scale scores can be checked against data elicited from open-ended questions. Different types of scale include attitude scales, rank-order scales and rating scales.

Unstructured Interviews

Unlike structured interviews, the unstructured interview is more open and less prescribed, however, it too has planned questions. These questions provide the key to the research content. The interviewer brings them up during the course of the interview at a time that he or she feels is appropriate. The content, wording and structure of the interview is more flexible and allows the interviewer to explore the personal accounts of experiences and feelings of the interviewee. Interviewees are able to express themselves in their own words and develop their own train of thoughts and elaborate on points of interest. The role of the interviewer is to be as unobtrusive as possible. Perry (1970), when interviewing male students about their experiences at Harvard, successfully used this technique using a single open-ended question, then

skilfully extended and elaborated the contents in order to gain insights into the male students' thinking. This kind of interviewing leads to a more in-depth investigation as it is a more effective way of discovering more complex issues and in gaining participant perspectives.

Non-Directive Interviews

In contrast, the non-directive interview has no set questions or framework for recording answers. The key characteristic of this type of interview is the lesser role of the interviewer, who exerts little control over the direction of the interview, thus allowing the interviewee to speak instinctively and spontaneously as he or she wishes. This type of interview derives from therapeutic fields and is mainly used to change the behaviour and increase the self-understanding of the interviewee. However, when used as a research technique there are several limitations as there is no restriction on the topics discussed and the interviewer is not actively involved in the pursuit of information.

Focused Interviews

This method of interview was developed by Merton and Kendall (1946) who attempted to follow the characteristics of the non-directive interview. This method allows the interviewer more control over the content and direction of the interview thus limiting the discussion to relevant aspects. Merton and Kendall (1946) identify four key features of this type of interview. Firstly, the interviewee is known to have experience of a particular situation, such as having seen a particular film or participated in a certain event. Secondly, the researcher has previously analysed the situation and has derived hypothesis relating to this. Thirdly, the interviewer composes an interview schedule which will guide the interview in order to gain the relevant data to test the hypothesis. Finally, the interview centres on the subjective opinions and feelings of the interviewee who has experienced the situation. The responses are then used to test the hypothesis and gather extra information about the situation which may be used to provide a restructured hypothesis. Merton and Kendall describe the advantages of this type of interview:

Fore-knowledge of the situation obviously reduces the task confronting the investigator, since the interview need not be devoted to discovering the objective nature of the situation. Equipped in advance with the content analysis, the interviewer can readily distinguish the objective facts of the case from the subjective definitions of the situation. He thus becomes alert to the entire field of "selective response." When the interviewer, through his familiarity with the objective situation, is able to recognize symbolic or functional silences, "distortions," avoidances, or blockings, he is the more prepared to explore their implications.

(Merton & Kendall, 1946, cited in Cohen & Manion, p. 290)

They further go on to establish a set of criteria which helps to differentiate between constructive and non-constructive information as it is essential that the interviewer is constantly evaluating the interview and material produced from it. The criteria are as defined in Table 13 below.

For the purposes of my research, I chose to use a structured interview schedule consisting mainly of dichotomous questions (Appendices B & C, pp. 263-264). There are several reasons for this. Firstly, by asking closed questions with standardized answers, such as yes, no and not sure, I was able to code answers to provide easy data analysis which provided quantitative data. This allowed me to conduct a quasi-experiment, a pre-test post-test non-equivalent control design group in Cycle two of my study (see pp.129-150).

Table 13: Criteria for differentiating between constructive information and non constructive information

Non-direction: interviewer guidance should be minimal.

Specificity: respondent's definitions of the situation should find full and specific expression.

Range: the interview should maximize the range of evocative stimuli and responses reported by the subject.

Depth and personal context: The interview should bring out the affective and value-laden implications of the subjects' responses, to determine whether the experience has central or peripheral significance. It should elicit the relevant personal context, the idiosyncratic associations, beliefs and ideas.

Adapted from Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 290

I also used a structured interview schedule because I felt that the children I interviewed would feel more comfortable answering questions with limited responses as many have language and communication difficulties. Sigelman, Budd, Spenhil and Schoenrock (1981a) and Sigelman, Schoenrock, Winer, Spenhil, Romas, Martin, Budd and Bensberg (1981b) studies designed to investigate the efficacy of different question formats with people who have learning difficulties, found that open-ended questions received the poorest responses. Such questions either elicited no response, or provided little data for the researcher. These writers recommend that researchers adopt a more direct style of interviewing when conducting research with people with learning difficulties. Moreover, Westcott and Jones (1997) have shown that answering questions with limited responses is less intimidating for children who find it difficult to express feelings and emotions. In addition, the children in my study are familiar with this type of questioning as many of their daily classroom assignments involve answering questions with standardized answers. Thus the children were accustomed to this type of task and I hoped it would make them feel relaxed and respond truthfully to the questions. Drawing on March's (1992) and Minkes, Robinson and Weston's (1994) studies, which used visual cues to help children with learning difficulties answer questions, I illustrated the interview schedule and the standardized responses with "smiley faces" to aid pupils' understanding, as many of the pupils respond better to visual aids. In addition, I hoped that this pictorial layout would capture their interest in the interview.

In addition to asking dichotomous questions, I also asked the pupils a few open-ended questions in order to gain greater depth and insight. In only offering the children a few open-ended questions I ensured that the pressure placed on their verbal communication skills was limited. I hoped that this would increase the reliability of their responses and ensure that their motivation did not depreciate, due to the demands placed on their communication skills.

Before using the structured interview with the children, I carried out a pilot study, the details of which are described below (pp. 139-140). However, before this is discussed, the next section considers sampling strategies.

Sampling strategies

There are two kinds of techniques associated with sampling. Firstly, there is probability sampling which is based on the notion that the researcher believes that it is probable that the events or people will provide a representative cross section of the total population. However, for many researchers, it is not feasible to have large numbers of examples in their study and indeed, they may have insufficient knowledge of the population as a whole to do this. Moreover, it can be difficult to contact a sample using this method, for example, research on the homeless would not lend itself to this type of sampling. The second type of sampling is non-probability sampling where the choice of people or events to be included in the sample are not done so by random selection. This type of sampling is more commonly used by small scale researchers. Despite the drawbacks that arise from their non-representativeness, they are far less complex to set up, less expensive and are sufficient in cases where the researcher does not wish to generalize findings beyond the sample in question.

Probability Sampling

Cohen and Manion (1994) and Descombe (1998) identify five approaches to probability sampling. The first is random sampling. This approach is based on the assumption that if the sample is sufficiently large enough and is selected genuinely at random, then it will be representative. In using this method, each member of the population has an equal chance of selection. Subjects are chosen at random from a list of the population. However, a disadvantage is that a complete list of the population is required and this is not always readily obtainable. A variant of random sampling is systematic sampling. This involves selecting subjects from a population list in a systematic rather than random fashion, such as selecting the *n*th case. Stratified sampling, the third approach, divides the population into homogeneous groups which contain subjects with similar characteristics. In order to obtain a sample which is representative of the population, a random selection from each of the homogeneous groups is made to reflect the proportions of the population as a whole. In effect this approach adds boundaries to randomness. The fourth approach, cluster sampling, involves focusing on naturally occurring clusters of the particular

phenomenon the researcher wishes to study. This approach can save researchers time and money, whilst allowing them to retain the principles of randomness and probability. The final approach to probability sampling is that of multi-stage sampling. Essentially, this refers to selecting samples from a sample. In principle, multi-sampling can go on through any number of levels, each level involving a sample drawn from the previous level.

Non-probability sampling

Cohen and Manion (1994) and Descombe (1998) identify six approaches to non-probability sampling. The first is purposive sampling which in essence involves the sample being “hand picked” by the researcher. It allows the researcher to select people or events which the researcher knows can give valuable data. In addition, this approach allows the researcher to single out people or events which are deemed to be critical and can display a wide variety or extremes. Another advantage of this approach is that it is economical. The second approach, snowball sampling, is an effective means of quickly building up a reasonable sized sample, especially in small scale research. It involves researchers in identifying a small group of individuals who have the characteristics they require. Each interviewee is then asked to nominate other people who are relevant to the focus of the research. This method also enables the researcher to use the nominator as a reference to “bona fides”, thus increasing credibility and rapport with the new interviewee. The third approach is theoretical sampling. This approach uses a selection of instances which follow a route of discovery based on theory grounded in evidence. Evidence is used to confirm the theory at each stage and points to appropriate choices of instances. Convenience sampling, the fourth approach, allows the researcher to select examples which most suit his or her convenience, that is, the example which comes “first to hand”:

Our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our enquiry.

(Stake, 1995, p. 4)

Table 14: Typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry

Type of sampling	Purpose
Maximum variation	Documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns
Homogeneous	Focuses, reduces, simplifies, and facilitates group interviewing
Critical case	Permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases
Theory based	Find examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborate on and examine it
Confirming and disconfirming cases	Elaborate on initial analysis, seek exceptions, looking for variation
Snowball or chain	Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich
Extreme or deviant case	Learn from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest
Typical case	Highlights what is normal or average
Intensity	Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely
Politically important cases	Attracts desired attention or avoids attracting undesired attention
Random purposeful	Adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large
Stratified purposeful	Illustrates subgroups and facilitates comparisons
Criterion	All cases that meet some criterion; Useful for quality assurance
Opportunistic	Follow new leads; taking advantage of the unexpected
Combination or mixed	Triangulation, flexibility; meets multiple interests and needs
Convenience	Saves time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility

Source: Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28

However, Denscombe (1998) warns that researchers need to be aware that convenience sampling provides no justification of inclusion and is not a factor by

which to select a sample. The practice of convenience sampling is hard to equate with good research if it is at the expense of representativeness. As my study was a small scale study and was not concerned with generalising findings, I chose non-probability sampling procedures (Table 14, p. 118).

The pilot study

Sample

The structured interview was piloted on six pupils between the ages of eight and thirteen (Table 15). All had agreed to take part in the study. These children were selected on the basis that they all had IEPs, attended the department of special education and were all leaving the department at the summer holidays, either to move on to secondary schooling, or to transfer to another primary school or special education department. This meant that they could not be included further in the research process.

Table 15: Description of pupils involved in the pilot study

Name	Age	Profile
Sally	11	Learning difficulties, working within Level A
Sandy	13	Learning difficulties, working within Level B
Alistair	8	Cerebral palsy, with learning difficulties, working within Level A
Andrew	12	Autistic, working within Level C/D
Gerald	12	Learning and behavioural difficulties, working within Level B
Peter	12	Autistic, working within Level B/C

Creswell (1998) refers to this as “criterion” sampling (p. 118-119) (Table 14, p. 118) and Denscombe (1998, p. 16) and Cohen & Manion (1994, p. 88) as convenience sampling. However, although hand picked, the sample included a range of pupils from different age groups and with a variety of additional support needs and abilities. This allowed for what Maykut and Morehouse (1999) describe as “maximum variation” (p. 58) (Table 14, p. 118). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), maximum variation “documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns” (p. 28).

Procedure

The pupils were withdrawn from their classrooms and interviewed individually in my room during the school day. We sat at a table. I explained the purpose of my study and asked the children if they were willing to participate. I read the questions to the children and they recorded their responses by colouring in the appropriate face on the interview schedule, choosing the coloured pencils from a box on the table provided by me. After question 2 I explained to the children what an IEP is in case the children's lack of knowledge was due to terminology. Throughout the interview I observed the children's behaviour and took notes (see Appendix D, p. 265). As a result of the pilot study changes were made to the wording of the schedule (see Appendix C, p. 264). I also decided to end the interview after question 6 if the children could not name any of their targets.

The structured interview

Sample

Sixteen pupils, aged between eight and twelve years from two classes within the department of special education, took part in the structured interview (Table 16, p. 121). All had given their consent to taking part in the research. Non-probability, purposeful sampling was used (Table 14, p. 118). The sampling strategy used was convenience sampling — selections were made to suit the convenience of the researcher (Denscombe, 1998, pp. 16-17). All of the pupils from the junior and senior classes in the DSE were selected for ease of working and because the children from the infant class did not have the cognitive or communication skills required to participate in the research process. However, after completion of Cycle one, I modified the IEP workbook for use with these children.

Procedure

The procedure used was the same as the one employed in the pilot study. However, the interview was terminated after question 6 if the participant could not name any of their targets.

Table 16: Description of pupils involved in the study

Name	Age	Profile
Brian	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A
Kate	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A
Judy	10	Learning and behavioural difficulties, working within Level A
Katrina	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A
Kevin	9	Autistic, working within Level A/B.
Annette	9	Cerebral palsy, with learning difficulties, working within Level A
Jim	9	Autistic, working within Level A.
Mary	8	Learning difficulties, working within Level A
Geri	9	Hearing Impairment, with learning difficulties, working within Level A
Terry	12	Learning and behavioural difficulties, working within Level A
Graham	8	Autistic, working within Level A/B.
Sandy	9	Autistic, working within Level A.
Colin	10	Autistic, working within Level A/B.
Gail	8	Autistic, working within Level A.
Andrew	8	Cerebral palsy, with learning difficulties, working within Level A
Jack	7	Learning difficulties, working within Level A

ANALYSING THE DATA

Documents

I read the children's IEPs and review reports. I noted points of interest using a method recommended by Faulkner, Swann, Baker, Bird & Carty (1993). This involved taking notes about what the document said in the left-hand column and recording my responses in the right-hand column. This method enabled me to distinguish between the content of the documents and my comments about them. It also helped me to critically analyse the documents and relate them to my study. As my purpose in analysing the children's IEPs was to provide information about the IEP process in the department, to supplement information obtained by interviewing the children and to increase the validity of my study through between methods triangulation (see Chapter 3, Table 12, p. 101), I decided to use an open-ended note-taking method to analyse the documents. This method provides qualitative data in contrast to the categorisation of documents which produces quantitative data (see Table 17, p. 122 for advantages and limitations of both methods).

Table 17: Advantages and limitations of the open-ended note-taking and categorisation methods

	Open-ended note taking	Categorisation
Advantages	<p>Provides a general impression of the content, style, approach, etc. of the document.</p> <p>Allows the researcher to take account of anything of interest to the study.</p> <p>Useful if the researcher does not know what specific features to look out for or does not want to use specific categories of information.</p> <p>Notes provide summary of document.</p>	<p>Allows the researcher to look out for specific features of the document that are relevant to the research questions.</p> <p>Provides numerical information about a document.</p> <p>Allows numerical comparison between different documents.</p> <p>Some category systems can be applied reliably so that two researchers will produce a similar analysis of the same document.</p>
Limitations	<p>Note-taking is selective, two researchers with the same research question may note down different things about a document.</p> <p>Note-taking subject to bias.</p>	<p>The researcher may miss anything of interest which does not form part of the category system.</p> <p>Assigning information to categories abstracts the information from its context</p>

Source Haddow, 2004, p. 170

Findings

From the data contained in the written response from the head of the department of special education (DSE), from informal conversations with the staff and from my analysis of the school documents associated with the IEP process, I was able to build up a picture of the IEP process in the department and the school.

Thirty children in the school have IEPs, twenty-four of whom are in the DSE. Mainstream IEPs tend to be written using commercial software such as I.E.P. Writer. However, in contrast, the DSE use a blank format, which has been devised for the department in conjunction with Fraser Council and Scottish Executive guidelines, upon which teachers record their own targets. The teachers in the DSE felt that commercial software could not be tailored to the specific, individual needs of the children with whom they work. Therefore, they often had to add smaller steps to the ones listed in such programmes. In addition, they felt that commercial software was

more time consuming as they did not have time to familiarize themselves with the workings of the programmes.

In the DSE both long-term and short-term targets are written for three main areas of the curriculum, Language and Communication, Mathematics and Personal/Social Development. Long-term targets for each child are set in October, with short-term targets being set each term. Targets are formulated by the class teacher and discussed with the head of the department, parents, psychologists and other professionals involved with the child at yearly review meetings. The children themselves are not involved in this process. This is in line with Banks et al.'s (2001) study which found that less than 20% of special primary schools involved children in the development of their IEPs. This is despite the Manual of Good Practice and the SEN Support Pack making clear the need to involve pupils in the formulation and implementation *wherever possible*. This "wherever possible" provides a "get out clause" for schools. It enables them to disregard the guidelines and recommendations on the grounds of the age of the child, their communication difficulties or the extent of their impairments. The danger here is that children with severe cognitive and/or communication impairments are excluded from decision-making processes and from the opportunity to influence education services. It reflects the medical model referred to in Chapter 3.

This model assumes that "experts" know what is best for these children. Moreover, it prevents professional dominance from being challenged. The child is seen as a "subject" to be studied, rather than as an individual, capable of constructing the meaning of his or her own experiences. From this perspective the views of children with cognitive impairments are considered invalid or unreliable due to brain damage. In addition, if the child has communication difficulties, this is taken to mean that the child cannot give his or her views. The problem is located within the child. Such an approach ignores the need for professionals to create contexts in which children can be involved in decision-making processes or to overcome obstacles to communication. To achieve these children's involvement in decision-making processes requires a genuine commitment to:

...a set of values and ethical principles that acknowledges the rights of all individuals to be treated with respect, to have their views heard and acknowledged, and to have their needs and wants met.

(Clare & Cox, 2003, p. 943)

Although staff in the DSE are encouraged to read over IEP reports with the children, there were no specific guidelines or strategies for encouraging pupils to take part in the IEP process. Talking informally with the teachers in the department, I found that pupil involvement in the IEP process was limited. Some teachers displayed the children's targets on charts in the classrooms and tried to involve them in review meetings. However, they have encountered problems with the latter. Some parents do not want their children to attend the meetings, sometimes professionals out with education have become alarmed when it was proposed that the children attend and sometimes the pupils themselves do not want to be involved. Nevertheless, staff were enthusiastic about exploring ways of increasing the children's involvement in the IEP process. In addition, the head of the DSE was keen to increase the children's involvement in the IEP process as she feels it will help them "be aware of what is planned for them at FNA [Future Needs Assessment] and Leaver's Reviews".

Analysis of the children's IEP documents also showed inconsistencies between the children's accounts of their targets and those specified in their IEPs. This is discussed along with the data obtained from the structured interviews.

Structured interviews

The questionnaires were scored individually as follows:- ☺ = 2 points, ☹ = 1 point, ⊖ = 0 points and note was taken of the pupil's response to questions 12, 14 and 15. The results were recorded in tabular form (Table 18, p. 125).

Table 18: Scores for structured interview

Questions	Yes	Don't Know	No
1. Have you heard of an IEP?	0/16	1/16	15/16
2. Do you know what it is?	0/16	1/16	15/16
3. Do you know that you have an IEP?	0/16	4/16	12/16
4. Have you seen it?	0/16	2/16	14/16
5. Has anyone ever talked to you about it?	0/16	1/16	15/16
6. Do you know what your targets are?	2/16	3/16	11/16
7. Did anyone ask you how you felt about these targets?	4/12	2/12	6/12
8. Did anyone ask you if you had any targets of your own that you would like to be included?	6/12	2/12	4/12
9. How do you feel about the targets that have been set for you?	10/12	2/12	0/12
10. Do you think they are good targets for you?	6/7	1/7	0/7
11. Are they helpful for your concerns/worries?	4/7	3/7	0/7
13. Do you think you will be able to achieve your targets?	4/7	2/7	1/7

Findings

The majority of the children had not heard of an IEP (15/16), did not know what it was (15/16) and were unaware that they had one (12/16) (Table 18, questions 1-3). The results also suggested that the children had not been meaningfully involved in the IEP process (Table 18, questions 3-5). However, most seemed to have some understanding of targets. Over half were able to describe some of their targets, although these did not always correspond to the targets specified in their IEPs — for example, one pupil described his target as being his “favourite teddy”. Of the children who were able to name targets, the majority specified targets relating to behaviour, such as “to behave”, “not to talk back” and “to be positive”. These are rather vague targets and are not specific, they are more likely to be phrases they have heard adults use. Targets related to academic achievement were also vague — for example, “ORT (Oxford Reading Tree) and phonics” and “yes, number” but when pressed for information this child said “colouring numbers”.

Some of the children’s responses seemed to indicate that they had been consulted and involved with target setting (Table 18, questions 7-11) but these responses (Table 18, questions 9-11) may be the result of trying to please the researcher (Tuckman, 1972).

Only one child indicated that they had a target they wished to be included, “I would like a target to be not to be cheeky.” All the children reported that they thought their targets were just about right for them and all believed that they could achieve their targets. Most identified teachers and auxiliaries as helping them to reach their targets but one named their parents as people who could help them reach their targets. This suggested that the pupils only saw their targets as being related to academic work and behaviour in the school. Pupil responses to question 14 suggested that the pupils were unaware of strategies that could help them achieve their targets.

This data suggested that the children had little or no knowledge of IEPs or the IEP process (Figure 18). Thus they appeared to be at the first rung of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation (see Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47) — no contact is made, decisions are taken without regard to those affected:

The child/young person finds him/herself in situations which have been decided by others, knowledge based on habit.

(Griffiths et al., no date, page 42)

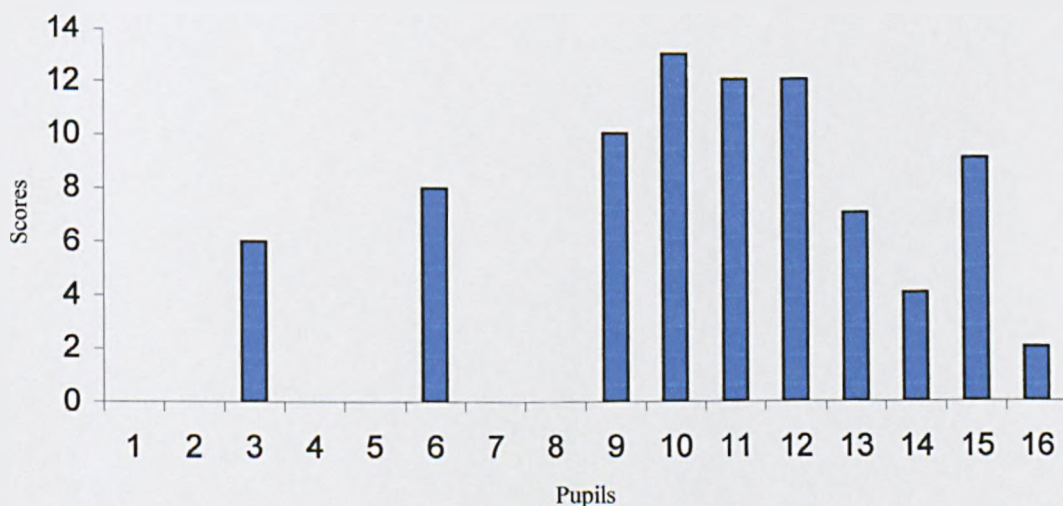


Figure 16: Children's scores

REFLECTION

Although the Manual of Good Practice and the SEN Support Pack recommends that children be involved in the formulation and implementation of IEPs, the school is using the “whenever” possible clause to exclude the children from actively taking part in the IEP process. Staff justify this by citing children’s lack of competency, workload pressures and time factors. There is also the belief that this initiative is an “airy fairy fad that will pass and practice will return to the old method.” This shows that passing legislation to affect change does not always result in changes to services. Policy implementation is influenced by the implementors, the people at ground level. Moreover, there was also a tendency for the teachers to assume they are the experts and know what is best for the children. This reflects the medical model of disability. In addition, some parents did not wish their children to be present at review meetings, again believing that they know what is best for their child and that their child lacks competency. Similarly, some professionals were also opposed to children attending review meetings, feeling that their expertise is being challenged and their professional dominance undermined. Furthermore, they seemed reluctant to let go of their power and relinquish some of it to the children.

In contrast to the adults who were reluctant to be interviewed, the structured interview pre-test worked well with the children who were enthusiastic and keen to participate. There could be a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the interviews were on an individual basis and children were able to receive my undivided attention, which is rare within the setting of a classroom. In addition, they may have found this a novel situation, an exciting change from their normal daily routine. Another factor for their enthusiasm could be due to the power relationship, which exists between children and teachers, their participation being fuelled by their desire to please me. However, one child wished to withdraw from the experiment and was able to do so because of the flexible approach I had taken towards ethical issues. This would indicate that he was able to do so because of the appropriate social setting I had created in which the children felt free to express their opinions or withdraw from the research process at any stage.

Analysis of the data from the documents, the written response from the head of the department, informal conversations with the staff and the structured interviews seemed to suggest that the children had little or no knowledge or understanding of the IEP process. Therefore the next stage of my research aimed to help the children to reach the second rung of Arnstein's ladder — information is given to those affected (see Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46). Hence the next cycle considered ways of increasing the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets. Initially I thought I would use a brainstorming or a focus group interview with the staff to explore ways of increasing the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process and evaluate it using the structured interview with the children as a post-test. However, this initial planning had to be revised to take into account the wishes of the participants. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CYCLE 2

This chapter looks at the second cycle of my research (Figure 19). It consists of three parts. The first part describes my plan of action. The second part describes the intervention used to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of their IEP targets and how it was evaluated. The final part reflects on the next cycle of research.

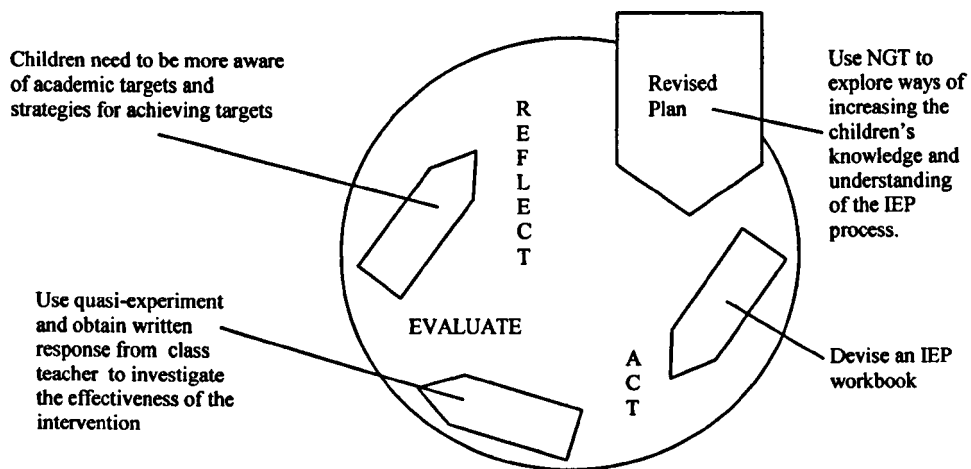


Figure 17: Cycle 2

PLANNING

The aim of this cycle of research was to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets, with the aim of helping them to reach Arnstein's (1969) second rung on the ladder of participation — information is given to those affected (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47):

The child/young person is given an explanation of what will happen and may express an opinion.

(Griffiths et al., no date, p. 42).

This equates with Treseder's (1997) degree of participation — assigned but informed (Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48) in which adults decide on the project, but children agree to take part and are fully informed of what the study involves.

My first task was to explore with the staff in the DSE ways of increasing the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets. This is in line with the action research approach which respects practitioners' knowledge and expertise and aims to involve them in the direction, design, development and use of research, thus "democratizing" the research process. According to Sommer and Wicker (1991), using "insider knowledge" of the situation and the people involved is one of the strengths of action research. Furthermore, Parlett and Pocklington (1983) argue that it is often the people on the job who know most about how the job can be done better. It is they who have the expertise and knowledge to propose innovations and reforms. Moreover, ultimately it is they who decide whether or not to adopt new innovations and practices. In addition, Vulliamy and Webb's (1991, 1992) studies found that staff, who took part in action research, gained confidence in their own abilities; participated more in educational debate; became more aware of different perspectives; began to question their own assumptions and preconceptions and became more open to new ideas.

Secondly, having decided on an intervention, I needed to devise methods to evaluate its effectiveness.

ACTION

My first task involved exploring with the DSE staff ideas for increasing the children's knowledge and understanding of their IEP targets. I considered the strengths and weaknesses of four approaches to group interviewing, namely, brainstorming, the Delphi technique, focus groups and the nominal group technique. At first I considered using brainstorming. However, with this method participants do not always remain focused on the task (Table 19, p. 132). Moreover, brainstorming does not always facilitate the flow of individual ideas (Parnes & Meadow, 1959). I rejected the Delphi technique as this method is more suited to groups in which the

participants are unable to come together physically (Moore, 1987). I then considered using a focus group interview. However, one of the dangers of using this technique is that vocal members of the group may dominate the discussion. This and other factors detailed below, made me decide to use the nominal group technique (NGT).

Nominal group technique

The nominal group technique (NGT) has been used as an evaluative tool in the areas of education, health, engineering, information and systems, management and behavioural research (MacPhail, 2001). Focusing on educational research, the NGT has been used to explore students' perspectives of assessment (Farone, Hall & Costello, 1998), to prioritise the implications for vocational teacher education (Frantz, 1997), to evaluate college students' teaching and learning experiences (Chapple & Murphy, 1996), to identify problems faced by pupils attending an inner city school (Gerdes & Benson, 1995) and to investigate pupils' decisions surrounding the selection of Higher Grade Physical Education (McPhail, 2001).

The NGT is a structured procedure for gathering information from a group of people who have insight into a particular area of interest. Zastrow and Navarre (1977) define a nominal group as "a group in which individuals work in the presence of others but do not verbally interact" (p. 113). The group is "nominal" as the views of all participants are collected separately and discussion is only allowed during the later stages of the process (O'Neil, 1981). According to Harvey (1998), the NGT gives participants a sense of ownership. It also helps to avoid the potential dominance of the interview by more vocal members of the group, as it allows the views of everyone to be considered as ideas are generated independently in response to a carefully formulated question (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Manwaring, 1998). These ideas are then shared with the other participants, discussed and finally voted on to identify the most significant items:

NGT relies on independent individual work for idea generation, then pools the individual judgements of group members, allows for a discussion stage and incorporates mathematical voting procedures.

(MacPhail, 2001, p. 162)

Therefore, according to MacPhail (2001), there is no need for respondent validation of the data as the members of the group have voted for the items generated and shifting responses are noted in the proceedings. Thus the data obtained is less open to researcher interpretations than data from focus group discussions. In addition, with the NGT, the researcher does not need to take extensive notes or tape record the proceedings, therefore he or she is less likely to be distracted by such requirements. Moreover, as the NGT requires researchers to follow predetermined stages, the procedure is unlikely to differ significantly between groups (MacPhail, 2001).

Table 19: The relative strengths of NGT, brainstorming, Delphi and focus group

Advantages	NGT	Brainstorming	Delphi	Focus
Difficult for dominant participants to control	Yes	No	Yes	Possibly
Avoids “quick decision making”	Yes	No	Yes	Possibly
Generates a high number of comments/ideas	Yes	Possibly	Yes	Possibly
Provides support to allow identification of personal problems and self disclosure	Yes	No	No	Yes
Allows measurement of importance of ideas/items to individuals	Yes	No	Yes	Possibly
Avoids pursuit of a single train of thought (“focus effect”)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Encourages minority concerns/options to be voiced	Yes	No	Yes	Possibly
Participants value social interaction i.e. group cohesiveness	Possibly	Yes	No	Yes
High degree of task completion	Yes	No	Yes	Possibly
Ease of administration	No	Yes	Yes	Possibly
Need for experienced leader	Yes	No	No	Yes

Source: Gallagher et al., 1993, p. 78

I chose the NGT as it usually generates a large number of ideas and the time required for all stages is low, compared to the focus group technique (Delbecq et al., 1975; Gallagher, Hares, Spencer, Bradshaw & Webb, 1993) (see Table 19 above).

Vulliamy and Webb's (1991, 1992) studies found that time was an important consideration in action research. Often such research was considered to be time-consuming for staff who already had heavy workloads. Thus researchers face the problem of trying to balance staff's demanding workload with systematic and rigorous research. Therefore one of my reasons for using the nominal group technique, as opposed to the focus group technique, is that it is less time consuming. A second reason for employing the NGT was concerned with organizational issues. By using the NGT, instead of a focus group discussion, I did not need to record the proceedings on tape. This meant that the procedure could be carried out in any available space, without concern for background noise on the tape. As already noted, one of the strengths of the NGT is that it makes it difficult for dominant personalities to control the group and encourages everyone to express their views (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). Both Denscombe's (1995) and Watts and Ebutt's (1987) studies illustrate the impact that one dominant person in a group can have on inhibiting responses from other members of the group, or even excluding them from participating. As the group involved in my study contained the head of department, teachers and auxiliaries, I hoped that by using this technique everyone would feel free to express their opinions. In addition, Harvey (1998) argues that the NGT is useful for identifying key issues to be evaluated in later stages of the research and I used the items generated by the group in other cycles of my study to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process (see Chapters 6 & 7). However, the nominal group technique requires researchers to be careful over the wording of the question (Delbecq et al., 1975), consider their role in the procedure (Horton, 1980) and the technique requires the active involvement of all the participants (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1972). I address these issues more fully below.

Sample

All of the staff working in the DSE took part in the nominal group technique (Table 20, p. 134). However, I also contributed to the list of items generated. In early research which employed the NGT, such as Delbecq et al.'s (1975) study, the researcher contributed to the list of ideas generated. However, there is now controversy surrounding the role of the researcher in the NGT. O'Neil (1981) and

O’Neil and Jackson (1983) maintain that the researcher should not contribute to the list items, arguing that the researcher should be a neutral receiver of group ideas. Nevertheless, as I was involved in the DSE and part of the staff team, I felt that my contribution was justified.

Table 20: Members of the nominal group

Pseudonym	Role
Mary	Head of the DSE
Clare	Class teacher
Helen	Class teacher
George	Class teacher
Joan	Nursery nurse
Lorna	Classroom assistant
Brenda	Classroom assistant
Mavis	Classroom assistant
Pamela	Classroom assistant
Sarah	Integrating teacher

Procedure

The procedure followed was an adapted version of the process described by Manwaring (1998). Each person was asked to note down their own ideas in response to the question: How can we increase the children’s knowledge and understanding of their IEP targets? Five minutes were allowed. The responses were then collected in a “round robin” way, with everyone’s first answer taken before allowing anyone else a second choice. These responses were recorded on a flip chart. A discussion followed and items were clustered. Each person was then allocated two votes to choose the two items from the list which they felt were the most important ways of increasing the children’s knowledge and understanding of their IEP targets.

Findings

The nominal group technique yielded quantitative data. The items generated by the group are shown in Table 21 (p. 135). Following discussion, it was agreed to group items 1, 4 and 7 together under the heading “Make children’s targets more visible” and items 2, 3 and 5 together. The group then voted on the remaining items as

shown in Table 22. Most of the group voted for an IEP workbook (Table 22). They felt that a workbook could explain the IEP process to the children and increase their knowledge and understanding of their targets.

Table 21: Items generated by the nominal group.

Number of item	Item
1	Display targets on classroom walls Make children's targets more visible
2	Talk to the children about their targets, explain what they are
3	Explain to children what their targets are
4	Sellotape their targets to their table
5	Tell them what their targets are
6	Celebrate target achievements
7	Put targets in their jotters
8	Relate targets to everyday work and behaviour in the classroom/school
9	Make a workbook for the children telling them about their targets
10	Help children to take an active part in deciding their targets

Strikeout text indicates items amalgamated with another item

With these results in mind, I devised a workbook for the children and drew on ideas from Goldthorpe's (1998) book "Effective IEPs through circle time" (Appendix E, p. 266).

Table 22: Items and the number of votes they received

Number of item	Item	Number of votes
1	Make children's targets more visible	2
2	Talk to the children about their targets, explain what they are	3
3	Celebrate target achievements	0
4	Relate targets to everyday work and behaviour in the classroom/school	6
5	Make a workbook for the children telling them about their targets	8
6	Help children to take an active part in deciding their targets	1

The first part of the workbook contained a short introduction to the IEP workbook. The next part helped the children to identify their strengths and concerns. The third part introduced the concept of targets and encouraged the children to devise strategies to achieve their targets with the help of the staff. The remainder of the workbook provided a record of the children's achievements.

Having devised the IEP workbook, my next step was to evaluate its effectiveness. I decided to do this by using an experimental approach — the quasi-experiment — and by interviewing the class teacher involved with the experimental group.

EVALUATION

The experimental approach

Spector (1981) describes experimental designs as occurring when “the subjects (people or social systems) and conditions (events or situations) to be studied are manipulated by the investigator” (p. 7). However, in social and educational research it is not possible or ethical to manipulate participants and conditions. Nevertheless, some social scientists have tried to retain a basic experimental stance outside the laboratory by using quasi-experiments. The quasi (“as if”) experimental approach recognizes that the researcher cannot dictate circumstances and must undertake studies with groups which are already in tact — groups constituted by means other than random selection. As my study took place in a department of special education in a mainstream school where the random selection of pupils was not possible, I used a quasi-experimental design — the non-equivalent control design group (see pp. 156-158).

The aim of experimental designs is to control and eliminate all possible variables until only the researcher's explanation remains as a possibility. Greene and Oliveira (1989) see experiments as the formulation of a hypothesis which predicts a precise relationship between variables, the manipulation of an independent variable to show its effect on a dependent variable and the elimination of alternative explanations by eliminating irrelevant variables. They argue that the experiment provides objective, quantitative data which can be statistically analysed to see whether it supports the

experimental hypothesis. Thus the experimental method increases the chance that an observed result can be attributed to the hypothesis being investigated rather than some other influence.

Denscombe (1998) concurs with this, arguing that experiments are repeatable, involve high levels of precision and may be convenient in terms of cost and time (p. 54). According to Pilliner (1973), experiments also have high internal validity as results are credible. However, Cohen and Manion (1994) identify seven “threats” to internal validity — history, maturation, statistical regression, testing, instrumentation, selection, experimental mortality (pp. 170-171) and six “threats” to external validity — failure to describe independent variables explicitly; lack of representativeness of available and target populations; the Hawthorne effect; inadequate operationalizing of dependent variables; sensitization to experimental conditions and interaction effects of extraneous factors (pp. 171-172).

Experiments have also been criticised for low population validity, low ecological validity and for trivalising the area of study in the interest of reliable and precise measurement (Sapsford, 1984). In addition, Greene and Oliveira (1989) point out that researchers involved in experimental research may sometimes ignore observational and intuitive evidence which might help to illuminate the phenomenon under study. Denscombe (1998) also emphasizes the need to consider ethical issues and deception in experimental research.

Cohen and Manion (1994) argue that good experimental research involves “maximizing both internal and external validity” (p. 172). Therefore I chose a quasi-experimental design.

The quasi-experiment

Design

The design of the quasi-experiment was a non-equivalent control design with two conditions — an experimental and control condition. Introducing the control condition allowed me to compare the two conditions, one with the independent

variable (the IEP workbook) and one without the independent variable (the control condition). By including a control condition I hoped to eliminate some of the confounding extraneous variables which can jeopardize internal validity. I also used an unrelated, between subjects design in which the comparison is between two groups of pupils whose scores are unrelated. Although the subjects were not randomly selected to the two conditions because of class restrictions; the purpose of the experiment was to act as a tool for evaluating the intervention strategy rather than to “prove” an experimental hypothesis. In addition, even if it had been possible to randomly assign pupils to the two conditions, the small numbers involved would not have been enough to enable the principle of randomization to operate as a powerful control. Moreover, the pre-test post-test method was not the only technique used to evaluate the intervention strategy (see below). I also obtained a written response from the class teacher of the experimental group about the effectiveness of the IEP workbook. In addition, the whole of stages one and two of the action research cycle was replicated in other classrooms in the DSE department, as well as in classes in the mainstream school which contained pupils with IEPs. This provided validation of the effectiveness of the intervention through triangulation.

The design used was a pre-test post-test non-equivalent group design consisting of two conditions and was devised to look at differences between scores in the two conditions (Figure 18, p. 139). The independent variable was the intervention strategy, namely the IEP workbook, based on Goldthorpe’s (1998) book “Effective IEPs through circle time” but adapted for use with the children in the department of special education (Appendix E, p. 266). The dependent variable was the children’s scores on the structured interviews. The hypothesis was a one-tailed prediction that participants in condition 1, the experimental condition, would obtain higher scores on the structured interview than the participants in condition 2, the control condition. The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant differences between the scores of the two groups, any differences being due to random variability in participants’ scores. I decided to use the children’s scores on the structured interview carried out in Cycle 1 of the study (see Chapter 4) as the pre-test scores and then use the same test afterwards, the post-test, to see if the intervention, namely, the IEP workbook, had improved the children’s scores.

Experimental

Pre-test scores

IEP workbook

Post-test scores

Control condition

Pre-test scores

No IEP workbook

Post-test scores

Figure 18: The experimental design

Sample

Convenience sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see also Chapter 4, Table 14, p. 118) was used to select children for the two conditions. Mrs Roberts' class were

Table 23: Description of pupils involved in the quasi-experiment

Name	Age	Profile	Condition
Brian	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A	Control
Kate	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A	Control
Judy	10	Learning and behavioural difficulties, working within Level A	Control
Katrina	10	Learning difficulties, working within Level A	Control
Kevin	9	Autistic, working within Level A/B.	Control
Jim	9	Autistic, working within Level A.	Control
Colin	10	Autistic, working within Level A/B.	Control
Jack	7	Learning difficulties, working within Level A	Control
Terry	12	Learning and behavioural difficulties, working within Level A	Experimental
Graham	8	Autistic, working within Level A/B.	Experimental
Sandy	9	Autistic, working within Level A.	Experimental
Gillian	8	Autistic, working within Level A.	Experimental
Archie	8	Cerebral palsy, with learning difficulties, working within Level A	Experimental
Annette	9	Cerebral palsy, with learning difficulties, working within Level A	Experimental
Mary	8	Learning difficulties, working within Level A	Experimental
Geri	9	Hearing Impairment, with learning difficulties, working within Level A	Experimental

assigned to the experimental group and were given the workbook and Mr MacGregor's class became the control group (Table 23, p. 139). This was done for organizational reasons such as pupils leaving school, new staff and so on.

Procedure

The experimental group worked through the IEP workbook with their class teacher and myself over a period of 6 months. Pages 1-4 of the workbook were completed during the fourth term, from April to June 2002 and the remaining pages, 5-9, were completed during term one of the new school year, August to October 2002. On completion of the workbook, the children completed the same interview schedule as previously (the post-test) (Appendix C, p. 264). The control group were not given the IEP workbook. Both groups were interviewed after seven months, in November, using the same interview schedule and procedure, described in Cycle 1 (see Chapter 4).

Analysing the data

The post-test was scored in the same way as the pre-test used in Cycle 1 of my study, namely, individually as follows:- 😊 = 2 points, 😊 = 1 point, ☹ = 0 points and note was taken of the pupil's response to questions 12, 14 and 15. The results were recorded in tabular form (Table 24, p. 141). I evaluated the intervention strategy (the IEP workbook) by analyzing the data from the pre and post-tests for both groups using a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney test. This test was chosen as the quasi-experiment involved a two condition unrelated design with different participants for each condition. This test ranks the scores of all the different participants in both conditions as if they were a set of scores (Table 25, p. 141). If the differences between the two conditions are due to chance differences, as stated by the null hypothesis, then there should be roughly equal scores and equal ranks in the two conditions. If there is a preponderance of low or high ranks in one condition or

Table 24: Post-test scores

Questions	Yes		Don't Know		No	
	C	E	C	E	C	E
1. Have you heard of an IEP?	3/8	8/8	2/8	0/8	3/8	0/8
2. Do you know what it is?	0/8	8/8	2/8	0/8	6/8	0/8
3. Do you know that you have an IEP?	0/8	8/8	3/8	0/8	5/8	0%
4. Have you seen it?	0/8	8/8	1/8	0/8	7/8	0/8
5. Has anyone ever talked to you about it?	0/8	8/8	1/8	0/8	7/8	0/8
6. Do you know what your targets are?	0/8	6/8	3/8	0/8	5/8	2/8
7. Did anyone ask you how you felt about these targets?	1/6	1/7	1/6	3/7	4/6	3/7
8. Did anyone ask you if you had any targets of your own that you would like to be included?	1/6	0/7	2/6	4/7	3/6	3/7
9. How do you feel about the targets that have been set for you?	5/6	6/7	1/6	1/7	0/6	0/7
10. Do you think they are good targets for you?	6/6	4/7	0/6	2/7	0/6	1/7
11. Are they helpful for your concerns/worries?	3/6	3/7	2/6	4/7	1/6	0/7
13. Do you think you will be able to achieve your targets?	3/6	5/7	2/6	2/7	1/6	0/7

C denotes the control group's results and E the experimental group's results.

the other, then the difference in the total of ranked scores for each condition is likely to be due to the predicted effects of the independent variable (the IEP workbook). If the total of ranks for one of the conditions is very small then there must be a preponderance of high ranks in the other condition. A statistic called *U* reflects the smaller total of ranks. The smaller *U* is, the more significant the differences in ranks between the two conditions.

Table 25: Mann-Whitney test results

	No Book	Overall ranks	Book	Overall ranks
	8	4.5	19	12.5
	14	9	18	11
	6	2.5	17	10
	11	8	20	14.5
	8	4.5	22	16
	6	2.5	10	6.5
	10	6.5	19	12.5
	1	1	20	14.5
		T ₁ = 38.5		T ₂ = 97.5
Means	8		18.1	

The results of the Mann-Whitney test suggested that the children who received the intervention had significantly more knowledge and understanding of their targets and the IEP process than those without the intervention ($p > 0.005$). Similarly, a comparison of the experimental and control groups pre-test and post-test scores (Figures 19 & 20) also supported this finding.

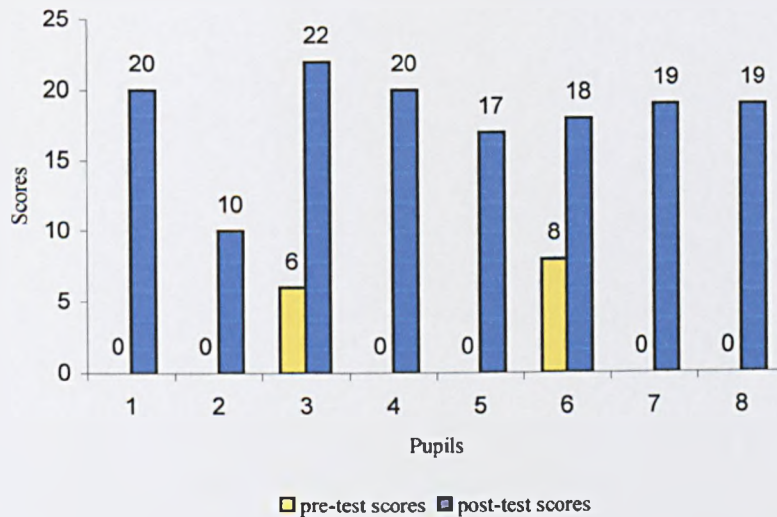


Figure 19: Pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group

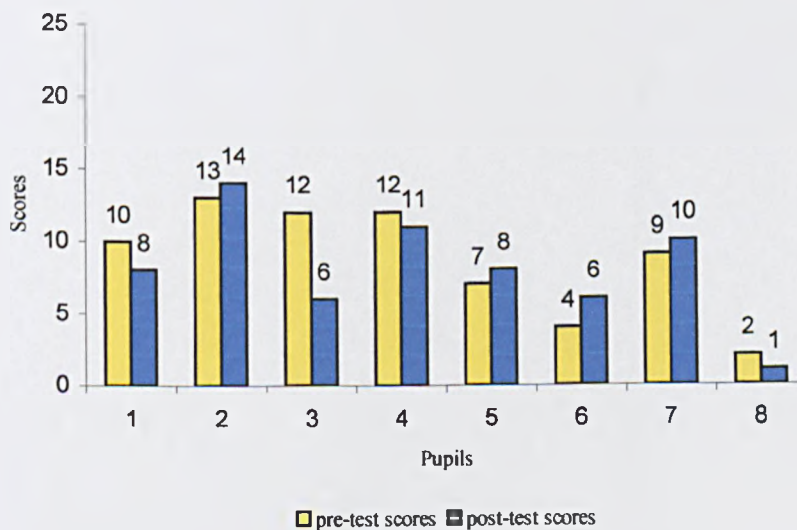


Figure 20: Pre-test and post-test scores for the control group

All of the children in the experimental group said they knew what an IEP was (Table 18, p. 125, questions 1-5), however, they all saw the workbook as their IEP rather than the official document:

That's that book about me (points to IEP workbook on pin board)

All of the children in the experimental group said they knew what their targets were. However, when asked to name their targets, one child was unable to do so and another described a target which was not contained in her IEP. Moreover, the targets identified by the pupils tended to be behavioural ones, rather than academic ones:

To be quiet – not to make silly annoying noises

Yes, to remember ma haimwork

Yes, me no fight in playground and me no suck me's thumb

Yes to get my work finished on time.

Yeah, remebah ma raio (remember my radio) [pupil with a hearing impairment]

The last response highlights the importance of researchers spending time with children with disabilities before carrying out their research. It is important that researchers get to know the children, their ways of communicating and develop relationships with them. This will enable researchers to not only choose the most appropriate research methods, but also help them to interpret the data and facilitate meaningful involvement of the children in the research process.

These findings suggested that the children find it easier to remember their behavioural targets rather than their academic ones. Although most of the children in

the experimental group felt happy with their targets (6/7), saw them as appropriate in terms of difficulty (7/7) and felt they were achievable (5/7), the results suggested that they have not been involved or consulted in the setting of their targets (Table 18, p. 125, questions 7 & 8). Only half (3/7) felt that their targets addressed their concerns and worries (Table 18, p. 125, question 11):

I think I need to work more because I'm in primary 5 you know and I want to go to the big class next year.

Furthermore, they seemed to be unsure and confused about how they could achieve their targets and who would help them (Table 18, p. 125, questions 14 & 15):

You get a prize for 10 ticks on your chart (this is for work done with the integrating teacher).

Only two pupils said that teachers and auxiliaries helped them achieve their targets and one pupil included the speech and language therapist and her Mum. Once again this suggested that the pupils only saw their targets as being related to academic work and behaviour in the school.

Thus the data obtained from this method seemed to suggest that:

1. the workbook increased the children's knowledge and understanding of IEPs and target setting
2. the children found it easier to remember those targets related to their behaviour, rather than to their academic achievements
3. the children needed to be consulted and involved more in the setting of their targets
4. the children needed to be more aware of the means by which they could achieve their targets

The intervention was also evaluated by obtaining the views of the experimental group's class teacher.

Written response from the class teacher of the experimental group

Originally I had planned to interview the teacher of the experimental group and I devised an interview guide (Appendix F, p. 275) designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the IEP workbook, suggest changes to the format and content of the workbook and consider further strategies to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. However, interviews are time consuming and I was reluctant to place additional demands on the teacher's already heavy workload. This illustrates one of the dilemmas confronting practitioners engaged in action research, namely, how to carry out systematic and rigorous research, whilst at the same time taking into account the effects of their study on the participants. Moreover, the teacher was very reluctant to be interviewed and expressed a wish to respond in writing. This highlights one of the ethical dilemmas faced by teacher researchers. Whilst I wanted to use methods best suited to the aims and objectives of my study, and which would lead to the collection of systematic data, I also had to take into account my responsibility to the participants involved in my study. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1988) point out, if research methods come into conflict with individual personalities, then the researcher has to rearrange the research design. This is supported by Kemmis and McTaggart's (1981) ethical guidelines which state that it is essential that researchers take into account the wishes of others, even if it lessens the contribution of the study to our knowledge and understanding (see Chapter 3).

All of the teachers in my study wanted to provide written responses. They were very reluctant to be interviewed. This situation is not unique to my study. Simons' (1978) and Elliott's (1993) studies found that teachers involved in action research in their own schools tended not to employ qualitative research methods as such methods had the potential to affect personal relationships. Despite my guarantees of anonymity, the teachers in my study wanted to provide written responses to save time and to allow them to carefully word their responses. This may suggest that they were aware of the effect their responses might have on personal relationships within

the school, but it may also suggest that they were concerned to present themselves in a positive light and be seen to be following national guidelines and procedures. Whatever their reasons, I had to make changes to my research design. Unfortunately, accepting a written response from the teacher of the experimental group did not allow me to follow up issues or gather in-depth information. Nevertheless, written responses are less prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Table 19, p. 132) Furthermore, the purpose of the interview was not to obtain in-depth information or explore feelings and emotions, but to collaborate data obtained in the structured interview through between methods triangulation (see Chapter 3, Table 12, p. 101). In addition, the IEP workbook was adopted by other teachers in the DSE, as well as by teachers in the mainstream school who had pupils with IEPs in their classes. As already seen in Chapter 3, Mischler (1990) maintains that the ultimate test of trustworthiness of a study is whether the findings of the study are considered so truthful that they are acted upon by other researchers and practitioners.

Table 26: Summary of relative merits of interview versus questionnaire

Consideration	Interview	Questionnaire
1. Personal need to collect data.	Requires interviewers	Requires a clerk
2. Major expense	Payment to interviewers	Postage and printing
3. Opportunities for response-keying (personalization)	Extensive	Limited
4. Opportunities for asking	Extensive	Limited
5. Opportunities for probing	Possible	Difficult
6. Relative magnitude of data reduction	Great (because of coding)	Mainly limited to rostering
7. Typically, the number of respondents who can be reached	Limited	Extensive
8. Rate of return	Good	Poor
9. Sources of error	Interviewer, instrument, coding, sample	Limited to instrument and sample
10. Overall reliability	Quite limited	Fair
11. Emphasis on writing skill	Limited	Extensive

Source: Tuckman, 1972, cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 285

Analysing the data

I had planned to analyse the data from the interview by using an adapted form of the constant comparative method (Figure 23), recommended by Maykut and Morehouse (1999) for analyzing interview data. I had also planned to use Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral (Figure 24). However, I adapted these methods to analyse the written response.

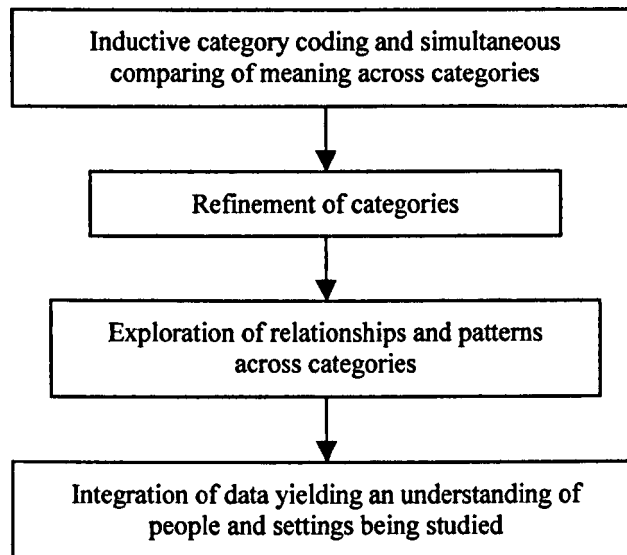


Figure 21: The constant comparative method

Source: Maykut & Morehouse, 1999, p. 135

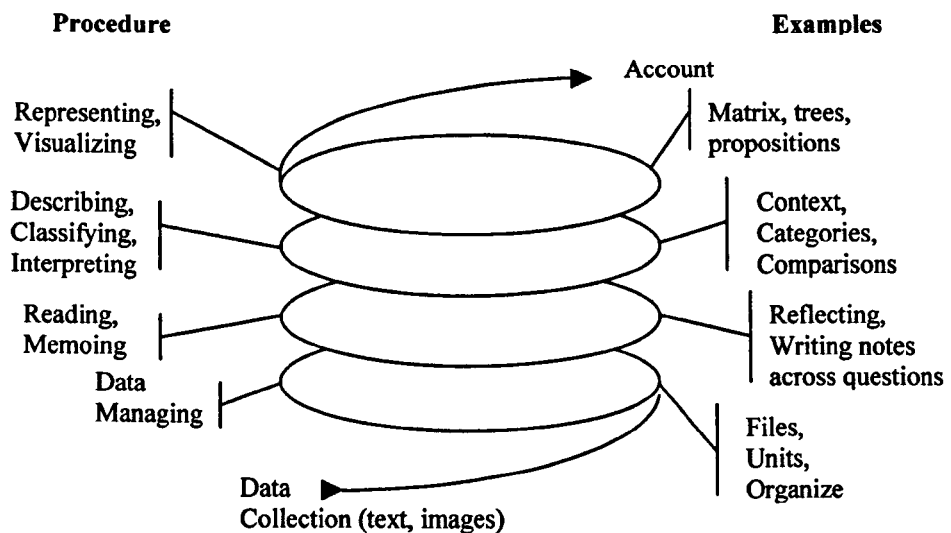


Figure 22: The data analysis spiral

Source: Creswell, 1998, p. 143

Firstly, I photocopied the written response (Figure 22, spiral 1, p. 147) and read through the document in order to obtain a sense of the overall data (Agar, 1980; Tesch, 1990), its meaning and themes (Hyncer, 1985). I also highlighted what seemed to me to be important points (Figure 22, spirals 1 & 2, p. 147). Then I related the points to other literature and data obtained from the structured interviews with the children (Figure 22, spiral 3, p. 147). Next I categorized the responses under the following headings — the effectiveness of the IEP workbook, modifications to the workbook, its contribution to the review process (Figure 21, p. 147 & Figure 22, spiral 3, p. 147). Lastly, I underlined quotations in preparation for writing up the findings section (Figure 22, spiral 4, p. 147 & Figure 21, p. 147) (see also Appendix N, p. 315).

Findings

The class teacher felt that the IEP workbooks increased the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets, especially their behavioural targets:

Behaviour targets are often successful because the child can focus on one particular behaviour at one time.

This supports the data from the quasi-experiment which suggested that the children found it easier to remember their behavioural targets rather than their academic ones.

She maintained that having knowledge and understanding of their targets helped to increase the children's motivation:

It [the IEP workbook] helps the children to share in our expectations. At one time, IEPs were a complete secret to the child. When the child knows his target, it often motivates him to reach it.

She also felt that the IEP workbook provided a focus for both children and teachers to discuss strategies which would enable the children to attain their targets:

It gives him the opportunity to discuss how they are going to reach it and discuss any particular problems arising.

However, she felt that the children's targets needed to be more visible:

I have newly started displaying targets on the wall with boxes:



I have started my target



I am nearly there



I can do it!

When the target is met, it can go in the wallet at the back of the assessment folder. Children can write their own target, if appropriate.

The latter comment suggests that this teacher believes that it is not always appropriate for children to set their own targets. Indeed in staff meetings she has expressed the opinion that teachers should set academic targets as they have the knowledge, training and expertise. This is discussed again in Chapter 6.

The comments of the class teacher were taken into account and the IEP workbook was revised. The pages recording targets were removed and replaced with target cards, which were displayed for the children in the classroom. These could then be transferred to plastic wallets at the back of the IEP workbook.

REFLECTION

Analysis of the data from both the quasi-experiment and the written response from the class teacher of the experimental group, suggest that the IEP workbook increased the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets. However, the children tended to remember their behavioural targets more than their academic ones. This concurs with Banks et al's (2001) study. Their case study of Jess (Appendix, 3, pp. 78-82), a nine year old boy attending a school special unit, found that the children in the unit were aware of their personal and social goals, but less aware of their learning

goals. This is perhaps because teachers make assumptions about the competency of children with learning difficulties. This is illustrated by one of the teacher's comments:

Children can write their own target, if appropriate.

Furthermore, they often assume that their academic studies and professional training make them the best judges of children's development and progress. This is highlighted by the structured interview in Cycle one with Graham, who stated he would like a target that included "not to be cheeky". A review of his IEP targets showed that this was not one of his behavioural targets and thus his wishes had not been acknowledged.

The results from my study also suggested that the children needed to be consulted and involved more in the setting of their targets and become more aware of strategies they could use to achieve their targets. The next cycle of my research aimed to address these issues. Originally my thoughts were to draw on the ideas generated by the NGT to help the children become more aware of their academic targets and the strategies used to achieve them. This cycle of research would be evaluated by individually interviewing the children, however time constraints surrounding both my own and the children's timetables resulted in the research design being rethought and changed to group interviews. I had planned to interview the children in mixed ability groups in order to encourage more interactive dialogue, however on consultation with the children, they informed me that they would prefer to be interviewed in social friendship groups as they "wanted to be with their friends". I interpreted this as them feeling more comfortable with expressing their views in front of their friends.

The next cycle of my research aimed to help the children reach the third rung on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation — consultation is offered.

CHAPTER 6: CYCLE 3

This chapter looks at the third cycle of my research (Figure 23). It consists of three parts. As in the previous chapters which have described the cycles of my research, the first part describes my plan of action. The next part describes the intervention and its evaluation. The final part reflects on the next cycle of research.

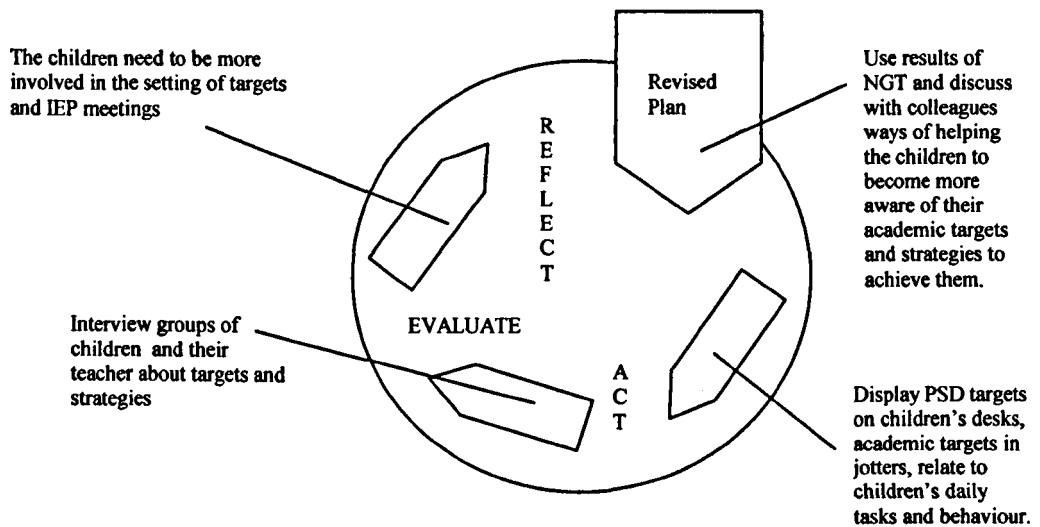


Figure 23: Cycle 3

PLANNING

Cycle 3 aimed to help the children reach Arnstein's (1969) third rung on the ladder of participation — consultation is offered (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47):

...the child/young person asked their views, may or may not contribute, depending on how asked and how supported
(Griffiths et al., no date, p. 42)

This is in line with Treseder's (1997) degree of participation — consulted and informed (Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48) which involves children being consulted and their views being taken seriously.

Thus this cycle involved looking at ways of helping the children become more aware of their academic targets and the strategies they could use to enable them to reach both their academic and behavioural targets.

ACTION

In consultation with the DSE staff, and drawing on the ideas generated by the nominal group discussion in Cycle 2 of my study (Chapter 5, Table 21, p. 135), it was agreed that staff would attach the children's personal and social development (PSD) targets to their tables, and curricular targets, e.g., in mathematics and language, would be glued into pupils' jotters at the start of their work on that particular target. It was hoped that by making the targets more visible to the children, it would aid their recall. The staff also agreed to talk to the children more about their targets and relate them to the children's daily tasks and behaviour. I decided to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures through group interviews with children from Mr MacGregor's class and Mrs White's class. I also obtained a written response from Mrs White.

Group interviews

As suggested by its name, this type of interviewing involves the use of more than one interviewee. Usually such groups consist of four to six people. A crucial characteristic of the group interview is that the interaction should not only be between the interviewer and interviewee, but amongst the members of the group:

Group interviews have several advantages over individual interviews. In particular, they help to reveal consensus views, may generate richer responses by allowing participants to challenge one another's views, may be used to verify research ideas of data gained through other methods and may enhance the reliability of...responses.

(Lewis, 1992, p. 413)

Thus it is not appropriate to pose a series of questions to individuals who take turns in answering. Instead the discussion should operate at the level of the group. Maykut & Morehouse (1999) describe the group interview as “a group conversation with a purpose” (p. 104). Usually a schedule is prepared for group interviews. However, such schedules only contain four to six questions or areas for discussion with some probes. This is because in a group interview it is important not to stifle interaction, which is vital to this type of interviewing. As Morgan (1988) states the distinguishing feature of focus groups is “the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (p. 12).

There are many advantages of interviewing people in groups (see Chapter 5, Table 19, p. 132). One advantage, particularly relevant to my study which involves children and an adult researcher, is that the presence of peers can help the participants to respond to questions in a relatively relaxed and easy way (MacPhail, 2001). In general, group interviews are seen as useful tools for generating discussions and a wide range of responses (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987). In such interviews members of the group have an opportunity to listen to each other’s contributions, which may spark new insights, or help them to develop their ideas more clearly. Thus information not thought of, or shared, in the individual interview, may emerge in the group interview. In addition, responses from group interviews tend to be richer and more detailed than those generated through individual interviews. Moreover, usually people enjoy group interviews because they are given an opportunity to express their viewpoints and sometimes they come to a new understanding of the issues through their interactions with other group members. Furthermore, group interviews can help to provide a consensus of views and may even provide deeper insights, as there may be differences of opinion amongst group members. Group interviews can also be useful in helping researchers explore a topic they know little about. From the interview they may be able to identify research questions which could then be pursued in other groups. In addition, group interviews can also be used to verify hypothesis gained through other methods of research, thus increasing the reliability of responses.

However, there are also disadvantages to this method of interview. Watts and Ebutt (1987) claim that group interviews are of little use in allowing personal matters to emerge or in circumstances where the researcher has a series of follow-up questions for specific group members. Moreover, there may be certain members of the group who tend to dominate the discussion and therefore the opinions of some of the quieter members of the group may not be heard (Kruger, 1994). In addition, if a member of the group exerts a strong opinion about a matter, others in the group may not wish to challenge that opinion or they may alter their comments in order to make them more acceptable to the group (Denscombe, 1998). Mulford, Watson and Vallee (1980) also stress that researchers must be aware that groups are more than the sum of their parts, therefore group dynamics have to be taken into account. They suggest that groups need to “form, storm, norm, perform and mourn” to be successful. For the group to “form” everyone needs to feel that they are included in the group. A period of “storming” then takes place in which the group works out the issues and personalities begin to emerge. At this stage it is important that individuals are not allowed to dominate the group and that everyone is encouraged to participate in the discussion. At the “norm” stage, people settle down and recognise that it is permissible to hold different opinions. When an atmosphere of trust is established within the group, the “performing” stage is reached and questions are addressed. Towards the end of the interview a stage of “mourning” is reached and the interview is brought to a close. Faulkner, Swann, Baker, Bird and Carty (1993) argue that an understanding of these stages is essential if focus group discussions are to be successful.

Group interviews with children

I chose to use this method with the children in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures described above — making the children’s targets more visible and relating their targets to everyday work and behaviour in the classroom. I hoped that as this method of interview resembles a conversation, it would put the children at their ease and lead to a more open and relaxed atmosphere in which more reliable evidence was produced. I also hoped that by using this type of less structured interview, the children would be encouraged to respond spontaneously to my initial broad questions and develop their train of thought. This method also allowed me to

probe and clarify issues and gain useful insider perspectives. However, I also had to take into account that the participants in the group interview were children. Therefore I had to consider ethical issues, be aware of the children's emotions and take into account the children's intellectual and communication impairments. Davis, Watson and Cunningham-Burley (2003) emphasize the importance of researchers learning how to communicate with the children in their research. They caution against "the use of short term, one visit, tickbox, assessments" (p. 219) and describe how in their study the researchers spent many hours observing the children at home, and in school, in order to learn about their lives and their means of communication. In my role as integrating teacher I facilitate the children's integration into mainstream classes, therefore I am familiar with the children's ways of communicating. Moreover, I have observed the children in a variety of situations, in their DSE class, in their integration classes and in some cases, their local catchment area primary school.

I chose to interview the children in friendship groups to give the children support and to help stimulate conversation. I was also concerned about the imbalance of the power relationship between myself and the children and felt that this would be lessened by a group interview. Moreover, Beresford (1997) found that when children are interviewed individually, many experience embarrassment, guilt, conflict and fear of failure. They may also feel that their self-esteem is threatened and their privacy invaded. Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that it is the researcher's duty to ensure that children do not suffer harm when participating in research and Levin (1994) maintains that researchers have an ethical responsibility to consider the emotions of children. Beresford (1997) also recommends that interviews involving children should be conducted within the context of an everyday activity in the children's classroom. Therefore my group interview with the children followed the format of a circle time.

However, Booth and Booth (1996) have identified that one of the disadvantages of interviewing children as a group is that inarticulate children tend to opt out of the general discussion and only respond if directly questioned. Even then their responses

tend to concur with other children's views. Examples of this were found in all three group interviews in my study. For example, Lorna, in interview one (see Extracts 1-3, pp. 156-157), responded on six occasions but only when directly questioned and half of these responses were in agreement with other children's responses.

Extract 1

Interviewer: How do you record your targets? Do you write them down?

Fran: We write them down on our timetable, we've got a space for them there.

Peter: We've got a timetable. It's got pupil target, pupil comment and teacher's comment. Well like you put the target at pupil target and then you put how much you've improved wi' that target then the teacher comes and tells you how she thinks you've improved and we keep them in a plastic wallet.

Interviewer: What were you going to say Lorna?

Lorna: The same as Fran.

Extract 2

Interviewer: How do you use your targets? How do they help you to learn? Do you look at them at the start of lessons or is there a thing you do with them...

Susan: Well we'll like look at them at the start of the day and say well I'm gonne try and do this today and then I'm gonne like the next day I'm gonne try and do that. That's how I take it.

Interviewer: So you look at them at the start of every day. (Susan nods in agreement). What about you Lorna, what do you do?

Lorna: Kinda the same as Susan.

Extract 3

Interviewer: Do you decide yourself or do you ...

Judy: I decide myself then the teacher will come round and she'll sit down and like ask you how you've done and I just sometimes do it on my own and sometimes with other people.

Interviewer: What about you Lorna?

Lorna: I'm just about the same as Judy.

These responses could be interpreted as Lorna acquiescing with other members of the group. However, my knowledge of the way in which targets are used and evaluated in the class concurs with her agreements.

In the second interview, Jim, who is normally reluctant to speak, also only responded when directly spoken to. During the group interview he sat calmly and appeared alert, looking at whoever was speaking at the time, suggesting that he understood the content of the discussions. His only response was appropriate and consisted of a complete short sentence.

Extract 4

Interviewer: So Archie you showed yours. What about you Jim?

Jim: I showed ma mum.

However, when directly questioned he became agitated, flapping his hands, avoiding eye-contact and shrinking back in his seat. From my experience of teaching Jim in the past, I knew that this type of behaviour indicated that he was feeling pressurised. In line with Davis (1998), who recommends that researchers, in the course of interviewing children, need to continuously question their methods and re-negotiate with their participants, I withdrew from further direct questioning of Jim, as I did not wish to cause him stress and emotional upset.

Sandy, like Jim, also was unresponsive during the interview, only contributing five times. However, unlike Jim, he appeared to have little interest in the discussion and poor understanding of the content as highlighted by his inappropriate responses.

Extract 5

Interviewer: All the teachers that work with you?

Graham: I think if you integrate into classes the wans the teachers that see what work you're doing they get to see them.

Sandy: Uhh hooo

Geri: Mrs Whitelaw

Graham: The mainstream teachers

Sandy: Forgot.

Extract 6

Interviewer: Did anyone show them [the IEP workbooks] to their mums
or dads?

Sandy: Oh naughty Thomas.

The above extracts mirror Sandy's responses in everyday classroom work and activities. When the activity is concrete, structured and organised, Sandy is focused and able to complete tasks e.g. a page of sums. However, when an activity is more orally based and requires Sandy to express his opinions, feelings and thoughts, he switches off and recites the narrative from familiar videos. In the above extracts (Extracts 5 & 6, p. 158) he appears to be repeating the narrative of a Thomas the Tank Engine video.

Like Danny Avebury, in research carried out by Booth and Booth (1996), a pupil in the third interview group, Kevin, tended to have trouble answering open-ended questions. Following Booth and Booth's findings, I rephrased the questions and broke them down into simple parts which required a yes/no response or a simple one word answer.

Extract 7

Interviewer: Do you talk about them [targets] with maybe any other members of staff at school?

Peter: Mrs Hughes and Mr Paterson we take them down and show them it.

Interviewer: Do you do that as well Jamie?

Jamie: Aye

Interviewer: What about you Kevin?

Kevin: Mmm

Interviewer: Do you ever show Mrs Hughes or Mr Paterson your targets?

Kevin: No. No.

The above extracts highlight the particular problems researchers encounter when interviewing children with learning difficulties, namely, inarticulateness (Extract 7), unresponsiveness (Extracts 1-4, pp. 156-157) and a concrete frame of reference (Extracts 5 & 6, p. 158). To this list Booth and Booth (1996) add difficulties with the concept of time. However, this difficulty did not apply to my study as the questions referred to present, on-going events. In their study Booth and Booth suggest practical ways of how the researcher can overcome these difficulties. They describe inarticulateness as “the inability to communicate fluently in words” (p. 56). They maintain that although this inarticulateness is the result of restricted language skills, it is also:

...generally overlaid by other factors including a lack of self-esteem, learned habits of compliance, social isolation or loneliness, and the experience of oppression.

(Booth & Booth, 1996, p. 56)

The above quote suggests that the inarticulateness of children with learning difficulties is not solely due to intellectual impairment but is also the result of social factors. According to Davis et al. (2003), this way of looking at children with disabilities, based on the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990), has highlighted the social factors of disability. This has enabled researchers “to move beyond notions of disabled children as medically defined unchanging individuals” (p. 206). In my study I tried to overcome inarticulateness by establishing a level of communication with the children, based on my knowledge of their ways of communicating, in order to facilitate rapport and the expression of opinions. For example, the group interview followed the format of circle time in which pupils are encouraged to express opinions and share views. I also tried to be aware of any discomfort shown by the children and endeavoured either to find some less threatening way of approaching the topic or withdrew from that particular topic (see Extract 4, p. 157, involving Jim).

Booth and Booth (1996) describe unresponsiveness as “a limited ability to answer some types of question” (p. 56). When interviewing the children I began with open-ended questions. However, I found that in the course of interviewing the children, some of them were unable to cope with open-ended questions and a more direct form of questioning was required (see Extract 7, p. 159, involving Kevin). This concurs with research carried out by Sigelman et al. (1981a) and Biklen and Moseley (1988) which suggests that people with learning difficulties find it difficult to respond to open-ended questions and those who do respond, provide little information. Nevertheless, Booth and Booth (1996) maintain that it is important that researchers begin interviews without any fixed assumptions about their informants’ ability to understand what is being asked of them. It is essential that their abilities are tested. Tremblay (1957) advocates that researchers adopt a “self-developing” technique. This involves researchers refining their interview methods during the course of the interview in line with the abilities of the informants as they are revealed during the interview process. In my study I adopted this technique. I began with open-ended questions but found that with some children I had to rephrase questions, or provide a menu of suggestions (Extract 8).

Extract 8

Interviewer: Have you shown your book [IEP workbook] to anyone?
Maybe at home or at school? Have you shared them with other
teachers?

Kevin: Nope

Jamie: No just a couple of friends and that.

Another problem facing researchers when interviewing people with learning difficulties, identified by Booth and Booth (1996), concerns their difficulty in generalising from experience and thinking in abstract terms. This is illustrated in Extracts 6 and 7 (pp. 158-159) above involving Sandy. However, Booth and Booth argue that these children’s voices must not be ignored and that:

The emphasis of research should be on overcoming the barriers that impede the involvement of inarticulate subjects instead of highlighting the difficulties they present.

(Booth & Booth, 1996, p. 67)

The findings of my study suggest that group interviewing with Sandy is not an effective method of obtaining information from him. I found that using the structured interview in Cycles 1 and 2 was a more appropriate method for him, although this method also had its limitations (see Chapters 4 & 5). With Sandy, probably an individual interview using concrete material might have been more successful. For example, to help him to complete his IEP workbook I used pictures and photographs to enable him to identify people who helped him and illustrated his targets. This could be transferred into an individual interview situation with him.

Once I had decided that a group interviewing technique was the most appropriate one for this cycle of my study, I then considered the role I should take on as researcher (see Chapter 3). I reflect on this and the methods employed in my study in the next section.

The role of the researcher

As previously stated, I felt that I could not adopt a non-authoritarian or “least adult” role because I was already viewed by the children as a figure of authority — a teacher at the school. However, by asking the children for their consent in carrying out the research and assuring confidentiality at all times, I hoped to minimise the social distance between myself and the children. I also tried to establish a rapport with the children because as Davis (1998) points out children will decide for themselves whether or not they wish to participate in the research process by remaining silent or “shutting the gates to their world” (p. 330). Extracts 5 and 6 (p. 158) illustrate the latter. Sandy retreats into the non-threatening world of Thomas the Tank Engine and shuts himself off from the group discussion. Davis (1998) also maintains that children themselves identify issues which are sensitive to them during the research process and this is illustrated in Extract 4 (p. 157) when Jim

demonstrates his anxiety through flapping hand movements, shrinking back into his seat and loss of eye contact.

I also recognised that researchers have to adopt a variety of research roles and that these may vary throughout the research. For example, my role in Cycles 1 and 2 of the research process was more in line with the friend/helper role than the more authoritarian role of teacher. As already seen above, just as there is no universally successful children's researcher role, there is also no one research tool best suited to accessing children's opinions.

In carrying out group interviews with the children I have been influenced by the work of researchers described in Christensen and James' book "Research with Children". This book makes the assumption that carrying out research with children does not necessarily involve adopting different or particular methods:

...like adults, children can and do participate in structured and unstructured interviews; they fill in questionnaires; and, on their own terms, they allow the participant observer to join with them in their daily lives. Thus, although some research techniques might sometimes be thought to be more appropriate with children, with regard to particular research context or the framing of particular research questions, there is, we would argue, nothing particular or indeed peculiar to children that makes the use of any technique imperative.

(Christensen & James, 2003, p. 2)

Nevertheless, the authors stress the importance of selecting methods which are appropriate for the people involved in the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and the social and cultural context of the study. The methods I employed reflect my belief that children should be viewed as social actors, as the subjects of research, rather than the objects. In addition, I also believe that researchers need to be aware of the inherent power relations between researcher and researched in childhood studies and this needs to be taken into account. As Christensen and James state:

Only through listening and hearing what children say and paying attention to the ways in which they communicate with us will progress be made towards conducting research with, rather than simply on, children.

(Christensen & James, 2003, p. 7)

In the following three sections I describe the sample and procedure for the group interviews and the methods used to analyse the data.

Sample

In total 14 children between the ages of 10 and 12 were interviewed. 8 children were from Mrs White's class, a mainstream class and 6 children from the DSE. The

Table 27: Group members

Group	Name	Age	Profile
1	Fran	11	Mainstream pupil working within Level D
1	Susan	11	Mainstream pupil working within Level B/C
1	Peter	11	Mainstream pupil working within Level D
1	Judy	11	Mainstream pupil working within Level E
1	Lorna	11	Mainstream pupil working within Level E
2	Jim	11	Autistic DSE pupil working within Level A.
2	Graham	10	Autistic DSE pupil working within Level C/D in the process of transferring into mainstream.
2	Mary	10	DSE pupil with learning difficulties working within Level A
2	Andrew	10	DSE pupil with cerebral palsy and learning difficulties working within Level A
2	Sandy	12	Autistic DSE pupil working within Level A
2	Geri	11	DSE pupil with hearing impairment and learning difficulties working within Level A
3	Jamie	11	Mainstream pupil working within level C/D
3	Kevin	11	Previously a DSE pupil, now fully integrated into mainstream working within Level C/D
3	Cathy	11	Mainstream pupil working within level C/D

children from the DSE integrate with Mrs White's class for curricular subjects such as mathematics, reading and expressive arts. Mrs White was willing to try out the strategies suggested by the nominal group, not just with the DSE children but with the whole class. This enabled me to include mainstream children in the study. I hoped that the latter's inclusion would provide more in-depth data. The children were interviewed in two groups of five and one group of three (Table 27, p. 164). The children were allocated to the groups using a criterion of friendship in order to put the children at their ease (see Chapter 4, Table 14, p. 118).

Procedure

An interview schedule was drawn up (Appendix H, p. 278) and the children were interviewed in my room. I explained the purpose of my study to the children and asked them if they would be willing to participate. The interview was taped and non-verbal behaviour was noted.

Analysing the data

The data was analysed using Maykut and Morehouse's (1999) constant comparative method and Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral (see Chapter 5, Figures 21 & 22, p. 147).

Findings

The responses from the members of the group discussions suggested that the children talked about their IEP workbooks and targets with school staff — class teachers and support staff e.g. auxiliaries and classroom assistants.

Extract 9

Interviewer: Em do you share them [targets] with anybody else in the school? Mrs Wilkinson or any other people who come into help?

Fran: I sometimes do.

Lorna: I share them with Mrs Dudgeon [auxiliary].

Judy: So do I

Susan: I remember in ma maths group Miss Haddow [integrating teacher] used to do it. She used to say our targets everyday to us and so does Mrs Malcolm [classroom assistant].

Group 2 reported that they had shown their parents their IEP workbook at their IEP review meetings and commented that this was the only opportunity they had to show their IEP workbooks to their parents as they were unable to take their books home. The children suggested that extra copies should be provided so that they could take them home to show their parents. Indeed, some teachers did photocopy the IEP booklets so that the parents had a copy too.

Extract 10

Mary: Well we showed them to Mr MacGregor [class teacher] but we weren't allowed to take them out.

Interviewer: You're not allowed to take them home, right?

Graham: But we can get them copied if we wanted to take them home and show our mums.

However, the children did say that they shared their weekly targets with their parents and kept them informed of their progress.

Extract 11

Judy: I usually talk to my Mum at home about it and like tell her if I've succeeded it or not.

Interviewer: So your mum's interested in it?

Judy: Uh hu.

Interviewer: Does anyone else talk to their mum or dad at home?

Susan: I talk to my mum and dad too at home and my mum says how did you get on with your target and I say well I got half way to it and I nearly got it the next day.

Peter: Well I like tell her what I've been learning and everything and how you like learn it by targets and everything.

Two children said they discussed targets with their friends in the playground or out of school hours.

Extract 12

Lorna: I usually just share them in the playground with my friends and sometimes with Judy.

All of the children agreed that targets helped them to learn. Different reasons were given to support this claim. The majority of pupils found that knowing their targets made them more focused and gave them a goal to strive for.

Extract 13

Judy: It makes you want to focus on one thing than thinking about other things and you're like I have to manage this so you just try more.

Interviewer: So it helps you focus on one thing at a time?

Fran: It makes you feel better thinking you've got a target to reach than just not having a target, that just makes you muck about.

In addition, they felt that targets gave them specific areas to concentrate on and guided them in their learning. They felt that targets were personal goals that as individuals they could achieve.

Extract 14

Mary: On your own sometimes 'cos they cannae get the same targets as you

They felt that learning was more relevant and they could understand why they were being asked to complete certain tasks.

Extract 15

Fran: You know what the weeks going to be all about, what you're trying to do every single day.

Peter: You know what you're learning and you dinnae need to focus on everything just that one main target.

Fran: Or if you look back at them you ken you've done that thing. You know what the weeks going to be all about, what you're trying to do every single day.

Others found that achieving targets gave them more confidence and that by recording targets visually they could see what and how much they has learned. For some children this experience of success boosted their self esteem and made them feel good about themselves, enabling them to tackle more challenges. One pupil commented that she had achieved things that she did not think she could do.

Extract 16

Judy: ...Em usually I write about maths I'm not really confident in it. It helps my confidence as well cos I've managed to do stuff I didn't think I could.

Extracts 13-16 (pp.167-168) concur with Banks et al's (2001) study. In their case study of Ralph (Appendix 3, pp. 98-104) who attended a mainstream primary school, the children set their own targets. Both the pupils and their parents were reported as viewing target setting in this way as "a great success" (p. 99).

There were some instances though when children felt that targets were not helpful. If targets were too easy, or based on something they could already do, the children felt that in these instances targets were "useless". Similarly, they felt that targets which were unachievable or too ambitious were also unhelpful. However, most of the time the children believed their targets to be achievable.

Target setting was viewed as a joint decision-making process and teacher and pupils were viewed as a team.

Extract 17

Cathy: It's the teacher and you. But when you've got the wee sheet... we've got one where you could write if you've achieved and so has the teacher

One child felt that target setting and evaluation was a teacher led exercise.

Extract 18

Jamie: But basically it's the teacher.

This raises the question of how much say should the pupils have in determining their targets. The teachers in my study felt that they should have the most say in deciding the children's academic targets as they were the "professionals". Moreover, teachers are required to state their aims and objectives in curricula areas for forward planning documents and follow the 5-14 guidelines. Therefore targets cannot be solely decided by the children.

The way in which targets were recorded varied. Class teachers had different ways of recording targets (see Chapter 5), and even within one class, methods varied according to the ability of the child. In all cases the targets were displayed where the children could see them easily. For example, mathematical targets were written at the top of mathematics work, in jotters.

Extract 19

At the top of a jotter in a coloured pencil.

Behavioural targets were taped to desks. Some of the children recorded their own targets, whereas others had their targets recorded for them by their teacher. All of the children said that they looked at their new targets on a Monday with their teacher. For behavioural targets, the children looked at them at the start of each day to remind themselves what they were trying to achieve. Curricular targets were discussed at the start of each lesson. Some pupils referred to their targets throughout the lesson, whilst others did not. Behaviour targets were evaluated at playtime, lunch time and home time and curricular targets at the end of each lesson.

The ways in which targets were evaluated depended on the ability of the pupils and the preference of the teacher. Some pupils evaluated their targets using a smiley, straight or sad face system which was converted into points at the end of the week.

Extract 20

Graham: Well if you get a smiley face you get two points, if you get a sad face it's one point then if you get a really, really grumpy face you get no points.

Some of the children said that they found the totalling up of points on a Friday difficult and this was a part of target evaluation that they disliked. The children discussed their progress with the class teacher, either individually, or in small groups. Following the discussion both the teacher and the pupil recorded a comment about their ability to meet their target.

Extract 21

Cathy: It's the teacher and you but when you've got the wee sheet we've got one where you could write if you've achieved and so has the teacher.

In addition, some children referred to evidence of written work in order to assess their achievements.

Extract 22

Peter: You would keep evidence, like in your jotter about how well you've done and you would look at your jotter and like look at it and like if it was all like good and everything you would like get 10 out of 10 or something and that's how we'd keep it.

Some pupils in mathematics completed a weekly assessment and used their score to assess whether they have achieved their targets. Some of the children received a reward for achieving targets, however, most felt that the feeling of success was reward enough in itself.

Extract 23

Judy: Just knowing that you've done something you wanted to do.

Peter: It's just the good feeling you get cos you feel really positive. Well you can be feeling kinda negative and everything but when you like pass it you feel really happy and like joy and everything.

To summarise, analysis of the interview data suggested that:

- The children shared their IEP books and targets with school staff, their parents and fellow pupils.

- All of the children felt that targets helped them to learn for a number of reasons — it made their learning more relevant, focused and goal orientated. However, targets had to be attainable and achievable.
- Targets increased the children's confidence and self esteem.
- Target setting was viewed as a joint decision-making process.
- Targets were looked at throughout the day and academic targets were evaluated on a weekly basis, however PSD targets were continually evaluated throughout the day.
- Progress towards attaining targets were discussed with the class teacher either individually or in small groups and the outcomes recorded jointly.

This data seems to suggest that the children are now more aware of their targets, both their academic targets and their behavioural targets and that they are now more fully involved in the setting, monitoring and evaluation of these targets. They seemed to have reached the third rung of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation — consultation and have made some progress towards the fourth rung — advises:

...consulted — child/young person asked their views, may or may not contribute, depending on how asked and how supported.

...advises — child/young person's view is important to the decision, which is taken by others, but care taken to elicit and incorporate child/young person's views.

(Griffiths et al., no date, p. 42).

However, the group interviews were also validated using between methods triangulation — by interviewing the class teacher, Mrs White.

Written response from a class teacher of a mainstream class

As with the other cycles of my research, I had planned to interview Mrs White. However, for reasons referred to in Chapter 5, she too, like the other teachers, provided a written response (Appendix K, p. 291). However, as once again the purpose of the written response was to validate the data from the three group interviews, perhaps an in-depth interview was not necessary.

Analysing the data

The data was analysed using the technique described in Chapter 5 for the written response.

Findings

The teacher admitted that the 5-14 curriculum dictates the children's targets. However, she said that the targets are modified to match the children's needs. Moreover, the children:

...are shown the school programme of work so they can see the "big picture". Targets are also sent home, so there is parental involvement.

The children are more involved in the daily setting of targets:

At the start of each lesson the class or group target is clearly stated. I draw their attention to their targets on the wall and explain how the lesson "fits in".

Academic targets are displayed on the classroom walls and each child has his/hers own personal copy of their own targets. PSD targets are sellotaped to the child's desk:

The children had it facing them every day and wrote a self evaluation comment every week.

The teacher also commented on, and discussed with the pupils, their achievements. Success was celebrated through positive oral or written feedback from the teacher, peer congratulations, notes to parents informing them of their child's success and certificates of work. She felt that:

Children had more ownership in setting PSD targets. Often the less able children found it difficult to think of a target and needed a lot of direction. With subjects like maths the targets were easier as the children saw the programme of work and knew what was coming.

Banks et al.'s (2001) report was unable to find studies which demonstrated a link between IEPs and the raising of attainment. They argue that for this to be shown conclusively, carefully controlled studies consisting of experimental and control groups would have to be conducted. The teacher in my study expresses similar views. She too is uncertain of the link between target setting and attainment.

The children certainly enjoyed target setting, they do feel ownership and were able to say why they were learning something, what level they were on, what learning style they preferred. As to whether it raised attainment... PASS!

This, along with the data from the group discussions with the children (see Extracts 13-16, pp. 167-170), supports Cornwall and Robertson's (1999) arguments for involving pupils in the IEP process. They argue that by involving pupils in the learning process, learning becomes more accessible and meaningful. Furthermore, it also increases pupils' understanding and motivation, as well as encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning.

The data from the group interviews and the written response from the class teacher seem to suggest that the children have increased their knowledge and understanding of both their academic and behavioural targets; that they are much more involved in the setting, monitoring and evaluation of their targets and are aware of strategies to

help them achieve their targets. However, the setting of targets is ultimately the teacher's responsibility and teachers' target setting has to be in line with the 5-14 guidelines. Thus although the children's views may be seen as important and may be incorporated into the decision-making process, the final decisions are made by others. Therefore the children cannot reach the higher rungs of Arnstein's ladder of participation (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47) — delegated authority and control. The children now appear to be at the third rung, "consultation" — the children are asked their views but decision-makers may or may not act upon them. Nevertheless, the children now have more control over the IEP process than at the beginning of the study. They are no longer passive recipients. They are now involved in the decision-making process and the adults are beginning to gradually relinquish their control to the children, although they still provide them with advice and support.

REFLECTION

This cycle of research shows the importance of involving and consulting the participants in the research process – giving them ownership. Without the staff's goodwill it would not have been possible to implement the measures generated by the NGT to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. By adopting a participatory research paradigm, I was able to work in partnership with the participants and include them in the research process in a relevant and meaningful way.

This cycle of research also demonstrates a change in attitudes of the teachers who took part in my research. As shown in Cycles one and two they were sceptical about the benefits of children being involved in their IEP processes and questioned their competency. However, the measures introduced in Cycle two, the IEP workbook and those adopted in Cycle three to increase the children's participation in the IEP process seem to have altered their assumptions about the children's competency and the benefits to learning and teaching both from the children's perspective and that of the teachers. This is demonstrated by the way in which the teachers continued to

target set with children and display targets more visually in the classroom after the study had been completed.

The above findings also seem to indicate that perhaps Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation may not be the most appropriate for my study. It is a hierarchical model and as Treseder (1997) argues the higher rungs are often inappropriate in particular contexts. He contends that the rungs of participation should be seen as different, but equal, forms of good practice, rather than as a progressive hierarchy. He argues that people who wish to involve children in decision-making processes should choose the degree of participation which will have the most benefit in their particular context. Therefore I decided that in this particular context I could only aim to help the children reach rungs four and five of Arnstein's ladder of participation — advises and deciding together. At rung four, children's views are recognized as important and processes are put in place to enable the children to express their views, which may be acted upon. At rung five, children are given information so that they will have a full understanding of the process. In addition, the children are educated and supported to express their views and they contribute to management decision-making (Griffiths et al., no date). Therefore the next cycle of my research looked at ways of involving the children in their IEP review meetings.

CHAPTER 7: CYCLE 4

This chapter looks at the fourth and final cycle of my research (Figure 24). It consists of four parts. The first part describes my plan of action. The next part describes the procedures used to increase the children's involvement and participation in their IEP review meetings. The third part evaluates the action taken and the final part reflects on the cycle.

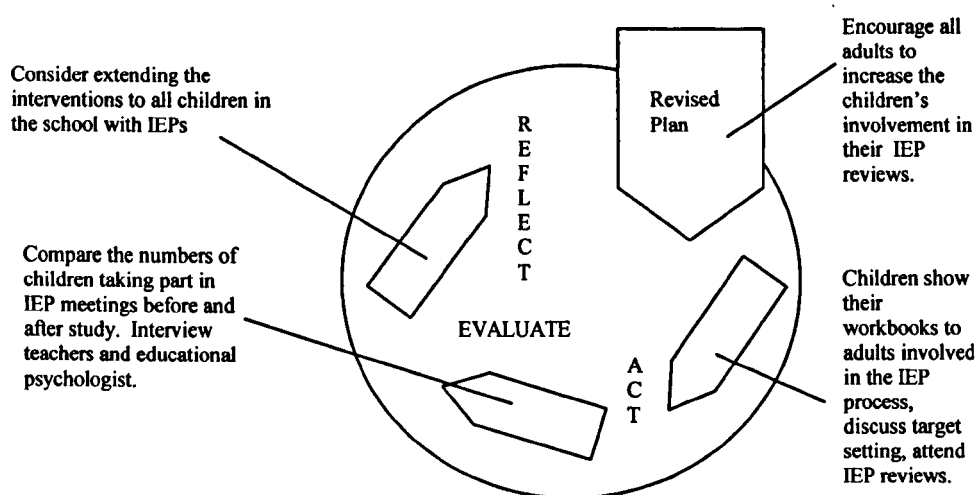


Figure 24: Cycle 4

PLANNING

The aim of this cycle of research was to increase the children's involvement and participation in their IEP review meetings. This would help them to reach Arnstein's (1969) fourth and fifth rungs on the ladder of participation — advises and deciding together in which young people's views are requested and proposals may be modified in light of these views (Chapter 2, Table 7, p. 46 & Figure 4, p. 47):

...the child/young person's view is important to the decision, which is taken by others, but care is taken to elicit and incorporate child/young person's views.

...care is taken to explain options and outcomes to young person, who is made aware s/he is sharing responsibility and supported in doing so.

(Griffiths et al., no date, p. 42)

This is in line with Treseder's (1997) degree of participation — adult initiated, shared decisions with children (Chapter 2, Figure 5, p. 48) which involves not only taking into consideration children's views, but involving them in every part of the planning and implementation.

My first task was to help the children to become more involved in their IEP review meetings. As already discussed in Chapter 4, the written response from the head of the DSE revealed that the children were not involved in their IEP review meetings. Furthermore, although the staff were encouraged to read over IEP reports with the children, there were no specific guidelines or strategies for encouraging pupils to take part in their IEP review meetings. Nevertheless, the head of the department felt that the children should be involved in these meetings as their involvement would prepare them for Future Needs Assessment meetings and Leavers' Reviews. This is similar to one of the arguments put forward by Griffiths et al. (no date) and Treseder (1997) for involving young people in decision-making processes. They agree that children who have been encouraged to take part in decision-making processes will acquire skills of debate, communication and negotiation and as a result be more prepared to participate in decision-making when they move into wider society.

ACTION

The children were asked if they would like to attend their IEP review meetings and show their IEP workbooks to the adults present. If they agreed, their class teacher discussed the contents of their IEP workbook with them prior to the IEP review meeting. At the meeting, with the help and support of their class teacher, the children showed their IEP workbooks to those adults present and talked about their targets, how they were achieved and suggested future targets. The children then left the meeting and the professionals and the parents/guardians continued the meeting.

EVALUATION

I had hoped to evaluate the effectiveness of this procedure by interviewing the child's class teacher, his or her educational psychologist and the head of the DSE. However, once again the staff expressed a wish to provide written responses to the interview schedule (see Appendix L, p. 309). In addition, as the educational psychologist was leaving her post and going on maternity leave, she too provided a written response.

The parents/guardians of the children were not asked for written responses, as many of them have difficulties with reading and writing, as well as personal and health problems. I did consider trying to interview some of the parents/guardians at the school or in their own homes. However, the school has problems involving the parents/guardians in discussions and meetings and there were safety issues surrounding the interviewing of the parents/guardians at their homes.

I also evaluated this cycle of my research by comparing the number of children who had attended their IEP review meetings before and after my study.

Written responses

Participants

The educational psychologist felt that she did not have a direct role in the IEP process in the school. She saw her role as more of a consultative one:

Mrs Luke: I don't have a direct role in the IEP process in Bennochy DSE. However, I can be involved at a consultative level if school staff feel it useful to help with setting targets and planning ways of achieving targets. Occasionally information may come up in review meetings which we can prompt would be a useful target for a young person and this may be incorporated into their IEP.

The class teacher of the control group involved in the quasi-experiment (see Chapter 5) viewed his role as one of helping the pupils to prepare for their IEP review meetings by:

Mr MacGregor: ...reading over them [the IEP workbooks] with the child.

No written response was received from the head of the DSE.

Procedure

The participants were given the interview schedule (Appendix M, p. 311) and asked to provide a written response.

Analysing the data

The same procedures, described in Chapter 4 for analysing the written response from the class teacher of the experimental group, in the quasi-experiment, were used.

Findings

All of the participants felt that the IEP workbook had been a successful intervention. Like the mainstream class teacher (see Chapter 6), both the educational psychologist and Mr MacGregor, the class teacher, felt that the IEP workbook gave the children ownership of their targets:

Mrs Luke: From what I have seen, I think the IEP Books look like a good way of structuring input from the pupils into their IEP, helping them to reflect on key people involved and to prompt them about targets that are part of their programme. They may give them more ownership of the targets.

Mr MacGregor: It has given them ownership and made it more personal and so hopefully more productive [in terms of pupil learning].

This idea of children being encouraged to take ownership of their targets was also expressed by mainstream secondary teachers interviewed in Banks et al.'s (2001) study.

All of the participants regarded the IEP workbook as a useful tool for involving the children in their IEP review meetings, as did Mrs Roberts, the class teacher of the experimental group in Cycle 2:

Mrs Roberts: I think the IEP workbook would act as a prompt.

Mr MacGregor: It has helped their confidence and given them a talking point and something to refer to, rather than answer unsupported, which all find difficult.

Mrs Luke: I think the book is a useful structured way of involving pupils in the meetings, as it gives a good focus. I'm sure it helps the pupil to have something visual and pre-prepared there to refer to. It is always difficult looking at meaningful ways of involving pupils at review meetings to ensure it is not a token measure.

This difficulty of involving pupils meaningfully in IEP review meetings identified by the educational psychologist above, is a problem faced by all professionals who want to involve children in decision-making processes. Stalker's (2002) study found that young people with disabilities, particularly those with communication and/or cognitive impairments, were infrequently involved in decision-making processes and planning for their future. Moreover, studies by Tisdall (1996) and Hubbard (1992), which looked at young people's involvement in their Future Needs Assessment meetings, found the young people's involvement and participation was constrained by its structure, duration and professional expertise. In addition, these studies also found that often professionals were insensitive to the young people's feelings or comfort. These issues were also highlighted by the educational psychologist who attended the IEP review meetings:

Mrs Luke: ...[the pupils] may have felt awkward “reading out” in that forum which is what happened in a couple of meetings.

All of the respondents’ comments supported the findings of Tisdall (1997) and Hubbard (1992), which suggested that alternative structures, systems and procedures need to be found so that young people can be actively involved in decision-making processes:

Mrs Roberts: [I] would like the structure/format to be more child-centred.

Mr MacGregor: The format of the meeting could be changed. Children could be present more of the time. The emphasis would require to be less formal, which may assist parents and others also.

Mrs Luke: I think there are difficulties at times with ensuring the involvement is not just tokenism and that it is a constructive process for the pupils. So often I think review meetings can be really intimidating for adults as well as pupils. I think a key part is how the meeting is structured, the tone that is set, and the preparation that goes into pupils’ involvement in meetings.

The above views echo those expressed by delegates who attended a consultation meeting organised by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Unit (2002). They suggested that meetings should:

- ensure that the experience for the child is not a negative one;
- centre around children’s abilities rather than their weaknesses;
- avoid using complex language;
- ensure that the child feels that his or her input is valued and taken seriously;
- provide feedback to the child about the outcome of the meeting.

However, they recognised that in order for children to play an active role in the meetings, they needed information about their situation. The children in my study were provided with information through their IEP workbooks. The delegates of the SEN Unit (2002) meeting also recommended that children should be encouraged to express their opinions from an early age. This would involve members of staff in encouraging children to express their views and opinions by showing them that their views are valued. It would also involve staff in developing the children's social speaking and turn-taking skills and helping them to respect the views of others. For this to happen children with learning disabilities need to be seen as competent social actors, capable of taking part in decision-making processes. This requires a move away from the medical model of disability towards a social model. This is discussed more fully in the final chapter, Chapter 8.

Mrs Roberts, who took part in this study, suggested that "Talking Mats" might help some of the children to actively take part in their IEP reviews and indeed this method has been used by other researchers working with children (Griffiths et al., no date; Christensen & James, 2003). The delegates who attended the SEN Unit's meeting, suggested that local authorities should provide schools with child friendly guidelines about the format of IEP meetings. Some researchers (Sanderson, Kennedy & Ritchie, 1997; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1998; Sanderson, 1998) advocate the use of person-centred planning as a way of increasing children's involvement and participation in decision-making processes.

Like the delegates attending the SEN Unit meeting, the participants in my study considered it important that the children were involved in their IEP review meetings:

Mr MacGregor: It is a legal requirement and [it] is important that their views and feelings [are] given due consideration.

Mrs Luke: I think the aim of involving pupils in the decision making process is key and should be a direction we are all looking to head in.

However, as highlighted by Cohen, Khan & O'Sullivan's reports (1998a, 1998b), although participation and empowerment tend to be seen as important for professionals working with young people, in practice other procedures are given precedence. They suggest that most professionals are too caught up with the constant pressures of everyday work and therefore they are not able to give much attention to including young people in decision-making processes. This seemed to be the case in my study. Although including the children in their IEP meetings was seen as important, lack of time and pressure of work meant that it was a low priority:

Mr MacGregor: There are workload issues in setting time to make and particularly in preparing IEPs.

Indeed workload pressures upon the staff influenced the design of my study and made it difficult for the staff to fully participate in the research process. As can be seen in Appendices G (p. 276) and M (p. 311), their written responses were in note form and did not contain much detail. Moreover, I had to constantly ask for their responses and a considerable length of time elapsed before I received them. Indeed the head of the DSE failed to provide a written response to this cycle of the research. This is one of the problems of engaging in teacher research. As Vulliamy and Webb (1991, 1992) point out such research is time consuming and places extra demands on the participants, which can be stressful.

Comparing numbers

I also evaluated this cycle of my study by comparing the numbers of children who had attended their IEP review meetings before and after by study. Prior to my research taking place, children at Bennochty DSE were not invited to attend their IEP review meetings. However, following the introduction of the IEP workbook, five children out of a class of seven, attended their IEP review meetings. Of the two who did not attend, one was attending his local catchment area school and the other child's parents did not permit him to attend.

However, although this data shows that more children attended their IEP review meetings after my study, this does not mean that they were actively involved in the decision-making process. As Dagnan and Sturmeys (1993) study shows attendance at meetings does not guarantee participation. Therefore there is a need for researchers to develop a scale to assess children's participation in their IEP review meetings. As one of the delegates attending the SEN Unit meeting states:

Someone should do a project to evaluate the effectiveness of children's participation and see if it actually changes things and/or makes children feel more involved.

(Special Educational Needs Unit, 2002, p. 11)

Alexander and Hegarty (2001) have developed and piloted a scale to measure client participation in Individual Programme Planning (IPP) meetings involving adults who have learning disabilities and limited verbal communication skills (Table 28). Researchers may be able to modify this scale to record children's participation in their IEP review meetings. However, as Alexander and Hegarty note the completion of the checklist relied upon the observer having a good knowledge of the participant's methods of communication. This would also apply to the use of a checklist with children with learning disabilities.

Table 28: Observational checklist used to assess client participation at IPP meetings

Clients should attend IPP meeting
Client was encouraged to provide information
Client was given the opportunity to ask questions
Client joined in group discussion
Client expressed opinions
Client made choices
Client's body language indicated interest in the meeting
Client answered questions
Client suggested goals
The client actively participated at the IPP meeting

Adapted from Alexander and Hegarty, 2001, p. 19

REFLECTION

The aim of this cycle of research was to increase the children's involvement and participation in their IEP review meetings. Looking at the number of children now involved in their IEP review meetings, seems to suggest that this aim has been achieved. In the past the medical model has been responsible for children being viewed as incompetent social actors. However, it is not just enough to give children information about the IEP process or to develop skills of negotiation and dialogue to enable them to take part in decision-making processes, as the social model argue social structures and organisations also have to be looked at. This is echoed by the written responses from the adults involved in the IEP meetings, who seem to suggest that for children to be actively involved, changes will require to be made to the structure, systems and procedures of these meetings. This study has suggested that a person-centred planning approach might be more appropriate than the present format of IEP meetings. However, as Davis and Watson's (2002) studies have shown children with disabilities are not a homogenous group and individual abilities and circumstances have to be taken into account. For example, some autistic pupils may find it easier to discuss their views and opinions, prior to a meeting, individually with their class teacher, parent or befriender which is videoed and played back at the meeting. Alternatively, higher functioning, more articulate and confident pupils may be able to cope with a more formal meeting, held in familiar surroundings, with adults known to them and with a structure recognizable to them. For example, in a format similar to pupil council meetings, with a chairperson, a set agenda, with everyone given an opportunity to express views and ask questions.

At the end of this cycle I had planned, if the interventions were successful, to discuss with the staff extending the interventions to all children in the school with IEPs. However, as seen in Chapters 5 and 6, the staff used the IEP workbooks and adopted the strategies and interventions identified in Cycle 2 before this final cycle of my study was reached. This adoption of the interventions by the staff suggests that they found the findings of my study useful. According to Mischler (1990) this is the ultimate test of trustworthiness of a study — the findings are considered so truthful that they are acted upon by other researchers and practitioners.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This final chapter of the study considers the implications of my study in terms of theory, research methodology and practice. It concludes by suggesting that local innovations may be more effective in increasing the involvement of children with learning difficulties in decision-making processes than further legislation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

This study suggests that we need to move away from models which represent children with disabilities as incompetent social actors and as a uniformly passive, vulnerable group (Davis & Watson, 2002) if children with disabilities are going to be actively and meaningfully involved in decision-making processes. The medical model of disability sees disability as resulting from physical or mental impairment. It locates the problem of disability in the impaired individual. It is based on a disease based model which assumes that professionals know what is best for patients. The person or patient is seen as a “subject” to be studied, rather than as an individual who actively constructs the meaning of his or her experiences. These assumptions, backed up by a discourse of scientific objectivity, preserve the distinct roles of professional expert and compliant patient and tend to prevent professional dominance from being challenged. They also encourage the down-playing of people’s emotional needs and subjective experiences and help justify services exclusion of people with cognitive impairments in consultation and decision-making processes. Thus Clare and Cox (2003) argue that the medical model has been used to justify not taking into account the views and opinions of children with disabilities. Like Davis and Watson (2000), they also argue that this medical model has encouraged professionals to use impairment as the reason for denying children with learning disabilities the right to be heard. In other words, their impairments, their learning difficulties, mean they cannot be competent participants in decision-making processes.

However, in the 1970s a new model of disability was beginning to emerge. Social model accounts of disability were developed by people with disabilities such as Finkelstein (1980) and Oliver (1990, 1996) in response to the medical model of disability. The social model of disability sees disability as being “socially constructed with ‘disabling barriers and social restrictions’ created by institutionalised practices of society” (Garth & Aroni, 2003, p. 563). According to Oliver (1996), the social model locates disability “squarely within society” (p. 32). Thus the social model should promise much for people with learning disabilities in terms of its analysis of their experience and strategies for change (Chappell, Goodley & Lawthom, 2001). Such a model offers an alternative way of viewing the effects of cognitive and communication impairments and has radical implications for service planning and provision.

However, Oliver makes little reference to people with learning difficulties and consequently the social model has been accused of being “constructed for healthy quadriplegics” (Humphrey, 1994, p. 6). Moreover, writers such as Chappell (1998) and Goodley (2000) argue that learning difficulties has only been included in the social model as an afterthought. Indeed writers, such as Aspis (1997), go further, arguing that people with learning disabilities have been excluded from the wider disability movement. He contends that there is a tendency amongst people with disabilities (without the label of learning disability) to view the problems experienced by people with learning disabilities as due to their impairments, rather than resulting from issues of access and social barriers. Therefore he maintains that the individualised medical model of disability is still applied to people with learning disabilities.

Focusing on children with learning difficulties, Davis and Watson (2002) argue that the social model tends to view children with disabilities as a homogeneous group, whereas their studies show that children with disabilities lead diverse and multifaceted lives. However, their studies also highlight the importance of impairment and what Thomas (1999) describes as impairment effects on the lives of

children with disabilities, although they caution against making the assumption that impairments are pre-given. They argue that:

...we need to move away from a model that fixes the identity of disabled children and from pathologizing them on the basis of their impairment, we also need to move away from a model which places all its emphasis on structural disablement.

(Davis & Watson, 2002, p. 170).

I concur with this. The findings of my study show that by increasing the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process and by developing skills involved in participation and decision-making processes, the children were able to take part in decisions influencing their lives. Nevertheless, this approach tends to focus on issues surrounding the children, such as competency and agency. However, my study has also shown that whether or not children's views are respected depends very much on the listening adults, their assumptions of competency, their ability to look beyond the children's impairments, to be aware of power relationships and to be reflexive about their own assumptions, prejudices and practice. For example a pupil involved in my study needs to start at a basic level of decision making which involves two options e.g. "Would you like to play on the computer or play with the train set?". In addition, staff need to assume that he has the competence to make such a decision and not for example chose his lunch for him, justifying this on the basis that they know best what he would find easiest to eat. It also depends on adults creating social settings and developing techniques and avenues of communication which enable children to contribute to discussions concerning their lives. The same pupil, in the home setting is deemed incapable of making even basic decisions about his life and therefore on his return to school after a period of absence, he has to be encouraged to regain his decision-making skills. Thus what also enables children with learning difficulties to engage in decision-making processes is the acceptance of their right to do so as children's rights are intertwined with relationships. However, disabling social and economic structures also need to be addressed. For example, Corker and Davis (2001) point out that the dominant discourse in law views children with disabilities in

terms of dependency, vulnerability and protection and results in the silencing of their voices. Therefore Davis and Watson (2002) argue for the strengthening of guidelines and legislation and for funding to be made available so that programmes can be developed to encourage and train staff to involve children with disabilities in decisions which affect their lives.

Thus I would argue that a transactional model of disability would be a useful tool for further exploration of ways in which children with learning disabilities can be involved in decision-making processes. Such a model enables the consideration of ways in which physical, material and social organisation of society creates inequalities and withholds rights to certain groups of people in society, such as children with learning disabilities. It also encompasses impairment effects, recognises the historical and social character of impairment and acknowledges that whilst impairment and disability can be viewed as discrete entities, they can also interact. In addition, the transactional model recognises the competency and agency of children with learning difficulties, viewing them as social actors. It also acknowledges that non-disabled people's attitudes to impairment and disability, their patterns of behaviour towards children with learning difficulties and the context or social setting, all influence children's participation and involvement in decision-making processes. However, this model is not a theoretical system, or a theory of disability and it cannot provide an explanation of every aspect of disability.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As already shown in Chapter 2, different models of disability favour different ways of conducting research. The social model favours emancipatory research, whereas much of the literature concerning people with learning disabilities favours an interpretive or enlightenment model based on participatory research. This approach focuses on experiential issues and aims to suggest service change to planners and providers so as to improve people's lives. The role of researcher is seen as one of empathising with people with learning disabilities, using his or her academic position, skills and knowledge to tell people's stories to the outside world and arguing for improved services. Examples of this approach can be seen in

ethnographic work (Wilkinson, 1989), research based on normalisation (Williams & Tyne, 1988) and oral history and narrative research (Goodley, 2000).

Participatory research uses a narrower definition of accountability to people with disabilities than the emancipatory paradigm. The latter views accountability in terms of accountability to the movements of people with disabilities, whereas the participatory model sees accountability in terms of accountability to the research participants. In Chapter 2 I argued that the emancipatory paradigm could not be applied to my study because the children have severe cognitive and communication impairments and therefore were unable to exercise control over the whole of the research process. However, by adopting a range of methods, it is possible to involve children with learning difficulties in the research process and to work collaboratively with them to produce research. My study took the view that children, whatever their impairment, are capable of agency and competency and can participate in decision-making processes. Therefore the challenge for researchers is to find effective ways of involving children with learning difficulties in decision-making processes and to create contexts in which this process can happen (Clare & Cox, 2003). As this study has shown, researchers wishing to elicit the views and opinions of children with learning difficulties, encounter a number of problems. Their participants may be inarticulate, unresponsive, have difficulty with thinking in abstract terms and problems with time. However, as my study shows, these barriers can be overcome (Table 23, p. 139).

Table 29: Research with children

Researchers need to:

- i) Consider how their academic preconceptions and personal culture influences their study
 - ii) Begin their research without any fixed assumptions about the children's ability
 - iii) Spend time to get to know the children
 - iv) Consider ethical issues
 - v) Be prepared to negotiate their research role and their methods with the children
-

Researchers need to take time to get to know the children, their ways of communicating and to develop relationships with them. This is illustrated in my

study. The knowledge I had of the children enabled me to interpret the children's responses and withdraw or change my methods if I felt that the children were becoming upset (see Chapter 6). As the latter suggests, researchers also need to have concern for the children's emotions and well-being and recognise the ethical issues involved when working with children (Chapter 3). Moreover, they also need to recognise that just as there is no universal research role, there is no one research tool best suited to investigating children's opinions. Therefore they need to continuously question their methods and re-negotiate with the children. Sometimes a group interview can give children with learning difficulties support to express their views; with other children, such as Sandy, in hindsight an individual interview may have produced more responses (Booth & Booth, 1996). Sometimes questions have to be rephrased or broken down into questions requiring a yes/no response or similar one word answer (see Chapter 6, Extract 7, p. 159). At other times, a menu of suggestions or prompts is required (see Chapter 6, Extract 8, p.161). Tremblay (1957) describes these techniques as "self-developing", as the interviewer needs to refine his or her techniques as knowledge about the interviewee's ability to communicate is revealed.

Booth and Booth (1996) argue that it is important that researchers begin interviews without any fixed assumptions about children's ability to understand what is being asked of them. Their role is to explore different modes of questioning in order to enable the children to respond. I adopted this approach and began with open-ended questions, but found some children required more prompts in the form of a menu of responses or questions requiring a yes/no answer. This method of interviewing means that the researcher has to pay more attention to the form of questions and language used as well as the conduct of the interview. However, there is a danger that the data obtained by these methods may reflect the researcher's concerns rather than the children's. Nevertheless, I concur with Booth and Booth (1996) who maintain that this is a price researchers must pay in order to obtain data from inarticulate people, otherwise their voices will be silenced.

However, researchers working with children also need to consider not only appropriate methods, but also ethical issues and roles. This study showed that ethical considerations have to be ongoing throughout the whole research process and in this case resulted in a change to the research design and methods. For example due to the wishes of the teachers who took part in the study, I accepted written responses to validate findings rather than individual interviews as planned. Therefore ethics are not just concerned with issues of gate-keeping and confidentiality, but also on the researcher's ability to understand and respond to the feelings of the children and adults who take part in the study. The study has also shown that researchers may have to adopt a variety of roles at varying times during the research process. This was something I was aware of when conducting my study. I was the children's teacher and a figure of authority within the school. As a result I had to carefully consider power relationships and try to minimise this imbalance by increasing the children's ownership of the research process. The way participants respond to the researcher's role can provide insights into the values of the people studied. For example, as I was a teacher at the school, I was able to gain useful insights from informal discussions with the staff and everyday observations which an outside researcher would not have been privy to.

My study also used an action research model (see Chapter 3, Figure 8, pp 62). Like the teacher researchers in Vulliamy and Webb's (1991, 1992) studies, I found problems with combining the demanding workloads of both myself and the teachers who were involved in my study, with systematic and rigorous research. I also felt that in order to maintain good working relationships with the staff, I had to rearrange my research design and accept that not all the participants would respond to my requests for written responses. As Hopkins (1985) asserts:

The teacher's primary role is to teach and any research project must not interfere with or disrupt this commitment. The method of data collection should not be too demanding on the teacher's time.

(Hopkins, 1985, pp. 58-59)

Therefore my study can be criticised for lacking in scientific rigour and for being constrained by ethical considerations. However, I felt it was important to collect data in an ethical manner and in a way which did not increase the participants' stress levels or workloads. I also tried to triangulate the data using both between and within methods to increase validity and reliability. Todd (no date) argues that the validity of action research should be measured by the extent to which the research produces findings which are useful in developing the classroom situation. I believe that my study has changed not only classroom practices but school practices. The interventions and strategies used in my study have been adopted by other teachers, both in the DSE and the mainstream school. The infant DSE class has adopted a simplified version of my IEP workbook and has begun to display targets in the classroom and ideas I have developed have been used in the introduction of Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) within the DSE. Moreover, the primary 7 teacher now instructs the children to copy their target into their jotter at the start of their work in order to keep them focused on the learning intentions. In addition, some of the strategies I developed can be used as part of the formative assessment initiative which is a priority within the region. Other researchers, such as Greenwood (1984) Stake (1995) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), argue that face validity and reliability can be checked in action research by using respondent validation. In my study the staff and pupils provided feedback on the interventions and strategies developed in my study.

I also feel that my study has contributed to both my personal and professional development. It has made me question my own assumptions and preconceptions. As a classroom teacher, I had always viewed target setting as predominantly a class teacher's role with occasional input from other professionals and with consultation with parents regarding behavioural targets. I informed children of their targets, however never involved them actively other than in their behaviour related targets. Now I firmly believe that involving children in target setting and decision making process leads to more effective learning and teaching and helps create more autonomous learners. It has also helped me to develop analytical tools to investigate problems encountered in the classroom which have enabled children with learning

difficulties to have a voice. I now formulate hypothesis which I test out in my everyday classroom work as a teacher and evaluate them in a “scientific” way. It has also resulted in me questioning my assumption and preconceptions as well as reflectively reviewing my current classroom practices.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The Scottish Executive has produced a number of documents relating to people with learning disabilities in the past ten years. They have been produced within a policy framework committed to ensuring equality, fairness and opportunity for all through social inclusion. There is now considerable pressure on providers of services to involve service users in decision-making processes. However, marginalized groups, such as those with cognitive and communication impairments, tend to be excluded from involvement initiatives. This group is often seen as too difficult to involve as involvement often requires specialist expertise. Thus they tend to be excluded from decision-making processes and from the opportunity to influence service provision. However, there is a commitment to the idea of the rights of the individual, irrespective of their degree of impairment, to equality, to empowerment of people with learning disabilities and to an inclusive society. For this commitment to become a reality requires genuine involvement of people with learning disabilities in decision-making processes and a shift in the balance of power and control. This requires service planners and providers to critically look at their assumptions, current thinking and practices. Furthermore, it also requires an acknowledgement of the unique individuality of people with learning disabilities – their personhood. As Davis and Watson’s (2002) study has shown, children with learning difficulties are not a homogeneous group. Moreover, we need to interact with them in ways which enhance their well-being and level of functioning. Therefore my study suggested that the current format of IEP review meetings needs to be changed to a more person-centred approach. Person-centred planning aims to maximise personal control, enable choice, respect dignity and promote equality. This approach views the difficulties as not residing in the person, but with the surrounding environment and interactions. Therefore the challenge is to create accepting contexts in which people are empowered.

My study focused on the rights of children with learning difficulties within the context of an everyday social setting within an educational institution. It aimed to increase children with learning difficulties' involvement in the IEP process and encourage staff and children to practise better forms of dialogue and communication. It devised a number of interventions and strategies to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of their targets, to involve them in the setting of their targets and to help them to participate in their IEP review meetings. Although these findings cannot be generalised as the study was small scaled and localised, the interventions and strategies suggested might provide other teachers with new insights into involving children with learning difficulties in the IEP process. The following interventions proved successful in my study:

1. The introduction of an IEP workbook;
2. Making children's targets more visible;
3. Relating targets to everyday work and behaviour in the classroom/school;
4. Talking to children about their targets and encouraging them to take an active part in deciding their targets;
5. Celebrating target achievements;
6. Using the IEP workbook as a tool to facilitate the children's participation in their IEP review meetings.

However, although the study found that the IEP workbook was an effective prop for increasing the children's participation in the IEP review meetings, it concluded that the structure, systems and procedures of such meetings needed to be changed. As previously mentioned, one way of doing this might be through person-centred planning. Indeed person-centred planning tools such as PATHS and MAPS have been used with children with learning disabilities to facilitate transition stages in education and to assist their inclusion in mainstream schools (Forest & Lusthaus, 1989). However, to play an active role in such meetings children need information. They also require help to develop skills of debate, communication and negotiation.

This study has shown that it is possible to explore the experiences of children with learning difficulties, to elicit their opinions and involve them in decision-making processes. However, involvement and participation need to become an integral part of the education system and not an occasional, optional feature that only occurs when a special project is initiated or funded. Children with learning difficulties have a right to be included in decision-making processes which affect their lives. For this to happen requires an acknowledgement of their competency and agency, a flexible and creative approach and the development of skills and channels of communication through which this groups' voices can be heard.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that although legislation emphasises the importance of taking into account children's views and opinions and involving them in decision-making processes which affect their lives, these rights are often ignored. Furthermore, in the case of children with learning difficulties, these rights are often denied on the grounds of "competency". Davis and Watson (2000) contend that as much of the legislation is in the form of guidelines rather than laws, it does not provide effective mechanisms for change. This enables people to claim that "they are doing something but does not allocate an effective voice to disabled children" (p. 225). They argue that tightening the legislation will not help as often legislation is ignored and does more harm than good (James & James, 1999). They maintain that:

...although legislation and guidance is important, it will only afford disabled children protection when combined with more local innovation. This should encourage adults and children to understand their interdependencies, act in more equitable ways, and, practise better forms of dialogue and communication.

(Davis & Watson, 2000, p. 213)

My study was a "local innovation". It was localised and small scaled. It aimed to deal with practical problems encountered in the DSE and to change practice. It does not pretend to be a traditional scientific study if "scientific" is understood in the

conventional terms of psychologists' scientific empiricism. It could not have been such because it had to take into account ethical issues and responsibilities. In addition, further research is still necessary to devise better methods of including all children by striving to overcome barriers to effective communication. However, I hope my study has encouraged both the children to express their views, and the staff to communicate and negotiate more effectively with the children.

REFERENCES

Abberley, P. (1997). The limits of classical social theory in the analysis and transformation of disablement — (can this really be the end, to be stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues again?). In L. Barton & M. Oliver (Eds.), *Disability studies: Past, present and future* (pp. 25–44). Leeds: Disability Press.

Abeson, A., & Weintraub, F. (1997). Understanding the individualised education program. In S. Torres, (Ed.), *A primer of individualised education programs for handicapped children* (pp. 328). Reston, VA: Foundation for Exceptional Children.

Adelman, C. (1989). The practical ethic takes priority over methodology. In W. Carr, (Ed.), *Quality in teaching: Arguments for a reflective profession*. London: Falmer Press.

Ainscow, M. (1997). Towards inclusive schooling. *British Journal of Special Education*, 24(1), 3–6.

Aitkenson, P., & Delamont, S. (1985). Bread and dreams or bread and circuses: A critique of “case study” research in education. In M. Shipman (Ed.), *Educational research, principles, policies and practices*. London: Falmer Press.

Alderson, P. (1995). *Listening to children: Children, ethics and social research*. Barking: Barnardo's.

Alexander, M., & Hegarty, J. (2001). Measuring client participation in individual programme planning meetings. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29, 17–21.

Anderson, E. M. (1973). *The disabled school child: A study of integration in primary schools*. London: Methuen.

Arnot, M., & Weiner, G. (Eds.). (1987). *Gender and the politics of schooling*. London: Hutchinson.

Arnstein, S. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, 35, 216–224.

Ashman, A., & Elkins, J. (1990). *Educating children with special needs*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.

Aspis, S. (1997 December). *Inclusion and exclusion*. Paper presented at the Social History of Learning Disability Conference, Inclusion and Exclusion, the Open University.

Backett, K., & Alexander, H. (1991). Talking to young children about health: Methods and findings. *Health Education Journal*, 50(1), 34–38.

Banks, P., Baynes, A., Dyson, A., Kane, J., Millward, A., Riddell, S., & Wilson, A. (2001). *Raising the attainment of pupils with special educational needs: Report to the Scottish Executive Education Department*. Glasgow: Special Needs Research Centre, University of Newcastle and Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research, University of Glasgow.

Barnes, C. (1991). *Disabled people in Britain and discrimination: A case for anti-discrimination legislation*. London: Hurst and Co.

Barnes, C. (1996). Theories of disability and the origins of the oppression of disabled people in western society. In L. Barton (Ed.), *Disability and society: Emerging issues and insights* (pp. 43–60). London: Longman.

Barnes, C. (1998). The social model of disability: A sociological phenomenon ignored by sociologists? In T. Shakespeare (Ed.), *The disability reader: Social science perspectives* (pp. 65–78). London: Cassell.

Barnes, C. (1999). Theories of disability and the origins of the oppression of disabled people in western society. In L. Barton (Ed.), *Disability and society: Emerging issues and insights* (pp. 43–59). Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Barnes, C., Oliver, M., & Barton, L. (2002). Introduction. In C. Barnes, M. Oliver & L. Barton (Eds.), *Disability studies today* (pp. 1–17). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Barton, L. (1992). Disability and the necessity for a socio-political perspective. In L. Barton, K., Ballard & G. Fulcher (Eds.), *Disability and the necessity for a sociopolitical perspective* (pp. 1–14). Newhampshire, UK: IEEIR World Rehabilitation Fund.

Bassey, M. (1981). Pedagogic research on the relative merits of search for generalisation and study of single events. *Oxford Review of Education* 7, 73–94.

Bassey, M. (1983). Pedagogic research into singularities: Case studies, probes and curriculum innovations. *Oxford Review of Education* 9, 109–121.

Bassey, M. (1990). On the nature of research in education (part 1). *Research intelligence, BERA Newsletter* 36, 35–38.

Bateman, F. (1897). *The idiot: His place in creation and his claims on society*. Norwich: Jarrold and Sons.

Baumrind, D. (1980). New directions in socialization research. *American Psychologist*, 35, 639–652.

Becher, A. (1974). The role of the researcher as an agent of innovation in the classroom. *Council of Europe Information Bulletin*, 2, 41–46.

- Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Begum, N., Hill, M., & Stevens, A. (1994). *Reflections: The views of black disabled people on their lives and community care*. London: CCETSW.
- Beresford, B. (1997). *Personal accounts: Involving disabled children in research*. Norwich: Social Policy Research Unit.
- Biklen, S. K., & Moseley, C. R. (1988). Are you retarded? No, I am Catholic: Qualitative methods in the study of people with severe handicaps. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13, 155–162
- Bindra, D. (1974). A motivational view of learning, performance and behaviour modification. *Psychological Review*, 81, 199–213.
- Bindra, D. (1978). How adaptive behaviour is produced: A perceptual-motivational alternative to response-reinforcement. *The Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 1, 41–91.
- Binet, A., & Simon, T. (1914). *Mentally defective children*. London: E. J. Arnold.
- Booth, T. (1984). *E241 Special needs in education: Unit 10 National perspectives*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.
- Booth, T. (1984). *E241 Special needs in education: Unit 13 Handicap is social*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.
- Booth, T., & Booth, W. (1996). Sounds of silence: Narrative research with inarticulate subjects. *Disability and Society*, 11(1), 55–69.

Booth, T., Potts, P., & Swann, W. (1985). *E241 Special needs in education: Unit 15 research and progress in special education*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.

Booth, T., Potts, P., Swann, W., & Masterton, M. (Eds.), (1992). *Curricular or diversity in education*. London: Routledge.

Bowers, T. (1997). Not just a piece of paper: A consideration of IEPs in the classroom. *Education 3-13*, 25(3), 47-51.

Brennan, W. K. (1974). *Shaping the education of slow learners*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

British Psychological Society. (1991). *Code of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines*. Leicester: BPS.

Burgess, R. G. (1984). *In the field: An introduction to field research*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Burland, J. R. (1979). Behaviour modification in a residential school for junior maladjusted boys. *Journal of the Association for Workers with Maladjusted Children*, 7, 65-79.

Burt, C. (1921). *Mental and scholastic tests*. London: Staples Press.

Butler, I., & Williamson, H. (1994). *Children speak: Children, trauma and social work*. London: NSPCC/Longman.

Butt, N., & Scott, E. M. (1994). Individual education programmes in secondary schools. *Support for Learning*, 9(1), 9-15.

Callaway, H. (1992). *Ethnography and experience: Gender implications in fieldwork and texts*. In J. Oakley & H. Callaway (Eds.), *Anthropology and autobiography*. London: Routledge.

Cannell, C. F., & Kahn, R. L. (1968). Interviewing. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology, Volume 2: Research methods* (pp. 526–595). New York: Addison-Wesley.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Cattell, R. B. (1965). *The scientific analysis of personality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Cavett, J. (1995). *Personal communication*. Stafford: University of Staffordshire.

Cheng, P. W., & Holyoak, K. J. (1985). Pragmatic reasoning schemas. *Cognitive Psychology, 17*, 391–416.

Chappell, A. L. (1998). Still out in the cold: People with learning difficulties and the social model of disability. In T. Shakespeare (Ed.), *The disability reader: Social sciences perspectives* (pp. 211–220). London: Cassell.

Chappell, A. L., Goodley, D., & Lawthom, R. (2001). Making connections: The relevance of the social model of disability for people with learning difficulties. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 29*, 45–50.

Chapple, M., & Murphy, R. (1996). The nominal group technique: Extending the evaluation of students' teaching and learning experiences. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 21*, 147–159.

Cheston, R. (1994). The accounts of special education leavers. *Disability and Society*, 9(1), 59–69.

Children (Scotland) Act (1995). Edinburgh: HMSO.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Research with children*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Clare, L., & Cox, S. (2003). Improving service approaches and outcomes for people with complex needs through consultation and involvement. *Disability and Society*, 18(7), 935–953.

Clough, P., & Barton, L. (1998). *Articulating with difficulty: Research voices in inclusive education*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education* (4th ed.). London: Croom Helm Limited.

Cohen, R., Khan, J., & O'Sullivan, T. (1998a). *Profile of disabled school leavers in Lewisham and Southwark. Young adults transition project, draft final report working paper 1*. Lewisham & Southwark: Optimum Health Services NHS Trust.

Cohen, R., Khan, J., & O'Sullivan, T. (1998b). *Professionals' views of transitional planning. Young adults transition project, draft final report working paper 2*. Lewisham & Southwark: Optimum Health Services NHS Trust.

Committee on the Rights of the Child. (1995). *Consideration of reports submitted by state's parties under article 44 of the convention. Concluding observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. New York: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Corker, M. (1998). *Deaf and disabled, or deafness disabled?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Corker, M. & Davis, J. M. (2001). Portrait of Callum: The disabling of a childhood. In R. Edwards (Ed.), *Children, home and school: Autonomy, connection or regulation*. London; Falmer.

Corker, M. & French, S. (Eds.). (1999). *Disability discourse*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cornwall, J., & Robertson, C. (1999). *Individual education plans: Physical disabilities and medical conditions*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Corrie, M., & Zaklukiewicz, S. (1985). Qualitative research and case-study approaches: An introduction. In S. Hegarty & P. Evans. (Eds.), *Research and evaluation methods in special education*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

Corsaro, W. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative enquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. London: Sage.

Crow, L. (1996). Including all of our lives: Renewing the social model of disability. In J. Morris (Ed.), *Encounters with strangers: Feminism and disability* (pp. 206–226). London: The Women's Press Limited.

Czerniewska, P. (1985). *E206 Personality, development and learning: Unit 20: Views of learning*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Da Costa, A. M. B., & Rodrigues, D. A. (1999). Special education in Portugal. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 14(1), 70–89.

Dagan, D. J., & Sturmev, P. (1993). A comparison of joint reviews and life plans in a hospital population of older people with learning difficulties. *Mental Handicap Research*, 6, 346–357.

Dalkey, N. C., & Helmer, O. (1963). An experimental application of the Delphi method to the use of experts. *Management Science*, 9(3), 456–457.

Damon, W. (1977). *The social world of the child*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

David, M., Edwards, R., & Alldred, P. (2001). Children and school-based research: “Informed consent” or “educated consent”? *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 347–365.

Davis, A. (1991). Piaget, teachers and education: Into the 1990s. In M. Woodhead, P. Light & R. Carr (Eds.), *Child development in social context 2: Learning to think* (pp. 16–31). London: Routledge.

Davis, J. M. (1998). Understanding the meanings of children: A reflexive process. *Children and Society*, 12(5), 325–336.

Davis, J., & Watson, N. (2000). Disabled children’s rights in every day life: Problematising notions of competency and promoting self-empowerment. *International Journal of Children’s Rights*, 8(3), 211–228.

Davis, J., & Watson, N. (2002). Countering stereotypes of disability: Disabled children and resistance. In M. Corker & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Disability/Postmodernity : Embodying disability theory* (pp. 159–174). London: Continuum.

Davis, J., Watson, N., & Cunningham-Burley, S. (2003). Learning the lives of disabled children: Developing a reflexive approach. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children* (pp. 201–224). London: Routledge Falmer.

Deem, R. (Ed.). (1980). *Schooling for women's work*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

De Landsheere, P. (1993). History of educational research. In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *Educational research: Current issues*. London: Paul Chapman.

Delbecq, A. L., Van de Ven, A. H., & Gustafson, D. H. (1975). *Group techniques for programme planning: A guide to nominal group and Delphi processes*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman & Co.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

DES. (1978). *Special educational needs: The Warnock Report*. London: HMSO.

DfEE. (1994). *Code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs*. London: DfEE Publications.

Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological method*. London: The Butterworth Group.

Denscombe, M. (1995). Explorations in group interviews: An evaluation of a reflexive and partisan approach. *British Educational Research Journal*, 21, 131–148.

Descombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale research projects*. Buckingham: The Open University Press.

Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's minds*. Glasgow: Collins/Fontana.

Donaldson, M., & Elliot, A. (1992). Children's explanations. In R. Grieve & M. Hughes (Eds.), *Understanding children* (pp. 26–50). Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Dryden, G. (2000). The transaction model revisited. *Sixteen +*, 4(Winter), 10.

Dyer, C. (1995). The Code of Practice through LEA eyes. *British Journal of Special Education*, 22 (2), 48–51.

Dyson, A. (1997). Social and educational disadvantage: Reconnecting special needs education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 24 (4), 152–157.

Eames, K. (1990). Growing your own: Supporting the development of action research within an action-research approach to whole-school development. *British Journal of Inservice Education*, 16(2), 122–127.

Education Department (1898). *Report of the committee on defective and epileptic children*. London: HMSO.

Eggleston, S. J., Dunn, D., & Anjali, M. (1986). *Education for some: The educational and vocational experiences of 15–18 year old members of minority ethnic groups*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I. (1970). *Ethnology: The biology of behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Elliott, J. (1993). *Action research for educational change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D., & Steinmetz, A. C. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles*. New York: Falmer.

Enell, M. C. (1983). *How to streamline your IEP: A special education handbook on computer-assisted individualised education programs*. Carmichael, CA: San Juan

Unified School District (ERIC Documentation Reproduction Service no. ED 236 859).

Ennett, S. T., & De Vellis, B. M., Erp, J. A., Kredih, D., Warren, R. W., & Wilhelm, C. L. (1991). Disease experience and psychosocial adjustment in children with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis: Children's versus mothers' reports. *Journal of Paediatric Psychology* 16(5) 557 – 568.

Ennew, J., & Morrow, V. (1994). Out of the mouths of babes. In E. Verhellen & F. Spiesschaert (Eds.), *Children's rights: Monitoring issues*. Gent, Belgium: Mays & Breesch.

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Evans, L. (1992). Robbing Peter to pay Paul: Teaching subtraction through role play. *Education*, 3(13), 48–53.

Faulkner, D., Swann, J., Baker, S., Bird, M., & Carty, J. (1993). *Professional development in action: Methodology handbook*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Farone, M. C., Hall, E. W., & Costello, J. J. (1998). Postsecondary disability issues: An inclusive identification strategy. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 13, 35–45.

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography: Step by step*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Fine, G. A. (1987). *With the boys*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fine, G. A., & Sandstrom, K. L. (1988). *Knowing children: Participant observation with minors: Qualitative research methods series, Volume 15*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Fink, A. H., & Hyde, D. R. (1985). Behavioural disorders: Social. In Husen, T., & Postlethwaite, K. (Eds.), *The international encyclopaedia of education*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Finkelstein, V. (1980). *Attitudes and disabled people: Issues for discussion*. New York: World Rehabilitation Fund.

Fiscus, E. D., & Mandell, C. J. (1983). *Developing individualised education programs*. St. Paul, State: West Publishing Company.

Forest, M., & Lusthaus, E. (1989). Promoting educational equality for all students: Circles and MAPS. In S. Stainback, W. Stainback & M. Forest (Eds.), *Educating all students in the mainstream of regular education* (pp. 43-57). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing.

Forman, E., & Ladd, R. (1991). *Ethical dilemmas in paediatrics: A case study approach*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Forness, S. R. (1988). Reductionism, paradigm shifts and learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 21(7), 421-424.

Frantz, N. R. (1997). The identification of national trends and issues for workplace preparation and their implications for vocational teacher education. *Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, 14, 8-19.

French, S. (1994) *On equal terms: Working with disabled people*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd.

Garth, B., & Aroni, R. (2003). 'I value what you have to say'. Seeking the perspective of children with a disability, not just their parents. *Disability and Society*, 18(5), 561–567.

Gerber, D. A. (1990). Listening to disabled people: The problem of voice and authority. In R. B. Edgerton's *The cloak of competence. Disability, Handicap and Society*, 5(1), 3–23.

Gerdes, K. E., & Benson, R. A. (1995). Problems of inner-city schoolchildren: Needs assessment by nominal group process. *Social Work in Education*, 17, 139–147.

Giddens, A. (1976). *New rules of sociological method: A positive critique of interpretive sociologies*. London: Hutchinson.

Giddens, A. (1987). *Social theory and modern sociology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gillborn, D. (1990). *Race, ethnicity and education: Teaching and learning in multi-ethnic schools*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Gillham, B. (1979). *The first words language programme*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Glutting, J. J. (1987). The McDermott multidimensional assessment of children: Contribution to the development of individualised educational programs. *The Journal of Special Education*, 20, 431–445.

Goddard, A. (1976a). *Objective examined*. Unpublished manuscript.

Goddard, A. (1976b). *The curriculum: Yearbook*. Darlington: Society of Mentally Handicapped Children.

Goddard, A. (1997). The role of individual education plans/programmes in special education: A critique. *Support for Learning*, 12(4) 170–174.

Goldthorpe, M. (1998). *Effective IEPs through circle time*. Wisbech: LDA.

Goodley, D. (2000). *Self-advocacy in the lives of people with learning difficulties: The politics of resilience*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Goodley, D. (2001). “Learning difficulties”, the social model of disability and impairment: Challenging epistemologies. *Disability and Society*, 16(2), 207–231.

Goodley, D., & Moore, M. (2000). Doing disability research: Activist lives and the Academy. *Disability and Society*, 15(6), 000–000.

Grbich, C. (1998). *Qualitative research in health: An introduction*. London: Sage.

Greenhalgh, P. (1996). Behaviour: Roles, responsibilities and referrals in the shadow of the code of practice. *Support for Learning*, 11(1), 17–24.

Greenwood, J. (1984). Nursing research: A position paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 9, 77–82.

Greenwood, J., & Levin, M. (1998). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Griffiths, J., Cunningham, G., & Dick, S. (no date). *Onwards and upwards: Involving disabled children and young people in decision making: A training manual for professionals*. Edinburgh: Children in Scotland.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communications and Technology Journal*, 29, 75–92.

Haddow, A. (2004). *The forgotten people: The transition period from school to post-school provision for young people with profound physical and intellectual disabilities*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Strathclyde.

Hall, K. (1992). A case study of reading difficulty. *Education*, 3(13), 47–52.

Hamilton, D., Jenkins, D., King, C., MacDonald, B., & Parlett, M. (Eds.). (1977). *Beyond the numbers game: A reader in educational evaluation*. London: MacMillan.

Hammersley, M. (1992a). *What's wrong with ethnography?* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hammersley, R., Gomm, R., & Woods, P. (1994). *MA in education, educational research methods: Study guide*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Hampden-Turner, C. (1970). *Radical man*. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman.

Hargreaves, D. H. (1967). *Social relations in a secondary school*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hardman, C. (1973). Can there be an anthropology of children? *Journal of the Anthropology Society of Oxford*, 4, 85.

Harris, C. W. (Ed.). (1960). *Encyclopaedia of educational research*. (3rd ed.). New York: MacMillan.

Hart, R. (1992). *Participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. London: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Hart, R. (1992). *Child's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. London: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Harvey, J. (1998). *Evaluation cookbook*. Edinburgh: Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative, Heriot Watt University.

Henderson, D. (1999, June 25). Anger at “offensive” special needs targets. *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*.

Henderson, D. (2000, March 10). Call to police special needs. *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*.

Hertz, R. (1997). Introduction. In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflexivity and voice*. London: Sage.

Hill, M., Laybourn, A., & Borlan, M. (1996). Engaging with primary-aged children about their emotions and well being: Methodological considerations. *Children and Society, 10*, 129–144.

Hopkins, D. (1985). *A teacher's guide to classroom research*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Horton, J. N. (1980). Nominal group technique: A method of decision-making by committee. *Anaesthesia, 35*, 811–814.

Hubbard, M. (1992). *School leavers with multiple disabilities: An exploratory approach of the issues and problems relating to the planning and provision of formal post-school services*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Stirling.

Hubbard, R. (1979). Have only men evolved? In R. Hubbard, M. S. Henifin, & B. Fried (Eds.), *Women look at biology looking at women* (pp. 8–35). Boston: Schenkman.

Hughes, B. (1999). The constitution of impairment: Modernity and the aesthetic of oppression. *Disability and Society*, 14(2), 155–172.

Humphrey, J. (2000). Researching disability politics, or, some problems with the social model in practice. *Disability and Society*, 15(1), 63–85.

Iano, R. P. (1996). *Contradictions within special education and schooling*. Unpublished manuscript, Temple University Philadelphia.

Ihde, D. (1977). *Experimental phenomenology*. New York: G. P. Putnam.

Ions, E. (1997). *Against behaviouralism: A critique of behavioural science*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Jackman, J. A. (1995). In knowing our students ourselves. *Journal of Learning Difficulties* 28(9) 569–574.

James, A. (1995). *Methodologies of competence or competent methodology?* Youth 2000 Conference, Guildford.

James, A. L., & James, A. (1999). Pump up the volume: Listening to children in separation and divorce. *Childhood* 6(2), 189–204.

James, A., & Prout, A. (Eds.). (1990). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

James, A., & Prout, A. (1995). Hierarchy, boundary, and agency: Towards a theoretical perspective on childhood. *Sociological Studies of Children*, 77–99.

Jones, M. (1979). The children of Beech Tree House. *Special Education; Forward Trends*, 6, 28–31.

Kanner, L. (1964). *A history of the care and study of the mentally retarded*. Illinois: Charles Thomas.

Kaplan, A. (1973). *The conduct of inquiry*. Aylesbury: Intertext Books.

Katz, L. (1987). *The experience of personal change*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Union Graduate School, Union Institute, Cincinnati, OH.

Keefe, C. H. (1996). *Label-free learning: Supporting learners with disabilities*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Keller, F. S. (1968). Goodbye, teacher. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Analysis*, 1, 69–89.

Kelly, A. (1986). The development of children's attitudes to science: A longitudinal study. *European Journal of Science Education*, 8, 399–412.

Kelly, A. (Ed.). (1987). *Science for girls*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1981). *The action research planner*. Victoria: Deakins University Press.

Kerlinger, F. N. (1970). *Foundations of behavioral research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Kierkegaard, S. (1974). *Concluding unscientific postscript*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kieran, C. (1999). Participation in research by people with learning disability: Origins and issues. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27(2), 43–47.

Kiernan, C., Jordan, R., & Saunders, C. (1978). *Starting off*. London: Souvenir Press.

Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages* (Vol. 2). New York: Harper & Row.

Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.

Lacey, C. (1970). *Hightown drama*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lane, H. (1976). *The wild boy of Aveyron*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lane, H. (1979). Paper read to the Little Commonwealth Committee after the Rawlinson Inquiry. In W. Eycken (Ed.). (1973). *Education, the child and society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Limited.

Langdon-Down, J. (1866). Lecture at London Hospital. In L. Kanner. (1968). *A history of the cure and study of the mentally retarded*. Illinois: C. C. Thomas.

Lansdown, G. (1994). Children's rights. In B. Mayall (Ed.), *Children's childhoods; observed and experienced*. London: Falmer Press.

Lansdown, G. (1995). *Taking part: Children's participation in decision making*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Le Moncheck, L. (1985). *Dehumanizing women: Treating persons as sex objects*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.

Levin, I. (1994). Children's perceptions of their families. In J. Brannen & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Childhood and parenthood: Proceedings of the International Sociological*

Association Committee for family Research Conference. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Lewis, A. (1992). Group child interviews as a research tool. *British Educational Research Journal*, 18, 413–432.

Light, P., & Blaye, A. (1991). Computer-based learning: The social dimensions. In P. Light, S. Sheldon & M. Woodhead (Eds.), *Child development in social context 2: Learning to think* (pp. 205–218). London: Routledge.

Light, P., & Perret-Clermont, A. (1991). Social context effects in learning and testing. In P. Light, S. Sheldon & M. Woodhead (Eds.), *Child development in social context 2: Learning to think* (pp. 136–150). London: Routledge.

Lin, N. (1976). *Foundations of social research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Llewellyn, A., & Hogan, K. (2000). The use and abuse of models of disability. *Disability and Society*, 15(1), 157–165.

Lovell, K., & Lawson, K. S. (1970). *Understanding research in education*. London: University of London Press Limited.

Mackay, R. W. (1991). Conceptions of children and models of socialisation. In F. C. Waksler (Ed.), *Studying the social worlds of children: Sociological readings*. London: Falmer Press.

MacPhail, A. (2001). Nominal group technique: A useful method for working with young people. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(2), 161–170.

- Mahon, A., & Glendinning, C. (1996). Researching children: Methods and ethics. *Children and Society, 10*, 145–158.
- Mandell, N. (1991). The least adult role in studying children. In F. C. Waksler (Eds.), *Studying the social worlds of children: Sociological readings*. London: Falmer Press.
- Manwaring, G. (1998). Nominal group technique. In J. Harvey, *Evaluation cookbook* (pp. 44–45). Edinburgh: Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative, Heriot Watt University.
- Mauther, M. (1997). Methodological aspects of collecting data from children. *Children and Society, 11*, 16–28.
- March, J., Steingold, B., Justice, S., & Mitchell, P. (1997). Follow the yellow brick road: People with learning difficulties as co-researchers. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 25*, 77–80.
- Marchant, R., & Page, M. (1997). *Bridging the gap: Child protection work with children with multiple disabilities*. London: NSPCC.
- Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1999). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press.
- Maynall, B. (Ed.). (1994). *Children's childhoods observed and experienced*. London: Falmer Press.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: Chicago Press.
- Mehan, H. (1973). Assessing children's school performance. In Dreitzel, H. P. (Ed.), *Recent sociology Volume 5, Childhood and socialisation*. London: Collier MacMillan.

- Menke, E. M. (1987). The impact of a child's chronic illness on school-aged siblings. *Children's Health Care, 15*, 132–140.
- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merton, R. K., & Kendall, P. L. (1946). The focused interview. *American Journal of Sociology, 51*, 541–557.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Minick, B. A., & School, B. A. (1982). The IEP process: Can computers help? *Academic Therapy, 18*, 41–48.
- Minkes, J., Robinson, C., & Weston, C. (1994). Consulting the children: Interviews with children using residential respite care services. *Disability and Society, 9*(1), 47–57.
- Mishler, E. G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review, 60*, 415–442.
- Moore, C. M. (1987). Group techniques for idea building. *Applied Social Research Methods Series, 9*. London: Sage.
- Morgan, D. L. (1988). Focus groups as qualitative research. *Qualitative Research Methods Series, 16*. London: Sage.
- Morris, J. (1991). *Pride against prejudice: Transforming attitudes towards disability*. London: Women's Press.

Morris, J. (1996). *Encounters with strangers: Feminism and disability*. London: Women's Press.

Morris, J. (1998). *Still missing?* London: Who Cares Trust.

Morrow, B., & Richards, M. (1996). The ethics of social research with children: An overview. *Children and Society*, 10, 90–105.

Moseley, C. (1988). *What work means: People with severe disabilities in the work place*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse: Syracuse University.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mulford, W., Watson, H. J., & Vallee, J. (1980). *Structured experiences and group development*. Canberra: Canberra Curriculum Development Centre.

Newell, P. (1983). *ACE special education handbook: The new law on children with special needs*. London: Advisory Centre for Education.

Nias, J. (1988). Introduction. In J. Nias. & S. Groundwater-Smith (Eds.), *The enquiring teacher: Supporting and sustaining teacher research*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Nind, M., & Hewett, D. (1994). *Access to communication: Developing the basics of communication with people with severe learning difficulties through intensive interaction*. London: David Fulton.

Nisbet, J., & Broadfoot, P. (1980). *The impact of research on politics and practice in education*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

Nugent, P., & Fauchatte, N. (1995). Marginalized voices: Constructions of and responses to physical education and grading practices by students categorised as

gifted or learning disabled. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 14(4), 418–430.

Oakley, A. (1985). *The sociology of housework*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

O'Brien, J., & O'Brien, C. (1998). *A little book about person-centred planning*. Toronto: Inclusion Press.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). (1995). *Guidance on the inspection of special schools*. London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). (1997). *The SEN code of practice: Two years on*. London: HMSO.

Oliver, M. (1990). *The politics of disablement*. London: Macmillan.

Oliver, M. (1991). From disabling to supportive environments. In M. Oliver, (Ed.), *Research highlights in social work: Disabling people and disabling environments* (pp. 13–18). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Oliver, M. (1992). Changing the social relations of research production? *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 7(2), 101–114.

Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding disability from theory to practice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Oliver, M., & Sapey, B. (1999). *Social work with disabled people* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan.

O'Neil, M. J. (1981). Nominal group technique: An evaluation data collection process for initiating curriculum development. *Evaluation newsletter*, 5(2), 44–60.

O'Neil, M. J., & Jackson, L. (1983). Nominal group technique: A process for initiating curriculum development in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 8, 129–138.

Opie, I., & Opie, P. (1969). *Children's gangs in street and playground*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oswin, M. (1971). *The empty hours: A study of weekend life of handicapped children in institutions*. London: Allen Lane.

Parahoo, K. (1997). *Nursing research: Principles, process and issues*. London: MacMillan.

Parlett, M., & Hamilton, D. (1997). Evaluation as illumination. In D. Hamilton (Eds.), *Beyond the number game*. London: MacMillan Education.

Parnes, S. J., & Meadow, A. (1959). Effects of 'brainstorming' instructions on creative problem solving by trained and untrained subjects. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 50, 171–176.

Parsons, T. (1951). *The social system*. New York: Free Press.

Patton, M. O. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

People First. (1994). *Outside but not inside. . . yet*. London: People First of London Borough, Instrument House, 207–15 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DB.

Perry, W. G. (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams, and imitation in childhood*. New York: Norton.

Piaget, J. (1972). Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood. *Human development, 15*, 1–12.

Piaget, J. (1973) *The psychology of intelligence*. Totowa, NJ: Littlefield and Adams.

Piattelli-Palmarini, M. (1980). *Language and learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pijl, S. J., De Graaf, S., & Emanuelsson, I. (1998). The function of individual educational programs in special education: A discussion premise. *European Journal of special Needs Education, 3*(2), 63–73.

Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of life*. London: Allen & Onwin.

Popkewitz, T. S. (1984). *Paradigm and ideology in educational research: The social functions of the intellectual*. London: Falmer.

Poplin, M. S. (1988b). Holistic/constructivist principles of the teaching/learning process: Implications for the field of learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21*(7), 401–416.

Poplin, M. S. (1995). Looking through other lenses and listening to other voices: Stretching the boundaries of learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 28*(7), 392–398.

Potts, P. (1984). *E241 Special needs in education: Unit 9 Origins*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.

Potts, P. (1982). *E241 Special needs in education: Unit 9 Origins*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Powell, M. P., & Vacha-Haase, T. (1994). Issues related to research with children: What counselling psychologists need to know. *The Counselling Psychologist, 22*(3), 444–453.

- Prendergast, S. (1994). *This is the time to grow up: Girls' experiences of menstruation in school*. (2nd ed.). London: Family Planning Association.
- Priestley, M. (1998). Constructions and creations: Idealism, materialism and disability theory. *Disability and Society*, 13(1), 75–95.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee. (1929). *Wood Committee*. London: HMSO.
- Rettinger, V., Waters, W., & Poplin, M. S. (1989). Constructing a response to responses. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 28(7), 425–438.
- Riddell, S., Wilkinson, H., & Baron, S. (1998). From emancipatory research to focus groups: People with learning difficulties and the research process. In P. Clough & L. Barton (Eds.), *Articulating with difficulty: Research voices in inclusive education* (pp. 78–95). London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Ritala-Koskinen, A. (1994). Children and the construction of close relationships: How to find out the children's point of view. In J. Brannen & M. O'Brien. (Eds.), *Childhood and parenthood: Proceedings of the International Sociological Association Committee for Family Research Conferences*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Roberts, D., Flynn, M., & Hirst, M. (1988). *Development and piloting of an interview schedule for use with young people with mental handicap*. Working paper DHSS 483 10/88, Social Policy Research Unit. York: University of York.
- Roberts, H. (1991). *Doing feminist research*. London: Routledge.

Robinson, C., & Stalker, K. (Eds.). (1998). *Growing up with disability*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Rodger, S. (1995). Individual education plans revisited: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 42(3), 221–239.

Rodger, S., Sigafos, J., & Ziviani, J. (1998). Quality and implementation of individual education programs (IEPS). *International Journal of Special Education*, 13(1), 60–75.

Rodgers, C.R., & Stevens, B. (1967). *Person to person: The problem of being human*. London: Souvenir Press.

Rogoff, B., Gauvain, M., & Ellis, S. (1991). Development viewed in its cultural context. In P. Light, S. Sheldon & M. Woodhead (Eds.), *Child development in social context 2: Learning to think* (pp. 292–339). London: Routledge.

Ross, D. M., & Ross, S. A. (1984). The importance of the type of question, psychological climate and subject set in interviewing children about pain. *Pain* 19, 71–79.

Rotheram-Borus, M. J., & Koopman, C. (1994). Protecting children's rights in AIDS research. In B. Stanley & J. E. Siber (Eds.), *Social research on children and adolescents*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb etc., of the United Kingdom. (1889). *Egerton Commission, Parliamentary Papers XIX, XX*.

- Russell, P. (1995). *Positive choices: Services for children with disabilities living away from home*. London: Council for Disabled Children.
- Ryan, J., & Thomas, F. (1985). Mental handicap: The historical background. In W. Swann. (Ed.), *The practice of special education* (pp. 80 –92). Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited.
- Sanderson, H. (1998). A say in my future: Involving people with profound and multiple disabilities in person centred planning. In L. Ward (Ed.), *Innovations in advocacy and empowerment for people with intellectual disabilities* (pp. 161–182). Chorley, Lancashire: Lisieux Hall Publishers.
- Sanderson, H., Kennedy, J., & Ritchie, P. (1997). *People, plans, and possibilities: Exploring person-centered planning*. Edinburgh: SHS, Ltd.
- Sapsford, R. (1984). *D307 Social psychology: Development, experiences and behaviour in a social world: Metablock paper 3: Levels of analysis*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Sapsford, R. (1984). *D307 Social psychology: Development, experiences and behaviour in a social world: Metablock paper 6: Research methods*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- SCCC. (1993). *Support for learning: Special educational needs within the 5–14 curriculum*. Dundee: SCCC.
- Schaffer, H. R. (1977). *Mothering*. London: Open Books/Fontana.
- Scottish Office. (1998). *Special needs in Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.
- Scottish Office Education Department. (1991). *The framework for national testing in session 1991–92*. Edinburgh: Scottish Office Education Department.

Scottish Office Education Department. (1994). *Effective provision for special educational needs: A report by HM Inspectors of schools*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.

Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID). (1996). (Circular 4/96, 1996) *Children and young persons with special educational needs: Assessment and recording*.

Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID). (1996b). *Improving achievements in Scottish schools: A report to the secretary of state for Scotland*. Edinburgh: SOEID.

Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID). (1998). *A manual of good practice in special educational needs*. Edinburgh: The Stationary Office.

Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1973). Cognitive consequences of formal and informal education. *Science*, 182, 553–559.

Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Seguin, E. (1846). *Traitement moral, hygiène et éducation des idiots et des autres enfants arriérés*. Paris: Baillière.

Seguin, E. (1866). *Idiocy and its treatment by the physiological method*. New York: Albany-Brandon Printing Company.

Shakespeare, T., Gillespie-Sells, K., & Davies, D. (1996). *The sexual politics of disability*. London: Cassell.

- Sherif, C. (1982, January–February). Should there be a feminist methodology? *Newsletter of the Association for Women in Psychology*, 3–4.
- Short, G. (1988). Children's grasp of controversial issues. In B. Carrington & B. Troyna (Eds.), *Children and controversial issues*. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Shuttleworth, G. (1895). *Mentally deficient children: Their treatment and training*. London: H. K. Lewis.
- Sieber, J. (1993). The ethics and politics of sensitive research. In C. Renzetti & R. M. Lee (Eds.), *Researching sensitive topics*. London: Sage.
- Sigafoos, J., Kigner, J., Holt, K., Doss, S., & Mustonen, T. (1991). Improving the quality of written developmental policies for adults with intellectual disabilities. *British Journal of Mental Subnormality*, 37, 35–36.
- Sigafoos, J., Elkins, J., Couzens, D., Gunn, S., Roberts, D., & Kerr, M. (1993). Analysis of IEP goals and classroom activities for children with multiple disabilities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 8, 99–105.
- Sigelman, C., Budd, E., Spenhil, C., & Schoenrock, C. (1981). When in doubt say yes: Acquiescence in interviews with mentally retarded persons. *Mental Retardation*, April, 53–58.
- Sigelman, C., Schoenrock, C., Winer, H., Spenhil, C., Romas, L., Martin, P., Budd, E., & Bensberg C. (1981b). Issues in interviewing mentally retarded persons: An empirical study. In C. Bruininks, B. Sigford & K. Lakin (Eds.), *Deinstitutionalization and community adjustment of mentally retarded people*. Washington, DC: Monograph No. 4, American Association of Mental Deficiency.
- Sinclair, R. (1996). Editorial. *Children and Society*, 10, 87–89.

Sinha, C. (1985). The role of psychological research in special education. In W. Swann (Ed.), *The practice of special education* (pp. 400–417). Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited.

Smith, H. W. (1975). *Strategies of social research: The methodological imagination*. London: Prentice-Hall.

Smith, S. W. (1990b). Individualised education programs (IEPs) in special education: From intent to acquiescence. *Exceptional Children*, 56, 6–14.

Solity, J. (1993). *Special education*. London: Cassell.

Somekh, B. (1995). The contribution of action research to development in social endeavours: A position paper on action research methodology. *British Educational Research Journal*, 21(3), 339–355.

Sommer, R., & Wicker, A. W. (1991). Gas station psychology: The case for specialisation in ecological psychology. *Environment and Behaviour*, 23, 131–149.

Special Educational Needs Unit. (2002). *Children's participation*. Edinburgh: Pupil Support and Inclusion Division.

Spencer, J. R., & Flin, R. (1991). *The evidence of children*. Blackstone Press.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stalker, K. (2002, November, 11). *An overview of transition issues: From research into practice*. Paper presented at the conference of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Pavilion Scotland, Hurling into a void? What works for young disabled people and their families, Thistle Hotel, Glasgow.

Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London: Heinemann.

Stenhouse, L. (1979). *What is action research?* Norwich: C. A. R. E. University of East Anglia.

Stevens, O. (1982). *Children talking politics: Political learning in childhood*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Stevens, R., & Sapsford, R. (1984). Paper 5: The significance of meaning. In R. Stevens (Ed.), *D307 Social psychology: Development, experience and behaviour in a social world: Metablock* (pp. 85–92). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Stevens, R., & Sapsford, R. (1984). Paper 7: The construction of reality. In R. Stevens (Ed.), *D307 Social psychology: Development, experience and behaviour in a social world: Metablock* (pp. 100–109). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Stevenson, R., & Noffke, S. (1995). *Educational action research: Becoming practically critical*. London: Teachers College Press.

Steward, M. S., Bussey, K., Goodman, G. S., & Saywitz, K. J. (1993). Implications of developmental research for interviewing children. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 17(1), 25–37.

Stone, E., & Priestley, M. (1996). Parasites, pawns and partners: Disability research and the role of non-disabled researchers. *British Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), 699–716.

Streubert, H. J., & Carpenter, D. R. (Eds.). (1995). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanist imperative*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

- Stuart, O. W. (1992). Race and disability: Just a double oppression? *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 7(2), 177–88.
- Sutherland, G. (1985). The origins of special education. In W. Swann, (Ed.). *The practice of special education* (pp. 93–101). Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited.
- Swann, W. (1984). *The practice of special education*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited.
- Tackett, P., Kerr, N., & Helmstader, G. (1990). Stresses as perceived by children with physical disabilities and their mothers. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 56(3) 30–34.
- Tanner, H. (1989). Managing perceptions through action research: Introducing investigations and problem solving – a case study. *School Organisation*, 9(2), 261–269.
- Thomas, C. (1999). *Female forms: Experiencing and understanding disability*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Thomas, C. (2002). Disability theory: Key ideas, issues and thinkers. In C. Barnes, M. Oliver & L. Barton (Eds.), *Disability studies today* (pp. 38–57). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Thomas, C. (2002). The “disabled” body. In M. Evans & E. Lee (Eds.), *Real bodies: A sociological introduction* (pp. 64–77). Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Thomas, C., & Corker, M. (2002). A journey around the social model. In M. Corker & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Disability/Postmodernity : Embodying disability theory* (pp. 18–31). London: Continuum.
- Thomas, N., & O’Kane, C. (1998). The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children and Society*, 12, 336–348.

Thompson, R. A. (1992). Developmental changes in research risk and benefit: A changing calculus of concerns. In B. Stanley & J. E. Sieber. *Social research on children and adolescents: Ethical issues*. London: Sage.

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Tisdall, E. K. M. (1996). Are young disabled people being sufficiently involved in their post-school planning? Case studies of Scotland's future needs assessment and Ontario's educational-vocational meetings. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 11*(1), 17–32.

Titchen, A. (1995). Issues of validity in action research. *Nurse Researcher, 2*(3), 38–48.

Titerton, M. (1992). Managing threats to social welfare: The search for a new paradigm of welfare. *Journal of Social Policy, 21*(1), 1–23.

Tod, J. (1999). IEPs: Inclusive educational practices? *Support for Learning, 14*(4), 184–189.

Tod, J., Castle, F., & Blamires, M. (1998). *Individual education plans: Implementing effective practice*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Todd, R. W. (no date). *Why do action research*. Retrieved February 15, 2005 from URL.http://www.philselfsupport.com/why_ar.htm

Tredgold, A. (1908). *Mental deficiency – Amerntia*. London: Bailliere, Tindal and Cox.

- Tregaskis, C. (2002). Social model theory: The story so far... *Disability and Society*, 17(4), 457–470.
- Tremblay, M. (1957). The key informant technique: A non-ethnographic application. *American Anthropologist*, 59, 688–698.
- Treseder, P. (1997). *Empowering children and young people: Training manual promoting involvement in decision making*. London: Save the Children.
- Tresiliotis, J., Borland, M., Hill, M., & Lamnert, C. (1995). *Teenagers and the social work services*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Tripp, D. H. (1990). Socially critical action research. *Theory into practice*, 24(3), 158–166.
- Tuckman, B. W. (1972). *Conducting educational research*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Turiel, E. (1989). Social constructionism as a social construction? In W. Damon (Eds.), *Child development today and tomorrow*. London: Jossey Bass.
- Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). (1975). *Fundamental principles of disability*. London: UPIAS.
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations. (1993). *The UN standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1983). *Convention on the rights of the child: Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989*. London: HMSO.

Van de Ven, A. H., & Delbecq, A. (1972). The nominal group as a research instrument for exploratory health studies. *Exploratory Health Studies*, 337–342.

Vulliamy, G., & Webb, R. (1991). Teacher research and educational change: An empirical study. *British Educational Research Journal*, 17, 219–236.

Vulliamy, G., & Webb, R. (1992). *Teacher research and special educational needs*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Vulliamy, G., & Webb, R. (1992). The influence of teacher research: Process or product? *Educational Review*, 44, 41–58.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1966). Genesis of the higher mental functions. In P. Light, S. Sheldon & M. Woodhead (Eds.), *Child development in social context 2: Learning to think* (pp.32–42). London: Routledge.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wales, R. (1992). Children's pictures. In R. Grieve & M. Hughes (Eds.), *Understanding Children* (pp. 140–156). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Walkerdine, V., & Sinha, C. (1978). The eternal triangle: Language, reasoning and the social context. In I. Markova (Eds.), *The social context of language*. New York: John Wiley.

Walmsley, J. (2001). Normalisation, emancipatory research and inclusive research in learning disability. *Disability and Society*, 16(2), 187–205.

Ward, L. (1997). *Seen and heard: Involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects*. York: The Joseph Rowntree Association.

Wartofsky, M. (1980). The child's construction of the world and the world's construction of the child. In F. S. Kessel & A. Siegel (Eds.), *The child and other cultural inventions*. New York: Praeger.

Watson, J. (1996). *Reflection through interaction*. London: Falmer Press.

Watson, J., & Fish, A. (1997). Evaluating the effectiveness of intensive interaction in teaching pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties. *British Journal of Special Education*, 24(2), 80–87.

Watts, A. F., & Slater, A. F. (1950). *First interim report on the allocation of primary school leavers to courses of secondary education*. Windsor: NFER.

Watts, M., & Ebbut, D. (1987). More than the sum of the parts: Research methods in group interviewing. *British Educational Research Journal*, 13, 25–34.

Webb, R. (1990a). The origins and aspirations of practitioner research. In R. Webb (Ed.), *Practitioner research in the primary school*. London: Falmer Press.

Weiner, B. (1979). A motivational theory for some classroom experiences. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71, 3–25.

Westcott, H., & Jones, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Perspectives on the memorandum: Policy, practice and research in investigative interviewing*. Aldershot: Arena.

Wilkinson, J. (1989). "Being there" ; A way to evaluate life quality, starting with a person's feelings and daily experience. In A. Brechin, & J. Swain. (Eds.). *Making connections; Reflecting on the lives and experiences of people with learning difficulties*. London: Hodder & Stoughton

Williams, P. & Tyne, A. (1988). Exploring values as a basis for service development. In D. Towell (Ed.), *An ordinary life in practice: Developing comprehensive community-based services for people with learning disabilities*. London: King's Fund.

Williamson, H., & Butler, I. (1994). Children speak: Perspectives on their social worlds. In J. Brannen & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Childhood and parenthood: Proceedings of the International Sociological Association Committee for Family Research Conference*. London: Institute of Education University of London.

Wood, S., & Shears, B. (1986). *Teaching children with severe learning difficulties: A radical reappraisal*. London: Croom Helm.

Woodhead, M. (1990). Psychology and the cultural construction of children's needs. In A. James & A. Prout, (Eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London: The Falmer Press.

Zarb, G. (1992). On the road to Damascus: First steps towards changing the social relations of research production. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 7(2), 125–138.

Zarb, G., & Oliver, M. (1992) *Ageing with a disability: The dimensions of need*. London: Thames Polytechnic.

Zastrow, C., & Navarre, R. (1977). The nominal group: A new tool for making social work education relevant. *Journal of Education for Social Work*, 13, 112–118.

APPENDIX A: LETTERS OF CONSENT

Dear Sir

I am currently employed with the region as the integrating teacher for children with special needs at Bennoch Primary School, Langside. I am also studying part-time for a PhD at Strathclyde University, Glasgow. My thesis is concerned with increasing the involvement of children with special needs, within a department of education, in the IEP process.

Therefore I am writing to ask your permission to carry out some action research at the above mentioned school. The first cycle of my study involves designing and piloting a structured interview (enclosed) to ascertain the extent of the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. Using this information, I hope to compile a workbook for the children with the aim of increasing their knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. I will monitor this strategy by using a control and experimental group. Further cycles of the research are likely to involve modifications to the workbook, analysis of IEP documents and interviews with the staff, both group and individual, to develop and monitor strategies to increase pupil involvement in target setting and IEP meetings.

I am aware of the ethical issues involved with such a study, and should you grant me permission to go ahead with the study, I will obtain the consent of the head teacher, the department head, the teachers, parents and children involved and observe strict confidentiality at all times.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Haddow

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you know, I am the integrating teacher for children with special needs at Bennoch Primary School, Langside. However, I am also studying part-time for a PhD at Strathclyde University, Glasgow. My thesis is concerned with increasing the involvement of children with special needs, within a department of education, in the IEP process.


































Therefore I am writing to ask your permission to involve your child in some action research at the above mentioned school. The first cycle of my study involves designing and piloting a structured interview (enclosed) to ascertain the extent of the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. Using this information, I hope to compile a workbook for the children with the aim of increasing their knowledge and understanding of the IEP process. I will monitor this strategy by using a control and experimental group. Further cycles of the research are likely to involve modifications to the workbook, analysis of IEP documents and interviews with the staff, both group and individual, to develop and monitor strategies to increase pupil involvement in target setting and IEP meetings.

I am aware of the ethical issues involved with such a study, and I have obtained permission from Fife Council, the head teacher, the department head and the teachers in the school. I will also obtain consent from the children themselves and observe strict confidentiality at all times. If you have any objections to your child's involvement in this study, please inform me via your child's diary.


































Yours faithfully

Sarah Haddow

APPENDIX B: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR PUPILS (PILOT STUDY)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Have you heard of an IEP? |  |  |  |
| 2. Do you know what it is? |  |  |  |
| 3. Do you know that you have an IEP? |  |  |  |
| 4. Have you seen it? |  |  |  |
| 5. Has anyone ever talked to you about it? |  |  |  |
| 6. Do you know what your targets are? |  |  |  |
| 7. Did anyone ask you how you felt about these targets? |  |  |  |
| 8. Did anyone ask you if you had any targets of your own that you would like to be included? |  |  |  |
| 9. How do you feel about the targets that have been set for you? |  |  |  |
| 10. Do you think they are good targets for you? |  |  |  |
| 11. Are they helpful for your concerns/worries? |  |  |  |
| 12. Are they | too hard | just about right | too easy |
| 13. Do you think you will be able to achieve your targets? | | | |
| 14. How do you work on your targets? | | | |
| 15. Who helps you? | | | |

APPENDIX C: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR PUPILS

1. Have you heard of an IEP or an Individual Educational Programme?   
2. Do you know what it is?   
3. Do you know that you have an IEP?   
4. Have you seen it?   
5. Has anyone ever talked to you about it?   
6. Do you know what your targets are?   
7. Did anyone ask you how you felt about these targets?   
8. Did anyone ask you if you had any targets of your own that you would like to be included?   
9. How do you feel about the targets that have been set for you?   
10. Do you think they are good targets for you?   
11. Are they helpful for your concerns/worries?   
12. Are they too hard too easy
just about right
13. Do you think you will be able to achieve your targets?
14. How do you work on your targets?
15. Who helps you?

**APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF NOTES ON OBSERVED
BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN DURING THE STRUCTURED
INTERVIEW**

Question No.	Pupil Response	Researcher's Notes / Comments	Researcher's Interpretation	Score
1	☹	Pupil shakes his head.	☹	0
2	☹	Pupil shakes his head.	☹	0
3	☹	Pupils says "no".	☹	0
4	☹	Pupil shrugs shoulders then shakes his head.	☹	0
5	☹	Pupil says "no".	☹	0
6	☺	Pupil responds "to be good behaved"	☹	0
7	☹	Pupil says "no".	☹	0
8	☺	Pupil says "yeah". From observation teacher involves children in writing of a weekly P.S.D. target.	☺	2
9	☺	Pupil nods head.	☺	2
10	☺	Pupil nods head.	☺	2
11	☺	Pupil shrugs shoulders interpreted as he doesn't know.	☺	1
12	Just about right	Pupil says "just about right".	-	-
13	☺	Pupils says "sometimes"	☺	1
14	Not sure	Pupil doesn't respond, interpreted as not sure or	-	-

		doesn't know.		
15	No response	Prompted by names of teachers and auxiliaries in class and he responded "sometimes." When asked about parent, responded "nut"	-	-

Researcher Scores

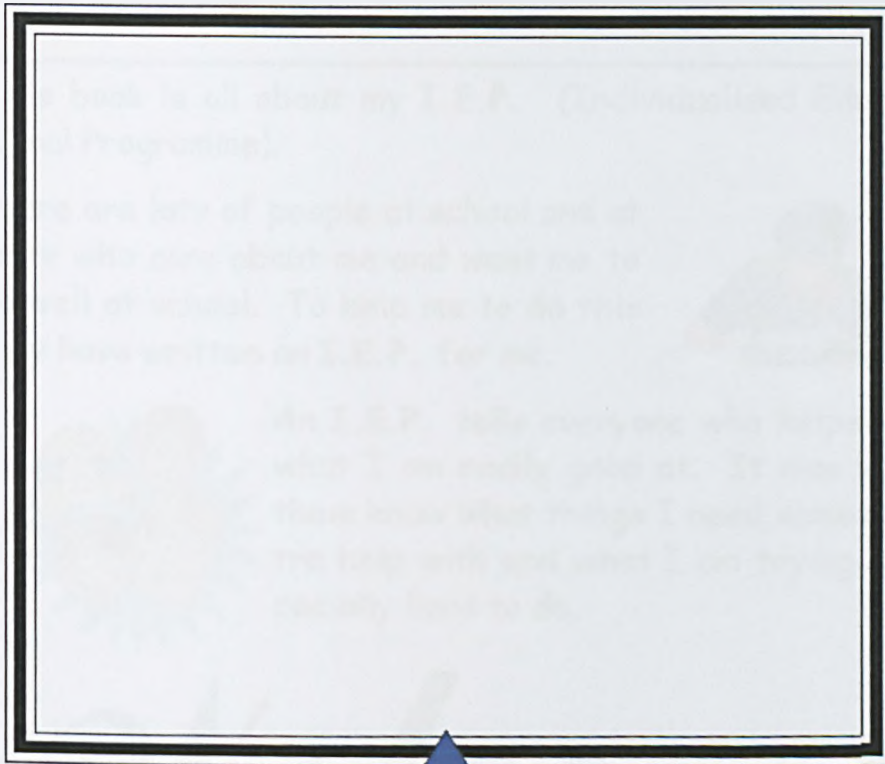
Total questions 1-5: **0**

Total questions 6 – 11, 13: **8**

Overall Total: **8**

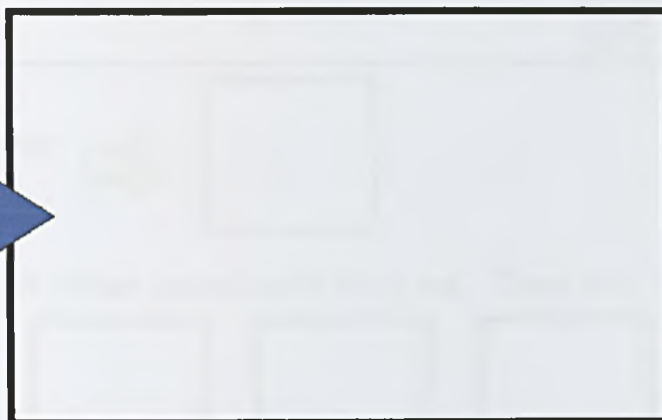
My I.E.P.

(Pupil Version)



This is me

This is my school.



This book is all about my I.E.P. (Individualised Educational Programme).

There are lots of people at school and at home who care about me and want me to do well at school. To help me to do this they have written an I.E.P. for me.



An I.E.P. tells everyone who helps me what I am really good at. It also lets them know what things I need some extra help with and what I am trying especially hard to do.

Welcome
to my I.E.P.



Me and my strengths



I am in room ____.

This is my teacher

_____.



There are lots of other people who help me. They are:

There are some things in school I am really **BRILLIANT** at!
I am really good at:



We do many exciting things in school.

I enjoy :



Worries and concerns



Sometimes I get worried at school. I worry about:



The people who look after me at home worry about me too. They worry about:

Sometimes my teachers worry about me. The things that concern them most about me are:





My work



My family and my teachers want me to do well at school and work hard. My teacher wants me to try especially hard to:

⇒

⇒

⇒



I will have to learn how to do these things by moving towards them in small steps. These small steps are called **targets**.



My targets are:





My strategies



It is very difficult to achieve a target but there are **strategies** I can use to help me. These are:



- ☞
- ☞
- ☞
- ☞
- ☞



Here are some of the ways in which my teachers are going to help me:

- ☞
- ☞
- ☞
- ☞
- ☞



My achievements



Each time I do well at trying to achieve my target I get a tick in my book.

Date started: _____ Date completed: _____

Target: _____

Week be- ginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Week be- ginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Week be- ginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Week be- ginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday



Stickers



I have been awarded lots of stickers. I have taken them home. The words on them are important. Here are the words on some of the stickers.

Words on Stickers	Date



Certificates



I have been awarded lots of certificates too. I have taken them home. Here are copies of some of them.

- How do you think the IEP workbook has supported the children's learning and understanding of the IEP process?
 - Learning objectives
 - How well understood as they progress
 - Parents' experience
- Having worked through the IEP workbook with the children, are there any alternative activities or resources that you would prefer for future workbooks?
 - Learning objectives
 - Activities
 - Progress
- How could children become more involved in making decisions?
 - Would the IEP workbook be used as a prompt for the IEP?
 - Does the structure present in the workbook need to be changed?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHER OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

- Could you tell me about how you came to be a DSE teacher?
 - Experience of working with children with special needs
 - Qualifications

- How do you think the IEP workbook has increased the children's knowledge and understanding of the IEP process?
 - know their targets
 - more involvement in their targets
 - greater motivation

- Having worked through the IEP workbook with the children, are there any alterations, additions or improvements you would make for future workbooks?
 - access to targets
 - recording
 - strategies

- How could children become more involved in review meetings?
 - could the IEP workbook be used as a prompt for the child?
 - Does the structure/format of the meetings have to be changed?

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX G: WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM TEACHER OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

1. Main stream teacher. Taught from P1-P7 until I left to have family.

• When I returned to teaching, I taught in learning support. I worked among 3 schools. While in learning support, I completed the diploma for pupils without a Row.

I missed having my own class, so applied for the first available job at Benarty J.S.E. I have taught here for 10 years, with a secondment for a year in Behaviour support.

• Qualifications,

J.P.S.E (NON-RECORDING PUPILS, PRIMARY)

CERTIFICATE IN AUTISM

DIP. IN PRIMARY TEACHING

CERTIFICATE IN INFANT TEACHING

2 YEARS ON DYSLEXIA COURSE

2. It helps the children to share in our expectations. At one time, IEPs were a complete secret to the child.

When the child knows his target, it often motivates him to reach it. It gives him the opportunity to

discuss how they are going to reach it
& to discuss any problems arising.

Behaviour targets are often successful
because the child can focus on
one particular behaviour at one time.

3. Have recently started displaying
targets on wall - boxes;



I have
started
my target

I am nearly
there

I can do it!

When target is met, it can go
in wallet or back of assessment
folder. Children can write their own
target if appropriate. 1 target for
each of 3 areas; Reading, Maths/Number,

P.S.E.

4. Think IEP w/book would work
well as a prompt.

• Talking mats

• Would like structure/format to
be more child centred.

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Introduction

Hello you all know me, Miss Haddow. Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study. I am studying part-time with Strathclyde University for my PhD. My study is concerned with raising pupils involvement in the I.E.P. process and targets. As part of my study I am interviewing groups of children about their I.E.Ps and targets. Hence this interview to-day.

Explain how it is important to capture their words and ideas, therefore I would like to use a tape recorder to record the interview. Explain how the information on the tapes will be transcribed and then the tapes erased. Inform the participants that they will not be identified by name, pseudonyms will be used, and that any information which might reveal who they are will also be changed. Ask their permission to tape record interview. Tell them that the tape recorder can be turned off at any time during the interview, if they so wish. Also let them know that I might take notes during the interview in order to keep track of the interview as it progresses.

Ask if they have any questions for me. Turn on tape recorder. Test.

Introductions

1. Have you shared your I.E.P. book or targets with anyone?

- Friends, other school staff, parents

2. Does knowing your targets help you to learn? Why?

- Provides focus
- Provides a goal to reach
- Gives point to learning

3. How do you record your targets?

- Where are they written?
- Who writes them down?

4. How do you use your targets?

- Do you look at them at the start / middle / end of lessons?
- Are they measurable eg do you collect ticks / smiley faces?

5. How are your targets evaluated?

- Do you evaluate them or you teacher?
- Do you do this alone / in groups / with teacher?
- How do you record your evaluations? eg faces, comments.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Switch off tape. Thank interviewees.

APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Interview 1: Peter, Fran, Judy, Lorna, Susan

Interviewer: Have you ever shared your targets with anyone maybe at home or with friends at school?

Fran: I share them in class we tell each other what the target is this week and how we expect to achieve it.

Interviewer: So Mrs White gives you a time to do this?

Susan: Yeah in the morning she gives us time to do it.

Interviewer: Is this every day?

Susan: No every Friday we put what we wrote and every Monday we just put our new target in

Peter: And she'll like put a comment about how well we've passed our target

Judy: I usually talk to my Mum at home about it and like tell her if I've succeeded it or not

Interviewer: So your mum's interested in it?

Judy: uh hu

Interviewer: Does anyone else talk to their mum or dad at home?

Susan: I talk to my mum and dad too at home and my mum says how did you get on with your target and I say well I got half way to it and I nearly got it the next day.

Peter: Well I like tell her what I've been learning and everything and how you like learn it by targets and everything.

Interviewer: Lorna, what about you?

Lorna: I usually just share them in the playground with my friends and sometimes with Judy.

Interviewer: Em Do you share them with anybody else in the school? Mrs Wilkinson or any other people who come into help?

Fran: I sometimes do

Lorna: I share them with Mrs Dudgeon

Judy: So do I

Susan: I remember in ma maths group Miss Haddow used to do it She used to say our targets everyday to us and so does Mrs Malcolm.

Interviewer: Do you think knowing what your targets are helps you to learn?

Peter: Yes 'cos it focuses you on that target and you ken that your working for that and you try and aim for the best for that target

Susan: And your reaching for your own target and not other peoples

Fran: You know what the weeks going to be all about, what you're trying to do every single day

Peter: You know what you're learning and you dinnae need to focus on everything just that one main target

Fran: Or if you look back at them you ken you've done that thing

Interviewer: So you can see how much you can do?

Group: Mmm

Interviewer: So if your Mum says to you before you would have said what were you doing at school, Och nothing much but now when she says what were you doing at school you can tell her all the things that you've been doing.

Group: Mmm

Interviewer: So do you think it maybe helps you to learn quicker?

Group: Yeah

Susan: A lot quicker

Judy: It makes you want to focus on one thing than thinking about other things and you're like I have to manage this so you just try more

Interviewer: So it helps you focus on one thing at a time?

Fran: It makes you feel better thinking you've got a target to reach than just not having a target, that just makes you muck about

Interviewer: So when you've got a target you've achieved it makes you feel good?

Fran: Mmm hmm

Interviewer: How do you record your targets? Do you write them down?

Fran: We write them down on our time table, we've got a space for them there.

Peter: We've got a time table it's got pupil target, pupil comment and teachers comment. Well like you put the target at pupil target And then you put how much you've improved with that target then the teacher comes and tells you how she thinks you've improved and we keep them in a plastic wallet.

Interviewer: What were you going to say Lorna?

Lorna: The same as Fran

Interviewer: Do you decide on your target on your timetable?

Lorna: Sometimes

Susan: Well it depends if you want like your maths or something if you want like to try reaching know how you do tens thousands and thousands and hundreds and things.

Interviewer: So do you have more than one target each week?

Group: Sometimes

- Fran: Well we have one for maths most of the time and one for the whole week for the class
- Susan: Then we have one for writing
- Fran: We've got that stuck in our writing jotters
- Interviewer: Right so Judy can you tell me about the target is that mainly behaviour on your time table?
- Judy: It's personal choice Em usually I write about maths I'm not really confident in it. It helps my confidence as well cos I've managed to do stuff I didn't think I could.
- Interviewer: Where do you put your maths targets?
- Judy: You could just like write it in your normal target for the week as well but you usually write it in your maths jotter.
- Interviewer: So you put it at the top of your work? And you put the writing targets at the top of your writing jotter.
- Fran: The writing targets stuck in the middle of our jotter
- Interviewer: Does Mrs Wilson give you the writing targets?
- Group: Yeah
- Susan: Yeah there too hard
- Interviewer: Do you write down your targets or does Mrs White write them down?

- Susan: We write our targets down so like we might read our own writing but Mrs White joins hers up and we might not be able to read it and things
- Interviewer: So you write your own ones. For writing when you stick them in your jotter is that ones Mrs White made up then?
- Peter: Well yes cos she thinks we need to work on them
- Fran: The teacher writes them down on the board for you to copy
- Interviewer: Right thank you
- Peter: That pupil target thing can also be like cleanliness about keep your tray tidy or like if you want to gain more confidence in like drama or remember your gym kit or anything like that
- Interviewer: It could be about anything. How do you use your targets? How do they help you to learn? Do you look at them at the start of lessons or is there a thing you do with them ...
- Susan: Well we'll like look at them at the start of the day and say well I'm gone try and do this today and then I'm gone like the next day I'm gone try and do that. That's how I take it.
- Interviewer:: So you look at them at the start of every day. What about you Lorna What do you do?
- Lorna: Kinda the same as Susan.
- Interviewer: So at the start of everything you do you look at your targets. What about you Judy?

Judy: It's just the same but like if I've wrote it for one specific thing then before I do that I'll just keep on looking at it and try to remember that I've just got to succeed that

Fran: I just do the same as Lorna and Susan

Peter: Well I would like look at the timetable I've got for that day before I look at ma target

Susan: Peter that's like at the start of the day.

Interviewer: So when you do maths you would look at your maths target and when you do writing you'd look at your writing target.

Peter: Uh hu.

Interviewer: Do you constantly look at them like when you do maths would you look at your target again in the middle of maths to remind yourself?

Group: Yes/No

Interviewer: Some people yes, some people no And do you look at them at the end to see if you've achieved it?

Group: Yeah

Susan: Yeah cos then you can write down your comment about it. On how well you've done.

Interviewer: Do you measure them in any kind of way? Do you maybe if it was remember your gym kit put down a tick every time you remember or maybe just keep it in your head and write a comment at the end?

Susan: Well the teacher's got like a clipboard and what Stacey made for us and somebody goes around and ticks our name if we've got our gym kit and things and homework.

Interviewer: What about if it was your target to remember your gym kit? Would you keep a record or just keep it in your head and at the end write a comment?

Susan: I keep a record

Others: No

Interviewer: So different people do different things Mm that's good. Em Do you have any rewards for achieving your targets.

Judy: Just knowing that you've done something you wanted to do.

Fran: Well we used to have a prize at the end for people who had got the most but if you achieve you don't get that anymore.

Interviewer: Do you think that helped? Or do you think that just knowing you've achieved your target is good enough?

Peter: It's just the good feeling you get cos you feel really positive. Well you can be feeling kinda negative and everything but when you like pass it you feel really happy and like joy and everything

Interviewer: What were you going to say Susan?

Susan *Em at the end of the week when we're like going to assembly and things that might be the people who's got it and they might get a certificate at assembly or something. That's what I thought would happen.*

Interviewer: *How do you evaluate your targets? How do you decide how well you've done? Do you do it on your own or do you do it with other people?*

Fran: *I do it on my own*

Interviewer: *You do it on your own?*

Peter: *You would keep evidence, like in your jotter about how well you've done and you would look at your jotter and like look at it and like if it was all like good and everything you would like get 10 out of 10 or something and that's how we'd keep it.*

Interviewer: *What about you Judy? What were you going to say?*

Judy: *I just*

Interviewer: *Do you decide yourself or do you ...*

Judy: *I decide myself then the teacher will come round and she'll sit down and like ask you how you've done and I just sometimes do it on my own and sometimes with other people.*

Interviewer: *What about you Lorna?*

Lorna: *I'm just about the same as Judy.*

Interviewer: Do you write down how well you've done?

All: Yes

Peter: In the pupils comment bit

Interviewer: On your timetables. What about for maybe your maths or writing targets, when they're stuck in your jotter would you write down

Peter: You would get a test on Friday usually an door class will get a test, Friday testing with Mrs White we would get like topic in a nutshell and em how well you've done in that is well you know how good you've done your target.

Interviewer: And the do does anyone write under their target about how well they've done?

Susan: I usually write if I got it all right like 10 out of 10 for my mental maths thing

Interviewer: So is there a space beside your target to do that?

Susan: uh hu

Interviewer: Good and do you just write a comment or do you do things like maybe a smiley, straight or a sad face or just write a comment.

All: just write a comment

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to say about targets? Anything that I've missed out?

Peter: Well our class has got a system going what we've learnt at the end of the week. Our targets help us to know what we've learnt and we go up and write like what we've learnt in like maths and everything and like how we use it like kinaesthetic em visual and auditory and everything. So were using targets to learn what we've done.

Interviewer: So targets let you see how much you've learned. Do you find that you've learned a lot?

Group: Yeah

Interviewer: More than you thought you had?

Group: Mmm hmm

Susan: Kinaesthetic is by doing it, auditory is by listening and visual is by seeing.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much Is there anything else anyone wants to say?

Peter: Targets are great.

Interviewer: Targets are great. Right thank you.

Interview 2: Graham, Mary, Geri, Jim, Sandy and Andrew

Interviewer: Have you showed your books to anyone? Your IEP books?

Graham: Well we showed them to Mr MacGregor

Mary: Well we showed them to Mr MacDonald but we weren't allowed to take them out.

Interviewer: You're not allowed to take them home right.

Graham: But we can get them copied if we wanted to take them home and show our mums.

Interviewer: Is there any other teachers or staff who have seen them?

Andrew: Well Mrs Cassells has seen them

Sandy: Oooooohhhh.

Interviewer: Right Mrs Cassells

Geri: Mrs Whitelaw

Andrew: You

Geri: Miss Haddow

Mary: Mrs Whitelaw

Andrew: Miss King

Mary: And I think Miss Kerr's seen it

Interviewer: All the teachers that work with you?

Graham: I think if you integrate into classes the wans the teachers that see what work your daing they get to see them.

Sandy: Uhh hooo

Geri: Mrs Whitelaw

Graham: The mainstream teachers

Sandy: Forgot

Graham: Sandy shhh

Interviewer: Did anyone show them to their mums or dads?

Sandy: Oh naughty Thomas

Geri: Mmmhh mmhhh

Mary: We showed them wance

Graham and Andrew: At review meetings eh

Interviewer: So Archie you showed yours. What about you Jim?

Jim: I showed ma mum.

Interviewer: You showed your mum? And Geri did you show yours?

Geri: Ma sister, ma mum, ma dad.

Interviewer: Right good. Do you think your targets help you to learn.

Graham: Sometimes I think they help us at the start of the week and at the end of the week we just get into it ehh.

Mary: But sometimes their like hard we're stuck on our work and everything

Interviewer: So sometimes they're quite hard to achieve?

Andrew: Yeah

Geri: I like you

Andrew: we only get a few points

Graham: mmm maybe 25 or 35 or something eh Andrew

Mary: Mr Mac Donald

Graham: You got 34 once eh

Mary: I got 35

Graham: That was good

Geri: I got 36

Interviewer: Do you think targets help you to see how much you've learned?

Graham: Yeah cos it builds your confidence

Mary: It builds your work going up

Interviewer: Right so you can see all the things you can do?

Graham: mmm hmm

Interviewer: How do you record your targets? Do you write them down?

Mary: Mr MacGregor writes them down

Graham: But sometimes we get to do them on he computer eh?

Mary: No Mrs Whitelaw and Mrs Cassells

Geri: I do

Graham: Mrs Cassells writes it on the computer eh

Geri: Teacher check the numbers come and sat and count it

Graham: He counts the point up

Interviewer: So Mr Mac Gregor counts them up. So Mr MacGregor tends to write them down for you

Graham: Mm hmm

Interviewer: So do you decide with him or does he decide?

Mary : Yes

Graham: Well

Mary: Well he decides and we decide sometimes

Graham: It's a team

Interviewer: So sometimes the teacher decides and sometimes you do it together good.

Sandy: Ohhhh

Interviewer: How do you use your targets when do you look at them.

Mary: Well we look at them every day

Graham: And sometimes we look at them at quarter to three and we dae them daily 9 o'clock.

Interviewer: You look at them at the start

Graham: And at the end

Interviewer: And how do you know how well you've done

Graham: Cos we get the points added up eh

Mary: Mmm We get the points added up and Mr MacGregor just says well done

Graham: And then you get a reward

Interviewer: What points are there?

Graham: Well if you get a smiley face you get two points, if you get a sad face it's one point then if you get a really, really grumpy face you get no points

Interviewer: How do you count up your points?

Andrew: Like two, one, three, two right three, two

Mary: Four

Andrew: Five

Mary: Six

Andrew: If it's a grumpy face you get nothing

Interviewer: Do you count them up each day? Or at the end of the week.

All: At the end of the week

Graham: But sometimes we do it daily and some times we do it at the end of the week.

Gerri: You count it see that you check it and count it

Mary: You were gonnae ask the teacher if you could get a calculator to add it up

Graham: But we just write it on the side Mary

Mary: But that's makin' it all, that's makin' it all

Andrew: That makes it difficult.

Interviewer: Does that make it difficult counting it up?

Graham: Sometimes.

Interviewer: Who decides if you get a smiley face a straight face or a grumpy face?

Mary and Andrew: Teachers

Graham: And us sometimes.

Interviewer: So sometimes it's Mr MacGregor and sometimes it's you. And do you do it on your own or do it as a whole class?

Graham: Whole class

Mary: On your own sometimes cos they cannae get the same targets as you

Interviewer: So everybody has different targets

Graham: Miss Haddow Jim's sitting there

Interviewer: If Jim's got something to say he'll say it

Geri: Is that your questions

Interviewer: uh hu that's my questions

Geri: What does that say?

Interviewer: So Mr MacGregor will decide with you if you get a happy or a sad face sometimes as a group, sometimes on your own

Graham: uh hu

Geri: Miss Haddow

Interviewer: Is there anything else about your targets

Graham: They help us

Interviewer: You think they help you. You would like a copy of your books to take home?

All: Yes

Geri: Mr MacGregor help me

Mary: Can I get two copies, one for me and one for my mum and dad?

Interviewer: I think your mum and dad could probably share one. Right thank you.

Graham: Only one copy per household.

Interview 3: Kevin, Jamie and Cathy

Interviewer: Have you ever showed your book or your targets to anyone? Maybe at home or at school? Have you shared them with other teachers?

Kevin: Nope

Jamie: No just a couple of friends and that

Interviewer: So you share it with some of your friends, you talk about your targets? Do you talk about your targets with anyone Kevin?

Kevin: With Miss White

Interviewer: So with Mrs White, right, so do you share your targets with anyone Cathy, maybe at home or at school?

Cathy: Well like at school Miss White just like asks us to write eh like she comes over signs it and tells us we've done well and tells us like if we've achieved it or that.

Interviewer: Do you talk about them with maybe any other members of staff at school?

Peter: Mrs Hughes and Mr Paterson we take them down and show them it

Interviewer: Do you do that as well Jamie?

Jamie: Aye

Interviewer: What about you Kieren?

Kevin: Mmm

Interviewer: Do you ever show Mrs Hughes or Mr Paterson your targets?

Kevin: No. No

Interviewer: Does anybody share their targets with maybe mums or dads at home?

Peter: I've showed it wi' ma mum like when I took it home in ma homework diary I showed them at home.

Interviewer: Right ok Do you think knowing what your targets are help you to learn?

Jamie: Yip

Kevin: Yeaah

Interviewer: How?

Cathy: Like when your daeing Maths and you've got your target doon there for Maths ...

Jamie: And it tells you what to dae and that. It helps you.

Interviewer: Do you think it makes you more focused on what your doing?

Cathy mmm hmm

Kevin: Yeah

- Interviewer: Do you think it helps you because you can see how much you've learned?
- Peter: Yes because just say like we're doing maths and were just starting it and er get our target and that's helping us with what your supposed to do ion it
- Interviewer: Do you think you've learned quite a lot? When you look back at your targets?
- All: Yeah
- Interviewer: How do you record your targets? Do you write them down or does somebody else write them down.
- Jamie: You write them down, the teacher writes them down and you write them down. Just like write them in ma jotter
- Interviewer: So does your teacher decide what your targets are going to be?
- Jamie: Yeah.
- Interviewer: Have you ever decided any of your own targets?
- Cathy: Mmm hmm, well we used to do that most of the time but if like when Miss Wilson used to do it for maths one she used to put up on the board and it used to be your target sometimes but most of the time it used to be us what was writing it
- Interviewer: And you write them down yourselves. Where do you write them down?

Jamie: At the top o ma jotter in a coloured pencil.

Cathy: Well sometimes we had the wee target sheets like it showed you what you were doing Monday to Friday and then it wrote your target and if you'd achieved it and your teachers signature and you used it as your target but

Interviewer: And do you keep these target sheets on your table or in your trays?

Jamie: Table

Interviewer: On the table And if it was for maths you'd write it in your maths jotter and if it was for language you'd write it in your language jotter Good. How do you use your targets? Do you look at them to remind you or ...

Jamie: Yeah you look at them

Interviewer: Do you do that at the start, end middle of lessons?

Peter: Start

Jamie: Eh start basically

Interviewer: So every time you looked you remind yourself what the target is. How do you know how well you've done on your targets.

Jamie: Cos your teacher like looks and put ticks and that.

Interviewer: So is it always your teacher who decides or do you help decide?

Cathy: We decide too

Jamie: But basically it's the teacher

Interviewer: Do you do it on your own with the teacher or do you do it as a class?

Cathy: We do it on our own and the teacher just comes round like our tables and says like you've done well on your target

Interviewer: And do you write down if you've done well

Jamie: The teacher will write like well done in our jotter

Cathy: It's the teacher and you but when you've got the wee sheet we've got one where you could write if you've achieved and so has the teacher

Interviewer: So both your opinions count So you write down how well you've done and your teacher writes down how well you've done good. And you said that you decide with your teacher em so you just write down comment, you don't have any smiley faces or anything like that.

Jamie + Cathy: No

Interviewer: Well is there anything else you would like to say about targets? Is it something you would like to use again?

Cathy: I'd like to use it at high school eh because it would like help you through the years like what to do on yer work

Interviewer: What about you Jamie?

Jamie: The same really

Interviewer: What about you Kevin? Do you think targets help

Kevin: Well they help sometimes

Interviewer: When do you think they don't help you ?

Kevin: Emm when you already know your targets

Interviewer: So if its something you can already do it no use to you/

Kevin: Yeah

Interviewer Are they sometimes too hard

Jamie: Some of them but mostly most of them are easy.

Interviewer: Right thank you very much for your help. That's it.

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHER

- Could you tell me about how you came to be a DSE teacher?
 - Experience of working with children with special needs
 - Qualifications

- Could you tell me how you involve pupils in the setting of their long and short term targets?
 - Who decides the targets?
 - Are children invited to attend meetings?
 - What is the format of these targets?
 - Are children involved in all areas?

- Could you tell me how you involve pupils in the implementation of their targets?
 - Are pupils aware what work has to be done to meet targets?
 - Are targets easily accessible to the child?
 - How do children work on targets?
 - Are targets involved in daily planning?
 - Is a key person identified?

- Could you tell me how you involve pupils in the assessment and evaluation of their targets?
 - How is success recorded?
 - Who is involved in the recording process?
 - Are children involved in their reviews?
 - How are pupils helped to recognize achievements?

- What are your feelings on involving pupils in their IEPs?
 - ownership
 - pupils challenging targets set
 - problems
 - targets set only by professionals
 - disability effects level of involvement

APPENDIX K: WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM MAINSTREAM TEACHER

- ①. Qualifications BEd (Hons) 2:1 graduated in 1995 taught all stages in mainstream.
- ②. Essentially 5:14 curriculum dictates targets then teacher + pupils 'tweak' them to suit needs eg maths follow maths programme whether it be a new concept or consolidation/extra practice. &
● The children^(P1) are shown school programme of work so they can see 'big picture'.
Targets are also sent home so there is parental involvement (had positive feedback from parents).
- ③ At the start of each lesson the class or group target is clearly stated ... draw attention to targets on wall for term and explain how the lesson 'fits in'.
● Targets are very accessible ... they are on wall and they all have personal copies.

Last year they had weekly targets self-taped on desk. More general target which usually related to PSD. The children had it facing them every day and wrote a self-evaluation comment every week. The teacher also commented and discussed achievements with pupils. Success would be celebrated through positive written/oral feedback, peer congratulations, note home, C.O.W. The targets sheets were also shared at parents evening.

On our maths term targets sheet each child ticks off

a concept after they have understood it - this is taken home to be shared.

- Children seemed to have more ownership in setting PSD targets. Often the ~~usable~~ children found it difficult to think of a target and needed a lot of direction.

With subjects like maths the targets were easier as the children saw the programme of work and knew what was coming.

The children certainly enjoyed target setting, they do/did feel ownership and were able to say why they were learning something, what level they were on what learning style they preferred.. As to whether it raised attainment

PASS!

This year I am involving the parents more.. concentrating on writing + maths .. hopefully this will help achievement more.

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN IEP REVIEW MEETINGS

Introduction

Hello my name is Sarah Haddow. Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study. As you know, I am studying part-time with Strathclyde University for my PhD. My study is concerned with raising pupils participation in the I.E.P. process. As part of my study I am interviewing individually, key individuals involved with the I.E.P. process. Hence this interview to-day.

Explain how it is important to capture their words and ideas, therefore I would like to use a tape recorder to record the interview. Explain how the information on the tapes will be transcribed and then the tapes erased. Inform the participants that they will not be identified by name, pseudonyms will be used, and that any information which might reveal who they are will also be changed. Ask their permission to tape record interview. Tell them that the tape recorder can be turned off at any time during the interview, if they so wish. Also let them know that I might take notes during the interview in order to keep track of the interview as it progresses.

Ask if they have any questions for me. Turn on tape recorder. Test.

Introductions

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your role in the I.E.P. process?

2. What impact, if any do you feel the I.E.P. books have had in raising the pupils' awareness of the I.E.P. process?

3. In your opinion, has involving pupils in their targets had any impact on their learning?

4. How useful do you feel the I.E.P. book has been as a tool to enable children to be involved in their review meetings and the decision making process?

5. In your opinion, how beneficial is it to involve children in the decision making process?

6. How do you think children could become more involved in review meetings?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Switch off tape. Thank interviewee.

APPENDIX M: WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM PROFESSIONAL INVOLVED IN IEP REVIEW MEETINGS

1 - occasionally helped child in IEP completion

- periodically read over them with child especially in preparation for reviews.

2 Helped them consider their own progress by attempting self evaluation at a simple level eg likes / dislikes, strengths / weaknesses.

Also had a record of others opinions which made it easier for them to contribute at reviews.

3 It has given them ownership and made it more personal and so hopefully more productive.

4 It has helped their confidence and given them a talking point and something to refer to rather than answer unsolicited which can find difficult. It has helped them clarify their thinking.

5 It is a legal requirement and is important that their views and feelings given due consideration.

6 The format of the meeting could be changed. Children could be present more of the time. The emphasis would have to be less formal which may assist parents and others also.

6 There are workload issues in setting time to make and particularly in preparing IEP's from scratch so there would need to be a standard template prepared.

Danger of becoming over detailed / complicated and involved which would dilute original purpose.

EDUCATION SERVICE

Your ref

Our ref

KL/GEN/BEN/

If you have any queries please contact me on 01383 312800

Ms Macpherson

01383 312800

Dear Sarah,

Thanks for your letter. I have jotted some things down which will hopefully be of some use. I don't feel able to comment very fully as I was only at some of the reviews for the pupils with their IEP books and as you highlighted, a couple of the children weren't able to be there for various reasons.

Role in the IEP Process

I don't have a direct role in the IEP process in Benarty DSE. However, I can be involved at a consultative level if school staff feel it useful to help with setting targets and planning ways of achieving targets. Occasionally information may come up in review meetings which we can prompt would be a useful target for a young person this may be incorporated into their IEP.

Impact of IEP Books

From what I have seen, I think the IEP Books look like a good way of structuring input from the pupils into their IEP, helping them to reflect on key people involved and to prompt them about targets that are part of their programme. They may give them more ownership of the targets.

Impact on their Learning

I don't feel able to comment on this, the class teachers would obviously have a sense of how it was before they had the books, compared to their experiences now.

Usefulness at review meetings

I think the book is a useful structured way of involving pupils in the meetings, as it gives a good focus. I'm sure it helps the pupil to have something visual and pre-prepared there to refer to. It is always difficult looking at meaningful ways of involving pupils at review meetings to ensure it is not a token measure. One thing that I was aware of that in some cases, the pupils found it difficult to read some of the words, and may have felt awkward 'reading out' in that forum which is what happened in a couple of meetings. I don't know if anyone else felt this. Perhaps a way round that would be an adult checking with them beforehand how they wanted to present it and maybe sharing the reading.

Psychological Service 13 Abbey Park Place Dunfermline KY12 7PT

HAMISH MACPHERSON

TELEPHONE 01383 312800
FEATURENET 707 2800

FACSIMILE
FEATURENE

www.fifedirect.org.uk

Involving pupils in the decision making process

I think the aim of involving pupils in the decision making process is key and should be a direction we are all looking to head in. I think there are difficulties at times with ensuring the involvement is not just tokenism and that it is a constructive process for the pupils. So often I think review meetings can be really intimidating for adults as well as pupils. I think a key part is how the meeting is structured, the tone that is set, and the preparation that goes into pupils involvement in meetings.

I hope this is helpful Sarah and not too general, like I said earlier I don't feel I know much about the IEP books but they certainly provided a good focus and way for the pupil to share information with the adults involved.

Best of luck with the PhD,

Regards,

Antio

|
|

Psychologist

P.S. Thought I'd send this as my last visit to Berakhi is next Thursday and I may not catch you!

APPENDIX N: EXAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS USED FOR THE WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. Main stream teacher. Taught from P1-P7 until I left to have family.

• When I returned to teaching, I taught in hearing support. I worked among 3 schools. While in hearing support, I completed the diploma for pupils without a Row.

I missed having my own class, so applied for the first available job at Benarty J.S.E. I have taught here for 10 years, with a secondment for a year in Behavioural support.

• Qualifications,

JP.S.E (NON-RECORDED) PUPILS, PRIMARY)

CERTIFICATE IN AUTISM

DIP. IN PRIMARY TEACHING

CERTIFICATE IN INFANT TEACHING

2 YEARS ON DYSLICIA COURSE

2. It helps the children to show us
our expectations. At one time,
IEPs were a complete secret to
the child.

effectiveness of IEP Workbook

when the child knows his target,
it often motivates him to reach
it. It gives him the opportunity to

effectiveness of IEP Workbook

Quick

discuss how they are going to react it & to discuss any problems arising.

Quick

Behaviour targets are often successful because the child can focus on one particular behaviour at one time.

- Bents et al.

3. Have recently started displaying targets on wall & boxes; - modifications



I have started my target

I am nearly there

I can do it!

Quick

When target is met, it can go in wallet at back of assessment folder. Children can write their own target if appropriate. 1 target for

each of 3 areas; Reading, Maths/Number, P.S.E.

4. Think IEP w/ book would work well as a prompt.

links to review making educational psychologist response

Talking mats links with person centred planning

would like structure / format to be more child centred modification to review meeting