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**Catherine Marie Brodie Stewart**

**Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools**

**ABSTRACT**

Scarce in the academic literature exploring the experiences of teachers within school environments specialising in the education of special educational needs children and disabilities are accounts from teachers working within SLD/PMLD schools. In light of this gap in scholarship, this study examined nine teachers' ecological narratives and explored their influence upon curriculum decisions and consequent pedagogic practices in the context of a naturalistic setting within four SLD/PMLD schools.

Three purposes framed this investigation. Firstly, to gain an in-depth understanding of how the pedagogic beliefs and identities of SLD/PMLD teachers are constructed within the framework of the school-espoused curriculum. Secondly, how teachers' practices emerge as functions of individual ecologies, beliefs and identities through autobiography and thirdly how these teachers' identities, ecologies and practices in turn, re-shape the enacted-curricular.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) ecological theories were considered as a conceptual framework that stood behind this work, but as personal 'special' pedagogical narratives unfolded, their influence became less formal in encapsulating how teachers constructed the curriculum as a situated pedagogic experience so local narrative frameworks were utilised.

Data sources included multiple individual interviews to enable ecological constructs to unfold, classroom observations, personal writing, research notes and other salient material. Dialogue between the researcher and participants ensured the rigour of the study. Experiences both personal and professional were used as a key to unlock participants' lives with multiple opportunities to critically assess portrayals.

Analysis of data revealed that teacher knowledge and personal ecologies were encapsulated both within conscious, internally and externally justified opinions and unconscious un-reflected intuitions, submerged within the identities of the teachers and their students. Whilst the importance of individual teachers' micro-ecologies as being unique was apparent in the context of current research in inclusive and specialist education, teachers' voices seemed to be heard and listened to only by those working within SLD and PMLD settings, both through choice and almost benign acceptance. Political macro-structures of inclusion were juxtaposed to micro-ideals of inclusive pedagogy and whilst ecological constructs impacted greatly, pedagogic practice emanated ultimately from personal belief and identity; in essence, these teachers *were* the curriculum.

At a time of profound change in Inclusive Education, this study contributes to deficient and under-theorised notions of SLD/PMLD teachers' narratives and practices. More critically, this thesis makes a significant and original contribution to scholarship concerned with the narration of pedagogic inclusion and how its teacherly embodiment may foster inclusive classrooms.

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**Catherine Marie Brodie Stewart**

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of  
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# CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>		i
<b>STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT</b>		viii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>		ix
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>		1
1.1	Background to the Study	1
1.2	The Contribution of this Thesis	5
1.3	Theoretical Considerations	8
1.4	The Nature of this Thesis	11
1.5	Organisation of this Thesis	15
1.6	Defining the Terms Used in this Thesis	16
1.7	Criteria for Data Inclusion in the Literature Review	16
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>		17
2.1	Literature Overview	21
2.2	Literature Review: The Nature of Inclusive Education and the Education Provision That Constitutes 'A Special Education'	27
2.21	The History of Special Education in Focus	27
2.22	History of Special Education Schooling and Appropriate Curriculum for Students with Deficits	29
2.23	Inclusive Education	32
2.3	Literature Review: The Espoused and Explicit Curriculum Adopted	33
2.31	The Nature of and the Special Context of the SLD/PMLD Curriculum: Defining the Curriculum	33
2.32	Models of Curricula and Curriculum Theorists	35
2.33	The SLD and PMLD Curriculum: What Should it Consist of and Who Decides?	39
2.34	The Parental Inclusive Curriculum: A Partnership or False Promise?	42
2.4	Literature Review: Special Teacher Beliefs and Identities; How Do Such Vital Components Create Pedagogic Practice?	44
2.41	Teachers' Beliefs, Values and Identities	44
2.42	The SLD/PMLD Teacher Identity and Personal Beliefs	49

2.5	Literature Review: Teachers' Practices in SLD / PMLD Schools	51
2.51	Teachers' Inclusive Ecologies: The Intersection of Practice, Theory and Curriculum	51
2.52	SLD/PMLD Teachers' Personal Ecologies	58
2.53	Recent Developments in Research into Teachers' Inclusive Practices in SLD/PMLD	60
2.6	Literature Review: Summary	63
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS</b>	<b>66</b>
3.1	Research Design	66
3.2	Research Design in Practice	66
3.3	The Researcher's Role and Beliefs	71
3.31	Insider Research and Gaining Access: Collusion Issues	72
3.4	Selection Procedures	74
3.5	The Setting of This Research	74
3.6	Ethical Procedures	77
3.7	Data Collection Procedures	80
3.8	Data Quality Procedures	96
3.9	Data Management and Analysis	100
3.10	Researcher Diary Field Notes	108
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>113</b>
4.1	The Research Aims and Motivation	113
4.2	Analytical Structure of the Findings	113
4.3	School Ecologies: Management Constructs	118
4.4	Teacher Beliefs and Values in Context	122
4.5	School Structure and Purpose	124
4.51	Historical 'Inclusive' Mainstream Ecologies	124
4.52	Teacher Training Ecologies and How They Intersect with Pedagogic Practice	130
4.53	Teacher-Parent Ecologies: Paradise or Purgatory?	138
4.6	Teacher- Practice Narratives	141
4.61	Historical Ecologies and the Impact Upon Teachers as Reflective Carers	142
4.62	Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies	146

4.63	Historical Narratives - Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: the Temporal Unfolding Of Lives	148
4.7	Teacher-Curriculum Narrative	151
4.71	The Purpose of a Curriculum for an SLD/PLD Student: Teachers' Views in Context	151
4.72	Conflict and Corrosion in the Curriculum: The Current Misfit Between Political Curriculum Ideals, Inclusive Practices and Pedagogy	155
4.73	Assessment, Ability and Accountability: The Impact of Macro Systems Upon Student and Teacher: The 'Acid That Rots Away Self Worth'	159
4.74	Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula	162
4.75	The Piccadilly Circus Narrative: The Ecology of Being Peripatetic	166
4.8	Overall Pedagogic Practice Ecological Narrative	168
4.81	Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?	168
4.82	The SLD/PMLD Teacher's Identity: Self Reflection	171
	<b>RESEARCHER'S TESTIMONY</b>	172
	<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS</b>	179
5.1	Thesis Overview	179
5.2	Establishing the Thesis Contribution In Relation To the Major Concepts Within This Research.	180
5.21	School Ecologies: Management Constructs	180
5.22	The Nature of Inclusive Education and the Education Provision That Constitutes 'A Special Education'	181
5.23	The Espoused and Explicit Curriculum Adopted	181
5.24	The Beliefs and Identities of 'Special' Teachers	183
5.25	Teachers' Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools	186
5.3	Implications for This Field of Study	190
5.4	Directions for Future Research	191
	<b>FINAL CONCLUSION</b>	193

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	A Diagrammatic Representation of How the Research Questions Address the Study's Three Major Purposes	13
Figure 2:	A Diagrammatic Representation of the Whole Study Showing the Relationship Between Research Purposes, The Research Questions, the Conceptual Content and Data Collection	14
Figure 3.1:	Criteria for Data Inclusion in Literature Review: Major Concepts within SEN Within The Literature Of This Thesis	18
Figure 3.2:	Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Nature of Inclusive Curriculum	19
Figure 3.3:	Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Espoused and Explicit Curriculum	19
Figure 3.4:	Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Beliefs and identities	20
Figure 3.5:	Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Teachers' Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools.	20
Figure 4:	Biography of Participant Teachers	76
Figure 5.1:	Justification for Choice of Strategies for Data Collection: Narratives	81
Figure 5.2:	Justification for Choice of Strategies for Data Collection: Interview	81
Figure 5.3:	Justification for Choice of Strategies for Data Collection: Observations	82
Figure 5.4	Justification for Choice of Strategies for Data Collection: Researchers Notes	82
Figure 6:	Teacher Groups Pilot Questions	86
Figure 7:	Initial Focus Groups / Initial Pilot Research Questions and Data Collection Methods	87
Figure 8:	Research Questions and Data Collection Methods	88
Figure 9:	A Diagrammatic Representation of Data Quality Control	97
Figure 10:	Flowchart to Clarify the Relationships between the Data Collection Methods (Triangulation)	103
Figure 11:	The Interrelationship between Research Questions 1 and 2: Narrative Exemplars and Literature Sections	116
Figure 12:	The Interrelationship Between Research Questions 3 and 4: Narrative Exemplars and Literature Sections	117

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A:	Glossary	194
Appendix B:	Request for Research Study Participants and Access to Schools and School Pilot Questions	195
Appendix C:	School Pilot Questions With Exemplar Notes	198
Appendix D:	Introductory Letter and Consent Form to Headmaster or Headmistress	206
Appendix E:	Introductory Letter with Research Information	207
Appendix F:	Participant Consent Form	209
Appendix G:	Initial Focus Group Interview Schedule with Exemplar Notes	210
Appendix H:	Interview Schedules 1-4 and Exemplar Notes (Interview 2)	221
Appendix I:	Observation Schedule and Exemplar Notes (Observation 2)	231
Appendix J:	Researcher Diary Field Notes Example	239
Appendix K:	Illustration of Data Analysis and Coding Procedures	241
Appendix L:	Vignette: Holland (Emily Perl Kingsley, 1987)	243

## **REFERENCES**

245

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## **Declaration**

**The material contained in this thesis has not been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. It is the sole work of the author.**

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To also the mothers of children with special needs, may you stay strong, be a rebel and never give up. Love your child and they will follow.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this whole piece of work to my children, who entered my life and changed my landscape forever, which is not flat and constant but full of hills, mountains and challenges, all of which have made me the mother I am today. My little soldier and angel, may you be happy and at peace. Like edelweiss may you blossom in springtime, rain and snow and remain 'truly truly scrumptious... you're the answer to my wishes'. Never give up and believe in yourselves that you can do in life everything that you want.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Teachers across the world are encountering students from increasingly disparate ability and needs backgrounds but whilst the student population is rapidly becoming diverse, teachers themselves are increasingly unprepared to teach them (Almog & Schectman, 2007). Although the importance of Teaching White Papers in England and Wales (e.g. Achievement for All, DfE, 2011) promotes the idea of a highly trained and suitably prepared workforce designed to recognise and harness aspiration and effort, the experiences of many children in educational terms are poor and frequently found wanting, especially in terms of SEN education (Silva & Morgardo, 2004; Barton & Armstrong, 2007; Hodkinson, 2009).

Despite widening participation and compositional diversity becoming mainstream in teacher preparation programmes, there are still few teachers educated upon the variety of specific difficulties and disabilities that are found reflected in their classrooms. In some cases, such as with SLD (severe learning difficulty) or PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulty) or particular SEBDs (severe and emotional behaviour difficulty), there are clear reasons for the lack of representation within classrooms. Still, research suggests that teachers are rarely exposed to deep and sustained inclusive pedagogical theory and practice during their initial preparation that would prepare them adequately for such contexts (Stowitschek, Cheney, & Schwartz, 2000; Hodkinson, 2009; Ekins & Grimes, 2009; The SALT Review, 2009; Richards, 2010). Furthermore, there is frequently little time within the ITE (Initial Teacher Education) curriculum to help teachers reflect on what personal experience they may have had, which according to research, remains an important source of 'subjective warrant' in terms of teacher pedagogy (Stowitschek et al., 2000; Almog & Schectman, 2007).

In addition, recent political change to move teacher preparation out of institutions and into schools has further reduced the exposure of teachers to potential sources of learning as forms of systematic 'case' learning and development and also decreased the time available for in-service teachers to engage in critical reflection. Research suggests strongly that teachers in schools with SLD and PMLD cohorts are 'special' teachers whose identity, practice and thought is subject to discourse and contextual practice in a more nuanced way than in mainstream schools, (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999; Jones, 2004). Not only that, there are tangible physical and psycho-social considerations at work in specialist schools (taken here to mean schools that specifically cater for students with SLD and PMLD) that are not prepared for in regular ITE programmes.

Many researchers believe that there is a connection between children's failure in school and those who teach them (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2011). Pedagogically such literature suggests teachers lack the requisite background knowledge, skills and dispositions to effectively teach children from diverse backgrounds due to their limited social and cultural knowledge and exposure to issues of diversity. Here one takes such beliefs and the problems that ensue to be applicable to both mainstream settings that have students with MLD (moderate learning difficulty) as well as schools with SLD and PMLD cohorts. If one takes such findings to assume teachers are aware of a personal lack of self efficacy then notions of belief systems and identity formation are critical in their practice. Regardless of school setting and cohorts, the way teachers perceive themselves is transactional with classroom behaviours and practice (Cross & Hong, 2012). Such perceptions have been linked to teachers' feelings of shame around an inability to effectively teach students. Moreover there are feelings of uncontrollability within their practice to teach students what they need to know (Weiner, 2007), essentially highlighting how teachers' beliefs influence how they understand and assess student's abilities and behaviours. Overall, teacher professional identities are fluid with personal ones where practitioners are "affected by the worlds they try to affect" (Britzman, 2003, p.5). This can be explained because:

We formulate our beliefs and values and how we interact with others based on what we experience throughout our life. We assimilate, differentiate and classify people into separate groups because it is more cognitively efficient (Porter, 2002, p.128).

Here then, not only are practical pedagogic issues a concern but rather the beliefs and values that serve to construct all teachers' practices and how they come to see themselves within their educational identity. While the teaching workforce might not be prepared for the difficulty and complexity that meets them in many schools, that does not mean teachers cannot learn to work more effectively with students who have moderate special needs in mainstream (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998; Clements, 2004), or SLD / PMLD settings (Mackenzie, 2012a, 2012b). Nor does it mean that teachers cannot understand their own cognitions in relation to the attributions they may make about and to children with SLD or PMLD. Many teacher education programmes, schools and local authorities have recognised and addressed the needs to find ways to better prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to teach and serve pupils in special needs schools, whose abilities and backgrounds are often outside the realm of their own experience and training (Buell et al., 1999; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Slobodzian; 2009; Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans, & Soulsby, 2007). In parallel with these teaching reforms, over the last two decades the English

curriculum has been the backdrop to a multitude of changes that aim to better prepare diverse groups of students for the curriculum and ultimately, the employment needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In actuality, the English curriculum has been beset by contention and controversy for the last forty years and various grounds for criticism have been marshalled – too much discrimination (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Rogers, 2007; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010), lack of specification (Lawson, Walte, & Robertson, 2005), too little discrimination (Yero, 2002), too much academicisation (Stakes & Hornby, 1997; Copeland, 1999; Senyshyn, 2012), too little vocational education (Tomlinson, 1996), too much social reconstruction (Sebba, Byers, & Rose, 1993; Clough & Garner, 2003) and too little social mobility (Barnes & Oliver, 1993; Vasey, 1992; Terzi, 2005). Alarming, such concerns are grounded within research spanning many decades and yet similar anecdotes remain pertinent. That said, research appears to be focused deeply within mainstream education leaving curricula concepts, the beliefs, values and pedagogic practice of SLD and PMLD teachers a rather deeply under-researched and uncharted territory.

Recent curriculum changes involving the reorganisation of schools as well as the incipient curriculum have focused on dual concerns of standards and independence (Henson, 2015). White Papers and legislation have explicitly concerned themselves with aspiration and achievement and articulated that these may be achieved through locally designed and negotiated curriculum and taught through a variety of mechanisms in diverse school types. The current and new curriculum (DfE, 2014) has challenged both mainstream teachers' working practices as well as those within SLD and PMLD settings due to a focus upon teaching students objectives that would have been studied in later key stages. This gives more weight to academic outcomes under the guise of 'emerging' and 'secure' knowledge without any assessment guidance or universal uniformity of testing parameters.

Whilst this may be a complicated undertaking for mainstream schools where the prescriptive curriculum is more transparent, this is a complex and multifaceted undertaking at special schools, where theories of curriculum intersect with both resource decisions and fundamental philosophical disagreements on what should constitute both the prescribed and experienced curriculum and until this thesis, without the realisation that a teacher's ecology impacts greatly upon its content and ethos. As such, the prescribed and experienced curricula have particular salience in the context of schools with SLD and PMLD cohorts. The term curriculum includes both the plans made for learning and the actual learning experiences provided. Teachers have their own attitudes and beliefs about learning and pupils and thus what they think should be learned,

viewed through the lens of their own philosophies and experiences. Depending on the context, prescribed curriculum plans are often ignored or modified and so there is an argument that in actuality a curriculum is rendered obsolete as it is a part of a teacher's identity. Moreover, the experienced curriculum is also a deeply problematic issue for schools with SLD and PMLD cohorts because of three points – the relative lack of critical engagement inherent within, the vulnerability of the pupils in relation to salient curriculum outcomes and the diversity and variability of the staff engaged in the education of children. Indeed, in many SLD/PMLD specialist schools, the level of training and preparation of teaching and learning staff is a microcosm of the complexity and incoherence of ITE in general. Critically, research suggests that parents of children with SLD or PMLD play a far larger and more significant strategic and curriculum role than other parents whose children attend mainstream schools (Fisher, 2007). There is an argument that specialist teachers with SLD and PMLD cohorts have a more deliberate role than peers within mainstream curricula roles, a finding that emerges powerfully from this thesis. For example, for some children in SLD/PMLD schools, the parents are the pedagogical and cognitive experts in their child's progress, often having had to exercise far more strategic and inter-professional power than similar parents in mainstream schools. Research demonstrates for example, that theories of power are impoverished in relation to parental school involvement (Lyotard, 1984), yet there is scarce research to demonstrate how such parents subvert hegemonic systems in relation to their children's schooling. As such, when the planned or written curriculum is actually delivered, the learning experience takes on a new importance and becomes immersed into a teacher's ways of being, their narrative and their reality. For that reason, school leaders, teachers and parents alike should view the curriculum as a type of dynamic process that rests critically on how teachers are teaching and what sense they are making of their environment.

Overall, each SLD and PMLD school designs and delivers its curriculum in unique ways (although this is not to assert that teachers with MLD cohorts within mainstream do not follow the same path). Research however, demonstrates that there are a superfluity of ways in which schools and teachers interpret the nature and prescriptions of a national curriculum to each particular assessment of need and ability within the pupil diversity of each school. Noddings (1984, p.113) asserts that:

Needs and wants are not necessarily the same thing in curriculum terms and in justice terms, the needs of children with SLD or PMLD are contested and subsumed frequently under discussions of philosophical wants that relate more to frameworks of rights than concrete outcomes and intentionally fitted and designed curriculum.

This is most potently exhibited in the schools with complex cohorts of SLD and PMLD students, that over the last five years have appropriated such theories as Forest Schools, or previously sensory schools and outward bound schools. Nevertheless, within schools such as these, studies utilising parents to investigate teachers' experiences of working with diverse professionals have emerged, offering insights regarding how diversely able children might learn and develop particular knowledge and skills. Such insight increases the potential to assist children in challenges they may face (Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen, 2003; Glashan, Mackay, & Grieve, 2004).

Because the education profiles and experiences of children with SLD/PMLD are varied and have multiple elements, it is impossible to pathologise or categorise them in relation to their abilities and capabilities and thus how teachers might interpret inclusive teaching for children in such settings. We can gain insights related to patterns of teachers' responses to various curricula but must be cautious as to how we use these generalisations as plans for the design of future SLD and PMLD curricula. We must always follow the admonition 'do no harm' as we seek to understand and support such children in their educational endeavors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a).

## **1.2 The Contribution of this Thesis**

Developments in special and inclusive education have lead to increasing challenges for teachers. Findings reflect a mismatch between developing policy and practice in the field and suggest the need for further professional development experiences for teachers within SLD and PMLD curricula overall (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007). I am aware of the significant contribution that developing a personal sense of self as a teacher has, which may begin with a life story or identity forged from adolescence onwards (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001). This is interesting as overall "we are affected by the worlds we try to affect." Here, "one needs to know thyself," (Britzman, 2003, p.5). The question that has driven this thesis is 'what do teachers actually know about their practice and the foundations of knowledge and experiences that shape it?' This comes from a deep rooted concern that focus upon SLD/PMLD teachers' values, beliefs and identities is an under researched area when compared to that on mainstream teachers. Clark & Peterson (1986) and Nespor (1987), maintain that in spite of arguments, that people's beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualise tasks and learn from experience. That said, within research overall, little attention has been given to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs in relation to their wider purpose and intersections with other domains of teachers' work, about their roles, the subject matter areas they teach and the schools they work in. This thesis narrates how beliefs, ecologies and identity allow one to articulate meaning and henceforth inform us as how teachers ultimately deliver a curriculum through the

lens of unique ecological constructs that serve to inform practice. Concepts of beliefs, identity, pedagogy, curricula and education are studied independently and the literature section will serve to show that the area dealing with SLD/PMLD teachers and schools settings is under researched, which is a crucial issue for such teachers' pedagogy. Academic literature rarely constitutes narrations of teachers' experiential environments and even less research views these concepts as holistic guides to practice and curricula delivered. Moreover, I argue that academic literatures regarding such concepts remain primarily focused within mainstream settings where SEN takes on meaningfulness through the lens of moderate needs as opposed to specialist SLD/PMLD settings where complexities are abundant. Compared to mainstream practices and teachers within such settings, those working within SLD/PMLD schools have remained unheard, misunderstood and most certainly underappreciated (Jones, 2004, added emphasis). This thesis allows SLD/PMLD practitioners whom it studies, to emerge holistically, immersed within ecologies not just as system of encounters, happenings and judgements but as the essence that drives a person's way of being. Their beliefs serve to create a new ecology which is immersed within their sense of identity and pedagogic knowledge and experiences.

Pajares (1992) rightly contends that attention to beliefs of teachers should be a focus of educational research as it informs educational practice, where beliefs are indicators of the decisions teachers make throughout their lives (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968). Such focus allows one to ponder upon how feelings about certain domains are akin to the self esteem of teachers (Pajares, 1992, added emphasis). Whilst such considerations and conclusions are laudable, there is a need to expand current conceptions of teachers' beliefs, ecologies and pedagogic practice within specialised settings overall. To not merely express the importance of beliefs and values but investigate where they originate, how they are understood, experienced, acted upon and serve to shape practical knowledge for those within SLD/PMLD settings as opposed to mainstream. In doing so one can consider the impact of ecologies upon the curriculum enacted within schools. To enable such conception one has to explore the full range of what Clandinin & Connelly (1996, p.26) have called teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.

“A territory of private and public knowledge of curriculum requirements and passionate explorations, of emotional knowing and cognitive outcomes”.

This is undertaken on the assumption that issues about content, curriculum and pedagogy cannot be separated from emotional or political issues and that all those are inseparable to a teacher's practice (Zembylas, 2007). Such notions become even more important when considering the

complexities and differing concepts and attitudes found within SLD and PMLD schools which is harboured by the lack of academic conceptual knowledge about how teachers work within specialised settings.

Teacher identity, beliefs and pedagogy within this thesis are seen as the history of one's own making set amongst social and political impositions that until writing this thesis have remained a hidden force. This thesis urges teacher educators to become aware of the potential influence of teacher identity when planning and delivering initial teacher training and continued professional development (Jones, 2004). Lasky (2005) revealed that macro systems of politics and social contexts along with early teacher development shapes a teacher's identity and purpose through the dynamics of core beliefs. Admittedly, once again without allowing one to narrate and thus uncover what those personal core beliefs are and how they impact curriculum decisions. Olsen (2015) rightly contends that teaching transcends the cognitive and technical notions of education, rather it becomes a complex and personal set of processes embedded within one's ecology. This thesis aims to contribute greatly to uncovering the hidden, the unknown and under-researched personalisation of lives and self-efficacy ecologies. In fact, microscopic perspectives of a person's narrative will be revealed not as a set of 'differing issues' that all impact upon teaching but as a holistic ecology.

Overall, finding consistent research that can highlight shared identities within a range of SLD and PMLD contexts is problematic but I argue that this may be because there is a deficit of narrative literature which temporally unfolds personal experiences without the encumbrance of methodological analysis and overall concluded meanings. Moreover, like Mackenzie (2012a), I contend that research often uses special schools that are for mainstream, EBD or sensory difficulty and therefore comparisons with SLD and PMLD specifically cannot be made straightforwardly (Brady & Wolfson, 2008). This is problematic as a teacher's identity changes through practice and she/he must constantly interpret experiences and what this means in terms of pedagogic practice or who they are as a person (Wenger, 1998). Such tensions sit amongst the issue that there is a lack of research-based evidence with which to inform opinion and practice (Wishart, 2005; Porter, 2005; Lacey, Layton, Miller, Goldbart, & Lawson, 2007; Warnock & Norwich, 2010; Theodorou & Nind, 2010). Through discourse, this thesis dares to allow teachers of students with SLD and PMLD (albeit a small group but their uniqueness adds weight) to express and consider why they care about a student's needs, inclusion and curricula, what they have found tolerable and intolerable and how historical narratives have shaped such beliefs. I argue this reflection upon the unknown self or life affirming incidents is not merely an experience that

leads to correcting and perfecting teaching but constructs an ecology of becoming an empathising practitioner for special needs. This thesis makes a major contribution in showing how explicit messages are conveyed that teachers need to be able to 'teach,' 'enable' and 'educate' but implicit messages that are shaped by historical ecologies of what they are trying to achieve comes from themselves as being decent human beings and not educators.

Certainly this research will highlight the temporal unfolding of professional development and identity through historical and political events that have shaped new identities and formed belief systems. Such ecologies are set amidst incidents of shock, lonely struggles to survive and a loss of one identity idealism as a mainstream educator, rising like the proverbial phoenix, becoming a more nuanced special needs identity. Therefore it is unsurprising that professional identities are multifaceted; the construction of which is a 'continuing struggle' between conflicting identities (Lampert, 1985; Samuel & Stephens, 2000).

This thesis aims to contribute a unique view of pedagogy, narratives will allow this complex phenomena to emerge, enabling a glimpse of the formation of the whole persona not just 'the teacher,' where holistically identity is constructed and reconstructed as people view themselves in relation to other people and notions of professional purpose.

### **1.3 Theoretical Considerations**

Within this thesis, an important function of narration and autobiographical life stories is that they situate themselves in their social and educational context and better document the function of identities. It is important for this thesis to make visible the ways in which, or even the possibilities as to how mainstream and SLD/PMLD specialist teachers' identities differ. Akin to Cross & Hong (2012), I assert the need to examine both psychological beliefs and identities as transactions with environmental situational and political constructs.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979a, 1979b) ecological framework (micro, meso and macro systems) at first appeared to have attractiveness as the organising conceptual framework that would stand behind this study to reveal narratives and enable exploration of teachers' identity and belief systems. Narratives weave in and out of ecologies and bring them to life, offering vessels to clarify experience; but more so within this thesis the narrative itself becomes ecology within its own right, rather than as part of a theoretical concept that Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1979b, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) posited. This changes the intersections greatly, as life is fluid and ever-changing. This study illustrated the difficulty of attempting to view 'mess' and complexity

through the lens of ecologies and it revealed that merely taking ecologies as separate constructs did not portray the situations and contexts of the participants and their pupils. Narrative studies are more compatible with Bronfenbrenner's (1989) consideration for the role a person plays in their own development and later models of Process, Person, Context and Time (PPCT), (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Here, the concept of ecology as a personal narrative where individuals relay how they make sense of their world rather than the original systems theory appears more pertinent and this was confirmed and validated as the study progressed.

At the heart of this thesis is the notion that to discount the role a person plays in his or her own development as opposed to purely focusing upon environmental contexts does little to explore 'ragged' and 'messy' personal narratives. Contemplation of such concepts led me as the researcher to consider that teachers' beliefs may be situated within the usage of a medical model of disability where student problems and teachers' practices emerge as a response to pathologies inherent within the child (Rogers, 2007). Yet to view pedagogic difficulty through a singular lens was to refute the multiple factors (teacher training, ecologies, inclusion issues and curriculum objectives) that served to shape practice, thus denying the origin of teachers' identities and beliefs. Reindal (2008) argued that whilst the social model of disability criticised the field of special education for preserving and understanding disability in accord with a medical model, it also and unintentionally placed the special education field in a state of crisis. Perceiving disability as caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference leads to an "overall embarrassment of talking about categories and levels of functional difficulty," (Reindal, 2008, p. 137). This is deeply problematic as teachers need to consider the phenomenon of a student's disability and identify educational and social needs as well as understanding their own positions and biases in relation to medical and social models. Unsurprisingly then, neither the medical or social model allowed me, within his research, to fully and completely engage within the chaotic involvedness of specialist teachers' lives. An ecological narrative approach was deemed pertinent to capture the complexity of beliefs, identities and their meaningfulness and impact upon practice.

Within current literature I argue there is limited academic material, set within special schools that could serve to practically inform teachers how to differentiate or deliver a curriculum in order to progress the PMLD and SLD student (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009) therefore their practice and interpretations remain silenced. Overall, the research arena is limited with regards to what a SLD or PMLD curriculum can be or should be. It is now apparent that unlike mainstream education, the National Curriculum is followed with such diversity that it is hard to gather

coherent and indeed consistent evidence on what a SLD/PMLD curriculum should be, even though the specialist SLD/PMLD school has every capability to be wholly inclusive (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). This is further compounded by lack of teacher training (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010; The SALT Review, 2009). Whilst everyone bemoans such problems, there is a distinct lack of case studies or narratives regarding how a teacher's personal ecology impacts on pedagogic practice. Such impoverished literature warrants a more thorough investigation; this thesis therefore, makes a major contribution to try to bridge these conceptual and practical gaps.

In view of the particular significance of teachers' experiences, beliefs and values in relation to their pedagogic practice and especially in the context of special educational needs, it is clear to see how the curriculum and teachers' beliefs and values are inextricably and potently linked in SLD and PMLD schools and thus how their intertwined outcomes determine in a complex and profound way, the learning experience of these pupils.

Within this thesis therefore, it was critical to take a narrative methodology as the embodiment of enabling the unheard experiences of teachers working within SLD/PMLD settings to become articulated for the first time. Taking such an approach facilitated the author to study within a naturalistic setting and capture the essence of a life lived through discourse and a temporal unfolding of lives. Indeed, here one could capture the impact of ecology upon pedagogic practice and how curricula were understood and delivered.

Three purposes framed this investigation:

1. To gain an in-depth understanding of how the pedagogic beliefs and identities of SLD/PMLD teachers are constructed within the framework of the school-espoused curriculum.
2. How teachers' practices emerge as functions of individual ecologies, beliefs and identities through autobiography.
3. How these teachers' identities, ecologies and practices in turn, re-shape the enacted-curriculum.

#### **1.4 The Nature of this Thesis**

This thesis will address conceptual gaps in relation to the foregoing discussion on teachers' pedagogies, ecologies and the SLD/PLD school curriculum, taking the view that research is currently saturated within mainstream. Further it will examine the impact of curriculum decisions on teachers' pedagogic practices in the context of the pupil's educational experiences in a group of SLD/PMLD schools and how a teacher's beliefs are enmeshed within such concepts.

Three issues that stand behind the pedagogical practice of teachers within SLD/PMLD schools are:

1. The nature of inclusive education and Special Schools.
2. The espoused and explicit curriculum adopted.
3. The teachers' narratives (beliefs, values and attitudes toward the abilities and capabilities of the pupils concerned).

In this thesis I use these contexts to demonstrate how the pedagogic ecology of the SLD/PMLD school is influenced by temporal and current teacher narratives which are challenged by powerful macro-ecological forces.

This thesis examines the impact of curriculum decisions on teachers' pedagogic practices in the context of the pupils' educational experiences in a group of SLD/PMLD schools. This study examined nine teacher ecological narratives and explored their influence upon curriculum decisions and consequent pedagogic practices in the context of a naturalistic setting within four SLD/PMLD schools.

Each participant was interviewed multiple times, firstly as part of the pilot process within an initial focus group (IFG), secondly within the initial participant meeting (IPM) and then individually four more times in accordance with the interview question schedules which were structured around the four research question themes. Throughout, they were asked to reflect on their practice, beliefs, feelings, attitudes towards and experiences of the curriculum in the school and how on a day-to-day basis they unfolded as a function of pupil behaviours, parents' involvement, school policy and strategy. Participants were also observed four times to ensure thick description, to aid credibility of the interviews and thus enhance reality to be captured.

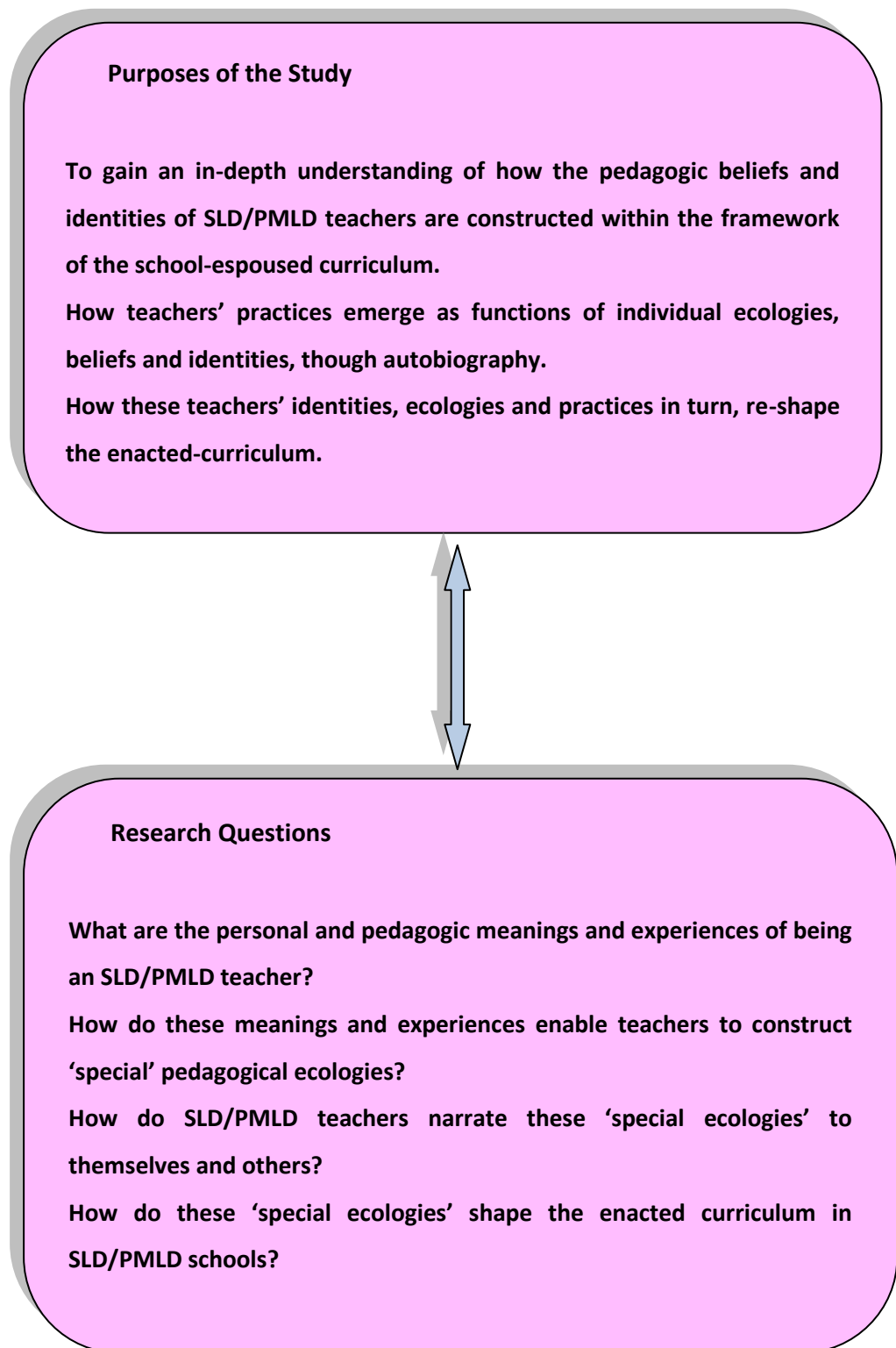
Three objectives framed this study:

1. To examine the nature of the SLD/PMLD curriculum within English special schools.
2. To examine how the beliefs and identities of SLD/PMLD teachers are constructed.
3. To examine how teachers' practices as a function of beliefs and identities, shape the curriculum in these schools.

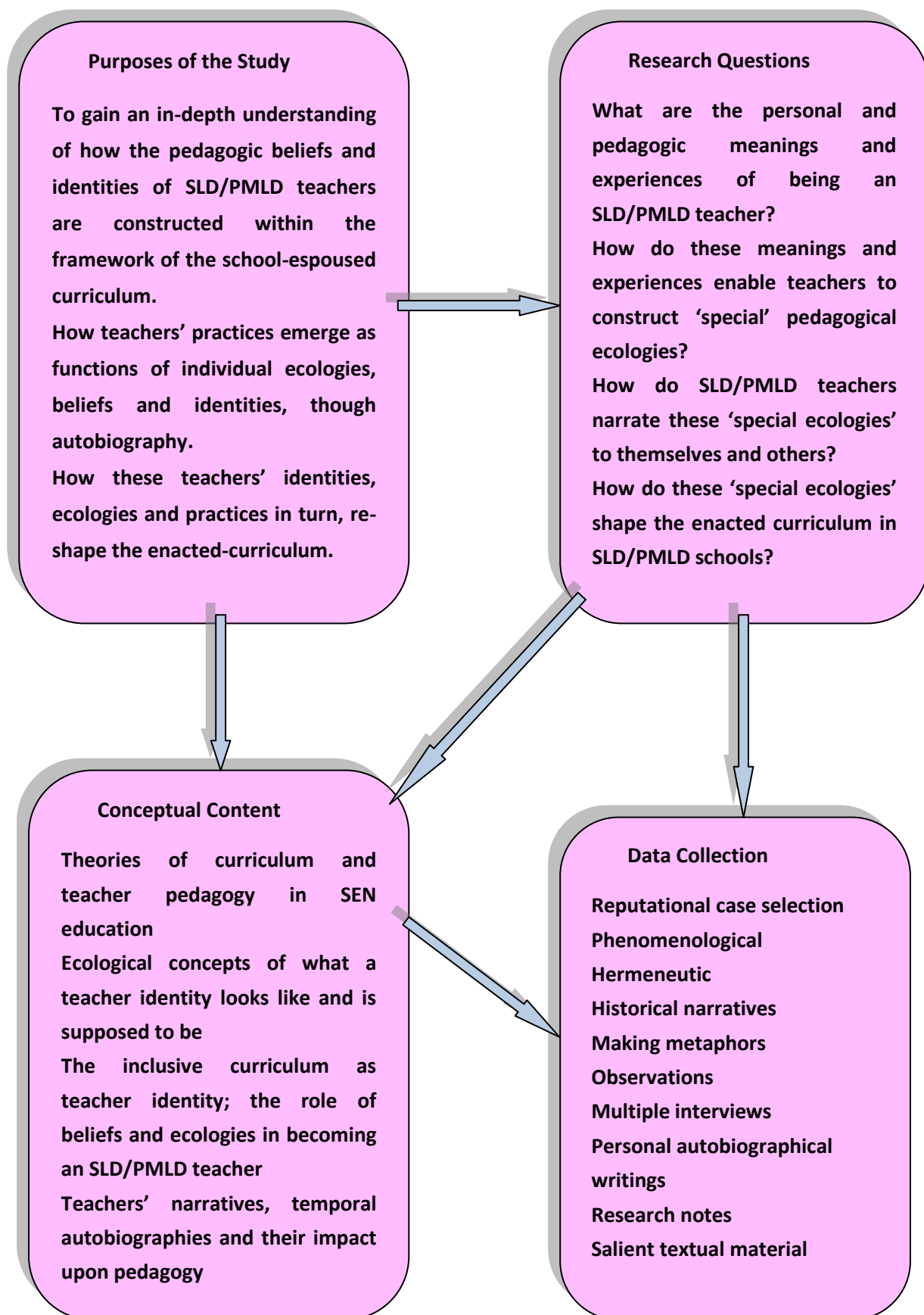
This study therefore explored four main research questions:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?
2. How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies?
3. How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these 'special ecologies' to themselves and others?
4. How do these 'special ecologies' shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?

**Figure 1: A Diagrammatic Representation of How the Research Questions Address the Study's Three Major Purposes.**



**Figure 2: A diagrammatic representation of the overall study showing the relationship between Research Purposes, the Research Questions, the Conceptual Content and Data Collection.**



## **1.5 Organisation of this Thesis**

This thesis is organised into five chapters:

Chapter 1 presents an introduction and background of the problem as well as a conceptualisation of teacher ecologies as local narratives rather than systemic ecological systems, offering an overview of the purposes, research questions, methodological details and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 contains a general literature overview summation followed by a detailed review of the major conceptual and theoretical framework. Four threads of research are examined; the nature of inclusive education and the education provision that constitutes a special education, the espoused and explicit curriculum adopted, the beliefs and identities of 'special' teachers and teachers' practices in SLD/PMLD schools.

Chapter 3 contains a description of the qualitative research undertaken, justifying the interviewee, school selection and phenomenological/hermeneutic narrative approaches, alongside the issues and justification of parental 'insider' research. In addition, the chapter discusses the procedures and methods of collecting and analysing the data.

Chapter 4 includes the research aims and motivation, conceptual framework and the analytical structure of the findings in the shape of detailed narratives for each participant with accompanying textual and other salient findings. It also contains a discussion of the findings aligned with the three original purposes of the study and located within the original conceptual threads of the field of literature. Finally this chapter contains a personal diary (researcher's testimony kept throughout the research which includes reflections, concerns and a personal narrative), which allowed one to project powerful emotions into script as a form of cathartic release that Kabuto, (2008) infers and also a useful tool to enable researcher transparency.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and implications of the research study related to its original purposes, with improvements suggested for future phases of research.

## **1.6 Defining the Terms Used in this Thesis**

In this thesis, there are many references to the main participants in the study – the teachers (mainstream, SEN, specialist, SLD and PMLD), other staff (TA and SENCo), management, and also the students/pupils whom they teach (ADHD, EBD/SEBD, MLD, SLD, PMLD). It is important to clarify the meaning ascertained to them within this research in order to prevent confusion. Moreover, within this thesis there are multiple references to themes (beliefs, pedagogy, teachers' pedagogy, teachers' practical knowledge and values). Whilst such terms have multiple definitions, it is important to elucidate the meaning ascertained to them within this research and so a full glossary has been provided. (See Appendix A).

## **1.7 Organisation of the Literature: Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion:**

In terms of the selection of articles, books, chapters, reports and other publications, criteria for inclusion was based on multiple interweaving factors as displayed in Figures 3.1 to 3.5.

Here, literature searches considered the following:

- (1) Research that examined and sought to understand the philosophical and practical issues of teaching for teachers overall such as the National Curriculum, curriculum objectives, Government ideals and policies regarding inclusion and rights for students with special educational needs, teacher training initiatives and teachers' abilities to teach diverse cohorts.
- (2) Research that examined the autobiographical nature of teachers' and academics' values, beliefs and identities both with mainstream and SLD/PMLD settings.
- (3) Research that contributed to a furtherance of knowledge and understanding about why and how academics' ecologies serve to impact upon the curriculum that they deliver.

It is important to note however that academic literature is abundant regarding rights around inclusive practice within mainstream schools, quantifiable data highlighting a school's ability to achieve grades is readily available as is literature that infers inclusion is problematic. This thesis does not aim to consider a detailed discussion of these concepts. The essential core of the work is one of lived experience and nuanced narrative; an emphasis on ecological constructs, and the beliefs and identities of those within SLD/PMLD schools. However influential, considering quantifiable statistics would detract from the phenomenological narrative nature of the research and ultimately undermine the sense of participant-owned testimony and dialogue which have played such a major role in the study and contribute to its rigour and integrity.

## **CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This literature review is laid out in five sections in relation to the ecologies of the SLD/PMLD school: to begin the major concepts within SEN academic research will be discussed, following from which is a review of the literature that is central to the four major purposeful sections within this thesis.

### **(1) The Major Concepts within SEN Academic Research (Figure 3.1)**

Here the literature will discuss the curriculum as an ill-fitting concept with inappropriate objectives for SLD/PMLD and an expose of the Government Acts and White and Green Papers that stand behind such concepts. Philosophical and practical pedagogic knowledge in mainstream and SLD/PMLD schools ensconced within the teachers beliefs, identity and ecologies.

### **(2) The Nature of Inclusive Education and the Education Provision That Constitutes 'A Special Education' (Figure 3.2)**

Here the literature begins with a historical overview of special education following with a focus upon appropriate curricula for special educational needs students leading onto a consideration of the inclusive curriculum.

### **(3) The Espoused and Explicit Curriculum Adopted (Figure 3.3)**

Here I will review the nature of and the special context of SLD/PMLD curricula, in terms of defining the curriculum alongside models of curricula and curriculum theorists. After this, consideration is necessitated around the SLD and PMLD curriculum discussing what it should consist of and who should decide upon this construct.

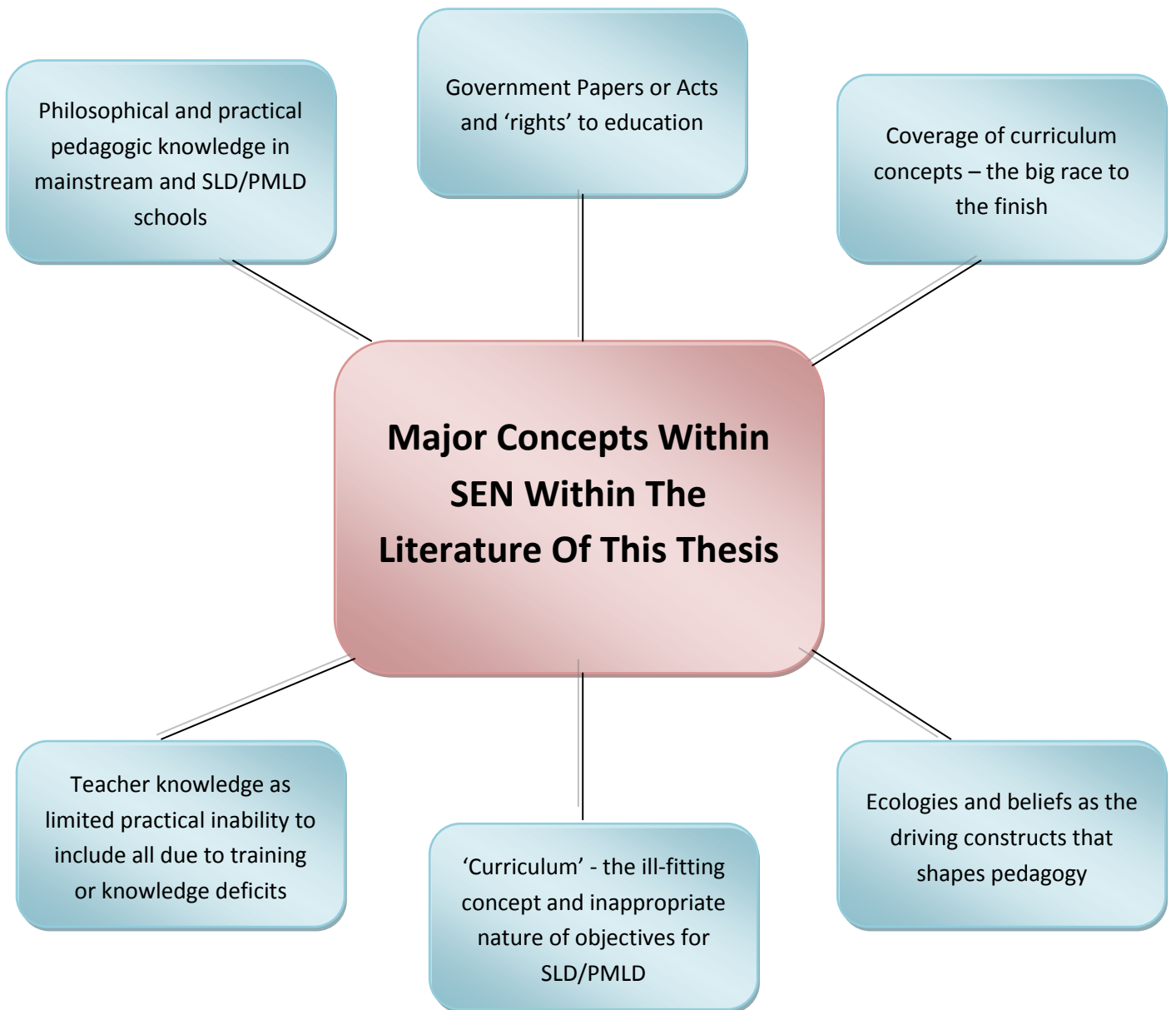
### **(4) The Beliefs and Identities of 'Special' Teachers (Figure 3.4)**

There is a need to review the concept of teacher identity and beliefs overall leading to a natural exposition of the SLD/PMLD teacher identity, beliefs and pedagogic ecologies; after which it is critical to consider their intersection with practice, theory and curriculum in SLD/PMLD.

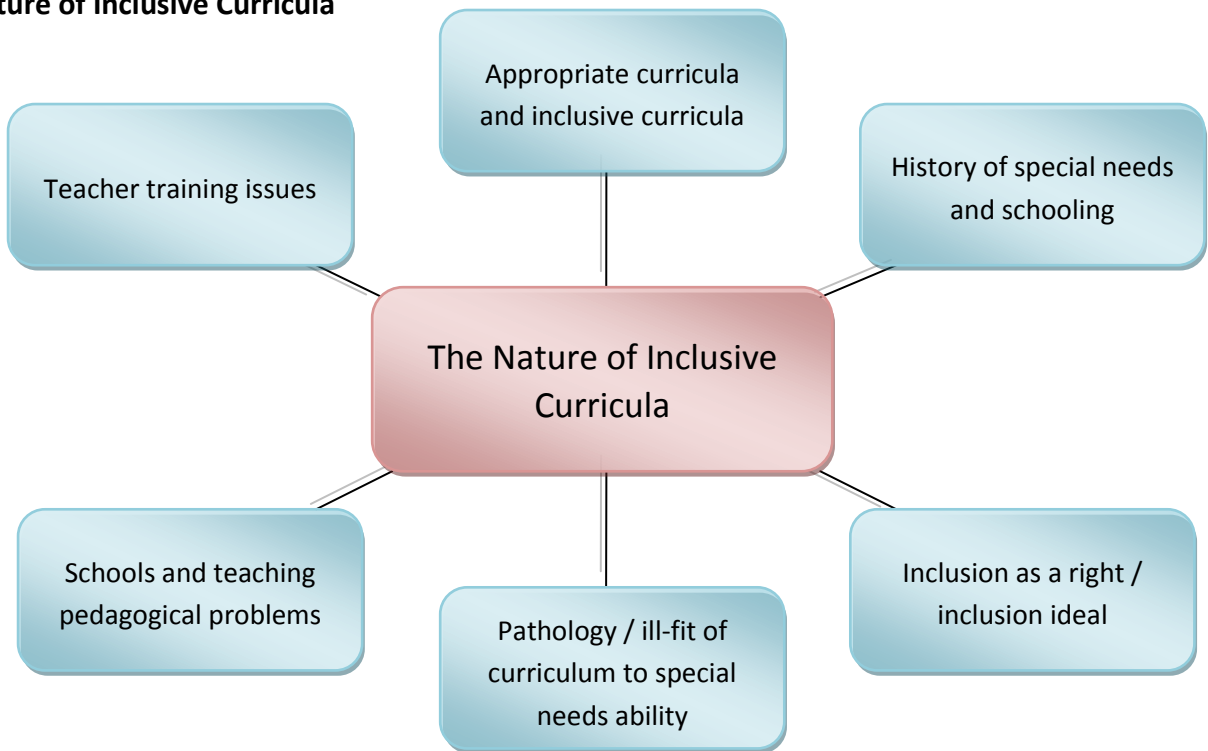
### **(5) Teachers' Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools (Figure 3.5)**

Teachers' inclusive ecologies as an overall concept will be discussed leading onto a thorough analysis of SLD/PMLD teacher practices in special schools. After this, teachers' personal ecologies will be reviewed with a final overview of recent developments in research into teachers' inclusive practices in SLD/PMLD.

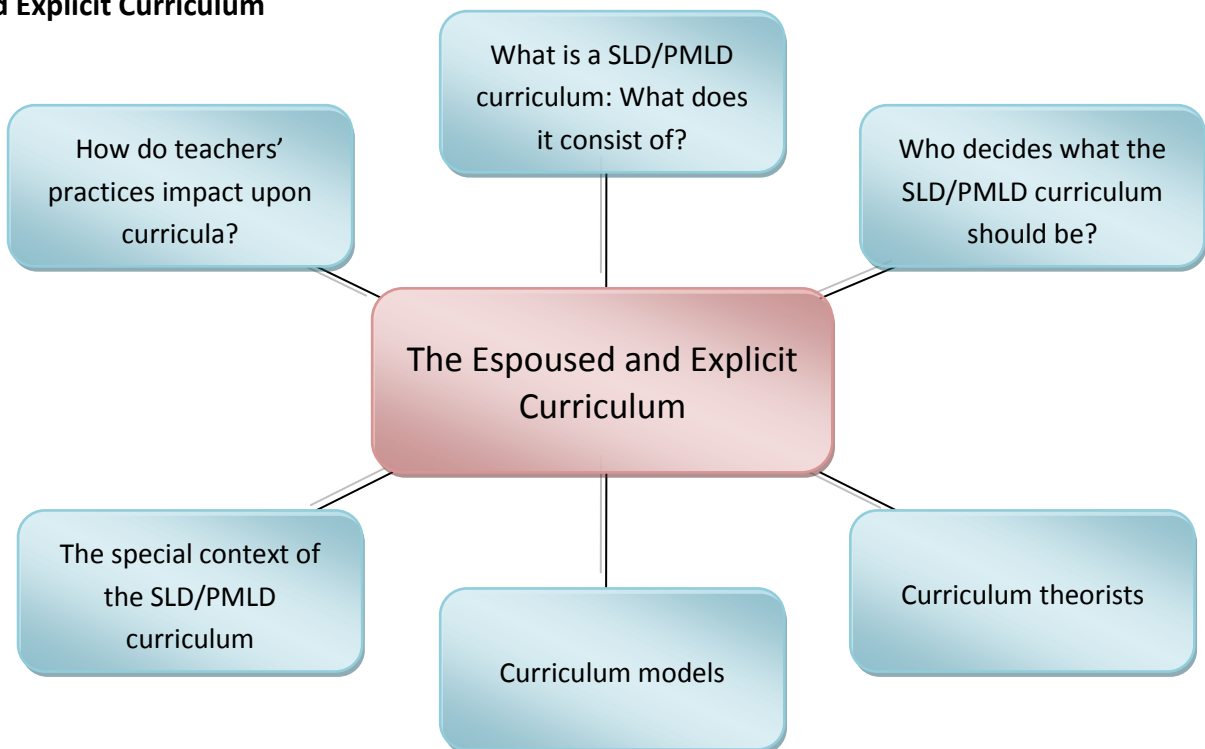
**Figure 3.1: Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Major Concepts within SEN within the literature of this thesis**



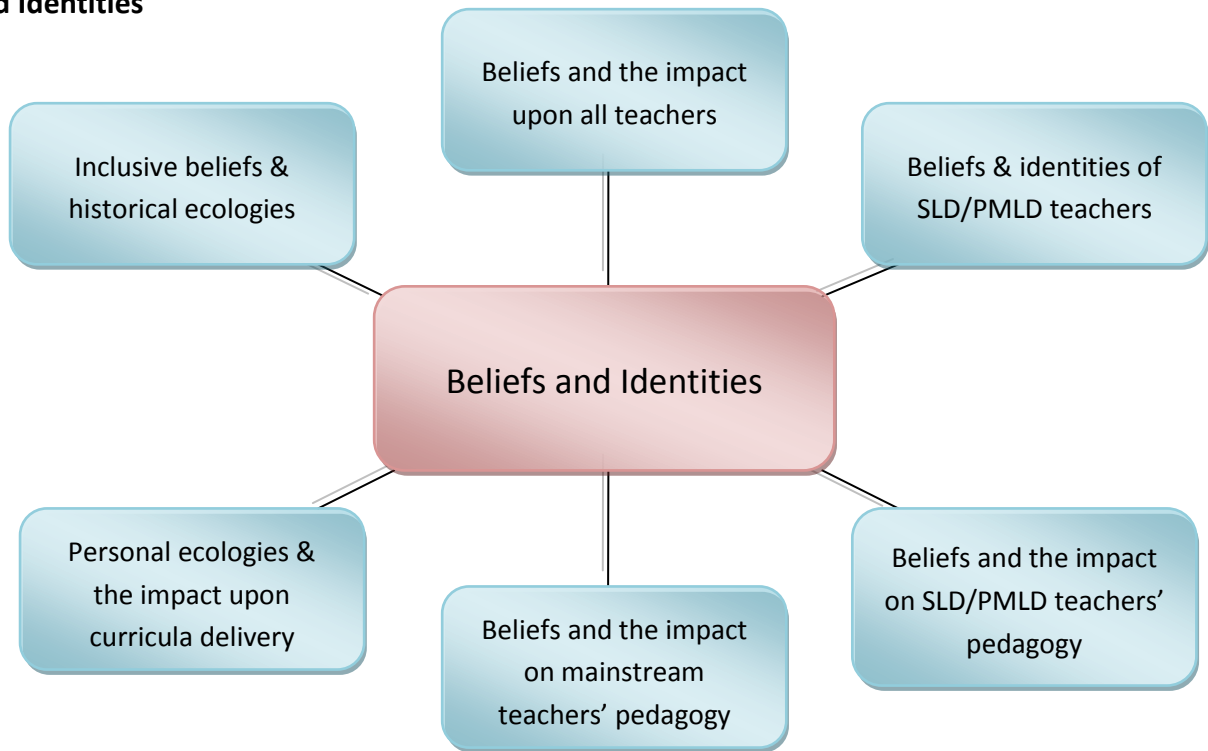
**Figure 3.2: Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: The Nature of Inclusive Curricula**



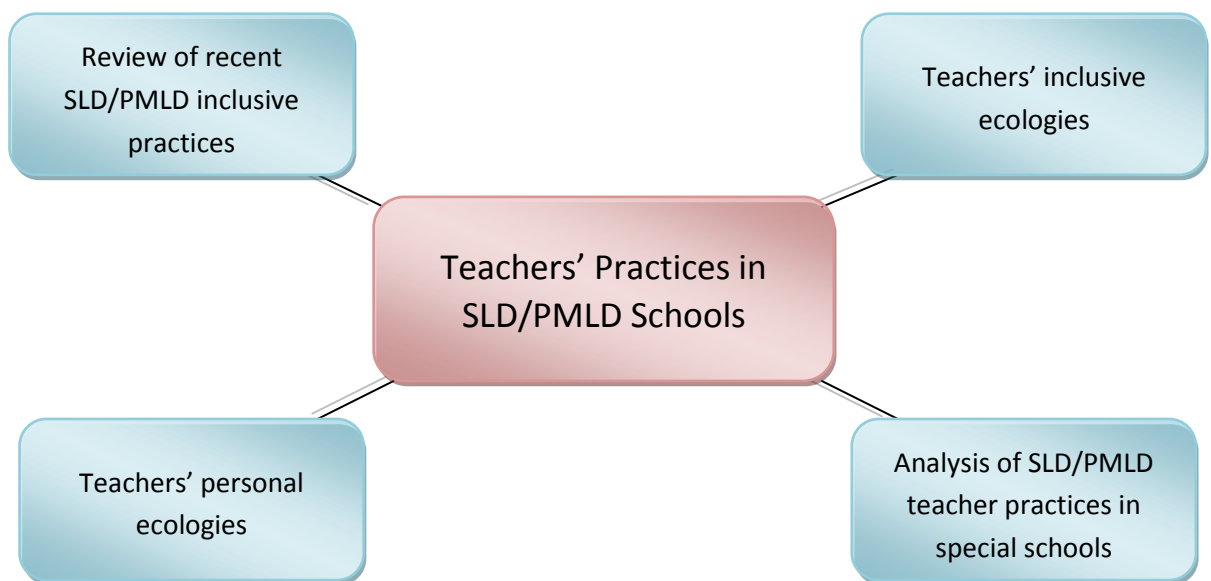
**Figure 3.3: Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Espoused and Explicit Curriculum**



**Figure 3.4: Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Beliefs and Identities**



**Figure 3.5: Criteria for Inclusion of Literature in Research: Teachers' Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools**



## 2.1 Literature Overview

The word 'curriculum' comes from the Latin word meaning "a course for racing," (Yero, 2002, p.31) and it is clear from the literature how closely this metaphor fits the way in which many educators perceive the purposes and the outcomes of curriculum in schools. Teachers often speak about 'covering' concepts as one would speak about covering ground. Coverage is often a race against the testing clock, where students have a number of years to get to the proverbial end and achieve as much as possible, based explicitly on self-contained and specific developmental theories that are pinned against time-scales and which in turn rest on foundations of systematic neuro-biological development. In other words, the curriculum 'race' is run against a backdrop of universal assumptions and expectations about the nature of taking part and the aspirations and outcomes inherent in this. Yet, despite the UNESCO: Salamanca Statement (1994); The Equality Act (2006) and The United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), on the rights of all individuals to an inclusive education based on the acceptance and celebration of diversity, inclusive education has as yet failed to find a consensus as to a most profound question and the one that lies at the heart of this thesis – what is the curriculum for and who decides this in the context of special education. Moreover, I question whether and if the SEN curriculum in fact exists at all! There is a dearth of literature in the area of theorisation of the special curriculum, existing studies primarily being case studies of specific interventions or innovations that 'appear to work'. Yet from the onset I argue that one must come to see a mainstream curriculum (static, a thing to deliver on levels) as a very different phenomenon from the SEN curriculum (assuming such a 'thing' exists at all) and challenge exactly what 'appeared to work' meant in actuality.

The literature in this field appears to be located in the framework of individual pathology rather than external capability toward some end goal. This stands in contrast with mainstream education curriculum where the end points and goals are explicit with curricula adjusted and pupils accommodated to meet those goals. In comparison, the special education curriculum appears to be a 'rabbit stuck in the headlights'; whilst there is a laudable focus on the personalisation of the curriculum, there would seem to be little else, culminating in a static vision of a pupil's development as being solely a function of their need. Overall then, there is a lack of conceptual clarity in the way that pupils designated as special will be able to take part meaningfully in this universal curriculum race; the only principled mechanism is that such pupils will be able to compete at all and this through a process of inclusion. This assertion already suggests that rather than being a constructive process of recognising difference in all people and their abilities, inclusion is a principled response to something inherently complex and messy. That is, to find a systematic way to accommodate difference at all and arguably to provide a rationale for the

failure of education systems to routinely do this. Even Baroness Warnock highlighted her naivety of assuming resources would be available, stating that “there is increasing evidence that the ideal of inclusion is not working,” (Special Educational Needs: A New Look, 2005, p.35). Moreover, inclusion “can be carried too far and it involves a simplistic ideal” (p.14). Echoing this, there is an argument that the curriculum is neither accessible nor applicable to all special needs (Rose, 1998).

If the curriculum context for special education is unclear and complex, then that for PMLD and SLD is the ‘Cinderella Curriculum’. With regards to PMLD and SLD students, there is a need for a distinct pedagogic national framework for those with PMLD (Imray & Hinchcliffe, 2012). There appears to be major confusion and deficits within academic literature regarding how to articulate such a ‘special’ curriculum, how to differentiate the curriculum (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Kelly, 1989), how to decide in practice what topics should be covered (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009) and whether teachers have enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate at all (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010). Much disagreement appears to rest on the complex dichotomy of whether and how to balance the aspirations of an overarching curriculum theory with a design that is able to understand the capabilities of a complex group of students and their multiple needs, with the resources to help them flourish and prevail. Furthermore, the current (scarce) literature suggests that it is the teachers who teach in these curriculum contexts that hold the possibility of change with regards to translating the curriculum theories and policies that exist into practices that are able to build upon capabilities in a progressive and productive manner. The research however that does exist is clear, this is a multifaceted and dynamic context that makes a very significant personal and professional demand on practitioners and certainly The SALT Review (DCFS, 2009) highlighted that teachers remain untrained and lacking in knowledge. The needs of complex students are not understood and therefore remain unmet; teachers assert that “social maps no longer fit social landscapes” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 9).

In the past two decades, ‘teacher pedagogic knowledge’ or ‘teacher practical knowledge’ has emerged as a major area of exploration for educational researchers (Carter, 1990; Hashweh, 2005; Shulman, 1986, 1987). In the literature regarding teacher knowledge, educational researchers have examined teacher thinking, beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices building on Shulman's work on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as a specific form of teacher knowledge. Shulman (1987) defined PCK as:

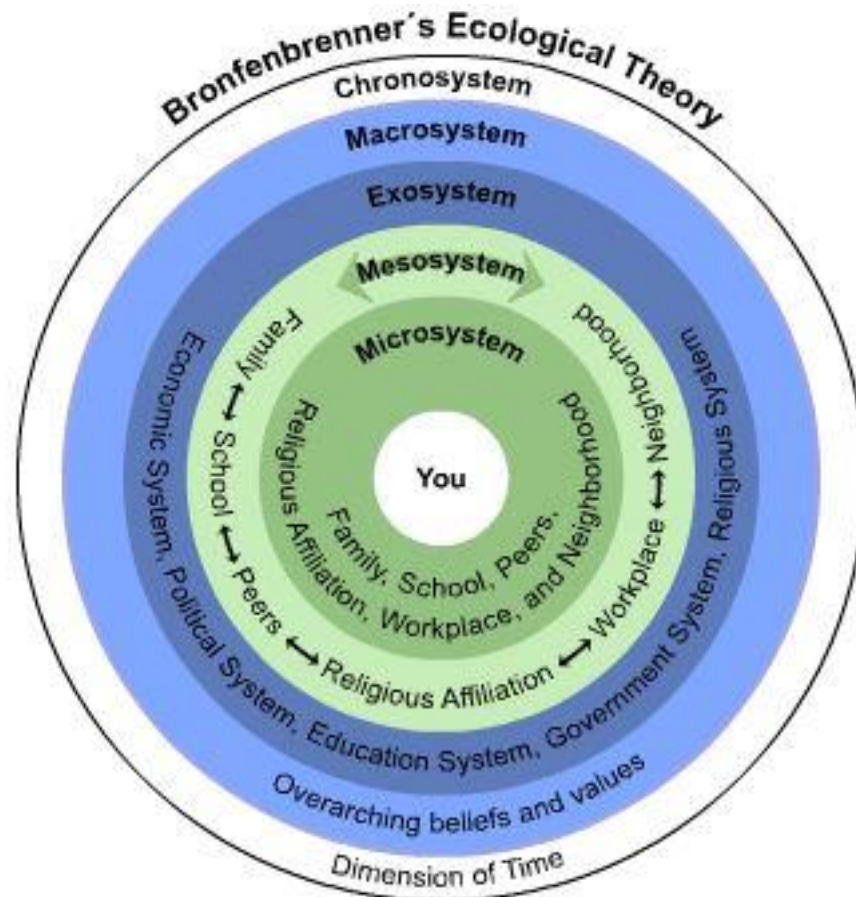
“That special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers and their own special form of professional understanding” (p.15).

In other words, ‘teacher practical knowledge’ builds bridges between subject matter concepts and pedagogical ideas. Although how teachers understand the emotional aspects of teaching and learning; how teachers and students develop emotional understanding of each other or of the subject matter within curricula they explore is rather absent (Denzin, 1984). Several studies have provided detailed accounts of teacher ecologies and the role they play in pedagogic practice and curriculum delivery regarding professional and personal development (Day & Leitch, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001, 2005). Unsurprisingly though, similar beliefs, practices and delivering curriculum diversity regarding PMLD and SLD have tended to be ignored.

Barton (1986) argues that despite good intentions, educators and professionals do not know a great deal about handicap and grossly underestimate people and the notions of capability that have been postulated (Sen, 2005; Terzi, 2005), which adds weight to such arguments. Mainstream teachers often possess low academic expectations of ‘mentally retarded’ students in mainstream with regards to potential (Aloia, Maxwell, & Aloia, 1981) and students’ academic performance can be affected by the ways in which teachers treat them; failure to achieve often correlates with expectation to fail (Good, 1981). Many mainstream teachers assert that they are not as confident in teaching special needs as opposed to SLD/PMLD teachers (Buell et al., 1999) and so we see a difference in ecological constructs (and narrative accounts) between the mainstream teacher and those working within an SLD and PMLD setting. Such research however, whilst informative does little to illuminate teachers’ identities and pedagogic practice within specialised settings, nor elucidate how the curriculum can be differentiated to become an inclusive instrument of education. Certainly, student and teacher ecologies are not stand alone concepts, but interwoven within complex multi ecologies.

‘Ecology,’ in the traditional sense, is the study of the complex interrelationships between organisms and their environments (Zembylas, 2007). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979a, 1979b) systems were useful as a starting framework for examining personal development and the medial and distal environments in which teachers are embedded (Cross & Hong, 2012) and certainly I have adapted such a structure in the sense of a very personal narrative approach to uncover the interplay between environments and teacher beliefs and identities. Like Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik (2009), I contend it is necessary to make explicit which model one is utilising as Bronfenbrenner revised his models greatly through the years. Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) work

considered the role a person plays in their own development, later developing the bioecological (PPCT) model of Process, Person, Context and Time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) where he added the chronosystem which refers to how the person and environments change over time. Here, the concept of ecology as a personal narrative where individuals relay how they make sense of their world rather than the original systems theory appears more pertinent to the thesis objectives and this was confirmed and validated as the study progressed.



Ecologies involve complex 'system layers' of environmental factors, each having an effect on a child's development which serve to mould and shape children's educational experiences. Parental and teacher views and/or experiences, teachers' practices and their links to government policies, economic interests and society's perceptions and reactions to SEN, all impact upon the educational experience and curriculum offered. Changes or conflict in any one ecological layer will ripple throughout other layers (Zembylas, 2007). To study teacher pedagogy then, it is imperative that we look not only their immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment where education, political rhetoric and pedagogic practices impact on curriculum materials and school experiences overall. In this way one can hope to obtain a personalised journey that narrates how teachers navigate their lives and the imposing interplay between ecological belief and identity constructs and environments.

Teacher identity is of paramount importance; teachers' characteristics and experiences will have an overall effect upon a child's micro ecology and schooling experience (Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985). Jones (2004) contends that teacher educators need to be aware of the potential influence of teacher identity when planning and delivering initial teacher training, especially when considering the support SLD and PMLD teachers may require.

Whilst as a child, teachers' parents may affect their beliefs and behaviour, but the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Overall, one is aware that there are difficulties in locating the exact educational process within family settings and yet they are of utmost importance; however, it is not the intention of this thesis to research into such aspects. Suffice to say though that children's disability often has a significant impact on the family (Najarian, 2006; Tripathi & Agarwal, 2000) and no doubt parents hope that a good educational experience will enable them to flourish. Interestingly, professional notions of teachers are often taken from information written and borne out by professionals who are 'specialists' within SEN. Conversely, many mothers have revealed their anger at professionals for making assumptions about their children (Murray & Penman, 1996) illustrating that although parents identify characteristics to describe their children, they are not the deficit-based characteristics they believe teachers and schools employ (Fitton, 1994). Indeed, educational agents of society each have their own methods, world views, settings and agendas. Special educational needs children are often described as a problem by teachers, (Brock, 1976; Carpenter, 1998) and parental experiences suggest a difference of approach between the perceptions and understanding of professionals and themselves (Fisher, 2007).

Teachers within mainstream schools often adopt restrictive responses more often than helpful responses using threats, preaching, punishments and withholding of privileges (Almog & Shechtman, 2007). Such an approach creates distance between teachers and students and may restrict the communication and interaction between them which does little to contribute to the successful integration of the 'challenging' student in the classroom. Certainly such practices may stem from insufficient knowledge, as well as additional factors such as a lack of experience, skills, time and resources (Witt, Martens, & Elliott, 1984). If one takes such findings to assume teachers henceforth become aware of a personal lack of self-efficacy then notions of belief systems and identity formation are critical in their practice. Thus the way teachers perceive themselves is transactional with classroom behaviours and practice (Cross & Hong, 2012), which is significant and has been linked to a teachers feeling of shame at not being knowing how to include all and a sense of uncontrollability within their own practice (Weiner, 2007). Such research essentially

highlights how teachers' beliefs influence how they understand and assess student abilities and behaviours. Teachers are often knowledgeable but experience difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and practice (Almog & Schectman, 2007) which may mean that curriculum delivery could depend on factors beyond realms of training and be entwined with teacher identity and a personal self-efficacy to differentiate.

Where one assumes that teachers' pedagogic practice is entwined with their identity as a practitioner (Jones, 2004), it is unsurprising to find that overall SLD/PMLD teachers' ecologies differ from mainstream teachers, often viewing themselves as separate entities from a mainstream teacher, but highly supportive of each other in the difficulties they encounter (Jones, 2004). A teacher's identity changes through practice and she/he must constantly interpret experiences and what this means in terms of pedagogic practice or who they are as a person (Wenger, 1998). Working within SLD and PMLD settings offers an emotionally charged work life and yet gives teachers a reason to stay (Mackenzie, 2012a, 2012b) and one would be wise to consider that we come to know people and their attitudes and what happens to them partly in terms of what they reveal (Davis & Florian, 2004). Certainly, notions of a possible mistrust of academics or professional ecologies that Fisher (2007) alludes to and culture that does not appear to value SLD and PMLD teachers or their pupils (Jones, 2004) will impact on further research within this arena if one takes 'culture' to include societal values, customs and laws (Berk, 2000). From an ecological perspective these stand as the relative freedoms that people are permitted by governments, cultures and economies which affect how children grow and develop. Olssen, Codd, & O'Neil (2004, p.72), suggest policy is about exercise of control and the language (discourse) that is used to legitimate the process. One could argue that the Warnock Report (1978) followed by The Education Act (1981) was prolific in changing education and removing categories where all educational goals for children should be the same and offer a continuum of needs. The literature base is replete with papers investigating the historical and political development of SEN (Kay, Tisdall, & Riddell, 2006; Pumfrey, 2008; Norwich, 2010) and the conflicts that have ensued, all grounded firmly within the macrosystem ecologies of political rhetoric. Overall it is how teachers experience such conflicts; not merely what the conflicts are but more importantly, what it means to them in term of practice and self-efficacy and how experience of such issues have formed their professional landscapes overall. Once again, only narration and unique discourse can uncover the experiential life shaping factors.

## 2.2 Literature Review: The Nature of Inclusive Education and the Education Provision that Constitutes 'A Special Education'

### 2.2.1 The History of Special Education in Focus

Historical writings appear to indicate that people with mental disability were regularly conveyed as synonymous with being mentally ill as behaviours and abilities deviated from social norms (Wright, 2001, p.160). Plato and Aristotle associated human worth with personal ability and quality of intellect; people who lacked the capacity to reason were considered barely human and therefore socially inferior (Stainton, 2001) which contrasts with Christianity's notions of innocence and hopeless affliction that necessitated support and sympathy.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1700s people with 'handicapping special needs' were regarded as undeserving of any respect and deemed unable to be educated due to their inability to think or reason like normal students. People were sent to asylums or lived at home uneducated for the entirety of their life.<sup>2</sup> Gilbert's Act (1782, cited in Shave, 2008) empowered parishes to find accommodation for 'poor impotent people' in addition to the requirement to 'set to work' their poor and promote industrious behaviour providing a workhouse exclusively for children, the aged, infirm and impotent, i.e. those individuals who were 'vulnerable' and 'not able to maintain themselves by their labour' (Gilbert, 1782).

During the 1800s, terminology from physical sciences and classifications arose to ensure the 'diseased brain' could receive medical attention to relieve symptoms with the aim to eventually cure such illnesses. Pinel (1793) called for more equal treatment to enable people to improve lives through medicine and science.<sup>3</sup> The DSM<sup>4</sup> was published in 1894 and is the predecessor of the DSM-IV used today and was the foundation for the modern ICD<sup>5</sup>, providing a comprehensive classification of mental disorders and supporting scientific diagnostic criteria which aims to help professionals communicate (e.g. symptoms to look for) and offer a workable diagnosis. The so-called 'objective' criteria of disability reflect the biases, self-interests and moral evaluations of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Re-So/Retardation.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Special Education*, 'History of Custodial Care for Individuals with Disabilities,' <http://credoreference.com/entry.do?format=html&id=9297997>

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Special Education*, 'Pinel, Phillippe,' <http://credoreference.com/entry.do?format=html&id=9299025>

<sup>4</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

<sup>5</sup> International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries, and Causes of Death

those in a position to influence policy (Albrecht, Walker, & Levy, 1982). Notions of normalisation involve comparison, differentiation, hierarchy, homogeneity and exclusion whereby definitions and genetics are used to distinguish the healthy from the sick (Foucault, 1982, cited in Copeland, 1999, p.100). Galton's Eugenics movement in 1920 was used by many powerful nations and leaders to persecute or eradicate individuals deemed as different or deviating from a social norm educationally or socially (Braund & Sutton, 2008). In post WWI Germany, *Zigeuner*, (the German word for Gypsy, meaning 'untouchable') were subject to special, discriminatory laws targeted by the Nazis for racial persecution and annihilation sharing to a degree, the fate of the Jews in the extermination camps; and their children were studied and classified by 'racial scientists'.<sup>6</sup>

Following The Education Act (1902), many new facilities opened such as open air schools, day and boarding schools for physically handicapped children, schools in hospitals, convalescent homes and trade schools. Only those who were judged by the authority to be incapable of being taught in special schools were to pass to the care of local mental deficiency committees (See Warnock, 1978:14-15, DES). The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic) Act, (1914); The Education Act, (1918) and the Wood-Mental Deficiency Committee Report, (1989), aimed to extend and provide education to all the categories of handicapped children (mentally, physically defective and epileptic) postulating that mentally deficient children should not be isolated from the mainstream of education and proposing certification should be abolished. Yet, provision continued to be based on a medical model of 'defects' and problems; individual differences and potential were not considered (Lewis, 1999). Burt (1933, cited in Chitty, 2004, p.24) suggested children be measured on their IQ, (intelligence quotient, an average IQ being 100 points) although Burt's work has now been discredited (Chitty, 2004). Educable Mentally Retarded, students with an IQ between 55 and 70 points were taught basic reading, writing and math skills. Trainable Mentally Retarded students (IQ of 40-55) were taught basic skills and activities of daily living and often trained in semi-skilled trades. Custodial (now known as SLD or PMLD students) who were believed to have an IQ of less than 40 did not traditionally attend school, as they were thought unable to learn academic tasks and in need of focused care. Children outside regular schools, sometimes in hospital schools or other institutions with a mild disability were termed Feeble Minded, Morons or Imbeciles and Mongoloid Imbeciles and Idiots for those with the most severe disabilities (Kain, 2011). The Education Act (1944) referred to children who suffered from a

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<sup>6</sup> A Bavarian law of July 16<sup>th</sup> (1926), outlined measures for 'Combating Gypsies, Vagabonds, and the Work Shy' and those unable to prove regular employment' risked being sent to forced labour for up to two years [www.Holocaustresearchproject.org](http://www.Holocaustresearchproject.org).

disability of mind or body, as needing special schools stating they were the most suitable to cater for handicapped children, although limited recognition was given to such provision, (Gillard, 2011). LEAs were charged with ascertaining all types of disability: The Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations (1945, cited in Gillard, 2011), defined eleven categories of pupils<sup>7</sup> and children falling into these categories were described in terms of the treatment they could receive and then assigned to particular disability groups with which particular institutions and curriculum forms were associated.

## **2.22 The History of Special Education Schooling and Appropriate Curricula for Students with Deficits**

One of the first schools to specifically deal with disability within England was The Braidwood Academy which catered for The Deaf and Dumb in 1760. This was followed by The Cripples Home & Industrial School for Girls (1851) for those aged 12 and over. Here, basic needlecrafts and housekeeping were taught as this was thought in keeping with both their ability and possible contribution to society. The Royal Earlswood Asylum for Idiots in Surrey (1847) took both adults and children. Patients were taught various manual trades as well as domestic, garden and farm duties possibly to enable those in need a chance to contribute to society through work based skills training, in some understanding that they could be cured (Wright, 2001, p.42).

Summerhill School (1921) postulated that “in learning we should demand nothing” (Jenkins, 1953, p.103). Children learnt “free from coercion,”<sup>8</sup> doing handicrafts; playing and choosing which lessons they wished to attend. Snyders (1973, p.317) asserts, schools such as this serve to reinforce notions of the uneducable special needs child to whom schooling is of no great concern. Stronach & Piper (2008) cite the Ofsted Report of (1999) which attacked Summerhill’s notions of non-attendance at lessons and encouragement of personal ‘fun’ pursuits, suggesting it was abrogation of education responsibility. Thus leading to an inference that the school had drifted into confusing educational freedom with the negative right not to be taught, those with special needs suffered most.

Burnard (1998, p.45) contends that some children do not perform well in classrooms, suggesting a ‘softer’ approach to teaching lesser able students (here I take softer to deduce that he means a

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<sup>7</sup> Blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially deaf, delicate, diabetic, educationally subnormal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped and those with speech defects.

<sup>8</sup> En.wikipedia.org/wiki/summer\_hill\_School

less taxing or rigid curriculum due to inability). Writers such as Sax (2001) support such incapability notions stating that:

“Students may naturally come from a non-academic background or have a short attention span and probably prefer to be outside more in general and learn better this way” (Sax, 2001, p.22).

Forest Schools believe that self esteem and experiential learning styles enable those with disabilities that may not be able to become wholly included in all curriculum objectives (Maynard, 2007). Overall they stress the combination of freedom and responsibility for children who lack confidence or whose behaviour is challenging in order to allow extension of ability.<sup>9</sup> Such schools offer a holistic approach advocating ‘lesser able’ students can be part of society which included creating an outdoors camp, with team building addressing children’s increasingly sedentary lifestyles (Maynard, 2007).

Whilst there is an argument that it is in keeping with early childhood education initiatives (which teachers have found helpful), attempting to offer a different approach more in keeping with students who have special educational needs proposes an incapability approach to education that Terzi (2005) and Nussbaum (2011) reverently dispute. Offering a more creative curriculum may mask society’s diagnostic and disabling views where lower level curricula are perfectly matched to the unable child that Burnard (1998) and Sax (2001), allude to. Whilst Forest schools have fewer discipline problems than their traditionally educated peers (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998) this does not constitute inclusion. We must consider if what students are being taught is worth knowing, comprehensible, capable of sustaining their interest and useful to them at any stage of development (Rogers, 2007).

The literature base is replete with papers investigating the historical and political development of SEN (Kay, Tisdall, & Riddell, 2006; Pumfrey, 2008; Norwich, 2010), although there is confusion regarding what counts as a special need, given it is based on a cultural phenomenon (Oliver, 1996; Bruzy, 1996), its usage implies everyone already knows what they are talking about (Wilson, 2002). Social model theorists such as Barnes & Oliver (1993) and Vasey (1992) have argued that

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<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest\\_schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_schools)

the reasons why children fail, lie not in their ability, low I.Q or 'deficit' but in the social, environmental and political agendas of society. Educational provision and policy is about exercise of control and the language (discourse) that is used to legitimate the process (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neil, 2004, p.72). The term SEN is used more when student difficulties exceed the schools capacity to deal with them which enables reduction of accountability and responsibility (Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse, 2007, p.18; Molloy & Vassil, 2002).

The Warnock Report (1978) followed by The Education Act (1981), was seminal in changing education for 'categorised' and 'uneducable' children suggesting medical categories be removed introducing statements of needs and integration which later became known as an 'inclusive approach' where all educational goals for children should be the same and offer a continuum of needs. Yet it failed to indicate actual handicap, achievements criteria or make available appropriate teacher training and funding (Weddell, 2003).

The Education Reform Act (1988) established the National Curriculum and a system of league tables arose where schools competed based on academic achievement ensuring the 'right' people got into the 'right' schools and henceforth good positions in society (Stakes & Hornby, 1997, p.22). Such testing appears to homogenise pupils into groups identified by their level of attainment to set up competition and exclude (Copeland, 1999).

Historically, following the Industrial Training Act (1964) education served to open up opportunities and enable the UK to reap the potential benefits of rapid scientific advances and a major factor of school during the 1960s and 70s was to prepare lower ability students for manual labour (Callum, 1995). Oliver (1996) asserts the varying social constructions of disability /difficulty allow powerful individuals to oppress people under the guise of aiding the 'inflicted'. The 1975 recession meant special educational needs students competed with those of higher ability. Economic problems were compounded by increased political pressure in schools to ensure that all left with some sort of qualification no matter how low the level leading to an expansion of specialised training courses for those who might never achieve work. Tomlinson (1996) in *Learning Works Widening Participation in Further Education and Higher Education in Learning Society*, focused on post-16 education and the notion of widening participation for all students moving away from elitist university places. Participation notions envisaged a more socially representative inclusive culture attending University, but in reality non-traditional entrants (disabled or ethnic minorities) were still found to attend less prestigious establishments as they were problematic to retain (Williams, 1997, p.6) implying that elitist universities cream- skimmed to keep academic league table metrics high and arguably artificially inflated.

## 2.23 Inclusive Education

The right to a more inclusive education is covered in several significant international declarations, including: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); The World Declaration for Education for All (1990). But the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) casts increasing light on the philosophy of a child's right to inclusion and inclusive schooling as a basic human right for all, irrespective of individual differences. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and Education Act (1996), were designed to give education providers guidance on how to identify needs and assess specific educational requirements with the Government's 10 year strategy for SEN *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004) alluding to "more consistency between local authorities and delegated funding," (p.75). Once again however, this was not borne out as training initiatives were not at the forefront and funding was sporadic.

Many argue the evolution of inclusion really began in 1997 (New Labour) with Excellence for All (1997) setting the premise of full inclusion with the introduction of Curriculum (2000) which supported UNESCO (1997) with broader inclusion statements initiating wider ranging and diverse curriculum provision for pupils with PMLD. The National Curriculum however, has become a straightjacket that discourages reflection on how teachers can contribute to increasing participation of all learners (Hodkinson, 2009).

*The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching* (Special Educational Needs Children) (DfES, 1998b), and *The National Numeracy Framework* (DfES, 1999), stated work should be enabled by objectives broken down in to smaller steps, aided by the implementation of IEPs<sup>10</sup> which allowed one to plot student objectives like a graph and enforce teachers' accountability. *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004) set out to implement Warnock's ideals tailoring curricula to equip the workforce with usable skills, yet again without any recommendations regarding how to achieve such a utopia. The *Special Educational Needs Disability Act* (SENDA, DfES, 2001) implied that a child's right to education within mainstream should not impact on the efficient education for other children. Yet special educational needs students negatively affect the achievements of other mainstream pupils and lower standards (Rouse & Florian, 2006). Low social acceptance increases the risk of victimisation for students as they often do not ask for help through fear of drawing attention to themselves (Nakken & Pijl, 2002; Carter & Spencer, 2006). It appears little attention is given to needs before attempting to meet them (Evans, 1989, p.35).

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<sup>10</sup> Individual Education Plans

Slee, (2003, p.48) argues that the Warnock Committee were overly optimistic in assuming adequate resources would be made available and did not understand the endurance of existing social relations in society. Clarke, Randall, Rouncefield, & Sommerville, (1997) suggested failure to adopt a whole school approach and others infer inability to integrate everyone involved (Booth, 1998, cited in Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 2005). In *Special Educational Needs: A New Look* (2005) Baroness Warnock highlighted her naivety of:

“Assuming resources would be available and all would be offered inclusion where there is increasing evidence that the ideal of inclusion... is not working” (p.35). That inclusion “can be carried too far... and it involves a simplistic ideal” (p.14).

Sen (1992, cited in Terzi, 2005, p.443) suggests assessing inequality through the lens of social arrangements which exclude people’s freedom to promote and achieve their own well-being. Students are limited by both their deficits and school systems within micro level ecologies and are excluded by the real freedoms they have to promote and achieve their own welfare (Hacker & Rowe, 1998). Michael Gove’s 2013 consultations papers insist on a single untiered examination to cover all pupils from potential Oxbridge candidates to those with learning difficulties, which presents an immense challenge (Adams, 2013). Such ideas appear to have been borne out of a lack of conceptual knowledge in that arguably, teachers do not have enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate insightfully enough (Norwich & Lewis, 2005; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010). Certainly *The SALT Review* (DfES, 2009) highlighted that teachers remain untrained and lacking in knowledge. Unsurprisingly, many parents have decided to opt out of mainstream schooling and educate at home and for many it is a positive concept (Arora, 2006), however others suggest caution and regard correct tuition and curricula as paramount (Abbott & Miller, 2006).

## **2.3 Literature Review: The Espoused and Explicit Curriculum Adopted**

### **2.3.1 The Nature of and the Special Context of the SLD/PMLD Curriculum: Defining the Curriculum**

Whilst, the word curriculum comes from the Latin word meaning “a course for racing” (Yero, 2002, p.31), exposure to it is a race against the testing clock where all students have a right to be included and offered the chance over a set number of years to get to the end and achieve as much as possible. Whilst mindful that perhaps inclusion is the significant factor in understanding what a special curriculum looks like, there is a need to explore the multiple definitions and functions of a curriculum itself as a set of entitlements, expectations and aspirations enshrined in

a designed body of activity (often set out in official documents and policy). Teachers' beliefs, behaviours and ecologies, govern the extent to which the 'special' curriculum on paper comes to life at classroom and school level both within mainstream and SLD/PMLD provision:

“Education should adequately prepare one for life, the curriculum is a series of experiences which children must have to obtain these objectives” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42).

Aristotle (cited in Thomson & Tredennick, 1976, p.23) considered difference or skill (*techne*) was associated with the action of a craftsman (*artisan*) who engages in actions (*poietike*) in order to create something, but is always restricted by societies idea (*eidos*) of what is to be created. Indeed, if a curriculum exemplifies specialist knowledge/content that society needs to know the:

“Teachers may regard issues of individual appropriate curricula as of no concern to them and differentiation or creativity is discounted” (Kelly, 1989, p.7).

### **(a) Curriculum as a Product**

Tyler (1949) emphasised education should be seen as a mechanical technical exercise with behavioural objectives set, plans drawn up and then applied and the outcomes (products) measured, whereby people need to know things in order to work and live their lives. Such curriculum programmes make the student experience 'teacher proof,' without any demarcation for individual student needs (Smith, 1996; 2000). Curricula are driven by social change; those in power have a vested interest in churning out good citizens which offers no reference to differing needs or abilities (Apple, 1979, cited in Grundy, 1987, p.56).

### **(b) Curriculum as a Process**

For Aristotle (cited in Thomson & Tredennick, 1976, p.23) human action called forth practical action using personal judgements (*phronesis*) in order to act for the good or bad of man and society. The teacher's work is informed by practical interactions with the student, meaningful objectives develop as teachers and students work together often in an experimental fashion. The context in which the process occurs (particular schooling situations) is considered; therefore such a curriculum package cannot be delivered almost anywhere (Stenhouse, 1975, p.142). Such interactive curriculum (rather like Vygotskian perspectives) may fit within SEN realms but Stenhouse (1975, p.95) asserts that it is rather difficult to get the weak student through an examination using this model which is problematic for any SLD and PMLD student who struggles

to analyse, speak or write the spoken word. Such notions strengthen the need to consider within this thesis whether the curriculum academics speak of exists within SEN settings, as both a concrete phenomenon or if it is in fact a manifestation of historical practices. If the latter then the curriculum does not have the presence we come to assume within mainstream, nor should it. In fact, a teacher's identity is a crucial factor in its composition and execution.

### **(c) Curriculum as Praxis**

Praxis models assume a process of meanings which are socially constructed, not absolute and ethically rooted in notions of the emancipation of every man; what a student learns is authentic to them but may not fit the world view. Students are disadvantaged if education is merely about creating a workforce (Terzi, 2005). Capability and social arrangements of schooling for special educational needs students should be considered otherwise curricula exclude the child (Sen, 1992). If so, then one must come to visualise a teacher as a curriculum tool rather than the deliverer of a package of information. As findings will aim to show, emancipation is not the same as education although knowledge can enable one to thrive but independence and being part of a community differs from many curriculum objectives, indeed they are a necessity.

### **2.32 Models of Curricula and Curriculum Theorists**

When people use the word curriculum, they are generally referring to the content chosen to be taught - the official curriculum, which reflects adopted standards and drives the everyday functioning of schools and sanctions what the student needs to know (Goodlad & Associates, 1989). Such knowledge is absolute; "they expect teachers to teach it, they assume all students can and will learn it" (Yero, 2002, p. 32). There appears to be an illusion that a well-defined curriculum determines what is taught (and learned) in a school (Cuban, 1995). Yet I argue such notions are bound within ideals of learning ability and styles, one needs to look further towards how to deliver within SEN and what place teacher narratives have within shaping content rather than what to deliver, which leads to an over focus upon content knowledge, rather than need and understanding. Such philosophies present the teacher as outside looking in. This thesis assumes that teachers are central to the child's ecology, that they are a curriculum construct rather than merely a teaching tool. The usage of narratives will allow one to understand how they make sense of education policy and the vicissitudes of school life and expediency.

The perceived curriculum is more concerned with what teachers, parents and others think the curriculum should be but overall it is shaped by teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the students they face daily (Cuban, 1995). This is problematic if educators use a diagnosis to deduce

ability (Corbett, 1994, p. 9) but unsurprising regarding abundant literature around teacher's lack of personal efficacy (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Slobodzian, 2009; Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans, & Soulsby, 2007) and lack of appropriate teacher training (Richards, 2010; Hodkinson, 2009). Whilst mainstream teachers are taught how to teach, no such manual exists for SLD/PMLD specialist teaching (Hodkinson, 2009). One wonders if that is because they are butressing against the tide trying to fit the student to the curriculum rather than the other way around, slotting a square brick into a triangular aperture if you like. Of more interest however is how teachers' make sense of or personally perceive the curriculum within pedagogy rather than as a political construct to deliver down.

The learned (sometimes referred to as implicit) curriculum is beyond examination scores and assessment results and may include unspecified lessons embedded in the environment of the classroom. The teacher's style, motivation and interests shape the way students learn to process information which is problematic as teachers do not feel competent enough to include all ranges of SEN (Hodkinson, 2005) and even if they want to include they may not know how to (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008). There is an argument that within this thesis consideration must be given to inclusion as a personal concept, an extension of historical ecologies. Here, inclusion transcends the curriculum, taking on a more ethical connotation emanating from personal belief in emancipation, often drawn from temporal teaching experiences rather than merely a right to a particular curriculum construct. The tested curriculum consists of the results and scores used to show policy makers students have gained the knowledge expected. Surprisingly, the taught and learned curricula are largely ignored within discussions of school effectiveness yet they are perhaps the most influential in terms of the student experience. Teachers should be cautious to concentrate on mastery of content versus narrow instruction that focuses solely on test content (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

Piaget, (1976, cited in Munari, 1994) inspired the transformation of European and American education, leading to a more developmental child-centred approach consisting of progressive stages related to age. Young children exhibit certain common patterns of cognition in each period and assimilate and respond to new events consistent with an existing schema,<sup>11</sup> leading to accommodation where they either modify existing schemas or form an entirely new one to deal with a new object or event (Ormrod, 2012). Piaget (1976, cited in Gallagher & Reid, 1981) contended that:

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<sup>11</sup> Here schema means a unit of knowledge or an experiential memory which aids comprehension of current and new learning.

“The child is someone who constructs his own moral world view, based on their own observations of the world that is not the direct product of adult teaching” (p.26).

I would argue that identical concepts are at the heart of this thesis in that teacher narratives emerge from ecologies experienced and lived within throughout life. Teaching experience, University and in-house training (or lack of) alongside pupil cohorts necessitates the need to constantly shift their professional landscapes and in doing so, shape the curriculum they envisage for special educational needs students. When one views such notions through this panorama, questions are proliferated leading to the deliberation to consider in this thesis and beyond if the curriculum exists in the political National Curriculum sense or whether it becomes inseparable from the teacher identity, thus becoming a teacher ecology.

Whilst Piaget’s work has influenced the National Curriculum, the inference of age educational norms and capabilities serves to oppress special needs students. Bruner (1996) argued for a spiral curriculum considering environmental and experiential factors where intellect develops in steps dependant on how the mind is used highlighting how previous concepts were related to knowledge later presented or experienced.

Dewey in *Experience and Education* (1938, p.48), believed experiences were central in the educational process and that productive knowledge approach was too concerned with delivering knowledge, and not enough with understanding students' experiences. Educational experience has to be continuous, interactive and lead to other experiences, in essence propelling the person to learn more. Interaction occurs when the experience meets the internal needs or goals of a person. Dewey also categorised experiences as possibly being mis-educative, stopping or distorting growth for future experiences and non-educative experience, in which a person has not undergone any reflection and so has obtained nothing for mental growth that is lasting. Experiential learning is designed to give one the freedom to explore and find the learning path that is most suitable for him or her (Armstrong, 1977). Similarly, Rogers (2007) believed that that relevancy to the student is essential for learning where personal experiences are the core construct of any course they follow, be it in life or in education.

A person cannot teach another person directly; a person can only facilitate another's learning, each student will process what he or she learns differently depending on what he or she brings to the classroom.

'A person learns significantly only those things that are perceived as being involved in the maintenance of or enhancement of the structure of self' (Rogers, 2007, p.55).

Rogers also talked about unconditional positive regard where the instructor's acceptance of being a mentor who guides rather than the expert who tells is instrumental to student-centred, nonthreatening and unforced learning.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, one could argue that Rogers' accolades resonate throughout teachers' lives where SEN is a vast chiasmic hole that teachers dip into and find themselves quickly immersed, sometimes sinking and sometimes swimming but only through the process of experience and ecological structures, a self-taught survival skill. If true, then perhaps teacher ecologies sit at the core of the nature of curriculum identity. Whilst supportive of such pedagogical practice and contemplation of ecological impact, academic literature continues to proffer that how comfortable a teacher feels around students with profound and multiple learning difficulty influences attitudes towards teaching them (Hodkinson, 2005; Jones, 2005; Ball, 2005). Moreover, it impacts upon how students are treated (Good, 1981), which is set amongst assumptions around capability (Terzi, 2005), all which influence a child's ecology.

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that cognitive development was rooted in the context of social relationships, viewing disability as a product of the individual's interaction with society and focused upon that person's abilities rather than impairment (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998). The 'zone of proximal development' was used as a basis for creating diagnostic and teaching tools; whereby with some adult or educational aid they learnt from consequences of actions and emphasised social rehabilitation of the disabled student, focusing on developing individualized approaches. Vygotsky (1987, cited in Glassman, 2001) saw education as consisting of an integration of culture and social goals whereby engaging in an activity would lead the child towards mastery, arguing that free enquiry was eclipsed by culturally significant and appropriate enquiry. In *The Collective Works*, Vygotsky (1987, cited in Glassman, 2001) suggested a child's ability to use social tools was at the heart of their learning and such ideas seem rooted within a more flexible and child centred approach that may be more in keeping with SEN. Goldstein (1999) asserts that Vygotsky's work is often misinterpreted as merely emphasising intellect without consideration of affective factors and meaningful interpersonal interaction. Overall, affective factors play a central role in intellectual growth (Dean, 1994) and through negotiation and shared experience comes a mutually held understanding (Rogoff, 1986, pp.32-33). Noddings (1984) argues for the joy of caring for the student and the need to see things through the students' eyes in order to teach them.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Rogers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Rogers)

### **2.33 The SLD and PMLD Curriculum: What Should it Consist of and Who Decides?**

The special considerations which apply to such pupils in respect of the curriculum relate to the general aims of education pursued through the curriculum, the range of that curriculum, the matter of access to the curriculum and the modifications to the curriculum that may be required. The history of the development of the curriculum for pupils with PMLD difficulties has been relatively brief as they were not included in the education system until 1971, following the 1970 Education Act (Handicapped Children), having previously been considered uneducable. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, curriculum development was generally carried out by staff in special schools and rarely published or made available commercially. The curriculum content and related assessment procedures were commonly based on developmental areas (for example, creative, cognitive, language, personal and social) not on discrete subjects or areas of knowledge; and has been redefined and restructured in order to give greater emphasis to the areas considered most essential, (Sebba, Byers & Rose, 1993). However, whilst such redefinition asserts inclusive practice there are still tensions regarding what curricula should offer (Lawson, Walte, & Robertson, 2005) and I remain concerned that decisions cannot be separated from professionals' personal beliefs, neurological and capability assumptions and social reasons for 'diversification'.

Substantial debates regarding the appropriateness and accessibility for special needs continued 10 years after the introduction of a national curriculum (Rose, 1998). There is a need for a distinct pedagogic national framework and consideration that not all SLD/PMLD pupils learn in the same way as their neuro-typically developing peers. Failure to recognise such differences in the name of political correctness or received wisdom or the desire for a fully inclusive education system and failure to act upon that recognition cannot be acceptable (Imray & Hinchcliffe, 2012).

Curriculum research appears to focus on national initiatives often in terms of inclusiveness (Howieson & Closs, 2006). Much is written about entitlement to the whole curriculum, but a rigid blanket style delivery does not effectively achieve anything (Carpenter, 1992). There is a fallacy that teachers are required to cover the entire curriculum, sometimes at a pace that leaves students with and without disabilities behind (King-Sears, 2008) and tensions around the various ways in which teachers assert that access to curriculum materials has aided learning (Palincsar, Magnusson, Collins, & Cutter, 2001). This is immersed within notions of equal education for all (Ware, 1994). Indeed, there is an argument throughout this thesis that SEN teaching is an extension of the teachers themselves. They alone are delivering a differentiated version which takes multiple forms, from which identity, ecology and historical practice culminate in their pedagogy.

In order to respect students' needs and individuality one should acquire humility and ignore the curriculum altogether (Senyshyn, 2012) or offer a more spiritual approach to curriculum activities for both SLD and PMLD students. Lawson, Walte, & Robertson, (2005) found several points of tension over PMLD curricula, namely whether it should be a broad and balanced functional skills based tool or offer elements of individual needs and preferences. O'Brien (1998) has argued for a curriculum design that addresses individual needs but also commonality needs that all students study. That said there are tensions surrounding the lack of teacher training (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010; The SALT Review, DfES 2009). However, rather like a counselling trainee, one can only work within the parameters of their own way of being, their empathy, compassion and their fierce ability to deliver through diversity. Once again I argue that forever in the background is the dominating force of the teacher's ecology, their professional ever changing landscape within eroding and reforming shorelines.

Schools that promote differentiation could potentially achieve higher scores on large-scale assessments than schools that promote 'one size fits all' instruction (King-Sears, 2008). Some students with disabilities are capable of learning grade-level content from teachers who know and use research-based techniques that are responsive to their needs. Such teaching can only come from practice and those working within a personal innovative ecology. Moreover, these techniques also increase the performance of students who are low achievers (i.e., at-risk), average achievers and the gifted (Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002; Magnusson, Collins, & Cutter, 2001). Heubert & Hauser (1999) caution teachers to consider students' mastery of content rather than narrow instruction that focuses solely on test content. Education must be planned and assessed on its own merits, allowing students to be viewed through a personal experiential continuum. Kelly (1989) contends that breaking down knowledge is not suitable to learning within schools, one does not acquire knowledge and at a later date use it, knowledge needs to be qualified and in this way can be integrated into new areas of experience and society as a whole rather than a linear set of sequences.

Goddard (2005) suggests that building up creativity within a child will enhance interactive aspects of learning. One needs a way to develop an interactive non-prescribed curriculum. Several previous behaviourist theorists are now moving away from prescriptive behavioural objectives preferring to consider experiences and attention given to whole child's needs, (Watson et al., 1999). Constructivist approaches highlight moving with the learner within their own capabilities and personal world with the teacher as scaffolding, building a bridge between new and current knowledge thus new meanings are created by the learner (Goddard, 2005). Patience and

perceptiveness is superior to piecemeal chunking approaches favoured by the behaviourists (Poplin, 1998b). There is an increasing awareness of the need for a socially interactive style of curriculum that encourages and allows SEN children to learn, drawing on Vygotsky's earlier work championing parents and teachers as educators working in partnership with children; knowledge needs to be actively built rather than delivered passively (Watson et al., 1999, p.135).

Sebba, Byers, & Rose (1993, p.56) advocate that personal and social development will be enhanced by increased access to the whole curriculum by using a balanced range of teaching approaches which facilitate a variety of captive learning styles. One champions the teacher who is unafraid to interpret the curriculum differently for individual students, delivering in ways to empower the student and ready them for adult life.

No doubt, like many teachers, I have contemplated whether what students are being taught is worth knowing, comprehensible, capable of sustaining children's interest and useful to them at any stage of development (Rogers, 2007). Certainly many parents have decided to opt out of mainstream schooling and educate at home which for many is a positive concept (Arora, 2006). Many believe that tailoring a more creative SEN curriculum within relaxed surroundings<sup>13</sup> proves beneficial; pre National Curriculum homeschooling has been critical, and possibly the only option in some cases (Darlington & Perkins, 1941).

Unfortunately, academic literature on home education in this country has received little interest in the world of education practice and research. Most of the published work on special educational needs students is based on anecdotal accounts from families (Dowty & Cowlshaw, 2002) and even if data from large samples is used (Rothermel, 2004), the information tends to rely on those who have readily volunteered. This is surprising, as technological advances (e.g., virtual learning environments, WebCT and access to the web generally) and government initiatives such as Extended Schools (DfES, 2005a) cause the boundaries between school and home learning to be increasingly blurred (Arora, 2006) where correct tuition and appropriate curricula are paramount (Abbott & Miller, 2006). Parents often come up against conflict and social pressure from those that prefer the more socially ingrained approach of mainstream education even though reports highlight better psychological, social and educational wellbeing (Gray & Riley, 2013). Many students with learning disabilities continue to struggle in the classrooms of traditional school systems, where curriculum objectives usually take precedence over the natural

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<sup>13</sup> Home Schooling: A Viable Alternative for Students with Special Needs? *CEC Today* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1, 5, 10, and 15.

processes of learning (Arora, 2006). Dowty & Cowlshaw (2002) demonstrate that many parents in the UK who are home schooling Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) children find it possible to adjust the home teaching environment more closely to the needs of the child than would have been possible in school. One of the main strands in the parents' accounts is their depth of knowledge and understanding of their child and the difference that can make to their teaching and learning experiences. It is possible that this is a crucial factor when considering whether appropriate teaching is taking place. In many cases, the need for home education would not have been contemplated if flexible support had been available at the time (Arora, 2006). Students still need compensatory strategies, they also require the space to allow learning to move at its own pace, the freedom to make good and bad choices, honesty from educators and they need to learn independence within structure (Csoli, 2013).

### **2.34 The Parental Inclusive Special Curriculum: A Partnership or False Promise?**

While researching outreach provision for pupils with severe learning difficulty on the autism spectrum, Glashan, Mackay, & Grieve (2004) found a positive relationship between parental knowledge and involvement in school and the success of the placement for children. Indeed, I argue that conceptualising the type of curriculum and how it could be inclusive or tailored to needs could benefit from parental guidance. Yet surprisingly, the lack of recognition received by parents has been considered to be a barrier to inclusion (Clements, 2004). Despite research showing the benefits of parental involvement in education, very few parents have had any involvement in developing objectives, interventions or methods of evaluation (Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen, 2003). Traditionally 'hard to reach' families have not been at the forefront of investigations (Jones et al., 2008). Whilst such research illuminates key issues and offers sound practicality, special needs children seem to be recipients of other people's decisions who may have had no direct contact with them (Brown, 1996; Swann & Brown, 1997). Indeed, the *Lamb Enquiry* (2009) highlighted that parents and carers of children with SEN can too readily be seen as the problem and as a result parents lose confidence in schools and professionals. This is perplexing as student needs, wants and abilities all impact on the curriculum and in order to shape an inclusive curriculum one needs to know the child's strengths.

As the system stands it often creates 'warrior parents' at odds with the school and feelings that they have to fight for what should be their children's by right, offering conflict in place of trust. Following Brian Lamb's 2009 inquiry into parental confidence in the SEN system which recommended that support for children with SEN and disabilities should focus on improving outcomes and not just processes, the DfES funded the two-year *Achievement for All* pilot project

from 2009-2011, involving four hundred and fifty primary, secondary, mainstream and special schools in ten local authorities.

Alongside such work is the Scottish Project (Harris et al., 2009) that highlighted defects within inclusive practices where reasonable adjustment duties do not require the responsible body to make alterations to the physical features of the school and records of needs do not have to stipulate resources and services to be provided. The curriculum however, is more than an educational service; it is at the heart of education be it experiential, praxis or any other format. Many parents understand the need for an appropriate and differentiated curriculum and yet are seen to be on the outskirts of any involvement in the formation of it for special needs students.

Riddell, Wilson, Adler, & Mordaunt, (2002) identified four particular types of parents on the basis of their relationship to SEN frameworks. These were termed under many guises, the parent as a tentative consumer, the disengaged parent, the parent as an uneasy client and the transgressive parent. The case studies revealed the relationship between the parent's social class position and the repertoire of identities available to them as users of SEN services on behalf of their children. The identity of the challenging consumer was relatively rarely adopted, and many parents regarded the expectation that they would be able to enter into an equal relationship with professionals as extremely oppressive. Furthermore, the child's right to be involved and have an active voice was highlighted, although it did not indicate how students were to be supported and given an opportunity to engage, which rather leads to contemplation and exasperation regarding how one is able to do this within PMLD remits. That said, with the prospective Government changes and Achievement for All (2011) paper, which arguably came about following the Lamb Enquiry (2009) recommendations, one can only hope that the parental power and partnerships will serve to ensure students receive a curriculum suited to their needs.

Perplexingly though, as a parent I was part of a pilot scheme at my son's school and was asked to be involved within teacher training and to support parents during said interviews in order for their concerns to be gathered successfully and reliably. I had hoped that such a project would 'bear fruit', enhance relationships and ensure that SLD and PMLD students receive more differentiated care and curricula. Two years on however, I have attended one meeting and received no feedback nor have I been involved in any teacher training to date. Whilst I was positive that this may change the SLD/PMLD teacher identity and enable more ownership of pedagogic practice, transparent with parental input, another hollow vessel was revealed.

## **2.4 Literature Review: Special Teacher Beliefs and Identities; How Do Such Vital Components Create Pedagogic Practice?**

### **2.41 Teachers' Beliefs, Values and Identities**

Personally, I am aware of the significant contribution that developing a sense of self as a teacher may begin with a life story or identity forged from adolescence onwards (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001), which are aspects of a psychosocial construction that Bruner (2003) speaks of. Indeed there are many pressing issues within this thesis, one of which is identity; what a teacher does, is and becomes should be seen as “never far away from feelings of adolescence” (Britzman, 2003, p.5), where one is uncertain and attempting to navigate a rather complex dichotomy. Identity should be seen as the history of one’s own making set amongst social and political impositions that remain a hidden force where one attempts to create a ‘stage’ due to instructions from real or imagined others, learning to play within the contexts of our own educational archive. Overall “we are affected by the worlds we try to affect” (Britzman, 2003, p.5), our sense of identity may telegraph this human condition that involves a dilemma of having to choose between personal or professional selves when teaching. Interestingly, Britzman (2003, p.5) spoke of the Socratic imperative to “know thyself” which within this thesis, should be contemplated upon from an ethical standpoint where teachers are allowed through discourse to express and consider why they care about students’ needs and what they have found tolerable and intolerable and how historical narratives have shaped such beliefs. I argue this reflection upon the unknown self or life affirming incidents is not merely an experience that leads to correcting and perfecting teaching but constructs ecology of becoming an empathising practitioner for special needs students. Explicit messages are conveyed that teachers need to be able to teach, enable and educate but implicit messages that are shaped by historical ecologies of what they are trying to achieve comes from themselves as being decent human beings and not educators.

An important function of narration and autobiographical life stories is that they situate themselves in their social and educational context and better document the function of identities. It is important for this thesis to make visible the ways in which, or even the possibilities as to how mainstream and specialist teachers’ identities differ. Certainly this research will highlight the temporal unfolding of professional development and identity through historical and political events that have shaped new identities. Such ecologies are set amidst incidents of shock, lonely struggles to survive and a loss of one identity idealism as a mainstream educator, rising like the proverbial phoenix, becoming a more nuanced special needs identity. Therefore, it is unsurprising that professional identities are multifaceted; the construction of which is a continuing struggle between conflicting identities (Lampert, 1985; Samuel & Stephens, 2000).

Lasky (2005) revealed that macro systems of politics and social contexts along with early teacher development shapes a teacher's identity and purpose through the dynamics of core beliefs. Olsen (2015) rightly contends that teaching transcends the cognitive and technical notions of education, rather it becomes a complex and personal set of processes embedded with one's ecology. Narratives allow this complex phenomenon to unfold enabling a glimpse of the formation of the whole persona not just 'the teacher,' where holistically identity is constructed and reconstructed as people view themselves in relation to other people and notions of professional purpose. Here, identity becomes a negotiation of meanings and yet there is an argument that teachers within this thesis or as a whole may be searching for a proficiency that does not exist.

Due to ineffective training, the nature of teaching and the teacher's work is often so ill-defined that educational beliefs are particularly vulnerable to becoming what Nespor (1987, p.320) called an *entangled domain*. When previous schemas or experiences do not work and the teacher is uncertain of what information is needed or what behaviour is appropriate, teachers are unable to fathom out what to do in such situations, they must rely on their belief structures with all their problems and inconsistencies. Unsurprisingly then, a teacher's identity changes through practice and she/he must constantly interpret experiences and what this means in terms of pedagogic practice or who they are as a person (Wenger, 1998). Such tensions sit amongst the issue that there is a lack of research-based evidence with which to inform opinion and practice (Wishart, 2005; Porter, 2005; Lacey, Layton, Miller, Goldbart, & Lawson, 2007; Warnock, & Norwich, 2010; Theodorou & Nind, 2010).

Research suggests that in order to understand teachers' behaviours one needs to focus upon what they believe (Clark, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1979, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Pintrich, 1990) based on the assumption that beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968). Pajares (1992) argues that the implicit fascination that educators and researchers have in beliefs have not become explicit and studies have been scarce. He rightly contends that attention to beliefs of all teachers should be a focus of educational research as it informs educational practice. Such focus allows one to ponder upon how feelings about certain domains are akin to the self-esteem of teachers (Pajares, 1992, added emphasis). Like Clark & Peterson (1986) and Nespor (1987), I too maintain that in spite of arguments that people's beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience, little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach and the schools in which they work (Nespor, 1987, p.317).

That said, distinguishing knowledge from belief is a daunting undertaking, that generally centres on the distinction between beliefs and knowledge, a distinction that Clandinin & Connelly (1987) attempted to clarify discovering instead a “bewildering array of terms” (p.487). Terms included, teachers' teaching criteria, principles of practice, personal construct/theories/epistemologies, beliefs, perspectives, teachers' conceptions, personal knowledge and practical knowledge. Such criteria were considered in addition to their own terminology, ‘personal practical knowledge’ which they defined as experiential knowledge “embodied and reconstructed out of the narrative of a teacher's life” (p.490).

I concur with Brown & Cooney, (1982) who explain that beliefs are dispositions to action and major determinants of behaviour, although the dispositions are time and context specific – qualities that have important implications for research and measurement. Moreover, beliefs are “mental constructions of experience” – often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts (Sigel, 1985, p.351) that are held to be true and guide behaviour. Harvey (1986) suggested beliefs were an individual's representation of reality that has enough validity, truth, or credibility to guide thought and behaviour. Overall beliefs draw power from previous episodes and colour subsequent events (Nespor, 1987). Pre-service teachers’ vivid images influence interpretations of classroom practices playing powerful roles in how one undertakes pedagogy in teaching environments (Calderhead & Robson, 1991, added emphasis).

Teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards student diversity play a pivotal role in educational settings which seek to diversify curriculum and integrate students (Semmler, Abernethy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). I contend that the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the better the child will be able to grow. In turn, how a child acts or reacts to these people will affect how they are treated; therefore it is imperative to gather the holistic experience of teachers.

Teachers’ ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their practice (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Nespor, 1987) and are important concepts in understanding their classroom practices and how they learn to teach (Richardson, 1996). There is a need to expand current conceptions of teachers’ beliefs, ecologies and pedagogic practice within SLD/PMLD settings overall, to do so one has to explore the full range of what Clandinin & Connelly (1996, p.28) have called:

“Teachers’ professional knowledge landscapes -a territory of private and public knowledge, of curriculum requirements and passionate explorations, of emotional knowing and cognitive outcomes”.

This is undertaken on the assumption that issues about content, curriculum and pedagogy cannot be separated from emotional or political issues and that all those are inseparable to a teacher's practice (Zembylas, 2007). Such notions become even more important when considering the complexities and differing concept and attitudes found within SLD and PMLD settings which is harboured by the lack of academic and henceforth conceptual knowledge about teachers working within such arenas. 'Teacher knowledge' is often used as an overarching concept that: "summarises a large variety of cognitions, from conscious and well-balanced opinions to unconscious and unreflected intuitions (Van Driel & Meijer, 2001, p.446, added emphasis)

I argue however that such intuition and balanced opinions are immersed within the identity of an SLD and PMLD student as well as teacher identity and their practices; all of which are founded within personal ecologies.

Overall there are many concerns regarding the dominance of a professional teaching discourse in our understanding of disability which in turn informs practice (Ball, 1994). To contextualize the views of teachers one needs to reflect upon how society has presented its understandings of this group of learners through the lens of definitions and classifications (Jones, 2005) and how immediate micro ecologies within the child's life, political rhetoric and professional discourse shape education. It is not only teachers' ecologies that impact on the child's education but the larger macro issues are also problematic as research indicates that teachers are untrained and henceforth rather unsure how to deliver a curriculum (Silva & Morgardo, 2004; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton, & Armstrong, 2007).

Teachers are happy to include those with MLD or mobility problems but those with sensory needs or behavioural stereotypes cannot be treated with the same competency within mainstream (Hodkinson, 2005). Teacher beliefs are likely to have some impact on his/her attitude towards teaching children with learning support needs. Barton (1986) argues that despite good intentions, educators and professionals do not know a great deal about handicap and grossly underestimate people and notions of capability as postulated by Terzi (2005), add weight to such arguments. This is concerning as teachers often possess low academic expectations of 'mentally retarded' students in mainstream with regards to potential (Aloia, Maxwell, & Aloia, 1981) and a student's academic performance can be affected by the ways in which teachers treat them; failure to achieve often correlates with expectation to fail (Good, 1981). Studies by Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, (1994) and Parasuraman (2006) have suggested there may be a relationship between experience of disabled people and teachers' attitudes. Teaching efficacy regarding personal

feelings of his/her own capacity to successfully facilitate learning has been found to be related to student outcomes such as achievement (Ross, 1992) and motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968) showed that when mainstream teachers held expectations of particular students, they interacted with their students in differing ways that as such their initial, sometimes erroneous expectations were fulfilled (the self-fulfilling prophecy effect). Whilst some younger less experienced teachers are often more favourable towards special educational needs students (Center & Ward, 1987, cited in Silva & Morgado, 2004), more experienced teachers working within higher ability ranges often have negative views of special educational needs students (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995). This is interesting and one questions if this comes from fear of the unknown or the teacher identity as a less than compassionate practitioner, where ecologies differ regarding their idea of their role in life.

All teachers seem to experience difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and practice and respond spontaneously to behavioural problems without relating to different theories or previously acquired knowledge (Almog & Shechtman, 2007). Moreover, they often find it too difficult to apply an individualised approach in education. Teachers' attitudes and perceptions influence their actual behaviour (Pajares, 1992), which infers a relationship between democratic beliefs and successful caring teaching behaviours (Shechtman, 2002). Identification of student needs can only arise from an understanding of how special needs impacts on the individual at a particular time and in a particular learning environment (Jones et al., 2008). Teachers with more experience of working with children with additional learning support needs attributed difficulties in learning more to external factors such as teacher and school-related factors which would appear to indicate that ecologies shape future practice. This echoes findings (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; LeRoy & Simpson, 1996) that verify a constructive willingness to accept responsibility for learner progress yet still does not account for how identities fit within ecologies and henceforth inform or shape curriculum delivery. Noddings (1984, p.113) asserts that to care about the student one must make curriculum problems their own and work together, which produces such joy and increases competence in the cared for on an ethical level.

Whilst mindful that many factors inform pedagogic practice both positively and detrimentally, there is no empirical nor logical reason why the teacher cannot not believe in things that are horrendous, immoral or simply false whilst still producing a good product such as delivering appropriate curriculum and treating students positively (Orton, 1997, my emphasis).

## **2.42 The SLD/PMLD Teacher Identity and Personal Beliefs**

Bruner (1996) highlights that individuals construct realities based on common cultural narratives and symbols therefore their reality is intersubjective through social interaction rather than external or objective. Jones (2004) contends that teacher educators need to be aware of the potential influence of teacher identity when planning and delivering initial teacher training, particularly when considering the support PMLD teachers may require. This is especially important as such issues sit within political and personal needs to include at all levels because “our social maps no longer fit our social landscapes” (Jenkins, 1996, p.9).

Overall, teachers of special educational needs students view themselves as separate entities from mainstream teachers. This appears to have a duality in terms of their entity being attributed by others regarding what and how they should or will be like, or an identity may be self-designated and utilised during interaction with others.

In comparison to a mainstream teacher it was something like you were second ... because people perceived that the children weren't going to learn that much so they didn't need bright teachers (Jones, 2004, p. 161).

Empirical research on SLD/PMLD teachers' identity in terms of commitment, resilience and perceived effectiveness and how it grows or diminishes in their lifetime has been quite limited (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). Furthermore, such research on teachers of special needs students is non-existent. Overall, teachers appear to support each other in the difficulties they encounter in a culture that does not appear to value them or their pupils.

“That's usually the next sentence isn't it, you must have a heart of a lion, I couldn't do that. That's what people say to you. But they wouldn't say that to a mainstream teacher” (Jones, 2004, p.165).

In truth though, finding consistent research that can highlight shared identities in a range of PMLD contexts is problematic and sporadic. Mackenzie (2012a) contends that research often uses special schools that are for EBD or sensory difficulty, certainly there is a problem with the transferability, validity and reliability of findings with regards to wider SEN needs as comparisons cannot be made (Brady & Wolfson, 2008). This is problematic as a teachers' identity changes through practice and she/he must constantly interpret experiences and what this means in terms of pedagogic practice or who they are as a person (Wenger, 1998).

Whilst conscious that case studies suffer population validity and cannot offer a universal picture in terms of our understanding of how identities shape practice, I am wholly aware that attempting to pigeon hole a teacher's identity and a PMLD student as a single construct is misinformative. Research that attempts to weave the invisible threads of identity, practice and curriculum can only be positive and enlightening.

Whilst research informs us of negatives within PMLD settings (Jones, 2004; Jenkins, 1996, p.9), some teachers appear to be very positive about working with students who have profound and multiple learning needs perhaps due to an inner motivation to serve (Hansen, 1995) Despite very occasionally regretting working with children with SEN, many teachers didn't want to do anything else:

It is to me the most interesting area of education. I don't miss taking a whole class. I can use creativity, we can write instructions, we can do things related to their topic so it's up to me to make what I do interesting rather than me force feeding them. Overall uniqueness makes the job enriching (Mackenzie, 2012a, p.153).

Within Mackenzie's (2012a, 2012b) research, as they spent more time in their roles, respondents found themselves experiencing profound feelings, both positive and negative, such as care and love, but also frustration, isolation and even anger. They also brought a great deal of emotion to the work, sometimes from being the parent or relative of a child with SEN or a long-standing passion for standing up for the underdog.

It appears that work with children with SEN means experiencing the highs and lows of teaching more intensely, with the strength of the rewarding emotions sustaining staff in their work (Mackenzie, 2013). Jones (2004) research notes similar views about teachers' perceived notions of PMLD. They identified students as:

A group of pupils with complex and multiple learning disabilities, pupils who can be very different from one another, who may present as very individual and unique who may share common characteristics, yet whose individual pictures are very difficult to define in a group definition and therefore are all special. It's hard to describe a typical child because they're often very different, they can be ambulant and mobile and they can also be profoundly disabled (p.160).

Indeed, it may be wise to consider that working within PMLD settings offers an emotionally charged work life and yet gives teachers a reason to stay (Mackenzie, 2009, 2012a, 2012b) and it would be prudent to consider that we come to know people and their attitudes and what happens to people partly in terms of what they reveal (Davis & Florian, 2004). Teachers of students with SLD/PMLD often felt guilt and failure when working with them. Such emotions originated from feelings that they were letting children down by not giving them enough time or seeing very slow progress educationally. Teachers believed that they were “muddling through” (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath, & Page, 2006, p.33). Overall, they were constantly weighing up the satisfaction felt through their commitment to the children with the stress that the job engendered.

Fortunately, within academic literature there are a few examples of positive beliefs of SLD/PMLD specialist teachers mirroring parents. Lacey & Ouvre (1998) present a teacher describing one of her pupils with PMLD in a similar way to how Fitton (1994) described her daughter to her friends and family in terms of her positive attributes as opposed to her deficiencies often indicated by professionals. Moreover, it appears that some teachers are resilient to the challenges special educational needs students pose and cannot imagine doing anything else, gathering joy from working with students (Mackenzie, 2012a).

## **2.5 Literature Review: Teachers’ Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools**

### **2.5.1 Teachers’ Inclusive Ecologies: The Intersection of Practice, Theory and Curriculum**

Curriculum design issues are at the centre of international moves to raise school attainment standards which infer what students must learn and yet little focus remains placed upon disability (Norwich, 2010). There is a plethora of research that considers effectiveness, assessment and inclusion (Howieson & Closs, 2006) but it fails to focus specifically on conflicts that teachers experience, especially teachers with SLD and PMLD cohorts (Norwich, 2010). However, an exception to this is Lawson, Walte, & Robertson (2005), who highlighted tensions between skills based curricula, choices, entitlement and individual needs for PMLD and SLD students. Consequently, educators may experience a cognitive dissonance in that they are told to teach all students together for the same content at the same pace but are aware that individuality is sacrificed. In reality one needs to consider mastery of content over coverage of large content (King-Sears, 2008).

In reflecting upon how teachers define children, Jones (2005) reported that historical understandings of PMLD are directly related to the degree, intensity and multiplicity of disabilities present in an individual person and the consequent levels of support needed for that person to function in society. This offers a paradigm of understanding that reflects a medical/individual model of disability where the person owns the disability (Oliver, 1996). Many argue that viewing special needs through a lens of inability creates social divisions in society (Apple, 1993), whereby schools are sites to produce society's expectations and disability does not rest easily within this (Barton, 1986, p.275, my emphasis).

Pupils with complex and multiple learning disabilities can be very different from one another; they may present as very individual and unique and may share common characteristics yet their individual needs are very difficult to define in a group definition (Jones, 2005). When asked to rate students' intellectual ability and henceforth potential, teachers' impressions of what they termed mentally retarded students were lower than their 'normal students' (Aloia, Maxwell, & Aloia, 1981, cited in Silva & Morgado, 2004), supporting research which indicates that a student's academic performance can be affected by the way in which they are treated (Good, 1981). Whilst such opinions are concerning, they are predictable considering the large bank of literature around teachers' personal low efficacy to teach special students (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Slobodzian, 2009; Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans, & Soulsby, 2007) and lack of appropriate teacher training (Richards, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009). Many teachers assert that they are not as confident in teaching special needs as opposed to SLD/PMLD teachers (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

The current Government-established National Curriculum for teacher training programmes is linked to a set of regulated standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), informed by recommendations from the national strategy *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004), which states that "all teachers should expect to teach special educational needs children and will be supported through the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP)," (DfES, 2004: 57). These new standards have placed a greater emphasis on SEN for all new teachers. ITE programmes are now expected to offer student teachers with core knowledge and understanding of teaching that includes pupils with SEN, behaviour management, assessment for learning and when to access specialist support (DfES, 2004: 58).

Numerous research pieces highlight the lack of teacher training available for SEN within mainstream (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007; & Richards,

2010). Despite these changes, student teachers still experience variation in the quality and quantity of information about SEN within their programmes. An Ofsted report, *How well new teachers are prepared to teach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities* (2008), expressed such concerns and focused on new teachers throughout their initial training and into their induction year. Overall, it reported a heavy reliance on schools to provide most of the training on SEN and a weakness in monitoring this. That said, Olsen (2015) rightly contends that the teachers' identity impacts upon practice where one needs to take a holistic approach to teachers and not just their practice. In essence, one may train to be a teacher but cannot become or assume the identity of a special needs teacher until one has experienced the phenomena. As argued earlier, there are concerns that teachers (student or experienced) may be searching for a proficiency that does not exist because they are in essence, the curriculum. In understanding teachers' inclusion ideals one must attend to the role of emotion and environmental issues. Cross & Hong (2012) contend that these factors are relational, they do not exist independently. Winograd (2003) deems emotions to be social and psychological interactions reflecting teachers' beliefs and motivation. If we take a belief to be a personal thought process, accumulated through ecological experiences and social groups (Cross & Hong, 2009) then it stands that teachers' pedagogic practice is relational to emotions regarding how they shape the curriculum and what to them, inclusion means. As Kagan (1992) suggested, a teacher's unique beliefs are situated in both context and content which over time shapes their identity which is crucial to the way they make judgements within the classroom (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Lasky, 2005). Overall the way a teacher perceives them or makes specialist teaching meaningful to them influences curriculum choices and judgements regarding what they deem as appropriate for their students.

Admittedly then, teachers are often knowledgeable but experience difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and practice (Almog & Schectman, 2007), overall attributing failure to students rather than oneself protects one's ego which in turn will impact on pedagogic practice. Weiner (2007) distinguished emotions such as teachers' shame and sympathy for students, generated by notions of personal uncontrollability. This is important because macro ecologies are not stable, shifts in policy and rhetoric mean school policies or 'good practice' are in constant flux (Smyth & Hatton, 2002). Such research however, whilst informative does little to illuminate teachers' identities and pedagogic practice within specialised settings, nor elucidate how teachers come to understand what the curriculum can or should be and how they can differentiate it and thus enable it to become an inclusive instrument of education.

Aird (2001) argues for a definition of PMLD that becomes contextual to a particular school and stresses the need to move away from models of stereotypical understandings. By developing a model that distinguishes between unique, distinct and common pedagogic needs, (Lewis & Norwich, 2000; Norwich & Lewis, 2005) advocate a move away from the stereotypical models that have long persisted in education to a greater focus upon those needs that can be conceptualised in individual terms and more closely associated with actions to support learning. They are clear that there is a difference between pedagogy and curriculum.

Overall, one hopes that eclectic approaches can aid the diversification of curricula alongside practical and informative parental techniques or wishes may impact on training initiatives as well as the teaching techniques required within intensive interaction do not feature in the common-to-all category (Lewis & Norwich, 2000), who interestingly, argue for all types of special educational needs. Research often can only suggest that the intervention being studied might be better than no intervention at all, but cannot be said to be the best intervention (Male, 2009). Norwich & Nash (2011) argued that there is “little evidence or value basis that justifies a simple model of distinctive specialist pedagogies” (p.4).

Rayner (2011) reported that teachers could not find any evidence that teaching specific curriculum subjects to children with profound and multiple learning difficulties was appropriate or effective. There was concern among the teaching staff that this is tokenistic for both the subject and the education that the children were receiving. Yet there is a strong argument that special needs schools can be just as inclusive and are indeed capable of offering a student’s right to a diversified curriculum within an appropriate setting (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). Routes for Learning which was the first systemised attempt to break away from a linear developmental model for those with profound learning difficulties post-National Curriculum, should be regarded as a seminal piece of work (Imray & Hinchcliffe, 2007) in terms of the idea that we might need to arrange the curriculum to fit the child and move away from a blanket delivery of a rigid, subject-bound curriculum (Carpenter, 1992, p.1).

Sebba & Clarke (1991, p.133) concede that teachers must stop pretending to teach areas of the curriculum, they argue that a “visit to the shops does not constitute Geography, although it may help independence.” Such an illustration presents the issue at the heart of this thesis, and questions the very nature of what a curriculum is and how it is discursively and relationally constructed. Certainly, the lack of research into actual PMLD curricula and the teacher’s identity

and ecology as a concept within it has led me to construct this thesis, spurred on by preliminary conversations within four SLD/PMLD specialist school settings.

The term SEN and moreover SLD is used more when student difficulties exceed the school's capacity to deal with students which enables reduction of accountability and responsibility (Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse, 2007, p.18; Molloy & Vassil, 2002). The lack of any specific diagnosis for my own son has led to confusion amongst multiple professional disciplines in terms of how to educate him, which is a concern as one would expect the child to be observed and a curriculum put in place rather than being diagnosis led. From a parental standpoint I appear biased and yet multiple research articles channel my frustrations and hopes regarding what SEN entails for families (Najarian, 2006; Tripathi & Agarwal, 2000) and differing definitions given to children (Fitton, 1994).

Mavropoulou & Padeliadu (2000) found mainstream teachers were more concerned with social and psychological well-being while special education teachers were more educationally goal oriented. General teachers rated their understanding of inclusion and their ability to motivate students lower than special education teachers (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). Ward, Center & Bochner, (1994) compared attitudes towards inclusion among principal teachers, general mainstream teachers, resource teachers (learning support teachers), school psychologists/counsellors, and nursery school heads in Britain, Australia and Canada, and found that the general mainstream teachers group held the most negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Indeed, a seminal piece of work by Bayliss & Simmons (2007) found that inclusion, teachers' identities and ecological concepts in special schools appear to be prevalent. A school classed as 'outstanding' by Ofsted was in fact failing in its ability to deliver appropriate curricula and teachers' were rather negative about students. The distinct lack of understanding of PMLD could be attributed to the lack of appropriate training opportunities. Apart from the Deputy Head Teacher, all the interviewed staff protested about the lack of external training opportunities, claiming that previous education and mainstream experiences were insufficient preparation for life in a school for children with SLD and PMLD. Overall, the confidence of individual staff members about their own abilities to provide an appropriate learning experience for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties was low and as such teacher ability and pedagogic practices varied greatly. Adversely, the Deputy Head Teacher asserted that:

There is strong cross-fertilisation within the school and so we don't have to go out and get certificates. If staff want to learn more, then it's up to them personally to join a course off their own back – though we don't have time to do that at the moment (Bayliss & Simmons, 2007, p.23).

It was not surprising to hear the low opinions staff had towards the development and progress of children with profound and multiple learning difficulty in their classes and overall most staff were very negative about the students. One teacher claimed that a child with traumatic brain injury was “unable to do anything” (p.24) and questioned why such a child was there. Whilst hard to read, such statements echo this thesis' intention to uncover just how much of an impact the teacher ecology, identity and 'way of being' impacts with the curriculum they deliver. Whilst cautious of stand-alone pieces of research, in truth some of these sentiments have been echoed during my pilot study interviews with various schools. Such tensions sit amongst the issue that there is a lack of research-based evidence with which to inform opinion and practice (Wishart, 2005; Porter, 2005; Lacey et al., 2007; Warnock & Norwich; 2010; Theodorou & Nind, 2010). Whilst everyone bemoans such a problem, researchers rarely investigate this area, which once again highlights my need to offer an olive branch and delve into personal murky waters. Such problems are compounded by lack of suitable training for new teachers when training (Richards, 2010; Hodkinson, 2009). Attempts to overcome this problem have included developing materials and curriculum packages which focus more closely on the 'process of discovery' or 'problem-solving' (Hoyningen-Suess, Oberholzer, Stalder, & Brugger, 2012). Nonetheless, this serves to allow surveillance, intrusion and action plans under the guise of doing things for the good of their health and well-being which Oliver (1996, p.101, my emphasis) stipulates. Overall there is conflict within current literature and a chiasmic hole regarding actual practice, implementation and how teachers seat themselves within the whole dilemma of delivering a curriculum which necessitates exploration of a teacher's pedagogic practice in SLD and PMLD schools and the ecology that informs their practice. This thesis sets out to illuminate the reality of their practice and develop an original body of research in this field.

This is critical when political ideology, professional diagnosis of needs and notions of rights means that surveillance is paramount (Oliver, 1996, p.101) to ensure children all follow the national curriculum in various guises where support is offered via modified curriculum developmental with assistance and suited to MLD or a developmental curriculum for SLD (Howarth, 1998). ACERT<sup>14</sup> (2013) argue that it is apparent that such surveillance now extends to those who travel

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<sup>14</sup> Advisory Council for the Education of Romany Travellers

and may have no fixed abode. The recent policy document *Reducing Inequality for Gypsies and Travellers* (2013) was intended to offer all children access to school education and attempted to repeal section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996 and make non-attendance illegal to all rather than just those who have no permanent address or travel to secure work. That said the ASCL<sup>15</sup> argues that such a document should be repealed as parents should not be allowed to undermine or neglect their child's education but concedes that there are tensions regarding a family's right to live as they wish. There are concerns however, that there may be a significant number of factors that push children to become non-attendees such as bullying, lack of curriculum flexibility and the failure to address special needs (Road, 2013).

Additionally, I am concerned with the surveillance and egotistical beliefs that professionals hold whilst working within an 'it's for their own good' ecology that being an SEN professional affords. Certainly I tire of the write ups and requests in my son's diary to highlight if he has emptied his bowels this morning (please tick the box, yes/no). Oliver (1996, p.101) suggests that the practice of educational therapy can be linked to Nazism highlighting that if a normal child was forced (requested) to undertake exercises until they could withstand no more this would be abuse. However, for a child with cerebral palsy this is aimed at helping them in the long run.

Furthermore, in asking whether pupils with special educational needs require distinct kinds of pedagogic strategies, we are not asking whether pupils with special educational needs require distinct curriculum objectives. We are asking whether they need distinct kinds of teaching to learn the same content as others without special educational needs (Norwich & Lewis, 2005, p.7).

Lacey & Ouvre (1998) suggest PMLD definitions should encompass a collaborative approach looking at the abilities of, as well as appreciating the extensive difficulties encountered by those young people and thus reflect the views of parents, carers and professional staff. Such an approach offers an example of a paradigmatic shift towards a more holistic and positive view of this group of pupils and a move away from a view that concentrates solely on a range of inabilities. The introduction of Achievement for All (2011) was heralded as a new wave of curriculum diversity in that it endeavoured to work in partnership with parents to enable them to become more involved in what they felt their child really needed to achieve. Such close partnerships with teachers were hailed as a way to ensure their child was in a more educationally appropriate place (whatever that means to the individual) rather than covering subjects that would be of no use to them under the veil of inclusion.

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<sup>15</sup> Association of School and college Leaders

## 2.52 SLD/PMLD Teachers' Personal Ecologies

Many teachers assert that they are not as confident in teaching special needs as opposed to an SLD/PMLD teacher (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999) and so we see a difference in ecological constructs between the mainstream teacher and those working within an SLD and PMLD setting. Indeed, student and teacher ecologies are not stand alone concepts, but interwoven within complex multi ecologies.

Overall, one is mindful of the wider societal ecologies often formed within political rhetoric that in turn impact on school environments, practices and teachers' ecologies. From the Warnock Report in 1978 that supported integration of pupils with special educational needs to the Rose Report (2009) that focused on pupils with Dyslexia, expectations of mainstream teachers have risen. Issues regarding training and ability within such realms will always be problematic and politics will serve to shape practice and self-worth, for example in September 2013 following government recommendations, teachers were to return to performance related pay (Tisdall, 2013). Alongside such notions were Michael Gove's various consultations papers that insisted on a single untiered examination to cover all pupils from potential Oxbridge candidates to those with learning difficulties, presenting an immense challenge (Adams, 2013). The Warnock Report (1978) and the Government's inclusion strategy made it all too clear that teachers would need to identify and meet the needs of children in mainstream schools and such ideals still bear down on teachers. Despite wide ranging recommendations, Warnock stated that it was not appropriate for teaching students to engage in in-depth studies of SLD or become trained in the ability to provide children with specialist help, Hodkinson (2009). Additionally, during the 1980s SLD training was phased out of ITT<sup>16</sup> courses and QTS did not necessarily involve intense or even singular SEN modules. Such knowledge was relocated within professional development courses and Masters Degrees, (Jones, 2004). Issues regarding training and ability within such realms will be problematic as from September 2013 following government recommendations, if teachers are to return to performance related pay (Tisdall, 2013) suffice to say teachers are not confident to either include or teach children with SLD or PMLD and feel unprepared (Richards, 2010). Research indicates that 30% of teachers do not support the concept of mainstream for special educational needs students, citing issues with time and the training to effectively integrate (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) and teachers with low efficacy overall are less receptive to inclusion and struggle to initiate differentiation (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1988). Teachers are often concerned about the extra academic work required to integrate students in mainstream (Jamieson, 1984; Forlin, 2003; Kirby,

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<sup>16</sup> Initial Teacher Training

Davies, & Bryant, 2005) suggesting the scarcity of training initiatives may be a stumbling block to effective practice and one fears the impact upon self-esteem which will surely 'leak' into practice and how the curriculum manifests. They are trained to operate in an educational society and have no doubt read numerous manuals on how to educate those with SEN, but I argue this does not prepare one to work in a socially and empowering manner.

Almog & Shechtman (2007) suggest that in reality mainstream teachers adopt restrictive responses more often than helpful responses, using threats, preaching, punishments and withholding of privileges. Such an approach creates distance between teachers and students and may restrict the communication and interaction between them which does little to contribute to the successful integration of the 'challenging' student in the classroom. Certainly such practices may stem from insufficient knowledge as well as additional factors such as a lack of experience, skills, time and resources (Witt, Martens, & Elliott, 1984). Mainstream teachers however, are often knowledgeable but experience difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and practice (Almog & Schectman, 2007). Unsurprisingly, children often feel social pressures within mainstream schools entwined with fear and prejudice and on occasion suffer emotional and physical retaliation from teachers (Corbett, 1994, p.9; Rogers, 2007, p.57; Humphrey, 2008) and students, (Nakken & Pijl, 2002; Carter & Spencer, 2006). Hodkinson (2005) illuminates such concerns reporting teachers are happy to include those with MLD or mobility problems but those with sensory needs or behavioural stereotypes cannot be treat with the same competency and furthermore they have admitted feeling they were not appropriately trained to fully include large numbers of autistic students attending mainstream.

Leyser (2002) found that mainstream class teachers were less likely to modify teaching strategies for children with learning difficulties than special education teachers. With regards to children with autistic spectrum disorders who were included in mainstream, Stein & Wang (1988) reported that SLD/PMLD teachers with a strong sense of efficacy are more willing to modify teaching methods to accommodate student needs and are most likely to be supportive of inclusive placements. Teachers evidencing high efficacy were found to be more willing to take responsibility for meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties in their own mainstream classrooms (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998) when working from an ethical and caring standpoint mooted by Noddings (1984). Goldstein (1990) contends that teachers are obligated to do what is required to maintain care of students and justify why they do not care for them.

Whilst this thesis focuses upon more severe needs, one is mindful that if mainstream is problematic then specialist provision may prove incredibly challenging for an untrained teacher. Often assistive technology can be used to maintain or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability' IDEIA (2004)<sup>17</sup> and may compensate for something a student cannot do or perform at an expected level (Parette & Peterson-Karlan, 2010a, 2010b) – it will not solve all problems encountered in and out of school (Bouck & Flanagan, 2010). Whilst it may promote independence (Edyburn, Higgins, & Boone, 2005), the research into substantial positive evidence remains sparse (Edyburn, 2007). If a student is not interested then assistive technology will not work nor will it prove positive if the student is embarrassed about having to use it (Alper & Raharinirina, 2006). Teaching ability and knowledge of the tools used further complicates the problem of inclusion, technology for students can only be useful and enable access to curriculum areas (which is immersed with social policy and often elitist ideal) if one is trained to use it.

### **2.53 Recent Developments in Research into Teachers' Inclusive Practices in SLD/PMLD**

Developments in special and inclusive education have led to increasing challenges for teachers (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007). Lacey & Ouvrey, 1998; WHO, 2001 and AAMR, 2002 findings reflect a mismatch between developing policy and practice in the field and suggest the need for further professional development experiences for teachers within SLD and PMLD curricula overall. It is argued that teacher educators need to be aware of the potential influence of teacher identity when planning and delivering initial teacher training and continued professional development. Jones (2004) argues that it is apparent that SLD and PMLD teaching as a profession requires something different, it is harder to enter and requires specialist and nuanced training. Narrative findings echo teachers concerns and frustrations with regards to the distinct lack of training, support and specialist knowledge needed to support effectively:

I wanted to train in severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties it was really irritating. I just couldn't, It's like, well how am I going to work in a school if I'm not going to get any training? They did employ me but it was like, you know, you have to be working before you could get any training (Participant 5).

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<sup>17</sup>Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Education Act 2004

Unsurprisingly, concerns have been expressed about ITE providers increasing adoption of a 'technician approach' to meeting QTS standards (Pearson, 2007), where they concentrate on auditable skills rather than underpinning pedagogical issues (Hodkinson, 2009). This raises many concerns not only for mainstream but leads to apprehension in regard to what this means for PMLD schools and teachers. The cessation of dedicated courses, an aging SLD/PMLD teacher population and the growing numbers of severely disabled children has created a worrying staff supply problem. The initiation of the SALT Review, (2009) considered the age profile of head teachers and teachers working with these children; the report highlighted that their ages were much higher than in mainstream schools. The concern here is that the current shortfall in the provision of teachers with specialist SLD/PMLD skills will worsen unless urgent action is taken and that because of the small number of SLD/PMLD pupils, coverage of their needs on these courses is particularly poor. Certainly the SALT Review suggests the need to ensure that there is an adequate supply of teachers for pupils with SLD and PMLD. Such literature argues this should be seen as a basic requirement if schools are to meet their statutory requirements towards these groups of learners (added emphasis).

Schools reported that retention of newly recruited teachers for SLD/PMLD settings was sporadic as they either left very soon after being appointed or stayed for a long time and that teachers apply to schools without sufficient knowledge of the nature of SLD/PMLD work, moreover, there appears to be pedagogical dilemmas on how to dispense the curriculum. Stowitschek et al., (2000, p.142) challenge the assumption that practising teachers have the ability to transfer information delivered in workshops, institutes and summer courses into applied use.

Although research indicates that training is becoming much more appropriate to PMLD student needs and trainees feel confident, there is an argument that such findings are post training and do not offer a longitudinal approach (Richards, 2010). Moreover, whilst teachers appear to learn more within school placements rather than university courses, their pedagogic knowledge comes from TAs and not the teachers themselves. According to the Salt Review (2009), Lorraine Petersen, chief executive of the National Association of Special Educational Needs, stated:

“We need to make sure special schools are actually willing and able to take on students because they've never had to in the past” (cited in Maddern, 2010, p.3).

Ofsted (2008), found the quality of teaching that special educational needs students experience depended largely on the school their teachers trained in. Norwich & Lewis (2001) rightly contest

that there are systematic differences in pedagogic practice within special needs sub-groups. There is also a greater need for adaptation for those with more severe needs which goes beyond normal adaptations found often in mainstream. This, alongside the deficit of research regarding what a PMLD curriculum should be as well as case studies regarding actual practice and beliefs illuminates even further the importance of my thesis aims. On researching the literature around teacher ecologies and practice, difficult themes emerged highlighting the need for trained teachers whose identities are grounded in empowerment and a real love and respect for difference. Noddings (1984 p.114) asserts that caring is an essential quality of meaningful teaching informed by what must be done and a sense of what ought to be done. Working within Noddings theories, Goldstein (1999) contends that the child's zone of proximal development should be seen as a relational zone whereby teacher and student find common ground to communicate upon and hold a mutual understanding of each other. Noddings (1984 p.17) asserts that caring is not a state one can learn at will, it is the first and unending obligation of those that wish to be moral.

Yet, Rogers (2007, p.57), indicated that students with complex problems fare worse than those with moderate needs, alarmingly reporting that one father felt the "headmaster could not be fucking well bothered" and another head discussing with an anxious parent that "I was not aware I had a bloody retard in the school." Other worrying tales unfold with caretakers and teachers lying on top of hysterical frightened children for up to an hour and students dead-heading daffodils rather than accessing maths lessons. Whilst some of Rogers' case study samples were at the more profound end of the spectrum, this by no means offers or shows awareness of inclusion, in fact it suggests abuse and such practice will no doubt mould the child's ecology of schooling experience. Being reactive to behavioural stereotypes of SEN problems (that to the untrained eye can be perceived as acts of aggression rather than frustration or fear) does not show any empathy or the duty of care all teachers should work within.

Humphrey's (2008) research indicated senior team managers don't really understand these children's needs and some teachers ignore special educational needs students totally in the classroom and stand them alone separately. Such insightful stories verify the concept of the internal exclusion and emotional weight of attempted inclusion for all where teachers are untrained and unprofessional. Walker-Gleaves & Walker (2009) maintain that teachers use stereotypes of deficits and parent profiles to decide what the child needs or will be like and underestimate the ability of 'looked after' children to progress onto higher education. Students were teased and bullied due to stereotypes, reporting how one child had become upset, fought

back and was immediately excluded and teachers stated “he is just like his father” (p.468). Garcia & Guerra (2004) suggests professionals tend to locate the problem within students, families and communities, often failing to examine the link between school practices and student outcomes as the root causes of failure.

Numerous research pieces highlight the lack of teacher training available for SEN within mainstream (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007; & Richards, 2010) let alone an SLD/PMLD school (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009). All of which is compounded by the numerous SLD and PMLD curricula available (Barrs Court, St Margaret’s, EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage), etc. Teachers review and ‘dip into’ the curricula but this does not serve to enlighten them as to how to engage the child to learn it. Jones (2005) argues that development experiences that enable teachers to integrate the distinct perspectives of parents alongside the more contemporary theories of disability into their understandings of this group of learners is a necessity if one wishes to build their professional knowledge base to include wider parental and societal perspectives.

## **2.6 Literature Review: Summary**

Overall this literature has historically suggested SEN equated with social inferiority (Stainton, 2001); where the ‘vulnerable’ are not able to maintain themselves by their labour (Gilbert, 1972) aided by ‘objective’ criteria’s of disability reflecting the biases, self-interests and moral evaluations of those in a position to influence policy (Albrecht, Walker, & Levy, 1982). Historically schools have attempted to offer education with purposes personified in the titles of the institutions and curricula offered (Deaf and Dumb School, 1760; The Crippled Industrial School for Girls, 1851; The Royal Earlswood Asylum for Idiots, 1847). Attempting to offer a lower level curriculum more ‘in keeping’ with special educational needs students ability is perfectly matched to the ‘unable’ child (Burnard, 1998; Sax, 2001) and propose an incapability approach to education that Terzi (2005; Nussbaum, 2000, cited in Terzi, 2005) reverently dispute.

Decades of political reforms have been the backdrop for attempts to change SEN provisions (The Warnock Report 1978; The 1981 Education Act); and inclusive rights covered in significant international declarations, (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; The World Declaration for Education For All, 1990; UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, 1994). The curriculum continues to be a ‘rabbit stuck in the headlights’ within the race course (Yero, 2002, added emphasis). Teachers are rarely exposed to deep and sustained inclusive pedagogical theory and practice during their initial

preparation that would prepare them adequately for such contexts (Stowitschek, Cheney, & Schwartz, 2000; Hokinson, 2009; Ekins & Grimes, 2009). Despite rhetoric designed to give education providers guidance on how to identify needs and assess specific educational requirements (The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995; The Education Act, 1996; Removing Barriers to Achievement, 2004) training initiatives are not at the forefront yet it remains an important source of 'subjective warrant' in terms of SLD/PMLD teacher pedagogy (Stowitschek et al., 2000; Almog & Schectman, 2007). Research highlights the need for more teachers' training in mainstream (Norwich, 2010; Buell et al., 1999; Richards, 2010), SEN issues such as inclusion as a right (Reid & Weatherly-Vale, 2004, p. 468) and indications that staff often feel overwhelmed by the amount of expertise they are expected to have (Garner, 1995).

The National Curriculum remains a straightjacket that discourages reflection on how teachers can contribute to education (Hodkinson, 2009). Predictably, I contend one must come to see a mainstream curriculum (static, a thing to deliver on levels) as a very different phenomenon from the SEN curriculum (assuming such a 'thing' exists at all), set amidst a fallacy that teachers are required to 'cover' the entire curriculum, sometimes at a pace that leaves students with and without disabilities behind (King-Sears, 2008), which is intolerable.

There is a need to explore the multiple definitions and functions of a curriculum itself as a set of entitlements, expectations and aspirations enshrined in a designed body of activity (often set out in official documents and policy) and that of the teachers in relation to their beliefs, behaviours and ecologies, that govern the extent to which the 'special' curriculum on paper comes to life at classroom and school level both within mainstream and specialist provision. Teaching experience, alongside pupil cohorts necessitate the need to constantly shift professional landscapes and in doing so shapes the curriculum they envisage for special educational needs students. Utilising this panorama one questions if the curriculum exists in the political National Curriculum sense or whether it becomes inseparable from teacher identity, thus becoming a teacher's ecology; developing a sense of self as a teacher may begin with a life story, (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001). Historical ecologies illuminate that curricula stem from the identity of being a decent human being, not merely an educator. Professional identities are multifaceted; the construction of which appears to be a continuing struggle between conflicting identities (Lampert, 1985; Samuel & Stephens, 2000). Teaching transcends the cognitive and technical notions of education, rather it becomes a complex and personal set of processes embedded with one's ecology (Olsen, 2015). Empirical research on teachers' identity in terms of commitment, resilience and perceived effectiveness has been quite limited (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2007) and narrative

research within SEN is virtually non-existent. This is important within this thesis because little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach and the schools they work in. In truth, failure to act upon that recognition cannot be acceptable (Imray & Hinchcliffe, 2012).

In understanding teachers' inclusion ideals and curriculum content and delivery, one must attend to the role of emotion and environmental issues which are relational (Cross & Hong, 2012). They do not exist independently, but serve to influence how one shapes the curriculum unique inclusive ideals. Teachers' narratives are situated in both context and content of belief and identity (Kagan, 1992) and now more than ever it is imperative to reveal the ecologies of those on the coalface of special educational needs teaching.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study examined nine teacher ecological narratives and explored their influence upon curriculum decisions and consequent pedagogic practices in the context of a naturalistic setting within four SLD/PMLD schools.

Three purposes framed this investigation:

- (1) To gain an in-depth understanding of how the pedagogic beliefs and identities of SLD/PMLD teachers are constructed within the framework of the school-espoused curriculum.
- (2) How teachers' practices emerge as functions of individual ecologies, beliefs and identities through autobiography.
- (3) How these teachers' identities, ecologies and practices in turn, re-shape the enacted-curriculum.

This study therefore explored four main research questions:

- (1) What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?
- (2) How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies?
- (3) How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these 'special ecologies' to themselves and others?
- (4) How do these 'special ecologies' shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?

### **3.2 Research Design in Practice**

Research reviewed in the literature demonstrates that over the last two decades, 'teacher pedagogic knowledge' or 'teacher practical knowledge' has emerged as a major area of exploration for educational researchers (Florian, 2012; Carter, 1990; Hashweh, 2005; Shulman, 1986, 1987). The Inclusive Practice Project (IPP), 2007 considered issues of pedagogical content knowledge (Van Driel & Berry, 2012), which are akin to Shulman's (2005) conceptualisation of professional learning as apprenticeships of the head (knowledge), hand (skill) and heart (attitudes and beliefs). This also linked to the Scottish SITE (GTCS, 2007), elements: professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills and abilities and professional values and personal commitment (Florian, 2012). The Inclusive Practice Project (IPP) in 2007 developed an innovative approach to preparing primary and secondary classroom teachers to view themselves as inclusive

practitioners (Graham, Bruce, & Munro, 2011). It centred on the head, hand and heart attributes using 'phronesis,' the ability to demonstrate 'practical wisdom,' that is Aristotelian in origin.

In Europe, demographic changes have coexisted with policy shifts, moving from dualistic systems of either a 'regular' or 'special education' towards more inclusive education systems, set amidst multiple diversity issues and national policies of social and educational inclusion. Such reforms have had implications for teachers' education and professional development enconced within a twenty five country report on teacher education for inclusion (TE4I) that examined the knowledge, skills, understanding and values that would be needed by all teachers for an inclusive society (EADSNE 2011)<sup>18</sup>. The issue here is how they can be inclusive and how heads and hearts interact with pedagogy.

Researchers have tried to investigate which pedagogical approaches effectively include children with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms (Florian, 2012; Nind et al., 2004) and what special skills teachers need to work effectively with such specific needs (Nind & Thomas, 2007). Yet observers lack knowledge about the detailed context of teachers' actions which underpin decisions around planning, knowledge bases and experiences. It is not easy for them to discern when teachers are extending what is ordinarily available in classrooms or what is professionally or personally acquired knowledge and skill (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Pajares (1992) rightly contends that attention to beliefs of teachers should be a focus of educational research as it informs educational practice, where beliefs are indicators of the decisions teachers make throughout their lives (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968).

Research on an SLD/PMLD teacher's identity in terms of commitment, resilience and perceived effectiveness and how practice grows or diminishes in their lifetime and the intersection with personal ecologies is currently non-existent (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2007). To expand current conceptions of teachers' beliefs, ecologies and pedagogic practice within specialised settings overall one has to explore the full range of what Clandinin & Connelly (1996, p.26) have called teachers' professional knowledge landscapes; "a territory of private and public knowledge, of curriculum requirements and passionate explorations, of emotional knowing and cognitive outcomes".

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<sup>18</sup> EADSNE (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education)

Issues about content, curriculum and pedagogy cannot be separated from emotional or political issues and all these are inseparable to a teachers' practice (Zembylas, 2007). Intuition and balanced opinions are immersed within the attributed identities of SLD and PMLD students as well as teachers and professional practice and delivery methods of curricula, all of which are founded on personal ecologies.

Attention to an ecological model for the study of teacher pedagogic practice and knowledge necessitates a research focus upon the entire ecological system in which their knowledge develops (Zembylas, 2007), as teachers become learners in their work environments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Such ecologies serve to shape teachers' dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their immediate role pedagogically and professionally (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005).

The research design must capture the possible inconsistencies between objectified aspects of what is being researched and what those phenomena mean as lived experiences and perceptions to the participants and others. This is a critical area as teacher' identity changes through practice and she/he must constantly interpret experiences in terms of pedagogic practice (Wenger, 1998).

The literature and my theoretical framework of narrative ecologies demonstrate that ecologies are a complex synthesis of values, beliefs and actions. Experiences, curricula and special educational needs students as recounted by teachers and students alike give rise to palpable relations between emotions, hopes and fears and the personal, political, economic and social contexts of education. As such, they are complex subjects to research and as DeMarrais & Tisdale (2002) point out, require approaches that seek to not necessarily 'straighten out' meanings, but to explicate the implications of emotions and beliefs on actions. DeMarrais & Tisdale call such an approach 'entangling' and assert that it is only through seeing entanglement in its situated and lived context that it becomes meaningful.

Although positivism claims that science provides clear and ideal knowledge, it is less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, & Wyse, 2010). People actively construct their social world; they are not passive (Becker & Geer, 1970b). Overall, I argue that only through the usage of an interactionist approach can the complexity of human nature and the elusive quality of beliefs and identities both in and out of classrooms be represented.

Phenomenological life historical methodology involves a portrayal of a person's lived experience and how meaning is constructed within the context in which they function and communicate (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Narrative methodology will sharpen and expose ecologies, beliefs, identities and curricula in structural terms.

Current thinking in the assessment of teachers' beliefs is that positivistic instrument-based measures are too constraining in that they are derived explicitly and precisely from scholarly literature and are predetermined by the researcher (Irez, 2007). Whereas until recently the positivist concern with objectivity and detachment predominated, it is now more widely accepted that these ideals are impossible and perhaps undesirable in human research (Van Heughton, 2004). I pursued the perspective that humans defy categorisation into one particular theory or experience as positivism would suggest. In the context of special needs where learning and educational outcomes can often seem regressive and chaotic, not to say fragmentary, being able to construct a narrative arc of learning and experience is crucial. Rather than predictive quantifiable indicators of teacher effectiveness, this research aims to understand the nature of teachers' thinking and their world-views (Richardson, 1996).

One may acquire similar experiential data within autobiographies but to assume all experiences can be gathered hermeneutically; that is to attempt to identically interpret lives, is to deny the existential turn we all have when capturing ecological narratives where experiences and personal lives overlap into analysis. Personally as a teacher, educational researcher and parent of a boy with autism the need to openly declare the paradox that comes with such roles is critical. Being able to take a hermeneutic approach was only made possible because of my existential 'turn', where experiences both personal and professional were utilised to unlock participant's lives. My research reflects a personal interest and inevitably raises the issue of subjectivity and the spectre of insider 'bias', as does all qualitative research. One reflects if those without an existential input could have produced such thoughtful and emotionally rich research or indeed, if 'uncovered realities' found were transferable and unbiased. Strenuous attempts have been made to remove opaque yet obscuring barriers, allowing narratives to unfold through the teachers' personal pace, necessitating multiple interviews and observations to ensure thick description and autobiographies to expose lived experiences. Throughout, my own personal verisimilitude, reflections and emotional roller coaster metaphors have been recorded and analysed in an attempt to refrain from biasing data analysis and enable storied lives to unveil.

Paradoxically, I have taken a hermeneutic approach (to thus reduce bias) yet the methodology and thesis aims stem from a personalised existentialist approach. Strenuous attempts have been made to ensure that the way a student/parent/teacher's social constructs are shaped by society is captured as closely to reality as any methodological construct can allow. At the methodological level however, the concept of multiple realities and the social construction of reality also mean that the perceptions of a variety of persons must be sought (Avramidis & Smith, 1999). The methodological implication of adopting a critical stance in special needs research is that participatory forms of engagement are required. As such, this methodology does not privilege one episode over another; it allows a layered approach to understanding the interrelation of short stories, narratives, critical incidents and longer episodes which are even more potent when several histories are accumulated (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

Interactionist methodologies (Abberley, 1987) are important to emancipatory research; to deny my existential stance as a parent is unavoidable, yet I sought to be hermeneutic in gathering and analysing data. Such qualitative methods have the potential to develop reciprocity between researchers and researched that can provide participants with reflexive insights and alternative stories and might serve as the basis for action and change as realities are socially constructed and influenced by history and culture (Mertens, 1999).

Inquiries may have multiple interpretations and since there is no foundational process by which truth can be determined, interpretivists/constructivists adopt relativist ontology; qualitative data is the product of an encounter in which the subjectivity of all partners plays a part. Avramidis & Smith (1999) assert that the interpretivist's intention is to offer understandings of the world, via qualitative methodologies and reconstruct it where it exists and use a hermeneutic, dialectic methodology to re-represent an individual's constructions. Certainly, conceptual concepts have interested me, borne out of twelve years of academic reading and pilot work which moulded the overall research aims and questions. Overall, I came to the research rather childlike, full of wonder with no notion of current professional landscapes, but wholly aware they were in constant flux due to multiple ecological constructs reiterated throughout this research. Existing values and 'warrants' wax and wane with policy shifts, changing terminology and discourse, exposing differences in teachers' beliefs and values.

### **3.3 The Researcher's Role and Beliefs**

Many researchers assert that parents have a unique way of viewing the child's capabilities set apart from professionals (Fitton, 1994). Such existentialism is a poisoned chalice in some respects; does it spur one on to seek knowledge in untested waters, yes. Are such waters muddied by calls of professional and personal bias, most certainly! Yet for all this is a dangerous dichotomy, there are strengths in such a position, calling for careful responses to how these make the work more richly representational.

Narrative inquirers often begin with personal justification, in the context of their own life, experiences, tensions and personal inquiry is commonly only thinly described in published narrative inquiries. It is imperative within this thesis to be as transparent as is possible about the multiple roles that I have. Such insight allows insider knowledge and to some extent drives one's quest to know and understand. The importance lies in recognising how the interplay of multidimensional aspects of 'mother,' 'academic,' 'researcher,' 'writer,' and 'wife,' that creates a 'whole' person can lead to paths of inquiry that evolve into theoretical and conceptual ideas within research designs. Paradoxically, research began existentially not wishing to bias, re-interpret or reinvent the ecology of teachers and yet one cannot deny that hermeneutically the very reason behind this research stems from being a mother of a child with SLD.

Parent researchers like other researchers, have identities and roles that are fluid, multiple, situated, co-constructed and at times, compete with their participants and one may end up spending more time defending 'research into their babies' than discussing findings (Kabuto, 2008). Narrative individualistic research must invoke strong built-in self-reflection that ensures that a researcher sees him/herself as part of the research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) Instead of denying or minimising the subjectivity, here I acknowledge and "make it explicit as possible" (Ghesquière, Maes & Vandenberghe, 2004, p.173). By immersing my situationally created self into the teachers' emotions, I am able to understand and write about their experiences in a more powerful and empathising way than those without personal experience of SEN ever could.

Mason (1996, p.46) argues such immersion produces the ethical consideration of the researcher's biases. However, grounded theorists such as Strauss & Corbin (1990, p.42) see such familiarity as positive, where personal experiences enable understanding of how things work within that environment and many other researchers have gained positive self-reflection during similar emotionally charged work (Miller, 1996).

Parent researchers do not simply reproduce the learning of their children as an autonomous phenomenon isolated from the social and emotional cores of the human situation but also influence the social and emotional aspects of their children's lives in many ways. Because of the interplay of the multiple social positions that are available to me, I am unable to claim innocence in having an insider view. Hat said, reflexive accounts, or personalised tales from the field, parental meetings and my position as a teaching practitioner became invaluable tools, aiding me to deal with the complexity of this research. I cannot deny my personal quest to assure a good education for all special needs children in accordance with needs. Certainly numerous conversations with teachers regarding their pedagogic practice and how they deliver the curriculum have allowed a release of emotions which is cathartic in nature (Kabuto, 2008, my emphasis). One must "interrogate the self" (Reinharz, 1997, p.3), in order to uncover the ways in which research is shaped and staged by personal lives.

There is also an academic and practical justification here regarding the necessity to hermeneutically investigate ecologies, practices and beliefs and how they shape the curriculum, reflexive accounts construct paths of investigation or lead us to follow, as they empathise and envision new research and human possibilities (Mazzarella, 2002). There is a social justification here in terms of the 'so what' and 'who cares' questions important in all research undertakings, to make visible the impact of teacher ecology. The use of reflexivity in parent-research cannot be isolated from a discussion of positionality, or how researchers situate themselves or are positioned within research studies, knowledge is constructed as researchers are repositioned and share similar types of experiences that raise questions or result in gaining insights into the behaviours that we observe (Salzman, 2002). Like Phillion (2002), I contend that knowledge is the result of experiential circumstances evolving out of a social milieu with others. Personally this is true having spent 12 years in the pursuit of the 'holy grail of a curriculum' for my son that would enable him to 'achieve his full potential,' only to discover that such concepts are subjective and can only be viewed within multiple ecological frameworks of experiences and teaching practices. Such notions are frequently hidden behind the personal exigencies and quests of teachers who were motivated by similar experiences to my own.

### **3.31 Insider Research and Gaining Access: Collusion Issues**

Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray-Orr, (2007), assert published narratives' regarding researchers' personal justification is often thinly described. As an 'inside researcher' it may be true that I have a unique way of viewing special needs children which is set apart from professional dichotomies that Fitton (1994) speaks to, yet I have been transparent in highlighting my multiple social and

power-shaped positions and often privileged knowledge. Knowledge is constructed as a researcher becomes repositioned during the research process (Salzman, 2002). This investigation has been shaped by the social milieu I have shared with numerous teachers and SLD/PMLD establishments over the years, sharing similar experiences and desires for special needs children and a dedication to inclusive education. Such privileged insider access may have led to schools consenting for my work to be carried out within my four chosen establishments, (which if wholly true would be unethical) however, no research is truly altruistic and without personal interest, many researchers have dismissed the fictionality of value free scientific enquiry (Farrow, 1999; Reinharz, 1997).

Mason (1996, p.46) argues such immersion produces the ethical consideration of the researcher's biases and careful consideration of the interviews as active relationships occurring in a context permeated by power and interpersonal processes (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). It is perhaps possible that my rapport with schools and teachers along with my identify as a parent of a boy with SLD that has led people to render my work as offering fidelity and a union of topics that are salient to myself and those studied, thus enabling access. Human research *should* use human tools, *and* the researcher as a research instrument (Reinharz, 1979), such tools include personal experiences and imaginative identification and emotion, now recognised as valid sources of scholarly knowledge (Riessman, 1994c). As Van Heugten (2004, p.206) asserts I took advantage of my insider knowledge utilising a "stream of consciousness writing" (see Appendix J for Researcher Diary Field Notes example) and spoke to others, particularly my research supervisor about my experiences. Such techniques helped to create distance and enabled me to begin to deconstruct the world of special needs in which I was engaged. These measures are borne out from the beliefs that the benefits of insider knowledge are best managed when a distinctive tension between an insider and outsider perspective is able to be maintained. Although 'going native' debates have caused rifts between scholars (Yow, 1997), if subjective engagement is actively avoided, valuable dialectic information is lost to the research endeavour (Coffey, 1999; White, 2001). Nevertheless, the potential benefits of privileged understanding require careful balancing if one is to avoid dominant discourse blind spots pervading the analysis (Kanuha, 2000), and I was alert to this. I sought to establish qualitative reliability through applying rigorous and triangulated methodology, and by exploring context, process, coherence and connectivity of themes in the accounts of the respondents.

### **3.4 Selection Procedures**

According to Cole & Knowles (2001) in qualitative research, the researcher aims to collect and signify representative, rich and truthful information about people, settings and social processes and discourses based upon the research questions, in order that an in depth analysis can be undertaken (Cole & Knowles, 2001). In describing how the setting, context and participants are selected we establish the scope and limitations of the research as well as the boundaries of which we enhance a study's transferability (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

### **3.5 The Setting of This Research**

Researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own respective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher and the impact on students and colleagues. Dual roles may also introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality and must be addressed accordingly, (BERA 2012)<sup>19</sup>. Therefore whilst some pilot work and focus group work was undertaken at my son's school and invaluable to me in terms of clarification and delineation of research concepts, I declined the offer to use any teachers as participants much to their consternation.

My geographic location also limited and circumscribed the choice and accessibility of the schools chosen for this study. Within an hour's drive of my home, there over forty SEN schools. However during a two-year pilot study carried out by myself, it became clear that finding a school that catered for SLD and PMLD rather than 'mainly autism and not SLD,' sight deficiency and EBD was a difficult task. Like Mackenzie (2012a), I contend that research often uses special schools that are for EBD or sensory difficulty and therefore comparisons with SLD and PMLD cannot be made (Brady & Wolfson, 2008). Having selected sixteen schools within my locality I contacted all of them by mail, letters and telephone, outlining aims and objectives (see Appendix B). This process took over a year as many Department Managers and Headmaster/Headmistresses' were extremely busy. Once contact had been made, multiple emails, personal meetings and focus groups were utilised to discuss my research, after which four schools consented to participate.

#### **The Four SLD and PMLD Special Schools Used In This Study**

The four schools have Prestige Awards given for outstanding practice in relation to expectations and learning outcomes of their pupils and one of the three schools initially used for pilot work is a

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<sup>19</sup> (BERA) British Educational Research Association

Beacon Academy for five surrounding schools, whereby professional practice is exposed for scrutiny and training.

### **Participants in This Study**

The aim of interpretive and individualistic research is to examine in great detail a small but highly homogenous sample within a series of in-depth narratives to consider if any themes emerge out of personal ecologies. The concentration of analysis and the individualistic nature of the thesis prohibit large sample sizes and whilst macro systems may be similar, personal ecologies never can be. Purposively, opportunity sampling was used within this study, due to the lack of appropriate SEN provisions and locality it became obvious that this sampling would yield the best results. The exemplifiers for participants were working within an SLD/ PMLD setting and having Qualified Teaching Status. See Figure 4 (overleaf) for a biography of participant teachers.

**Figure 4: Biography of Participant Teachers**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Biography</b>
1	B.Ed. Primary Education Degree. Taught in mainstream for 10 years and moved to specialist mainstream SES groups for another 6 years. Obtained PGCE in Special Educational Needs. Has taught in school for SLD/PMLD students for 9 years.
2	B.Ed. Primary Education Degree, taught in mainstream Secondary School for 20 years. Undertook Psychology Degree, School SENCo for 6 years in mainstream. Obtained MA in Special Educational Needs, taught in SLD/PMD school for 6 years
3	Nursery Nurse in special needs school for 4 years. TA qualification level 3, worked in mainstream whilst completing B.Sc. (Hons) Primary Education Degree for 5 years. PGDip in Special Educational Needs, MA in Behaviour Management in Education. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students for 6 years
4	Nursery Nurse for 18 years, BA in Education Degree. Taught in mainstream for 10 years. Obtained PGDip in Play Therapy. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students 9 years.
5	Degree in Specialist subject. PGCE in Secondary Education. Taught in mainstream 1 year. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students 1 year
6	BSc. Primary Education Degree, mainstream for 2 years as NQT, doing supply teaching. Obtained MA in Special Educational Needs specialising in early years. Taught in school for SLD/PMD students for 2 years
7	BSc. Primary Education Degree, 10 years in mainstream school, 5 of which in PRU units. Taking Postgraduate Doctorate Course. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students for 9 years.
8	Teaching Assistant for 1 year in mainstream, 3 years in special needs school. BSc. Primary Education Degree and PGCE in Special Educational Needs. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students for 7 years.
9	BSc. Primary Education Degree. Mainstream Education for 7 years. Obtained PGCE in Play Therapy and PGCE in Special Educational Needs. Taught in school for SLD/PMLD students for 6 years.

### **Process of Selection**

During the course of a year within the pilot study era (2012 – 2013) a letter (Appendix B) was sent to the Schools' Managers and Heads briefly discussing the purpose of the study and asking each to discuss with all staff members and requesting kindly the opportunity to discuss further. Five schools responded with a polite refusal, three did not respond at all (after numerous phone calls and emails) and eight schools invited me to attend staff meetings to discuss further. During the following next five months I attended fourteen focus groups, meeting over ninety teachers (as not all teachers could make the same meeting in each school) to discuss my research in detail.

Following this initial formalisation four schools allowed me access from which nine teachers volunteered, which is a take up of 11%. Whilst low acceptance is to be expected (considering teachers' busy schedules) closer analysis of narratives will serve to suggest that teachers' voices remain unheard for multiple reasons (which will be analysed within the findings and discussion section). As a result, each participant was then sent a more detailed Research Study Information Sheet (Appendix E), a first meeting set up in which the researcher obtained Informed Consent (Appendix F) and finally, an initial participant meeting / focus group arranged to record detailed contextual information regarding the teachers' biographic details and their role and work within the schools (Appendix G refers, including an example of notes taken).

## **3.6 Ethical Procedures**

### **Informed Consent and Permissions**

Appropriate procedures for obtaining informed consent and permissions are critical for the ethical conduct of the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and in addition are required by the University's Internal Ethics Committee Procedures. According to Rossman & Rallis (2003) all informed consent should rest on four principles:

1. Transparency of the purpose of the research, to the audience and the research community
2. Full understanding of the participant's agreement to participate
3. Willing consent
4. Right to withdraw without penalty or consequence

All of the forms and questions developed within the study were written with these principles in mind and the project and the forms were reviewed and approved by the researcher's doctoral (Durham) Ethics Committee in the academic year 2013-2014.

### **Assurance of Confidentiality**

Rossman & Rallis (2003), contend informed consent and permissions serve to protect the participants of any research study in two ways – by assuring privacy and by concealing identity. The forms and procedures used in this study aimed to satisfy both requirements. Every attempt was made to protect the confidentiality of the data collected and protection of the reputations of the participants. In this written report anything which identifies the school or teacher interviewed has been omitted and numbers ascribed for both. All documents, reflexive journals, interview and observational data notes, recordings and writings collected were kept in a secure location at my home.

Through narrative methodology, participants were asked to share both their lived experiences (Daniluk & Hertig-Mitchell, 2003; MacKnee, 2002) and reconstruct their life stories. Without careful design and due consideration, interviewing that necessitates drawing upon one's life experiences can create feelings of vulnerability, especially when they are linked to how the past has shaped or will perhaps shape the future (Daniluk & Hertig-Mitchell, 2003). Great care was taken to respond with sensitivity to all data collected and discussed at each stage of the research progress. Their involvement in this thesis does not intend to impact on their teaching status within the school or compromise time spent within classrooms. However, one is aware that socially sensitive research such as this always has a halo effect and investigation of personal ecologies may uncover anecdotes or experiences which will lead to self-reflection in possibly both positive and negative ways; therefore, debriefs and the opportunity to withdraw or decline interviews will be paramount to rapport and professional and ethical relationships.

Notwithstanding, issues of insider research are clearly significant and formed a major element of methodological considerations, as well as issues of ethics and disclosure. As a result of the context of the research, permission to approach the participants was granted from all schools by the head teachers and governors in addition to ethical approval being sought from the researcher's Doctoral Department at Durham University.

### **Gaining Access and Entry**

Attendance and compliance with recommendations given in the DfES document Safeguarding Children in Education (2004, 9:2) and legislative documents such as The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, (2006) and The Equality Act (2010, 2012), provided a framework for consideration of working with children and vulnerable adults; this was considered diligent where records and

teachers' narratives would involve 'stories' regarding teaching experiences with such pupils as well as the need to consider the observational data used to offer reliability.

Positionality needs to be viewed as co-constructed and up for negotiation by all social actors (Coffey, 1999; Salzman, 2002). It is intersubjective in nature, requiring researchers and informants to reconcile the differences in subjective perceptions of common experiences among social actors to create shared points of reference. Over the course of a year (2012-2013), multiple school visits were made for focus groups and staff meetings to ensure managers and Headmasters / Headmistresses were conscious of research intentions and validity. These numerous informal visits prior to any real data collection procedures certainly smoothed the way for access to the schools and teachers as well as allaying any socially sensitive fears and aided the quest to act in a reflexive and transparent manner.

### **Pilot Research Prior to Beginning the Study**

Prior to beginning this thesis, pilot research really began over 12 years ago talking to parents within special needs support groups, teachers and Head Teachers involving discussions around issues that all parties expressed whenever I met individuals on an informal basis. During this time universal themes emerged which guided my tentative research directions and ultimately helped form the basis of the actual pilot research process where questions were fine-tuned to the research objectives and aims after the extensive literature search.

Alongside this, classroom observations increased the ability to clarify and understand people's thought processes, illuminating the real need for personal ecologies to be told thus allowing elucidation of the research themes that were important and were informed by literature reviews (see Appendix C for School Pilot Questions and example notes).

Regardless of school setting and cohorts, the way teachers perceived themselves was indeed transactional with classroom behaviours and practice (Cross & Hong, 2012) set within feelings of shame and an inability to effectively teach students due to a lack of training (Almog & Schectman, 2007). Feelings of uncontrollability within practice were recurrent themes, essentially highlighting that teachers' beliefs influence how they understand and assess student abilities and behaviours. Overall, it was apparent that practitioners are "affected by the worlds they try to affect," (Britzman, 2003, p.5); a world that denies them an existence (Jones, 2004).

Here then, not only are practical pedagogic issues a concern but rather the beliefs and values that serve to construct all teachers' practices and how they come to see themselves within their educational identity.

Once pilot work had officially and formally begun in schools (see Figures 6 and 7 as well as Appendix C for schedule), focus groups allowed the refinement of more appropriate questions to be formed to ensure the credibility of the questions to the research objectives, conceptual ideas and research questions found in Figures 1 and 2)

Such a process required deep reflection; researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own respective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher. To become transparent one needs to become a reflexive dyadic interviewer; personal disclosure was not a tactic to 'open things up' or to artificially construct a collusive relationship (which of course would have been unethical in any sense) but to enable deep reflection on the personal experiences of both teachers and myself (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.61, added emphasis). Narratives exposed some very personal deep wounds for both parties, set within personal ecologies. Here it was critical to be honest, open and supportive of their narrative stories and consider my own ecological poignant points in time. Whilst it was emotionally draining at times to hear narratives and comments that echoed some of my own life experiences, writing a personal diary (see Appendix J for Researcher Diary Field example notes) allowed expression of thought and distancing.

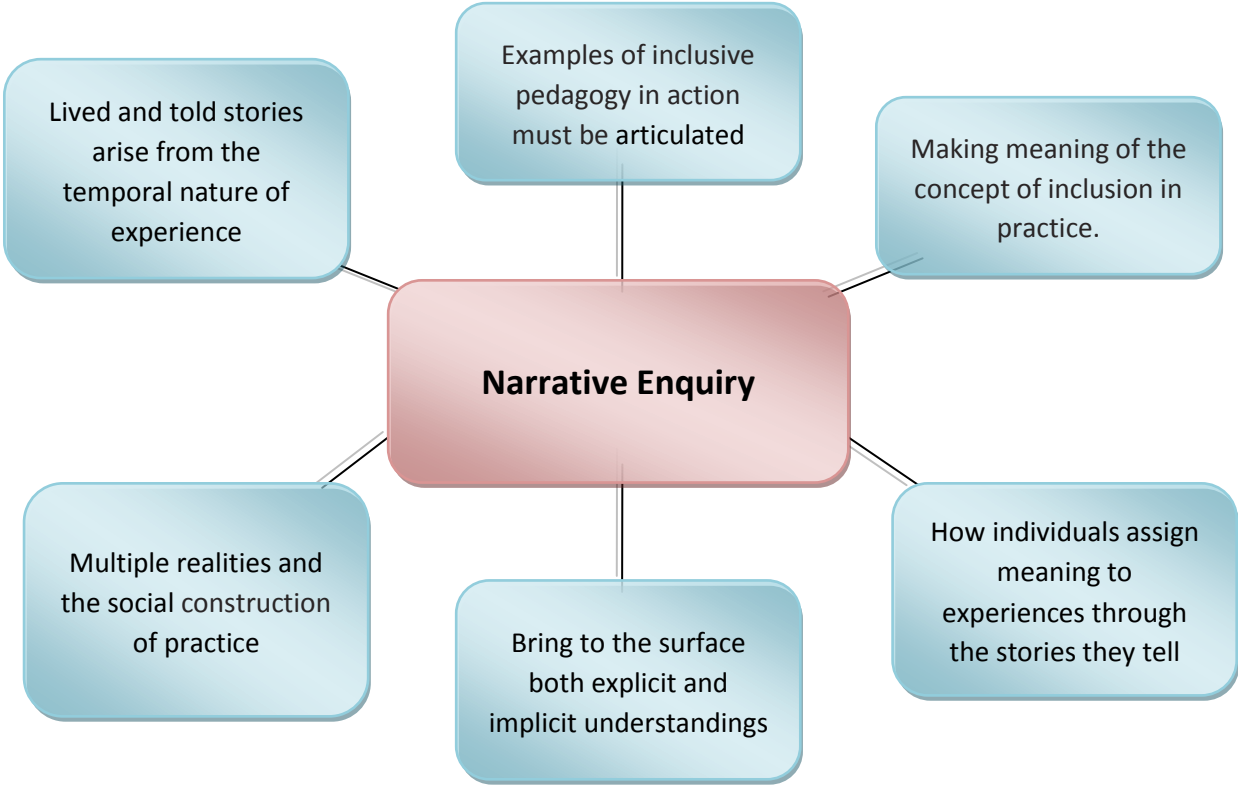
### **3.7 Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Triangulation**

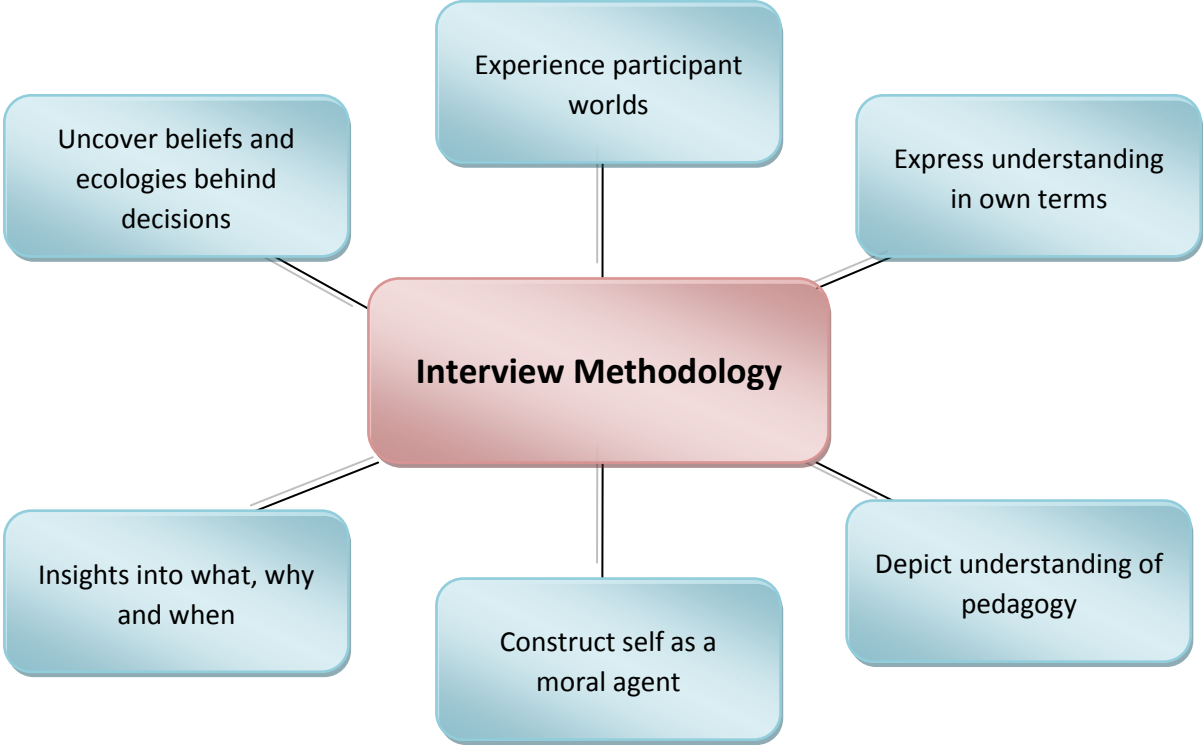
Method triangulation is the use of multiple research methods to gain sources of information to study a particular phenomenon, whilst data triangulation is achieved by collecting data multiple sources with multiple participants, over a period of time. In this research design, there were four methods of collecting data or narrative enquiries that illuminated the concept of 'ecologies,' both forms of triangulation occurred through the use of multiple narrative interviews, observations (method triangulation), multiple sources of writing and multiple exposures to the nine participants via texts, phone calls and informal chats (data triangulation). Combining methods allows one to elicit the participants' definitions of the situation.

Data was collected from the beginning of March through to October 2014. In the next section, each of the four major data collection procedures are described and in addition, I make an exposition of their justification for use within this research study in Figures 5.1-5.4 and within text.

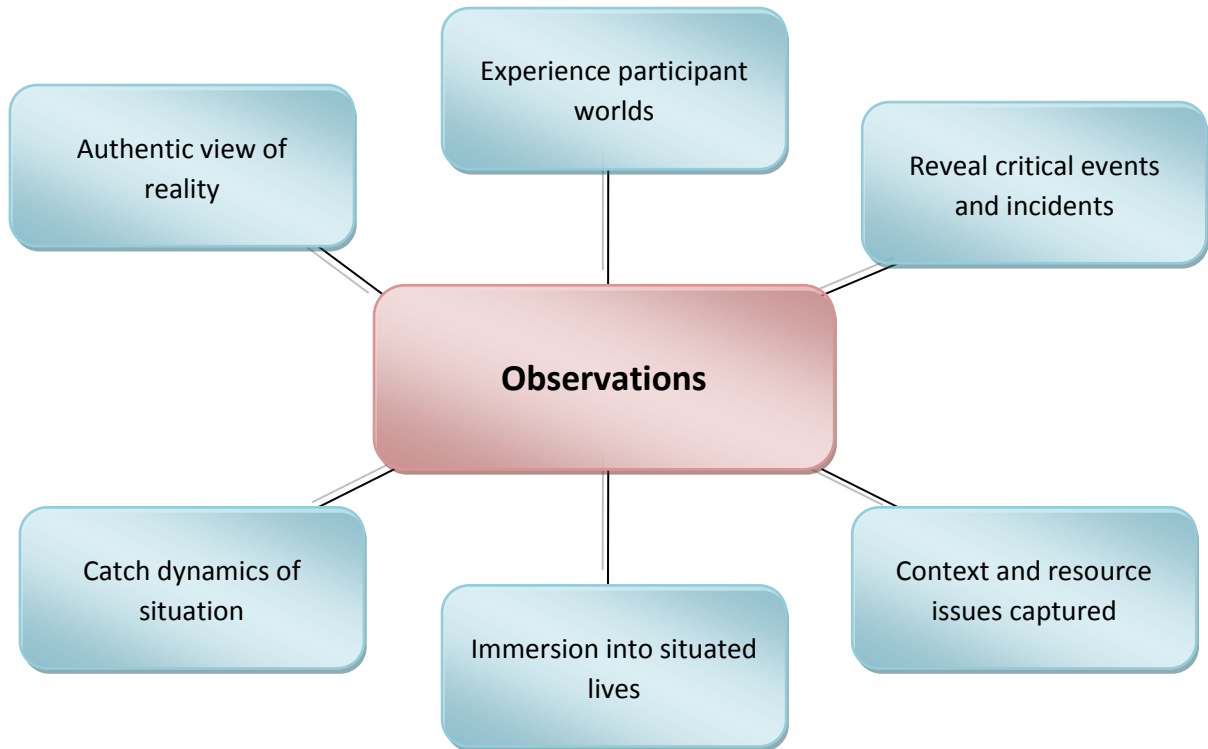
**Figure 5.1: Justification for Use of Narrative Enquiry**



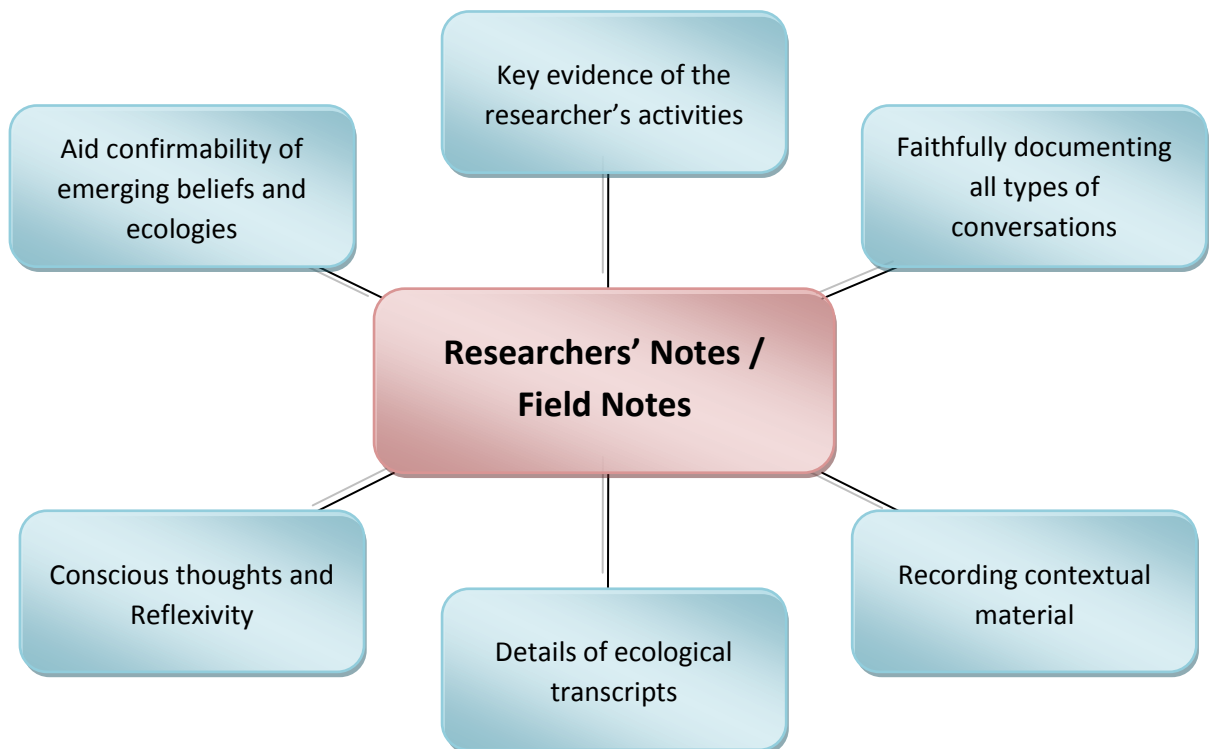
**Figure 5.2: Justification for Use of Interview Methodology**



**Figure 5.3: Justification for Observations**



**Figure 5.4: Justification for Researchers Notes / Field Notes**



## **Narrative Inquiry**

Florian & Black-Hawkins (2011), argue that examples of inclusive pedagogy in action must be articulated in ways that are useful to other teachers and supportive of their practice, henceforth focus on teacher craft knowledge and ecological concepts that drive such factors seems especially pertinent. There is a great need to set out to encourage teachers to articulate how they make meaning of the concept of inclusion in their practice. The primary purpose of the research was not only to observe the teachers' inclusive pedagogy, but to encourage them through interview to articulate their thinking about their practice and how historical ecologies have impacted upon them.

The narrative is regarded as "the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.1). Consequently, it focuses on how individuals assign meaning to experiences through the stories they tell, social settings, at different times and for different addressees. This means that the perspective on their experiences constantly changes form as they gain new experiences and engage in dialogues with other people (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007) within ecological frameworks (Moen, 2006).

Narrative research was used because teachers, like all other human beings, are storytellers who individually and socially lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) argue that the narratives of teachers about themselves and their practice, as well as the discourses in which they engage, provide opportunities for exploring and revealing aspects of the self, which is especially important within 'a changing professional knowledge landscape' and multiple contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.120; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Studies of teacher discourse (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) bring to the surface both explicit and implicit understandings of teacher roles as ways to discern and appreciate teacher identities and how curriculum materials are differentiated. Ghesquière, Maes, & Vandenberghe, (2004) assert making use of narratives allows researchers to unravel the complex school and classroom realities, where diverse information sources are tapped in order to chart the unique teacher in a natural environment.

At the methodological level, the concept of multiple realities and the social construction of reality also mean that the perceptions of a variety of persons must be sought (Avramidis & Smith, 1999) because narratives offer such a channel and fit within the complex layers that ecologies pose. Educational researchers aim to extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity and from all perspectives including learners, educators, policymakers and the public

(BERA, 2011). To study personal ecologies and impact on curriculum delivery, justification and pedagogic practice then is paramount; the reality of teaching within SLD and PMLD settings needs to be captured.

Bruner (1996) highlights that individuals construct realities based upon cultural narratives and symbols therefore their reality is intersubjective, through social interaction rather than 'external' or 'objective'. Language and other symbolic systems mediate thought and place their stamp on our representations of reality (Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1989). Narrative constructions can only achieve unsubstantiated evidence or 'verisimilitude,' they are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity,' rather than by empirical verification although ironically we have no compunction about calling stories true or untrue (Sarbin, 1986). Rose & Grosvenor (2001, p.50) contend that no document is innocent as they all carry ideologies and may not reflect social reality or be universally meaningful. I concur with critical theorists that research is not a value-neutral activity (Barton, 1988). Issues around content, curriculum and pedagogy cannot be separated from emotional or political issues all of which are inseparable to a teacher's practice (Zembylas, 2007). Teacher knowledge summarises a variety of cognitions, conscious, well-balanced opinions to unconscious and unreflected intuitions (Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001, p.446, added emphasis). Ecologies are complex and multi layered therefore it is critical to attend to how changes within all layers create ripples that resonate throughout lives. Such notions have served to shape the thesis methodology and henceforth the need to utilise a multiple narrative approach to capture storied lives.

Narrative frameworks are shared cultural tools that offer us a repertoire of possible stories, but also set limits on what can be told. The difficulty with beliefs research is that they cannot be directly observed or measured, understanding beliefs requires making inferences about individual's underlying states (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968).

Data does not exist independently of the researcher but is a result of the social construction of the research process itself and the quality of the relationship the researcher has built with the research participants (Measor, 1985). Research is value-based and not value-free and I have been prolific in asserting my experiential 'poisoned chalice' that I bring to the thesis. The individual in question is irreducibly connected to her or his social, cultural and institutional setting (Wertsch, 1991). Being in the field then, involves settling into the temporal unfolding of lives. Sarris (1993, p.41) notes that "stories are often not shared in chronological sequence, people's lived and told stories are not linear—they do not necessarily move from point A to point B." These narrative

qualities of lived and told stories arise from the temporal nature of experience in which people are simultaneously participants in and tellers of their life stories (Carr, 1986).

Somers & Gibson (1994) highlight that ontological narratives are the stories we tell in an effort to make sense of how we experience ourselves and how we would like to be understood in order to bring structure to our personal lives, all of which I argue are shaped by cultural conventions and influenced by audiences to whom they tell. The choice of research methods therefore, should be dictated by their research problem rather than the unchallenged superiority of one kind of strategy (Trow, 1990). Consequently, multiple methods of confirmability are necessitated, each method implies a certain view of the world (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.109), but I argue that when used in a holistic manner, personal ecologies are illuminated.

The complexity of narratives and their relationship to initial pilot questions, teacher groups' pilot questions, focus group discussions and ultimately the actual research questions used necessitates a diagrammatic representation to enable understanding of how they are interrelated. In this way one can begin to understand storied lives more thoroughly.

Figure 6 displays the Teacher Group School Pilot Questions that were broad ranging and from which focus group and initial participant questions emerged. (See Appendix C for exemplar notes)

Figure 7 displays the Initial Focus Group (IFG) questions which enlightened people to topic areas. Questions were outlined and also served as the initial participant interview (IPM). Appendix G refers to Focus Group Interview Schedule and exemplar notes.

Figure 8 outlines the alignment of the research questions with the data collection methods which were the interview questions utilised after initial meetings. The full and comprehensive Interview Schedules 1 – 4 along with one example of notes taken can be found within Appendix H.

## Figure 6: Teacher Groups Pilot Questions

1. In an ideal world, what would be your ideal teaching and learning environment for pupils with SLD/PMLD?
  - A School?
  - A specialist unit?
  - Something else?
2. What class size?
3. What do you feel is an appropriate curriculum for pupils with SLD/ PMLD?
4. Does it depend on individual pupils or on something else? What?
  - Social
  - Emotional
  - Educational needs
5. What constraints are placed upon implementing such ideas?
6. What has influenced your work with pupils?
7. With regards to their relevance for working with pupils with SD/PMLD can you tell me a little about your teacher training?
8. If I walked into your classroom during an observation, what would I see you doing?
9. What would the pupils be doing?
10. Have any past experiences shaped the practitioner you are today?
11. What was your schooling like?

**Figure 7: Initial Focus Group / Initial Participant Meeting Questions and Data Collection Methods**

Research Questions	Data Collection Methods	Time Frame Of Study
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you describe a student with SLD/PMLD?</li> <li>2. What constraints are there on students':               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educationally?</li> <li>• Socially?</li> <li>• Emotionally?</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. What do you feel the curriculum should be?</li> <li>4. What would you include and why?</li> <li>5. Where do you get these ideas?</li> <li>6. Who decides which area of curriculum to cover?</li> <li>7. What sort of training have you had?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Focus Groups (IFG)</li> <li>• Initial participant Meeting (IPM)</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Reflective Piece</li> <li>• Researcher's Journal</li> <li>• Personal Communication</li> <li>• Other Salient Textual Material</li> </ul>	<p>IFG week 1 month 1</p> <p>IPM week 2 month 3</p> <p>Interview 1-5 weeks</p>

**Figure 8: Research Questions and Data Collection Methods**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	<b>Time Frame Of Study</b>
<b>What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>• Interview 1</li> <li>• Teaching Observation</li> <li>• Personal Communication</li> <li>• Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>• Teaching Observations</li> <li>• Metaphors</li> <li>• Researcher’s Journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPM</li> <li>• Interview 1 – week 8</li> <li>• Observed Teaching Sessions – once each term of the study</li> </ul>
<b>How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct ‘special’ pedagogical ecologies?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>• Interview 2</li> <li>• Teaching Observation</li> <li>• Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>• Personal Communication</li> <li>• Researcher’s Journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPM</li> <li>• Interview 2 – week 13</li> <li>• Observed Teaching Sessions – once each term of the study</li> </ul>
<b>How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these ‘special ecologies’ to themselves and others?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>• Interview 3</li> <li>• Personal Communication</li> <li>• Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>• Researcher’s Journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPM</li> <li>• Interview 3 – week 20</li> </ul>
<b>How do these ‘special ecologies’ shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>• Interview 4 (summation)</li> <li>• Teaching Observation</li> <li>• Personal Communication</li> <li>• Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>• Researcher’s Journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPM</li> <li>• Interview 4 – week25</li> <li>• Observed Teaching Sessions -once each term of the study</li> </ul>

## Interviews

Rossman & Rallis (2003) assert that the interview is “the hallmark of qualitative research” (p. 180). Interviewing is a method through which one gains understanding of the participant’s world through experiencing their speech and response. As such, it provides a means of ‘seeing’ and ‘experiencing’ the participant’s experiences. Patton (1990 p.205), argues:

“It’s a fundamental principle is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own understanding in their own terms.”

Within the research study, this notion of expressing understanding in one’s own terms is critical to entering the participant’s life worlds therefore as part of the research process, particular topics were examined to assess their potential for inclusion in particular types of interview.

In recent years a variety of qualitative methods for eliciting teacher beliefs has emerged, including semi-structured interviews, during which teachers are asked to recall specific classroom events and decisions, to depict their understandings of pedagogical terms and a close analysis of the language teachers used to describe their thoughts and actions (Kagan, 1992). One appreciates that interviews are occasions which enact particular kinds of narratives, where informants construct themselves as moral agents (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.110).

Literature reviews of Framework of Participation (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007, Black-Hawkins, 2010; Rouse, 2008) insight that what teachers ‘do,’ ‘know’ and ‘believe,’ in terms of their inclusive classroom practices, are interrelated. The nature of the interconnections between each of these three key aspects of their day-to-day classroom activities is such that any two will enhance the third (e.g. believing and doing enhances knowing and so on). Such notions were initially used within pilot studies to shape the end product and certainly helped to identify experiences, ecologies, teaching strategies and approaches used by individual teachers that could be considered as tangible examples of their inclusive pedagogy in action (See Figure 12).

These then became the focus for the interviews in which I could explore further with each teacher, asking how and why they made particular decisions. Whilst all the interviews followed a similar format, each one was prepared individually in line with ecologies (and research questions seen in Figure 8) to capture the complex layers of their storied lives. As previously mentioned, the need for thick description, to capture ‘everything’ and the complexity of lives meant a lot of literature was gathered as people took a rather cathartic approach to interviews, shedding

decades of concerns, frustrations and turmoil as well as proffering accolades for special educational needs children. In truth my need to capture a 'world' was often in juxtaposition with the need to adhere to University word limits, not to 'summarise away' an experience or do it the injustice of being shed upon the 'cutting room floor' as it were. The interviews required a systematic structure that was thorough but allowed for probing questions.

Seidman (1998, p.72), asserts that the 'social relationship,' that is the conscious awareness of the intersubjective nature of the interviewing context and existent or emerging power relations, is of critical importance. Within interviews, the researcher aims to provoke through possibly only one or two governing questions and sporadic prompts and requests for clarification, a narrative-style response to the experience of the phenomenon under study. As Thompson (2008) explains, when asked to describe his/her experience of a phenomenon, an ideal interviewee would then go on to describe, unselfconsciously and fluently, their experiences, inadvertently normally (because that is the nature of storytelling), as overall what one expresses in speech is what one thinks.

There is still a clear need for the structure and concretisation of the autobiographical life history interviews. For these I turn to Seidman (1998) who recommended an interviewing model comprising three interviews with each participant to gain an understanding and context of their experiences, particularly in different settings and stages of the participant's life. With this in mind, I selected to use a phenomenological questioning for the first teacher narrative focused interview (see Figure 12) but subsequently used a four-stage structure for the remaining interviews as narratives' were so intense and informative (see Figure 11 and 12 and Appendix H). In addition, I had an initial informal meeting with the participants where I elicited biographical and concrete occupational data.

The focus group and first initial participant meeting interviews (IPM) is presented in Figure 7 and examples of written notes in Appendix (G) which took part 6 months prior to beginning the round of interviews. These first initial participant interviews were utilised to gain a thorough understanding of all the research concepts and questions, to uncover how they would describe a student with SLD/PMLD and what constraints they had on a social, emotional and educational level. Moreover, we discussed views regarding what a curriculum should or could be and what they felt should be included and excluded. At this point it was pertinent to use prompts such as "what would you have like to see happen," "where did that idea come from." Manuals and plans of training were requested, often to a retort of laughter or responsive facial expressions denoting disillusionment, or as Participant 9 stated "you are joking of course!"

Often I would return to a theme discussed within focus groups, around curricula, inclusion, personal issues and political barriers to achievement earlier to ensure credibility. Throughout interview rounds participants were encouraged to consider any 'eureka moments' (reflections, practice issues ongoing and historical) that may occur after our meetings and relay via telephone or email or write them down to discuss at the subsequent meetings in order to capture as many ecological occurrences as possible. Although interview questions were set out in advance, there were no attempts to rigidly enforce scope of experience. Refer to Appendix H for Interview Schedules 1-4 and exemplar notes for one interview)

My own beliefs and experiences were so woven into the fabric of this research that it was critically important to consider how I would elicit the lived experiences of participants in spoken and unspoken ways, whilst reducing the impact of my subjective influence. During interviews, values and beliefs about teaching were explored in relation to how they affected the participant's every day teaching practices. Throughout, the usage of prompts was necessary "how did this make you feel," "what enabled or disabled that instance," "how have you come to think that," always attempting to understand the ecology and belief.

Interviews incorporated the four main research questions, considering what the inclusive curriculum meant to them and political and spatial barriers to implementation alongside lack of training and support. Flowing back and forth to capture historical narratives and compare with current ecologies. (See Appendix H)

Interview 1 began with a historical ecology of teachers' current and previous placements both mainstream and SEN, views on special educational needs students' needs (emotionally, socially and educationally), routes taken towards current placement as well as teacher and specialist training and their impact upon practice both at school, during teacher training, mainstream teaching and beyond.

Interview 2 encompassed what a curriculum could and should be as well as personal ecologies regarding their reality of the curriculum, inclusion problems, diversification and resources.

Interview 3 utilised historical narratives to consider transactional elements within mainstream and SEN placements and own schooling to investigate the narrative and ecologies and how events had impacted upon beliefs and the identity they assumed to consider the meaning of their ecologies and how they shaped the special curriculum.

Finally, during interview 4 participants were asked for metaphors of themselves as teachers, building upon the work of Shulman (1986) in articulating a coherent basis for personal and professional intersections of pedagogic content knowledge. Critical to the use of metaphor in this interview was the necessity to understand how the participant's metaphors not only illuminated their identities, but also positioned others in relation to them, especially mainstream peers. Here the notions of Holland as a different place for parents as written by Kingsley (1987) as well as the "hearts of lions" that Jones (2004, p.162) found were utilised to explore ecologies. Here caring was viewed as a relational act, overall this sense of reciprocity is clearly very important.

In all, thirty six interviews (four individual ones with each of the participants), were conducted during the academic year 2014 – 2015. Interview durations were variable, but most lasted no more than seventy minutes, with occasional ones lasting ninety minutes. During the interviews and meetings, pen and notepad were used as writing in a personalised précis format is a skill learnt over many years and allows a rapport to build without a microphone being on the table. All notes were written out fully within twenty four hours to ensure reliability. (See Appendix H for an example)

Verbal transcriptive feedback was offered at every consecutive interview, to confirm or clarify data. Previous pilot studies that utilised an unstructured interview context called for me to play a neutral role, never interjecting my opinion but always responding to any answers. My aim to be as transparent as possible and teachers' prior knowledge of my son and personal ecology meant that I was most definitely an insider researcher henceforth rigid non empathising styles offered no structure and conversations yielded data that whilst illuminating did not always render answers regarding ecologies and practices. Nevertheless, such work was invaluable in recognising the need for ecological frameworks to allow stories to unfold and shaped my semi structured methodology that was eventually adopted. Asking someone to tell a whole life story is overwhelming therefore asking about particular events within multiple interviews and diaries may stimulate retellings. In truth, one concern was the vast amount of literature I collected that was rich and illuminating offering a very personal path in great detail. As a professional, my quest was to do teachers' life stories justice. It was imperative that every single word was recorded in the thesis. Frustratingly though, the word limit would not allow for the richness and substantial amount of storied lives I uncovered to be put within the thesis. As such, many hard decisions had to be made about what to keep in and what to file as 'full narratives' without losing the depth and ultimately the essence of people's lives. I can only hope that I have done their ecologies justice.

### **Observed Teaching Sessions**

Being part of the social life of teachers is useful for studying small groups and events that last a short time and can serve to reveal events that interviews cannot (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 404). Observational data is sensitive to contexts and can demonstrate strong ecological validity, (Moyles, Adams, & Musgrove, 2002) and observing events within context yields a more complete record of events rather than reliance on verbal descriptions (Becker & Geer, 1970b, p.150). Cohen, Manion & Morrison, & Wyse (2010) argue that often one event can occur which offers an important insight into a person or situation. Such critical incidents (Flanagan, 1959) or critical events (Wragg, 2013) typify or illuminate starkly a particular feature of a teacher's behaviour or style. Morrison (1994, p.88) rightly contends that immersion into observation of people and practices allows salient features to emerge, gaining a holistic view of the interrelationships of multiple factors. Overall one can evaluate events that evolve over time and catch the dynamics of the situation within this thesis this enables teacher roles, contexts and resource issues to be captured and understood.

One is not endorsing one sort of method over the authenticity of another (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995); the usage of multiple methods stands to confirm experiences rather than test accuracy or confer 'correctness'.

Although narrative research from an observational perspective perhaps has the ability to produce some kind of authentic view on reality, evidence can become 'immediately cloudy,' where facts are open to interpretation and judgements of the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2010, p.396); therefore, triangulation allows one to credibly consider why critical events matter to teachers.

During the study, each participant was observed teaching a class of their choice, on four occasions during the academic year. No requirement for the number of students or type of student cohort was stipulated in advance, except that the session had to be face to face. The focus of all the observations was broadly relational, or encounter-based (Uitto & Syrjala, 2008), but this included a diverse data set, since it encompassed questioning, instruction-giving, discipline and so on.

Importantly, because as a researcher I would be ultimately making interpretations of a pedagogical act that is intensely personal to the academics concerned, I decided to adopt a naturalistic ethnographic stance to the observations.

As Walford (2008) has pointed out:

Ethnographers work on the premise that there is important knowledge which can be gained in no other way than just 'hanging around' and 'picking things up'. The idea is that participants 'perform' less and as trust builds, reveal more details of their lives (p.66).

Observation notes were transcribed and stored in accordance with ethical guidelines. (Please see Appendix I for Observation Schedule including pro-forma and an example of notes)

### **Personal Experience Writings and Other Salient Material**

There are multiple ways to gather, compose and create field texts (data) from studying the experiences of participants and inquirers in a narrative inquiry, Lincoln & Guba (1990, p.55) highlight that observations suggest a variety of types, in particular field notes, participant observations and chronological diaries, all of which I employed. There is an argument that interviews rely on information regarding what people say they have done or will do (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.112) possibly because narratives are shaped more by vagaries of experience rather than collections of experiences. Asking people for meaning is isolated from particular teaching contexts and may 'fix' stories in an inappropriate way. Within this research study, participants were encouraged to communicate with me via emails, texts and phone calls after every interview about any incidents, events, thoughts, feelings, indeed anything that seemed relevant to the general research topic. All were written down and amalgamated into interview notes and clarified at the next interview or meeting. After every observation participants were asked to discuss what they thought about the session, research questions utilised in initial interviews about what, when and why were used to evoke responses and focus was also placed on the four research questions with regards to how the curriculum and their beliefs had impacted on observations. (See Appendix I for Observation Schedule and pro-forma with one example)

Diverse textual material, documents and material objects are all further ways in which a person's life can be represented. In addition, there are other ways both to seek clarification of understanding or expression and therefore to aid triangulation. In life history research there are three types of artefacts: primary data sources, representational sources and contextual sources (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

### **Researchers Field Notes**

Field notes are key evidence of the researcher's activities in the field and are a means of faithfully documenting all types of conversations, observations and incidents at the research site (Rossman

& Rallis, 2003). Additionally, they are important in recording contextual material that represents impressions about the process of the research.

Narrative individualistic research must invoke strong built-in self-reflection that ensures that a researcher sees him/herself as part of the research project (Ball, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Instead of denying or minimising the subjectivity, field notes will enable my thoughts to become 'as explicit as possible' (Ghesquière, Maes & Vandenberghe, 2004, p.173). By immersing my situationally created self into the teachers' emotions, I was able to understand and write about their experiences in a more powerful and empathising way than those without personal experience of SEN ever could.

In this study, the notes provided details for ecological transactions with curriculum delivery alongside very personal beliefs, identities and historical storied lives. During the data analysis stage my own research journal (researcher's testimony) provided unique insights. Reviewing the information in this journal led to new levels of reflexivity as emergent themes and subjectivities emerged. Within this investigation, this last element was particularly critical during the final summation interview, where my attempts at 'bracketing' (Thompson, 2008) were critical to understanding the way in which the concept of ecology was allowed to emerge, serving as another data source to test consistency within the data.

Narrative research designs allow for an unravelling and analysis of stories and research material over time, illuminating how ecological systems are entwined within ever changing temporal political constructs and the teacher's personal growth. Discourse ensures the capture (as close to reality as any methodological construct can allow), how the social constructs of student, parent and teachers are shaped by society are captured (Avramidis & Smith, 1999).

Field notes will take the form of observational notes, interview notes from transcripts, focus groups and researcher diary notes taken during and after interviews to aid reflection, confirmability and the overall analytical process where multiple methods were employed. (See Appendices H – K for examples of notes)

### **Researcher Diary**

Opportunity for self-reflection allows one to pontificate and consider feelings that emerge during interviews, thus enabling clarification of how one uses their experiences and self-analysis to understand and interpret the experiences of others (DeVault, 1997), which has proved essential

within this research. By immersing myself in the teachers' emotions I am able to understand and write about experiences in a more powerful and empathic way than one ever could if distanced from SEN.

Although I am aware of the problems that insider research can bring, many researchers discuss how they have changed and gained insight during research (Miller, 1996). A diary will allow such experiences to be encapsulated to some degree. For the sake of transparency telling the story of research will enable deep reflection on findings, personal experience and understanding of data collected and adds to the complexity of the layers that capturing personal ecologies amount to. Common feelings towards the same occurrences can be an important part of understanding what goes on in the lives of one's informants and I would argue that perceptions of temporality are a key aspect of this.

The past, present and future are not always offered in chronological order and they do not sit independently of each other, nor of our experiences of them in everyday life (Uprichard, 2011). I am not naively assuming that futures can be captured and reported but merely that narratives viewed through both researchers lived in experiences and thoughts whilst investigating interviewee's personal ecologies can offer glimpses of possible future stories and possibilities.

Dissection is an essential part of scientific method and it is particularly tempting to disassemble people's experiences once interviews and observational narratives have been recorded and begin analysis and interpretation at a distance from participants (Bateson, 1989, p.10). Whilst I sought fiercely to keep the essence of people lives, the dissection process was challenging as all narratives recorded were rich and informative, no information was obsolete it could not be anything else as it portrays a life lived.

### **3.8 Data Quality Control Procedures**

Within a research study, data quality is achieved through the fidelity and trustworthiness of the transparent and systematic collection of data, utilising credible and ethical procedures throughout, permitting the findings and procedures to be openly and freely scrutinized by others (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

In this section, I examine the procedures for enhancing data quality and control in its widest sense, both within pictorial form and within text. Figure 9 is a diagrammatic representation of data quality control

**Figure 9: A diagrammatic representation of data quality control**



### **Triangulation**

Method triangulation was facilitated by the use of multiple research methods to gain sources of a particular experience; data triangulation was achieved by collecting data multiple sources with multiple participants, over a period of time (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Within this research study, both forms occurred through the use of multiple interviews, an eclectic mix of written sources and multiple visits with participants and not least, observation and metaphor.

### **Credibility**

Shenton (2004) rightly argues that credibility involves the usage of correct methodology for the subject matter, reflection on the researchers' part of their data collected as well as the viability of the investigators credentials. Moreover, it is important to familiarise oneself with the area to be studied, in that investigators should be suitably qualified to collect and analyse data. My privileged position as a parent of a child with severe learning difficulty and sixteen years as a teacher and researcher more than accommodates such suggestions. By immersing myself in the teachers' emotions I am able to understand and write about experiences in a more powerful and empathic way than one ever could if distanced from SEN.

Multiple strategies for enhancing credibility of the research process and the findings have been employed in this research, including protection of the confidentiality and rights of the participants, adherence to ethics, personal transparency, deep immersion in the field, prolonged engagement with participants, communication with participants during focus groups to allow access to interview schedules, member checks and authorization of release of subsequent research findings and not least, triangulation. Rossman & Rallis (2003) suggest deep immersion in the field via triangulation ensures that the researcher acquires an encompassing view of the phenomenon under study.

Narrative ecological methods require a depth of understanding that can only be achieved with few participants over a long period of time. Both approaches were employed in this research and throughout, the researcher took every opportunity to meet with, interview, observe, or collect data from the participants. Including scheduled interviews and observations, the researcher visited each school 8 times throughout the year; adjusting to teachers' personal timetables and teaching preparation time. Member checks or participant feedback is one of the single most important aspects of ensuring credibility in research (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). They enable interpretations of the participant's viewpoint ensuring a good fit between the elucidation placed on the data by the researcher and the precise content of the feedback.

Participant feedback occurred five times for each participant during the research, in April, March, May and September 2014. The process was continual, with each social milieu serving to deepen reflection and clarification upon ecologies. In addition, there were constant dialogues between the researcher and each participant, by email, phone calls and occasionally text messaging.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to how well a researcher exposes their findings and provides sufficient detail in order that other subsequent researchers may determine the utility of the findings for their own research (Houston, 1990). Guba & Lincoln (1989) identify the notion of transferability as being parallel to positivistic external validity. They argue that only through thick description (consideration of the cultural, political and contextual ethos stated within the general write up) will the reader and researcher be able to truly immerse themselves in the participant's experiences and belief systems. I argue that by its very volition this research is transferable on two counts. Firstly, purposive opportunistic sampling within research assists with trustworthiness; integrity and credibility (Patton, 2002) within this research, the context, events and the participants were chosen based upon their ability to provide a wealth of research information concerning the research question (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Secondly, strenuous attempts were made to ensure that the way a student/parent/teacher's social constructs are shaped by society is captured as closely to reality as any methodological construct can allow, hence the usage of interviews, observations and researcher and teacher diaries to aid confirmability.

Bassey (1981) proposes that if practitioners believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study, they may relate the findings to their own position. Whilst ecologies are personal, during pilot research analysis each system layer produced findings and experiences which whilst not identical had similarity and were salient points for many educators working with SLD and PMLD students.

Guba (1981) argues it is the transferability of the research results to situations with similar contextual features that give interviews external validity whereby the new situation can be compared to the research situation. Although here, ecologies are unique rather than universal, interwoven within individual identities and played out through the personal lenses through which we view our existence and lives. Ghesquière, Maes, & Vandenberghe (2004) speak of narratives, similarities within teacher experiences and ecologies painting a true-to-life picture of the 'SEN situation' (including contextual features) making it more recognisable to others.

## **Dependability**

In addressing the issue of reliability, the positivist employs techniques to show that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, then similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, this concept addresses the consistency of data and processes over time within the research study (Kvale, 1996). Methods for establishing dependability in qualitative research include the triangulation of data, the transparency of research and the maintenance of systematic and transparent records, databases and audit trails.

Florio-Ruane (1991) highlights how the investigator's observations are tied to the situation of the study, arguing that the 'published descriptions are static and frozen in the 'ethnographic present'. Lincoln & Guba (1990), assert dependability may be achieved through the use of overlapping methods, such as observations and individual interviews and that the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work. Triangulation of data occurred through the use of multiple interviews, multiple sources of writing and multiple exposures to the participants and not least, other methods such as observation and metaphor. All of these were carried out over the period of one academic year, from April 2014 to October 2015. Transparency was assured through operational detail of data gathering and a reflective appraisal of the project, descriptions have been offered regarding precisely how the raw data were collected, how the data analysis was carried out and how the findings were derived from the data analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Records have been meticulously maintained throughout, with archives of recordings, personal textual material, field notes, personal writings and transcriptions) thus offering all the details needed to produce similar inquiries.

## **3.9 Data Management and Analysis**

### **Data Management**

Data needs to be coded according to the source of information since this is important within the later analysis process (Huberman & Miles, 1994). All the data for this study was coded with a descriptive coding system comprising the source of the collection, the participant's name, the page number and line number of the data and the assigned document code. Lincoln & Guba (1990) also suggested that the site of data collection be included and so the room and where it was located was also noted for the researcher's records. As data began to be collected throughout the academic year, databases of raw data, their origin and a meta-level log of the research process was also established and maintained. Huberman & Miles (1994) suggests that this transparent and rigorous collection is a critical aspect of the whole research process.

Three copies were made of all data. The first copy of each type of data (for example, hand written observational data, interview data) was kept as hard copy and was managed chronologically over the course of the academic year, spanning 32 weeks. At the same time, electronic copies of all the data were made, keeping separate databases with unique identifying codes for each type of data. During the on-going data analysis in the Spring and Winter, 2014 through to Summer 2015, two copies of these data were used for data categorising, one according to participant and one according to themes across all participants.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Collusion: The Need to Expose Teachers' Stories**

Data does not exist independently of the researcher but is a result of the social construction of the research process itself and the quality of the relationship the researcher has built with the research participants (Measor, 1985). Certainly utilising a "stream of consciousness writing" (Van Heugten, 2004, p.206) and discussing 'going native' (Yow, 1997) experiences with my supervisor helped to create distance and enabled me to begin to deconstruct world of special needs in which I was engaged. This maintained a distinctive tension between an insider and outsider perspective. Consequently, to avoid issues of collusion, multiple methods of confirmability were necessitated; each method implies a certain view of the world (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.109). Qualitative reliability was enabled through applying rigorous and triangulated methodology, and by exploring context, process, coherence and connectivity of themes in the accounts of the respondents.

I argue that when used in holistic manner, personal ecologies are illuminated to expose teachers' personal narratives as opposed to a reflection of the existential turn I had within this research.

As such, at every turn, whilst recognising my status as an insider, I conducted the research according to principles of rigour, fidelity and with integrity. (Please refer to pages 72 and 73 for a more thorough consideration of insider research and 'going native' issues).

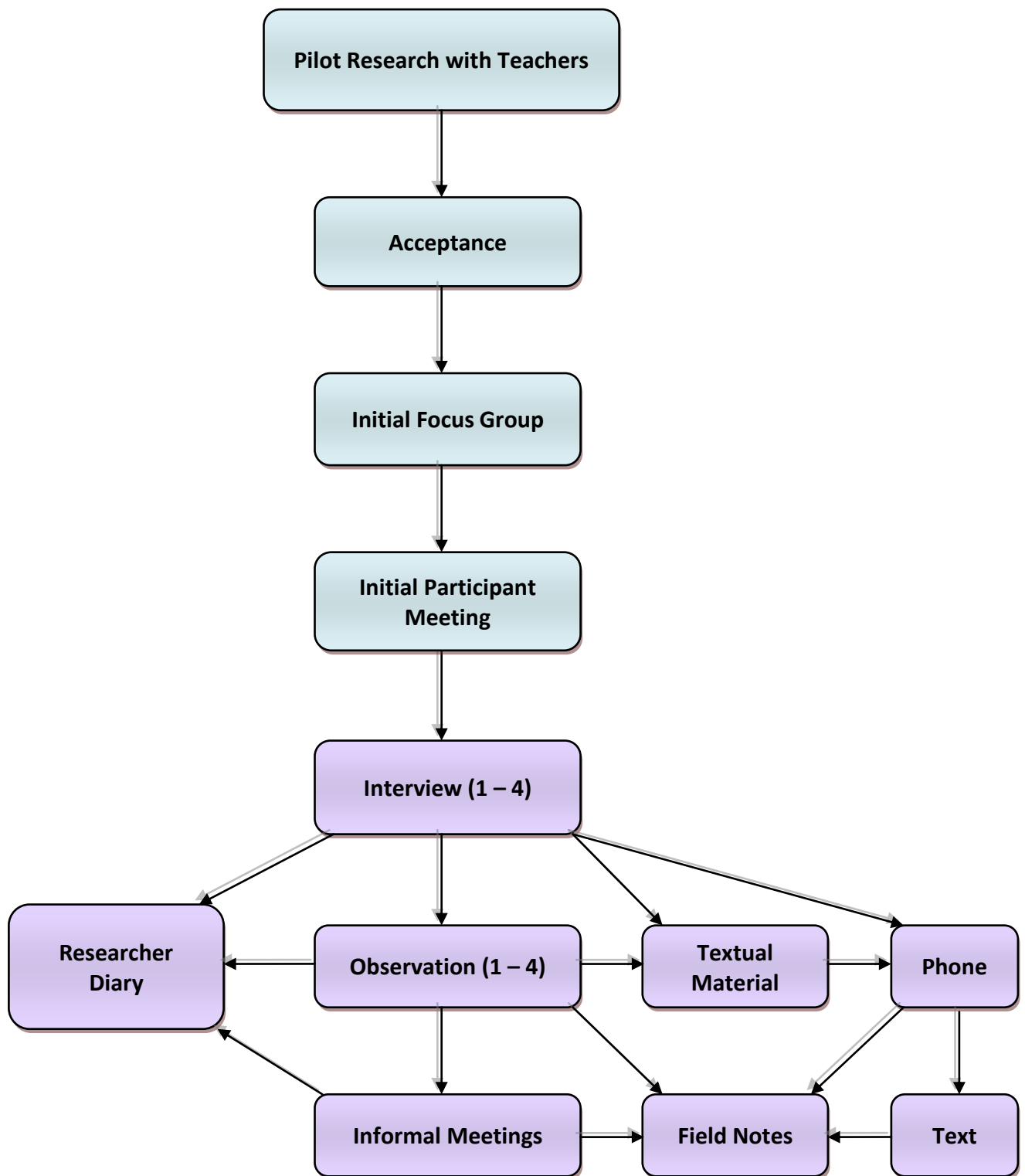
### **Data Analysis Method**

Clandinin & Murphy (2007) encourage narrative inquirers to make visible in their research texts, the process by which they chose to foreground particular stories. It is important to note that narratives within this thesis are not merely a methodology, a tool to gather information, they are the essence of that person and unique as every single child with SEN and the behavioural stereotypes and problems that ensue. Gergen (1997, p.272) cautions that using an analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles could undermine the aims of the research by directing attention away from thinking narratively about experience. One needs sensitivity to the

imaginings and distortions that configure any human narrative and should attend to the materiality of a world of objects and others, which rarely resists the construction of particular stories, (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Ghesquière, Maes, & Vandenberghe, (2004), asserted fieldwork involves (literally) research in which the numbers are small, the relationships complex and nothing occurs exactly the same way twice. It was critical therefore, to represent teachers' personal ecologies in a sensitive and meaningful way to represent their reality. Consequently, it is necessary to employ inductive thematic analysis by reducing the extensive text of the interviews into core themes that reflect the overall context, in this case, the ecologies within which the teachers are operating and constructing meaning and action (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993).

I additionally employed data source triangulation techniques via multiple sources of writing, lesson planning and physical data and researcher field notes and multiple exposures to the nine participants via texts, phone calls and informal chats to enhance credibility by adding, modifying and merging the interview data with the observation data (method triangulation technique), (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). See Figure 10: for flowchart to clarify the relationships between the data collection methods (triangulation).

**Figure 10: Flowchart to Clarify the Relationships between the Data Collection Methods (Triangulation)**



### **Data Analysis Procedures**

There were four coherent data sets within this study; the observation data from the participant's teaching sessions, interview data, personal writing and other diverse textual data and research notes. To begin, the constant comparative method was chosen for the overall data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1990; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.133) as it is an inductive category with simultaneous comparison units of all meaning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.134). Whilst narratives are utilised and they are unique, comparative methods allow the researcher to determine themes through each factor under analysis and enables categorisation of key themes. Interrogation of the emerging themes reveals patterns across narratives and serves to strengthen transferability. (See Appendix K for flowchart of Coding Procedures)

With regards to the observational data, tentative analysis of the material started immediately after leaving the classroom and continued during the entire data collection period. The aim of this data analysis was to ascertain recurring patterns of the participants' behaviour and thoughts (Fetterman, 1998). This method enabled one to cluster their experiences into categories that were contextually woven through research questions and participant's lives (peripatetic issues, spatiality, curriculum inclusion, frustrations and teacher identity within the classroom).

Parallel to the analytic process of categorising the participant's practices into themes, there was also a continuous comparison with relevant theory to obtain a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data material. This was to ensure that instances of behaviours and beliefs that did not seem immediately or easily classifiable were properly understood in terms of ecologies and literature. This was critical given the complexity and breadth of the teachers' ecological narrations as well as theoretical frames used within this research. In the search for appropriate analytic concepts I remained within the framework of ethical/autobiographical theory that is the overall theoretical framework of the study. These two processes, analysis of the data material and rereading of theory, continued during the entire research period. The outcome of this analysis formed part of the overall analytical framework that encompassed all the forms of data.

Concerning the interview transcript data, the primary sources of data for each participant were the initial participant meeting (IPM) notes and four recorded interviews which were personally transcribed and coded as soon as possible after each interview with the interview number, participant information and location. (See Appendix H for examples of interview transcripts 1-4 and one example of data collected).

Data analysis was an on-going process during the academic year. There were however, two distinct frames for analysis of the narrative interview data.

In the first formal interview, dealing with overall narratives around curriculum beliefs, training and SLD/ PMLD students' needs, it was deemed best to follow the five broad steps identified by Wertz (1979), to allow multiple meanings and experiences to become the research strength rather than an overflowing mass of data.

- (1) Familiarisation with the transcripts by re-reading.
- (2) Demarcating transcriptions into numbered natural meaning units (NMUs).
- (3) Casting these units into temporal order
- (4) Organising clusters of units into scenes.
- (5) Condensing these organised units into non-repetitive narrative form with non-essential facts dropped.

Natural meaning units (NMU) represent 'distinguishable moment[s] in the overall experience of the phenomenon' (Wertz, 1979). These moments can be understood structurally as the words that make up a sentence – together they constitute a whole, but between each is a diminutive but distinguishable 'space' and recognising these spaces is as important to appreciating the whole sentence as is seeing each word for what it is, as without both space and words there would be no sentence. Within narratives, entangling where one moment, feeling or event begins and another ends is critical and depends on the researcher's intuitiveness of the 'spaces' as described above. When one is immersed within the world of words eventually moments do become noticeably distinguishable. This is important because narratives yielded an immense amount of data as teachers were rather cathartic in shedding years of ecological discontent. Such rich data deserves a voice but in truth my need to capture a 'world' was often in juxtaposition to a necessity to adhere to University word limits. The aim was not to 'summarise away' an experience or do it the injustice of being shed upon the 'cutting room floor' as it were, to allow the unspoken to be spoken, the identities to become visible, was imperative.

Wertz (1979) notes that the purpose of demarcating NMUs is not for technical reliability, but rather for the disciplined thoroughness and accountability it requires of the researcher, disallowing the rush to conceptual closure. This highlights the trust that the researcher must place in the participants' narratives which were crucial in producing the structures within which the findings sit.

Within the next four interviews data gathering pertained to questions around:

1. Personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher
2. How these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies
3. How SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these 'special ecologies' to themselves and others
4. How these 'special ecologies' shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools

As well as other data, I employed inductive coding (Huberman & Miles, 1994) and constant comparison as a means of data analysis, framed by the research questions and the literature reviewed for this study. I used an iterative process of close reading and interrogation of the data in structured and overall impressionistic ways, to return to the literature again and again to clarify meanings. As a result, initial start codes were developed which consisted of fourteen unique words or phrases. Huberman & Miles (1994) recommend a provisional list of start codes during initial data collection, which can be expanded, cultivated, modified and discounted, if needed, during the coding process. The initial codes or categories that surfaced in the data represented the first level of analysis. As data was collated, each line was assigned a number and this number located with a reference (asserting to a theme within ecologies) within a paragraph; this process allowed for category development and assignment of quotes for inclusion in the second tier of analysis.

Alongside these paragraphs, emergent categories (such as maltreatment, frustrations, mainstream and SLD/PMLD teacher identity) were generated to create a stratified list of codes. For the initial coding process, all interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews. Coding of each set of interviews occurred immediately after all transcripts in an interview set had been completed.

Coding lists were maintained during this repeated cycle of interview transcript set coding; the final list of codes expanded to one hundred and forty unique words or phrases.

The second tier of this process is pattern analysis (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Pattern codes allow one to group phrases and unique experiences into the polished research question meanings. Returning to the narratives and literature again and again enabled one to construct firm personalised temporal ecologies, experiences, beliefs and identities alongside impacting

factors. This enabled positionality of the teacher narratives to become exposed and developed into a sophisticated life story representation, a salient record of professional landscapes.

The third level of data analysis represented the construction of narrative evidence and lucidity of the data and involved application of the data to theoretical constructs and theories (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Here, rather than subtlety and nuanced meanings, a coherent framework was developed for synthesising data, constructs and concepts. In particular, the six themes arising out of dissemination of the data were ordered to reflect major areas, the domains that accurately and faithfully characterized the participant's beliefs, thoughts and practices.

Reduction of data identified six major domains:

- Lack of Training
- Mainstream Teaching as Challenging and Disheartening
- Mainstream Curriculum Inclusion Ideology Problems
- SEN Purposeful Pedagogies
- Multiple Identities
- SEN Teaching Identity

These closely aligned with the research questions and from which interrogation of the data yielded the major constructs found within the findings sections:

- Teacher values and beliefs and values in context
- Historical 'inclusive' mainstream ecologies
- Teacher training ecologies
- Teacher practice narratives
- The purpose of a curriculum for an SLD/PLD student
- Conflict and corrosion in the curriculum
- Assessment, ability and accountability
- The impact on pedagogy and inclusive curricula
- Teacher identity and ecologies; mainstream and SEN pedagogy
- The SLD/PMLD teachers' identity; self reflection

### 3.10 Researcher Diary Field Notes

Keeping a diary offered an opportunity for self reflection regarding personal feelings during data collection and analyses. This facilitated the usage of experiences and self analysis to understand and interpret the experiences of others which proved essential within this research. Immersing oneself in the " emotions enables understanding of, and the ability to write about experiences in a more powerful and empathic way than one ever could if distanced from SEN. Although I was aware of the problems that insider research can bring, like many researchers I contend it changes the 'lens' used and enhances insight during research (Miller, 1996). The diary allowed such experiences to be captured to some degree. For the sake of transparency, telling the 'story of research' facilitated deep reflection on findings, personal experience and understanding of data collected which added to the complexity of the layers that capturing personal ecologies amount to. Common feelings towards the same occurrences can be an important part of understanding what goes on in the lives of the researcher's informants and one argues that perceptions of temporality are a key aspect of this. Time is an integral part of everyday life and the way we move within and make sense of our experiences of our surroundings (Frederiksen, 2008). Narratives revealed that the past, present and future are not always offered in chronological order and they do not sit independently of each other, or our experiences of them in everyday life (Uprichard, 2011). One does not naively assume that futures can be captured and reported; but merely that narratives viewed through both researchers' lived in experiences and thoughts whilst investigating interviewee's personal ecologies can offer glimpses of potential future stories and possibilities.

"Dissection is an essential part of scientific method and it is particularly tempting to disassemble people's experiences, interviews and observational narratives once recorded and begin analysis and interpretation at a distance from participants" (Bateson, 1989, p.5).

Clandinin & Murphy (2007), encourage narrative inquirers to make visible in their research texts the process by which they chose to foreground particular stories. As earlier described there are multiple approaches to analysing field texts however as Gergen (1997, p.72) cautions, an analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles could undermine the aims of the research by directing attention away from thinking narratively about experience. Researcher diaries permit ongoing temporal interpretations and inquiries to continue to be lived out with participants in the field (Clandinin & Huber, 2002). Henceforth, one is able to further co-compose

storied realities which are open to negotiation of a multiplicity of possible meanings set within multiple time frames.

Data does not exist independently of the researcher, but is a result of the social construction of the research process itself and the quality of the relationship the researcher has built with the participants (Measor, 1985). This research has allowed me to capture some truly inspirational and poignant lives through which I have journeyed as an equal partner.

Research is value-based and not value-free; investigations should not simply represent the world but change and empower those people involved. Interestingly, within this research I sensed that teachers are rather reticent to see themselves as visionary or exceptional, yet their stories unfold into a very inspirational journey of how one should teach. Personally one can only hope that my son is taught by teachers with the same values, beliefs and ecologies.

Interactional methodologies (Wellbank, 1987) are important to emancipatory research, they have the potential to develop reciprocity between researchers and researched that can provide participants with reflexive insights and alternative stories and might serve as the basis for action and change. The narrative is regarded as “The primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.1).

Narrative research is, consequently, focused on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell, social settings, at different times and for different addressees. This means that the perspective on their experiences constantly changes form as they gain new experiences and engage in dialogues with other people (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007) within ecological frameworks (Moen, 2006). Certainly, as both a researcher and a parent I have found that teachers’ narratives opened up a new dialogue of humanity and empathy that I only imagined was possible for special educational needs children.

Researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own respective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher and the impact on students and colleagues. Gubrium & Holstein (2003, p.61), consider that to become transparent one needs to become a reflexive dyadic interviewer, where personal disclosure is involved not as a tactic to ‘open things up’ but to enable deep reflection on the personal experiences of both researcher and interviewee. Such cognitive and emotional reflections add context to stories told which reduces issues of power and the interview becomes a

conversation between two equals. Overall I sense that my openness and transparency allowed a very quick descent into personal narratives, the rather blunt commentary and dialogue captured began acutely and it felt more like a meeting of kindred spirits rather than interview and interviewee. Narratives exposed some very personal deep wounds for both teachers and myself that were set within personal ecologies. Here it was critical to be honest and open and support their narrative stories with my own ecological poignant points in time. It was emotionally draining at times to hear stories and comments that echoed some of my own life stories and at times some of their narratives mirrored those of my own.

Many researchers assert that parents have a unique way of viewing the child's capabilities set apart from professionals (Fitton, 1994). This is a poisoned chalice in some respects – does it spur one on to seek knowledge in untested waters, yes; are such waters muddied by calls of professional and personal bias, most certainly! Yet for all this is a dangerous dichotomy, there are strengths in such a position and careful responses to how these make the work more richly representational.

Narrative inquirers often begin with a personal justification in the context of their own life experiences. Tensions regarding personal inquiry are commonly only thinly described within published narrative inquiries (Clandinin & Huber, 2002). Yet I feel that it is imperative to this research to be as transparent as is possible in that as a mother of an SLD child and a teacher I am immersed within multiple roles. Whilst many may argue that my insight allows insider knowledge, it drives my quest 'to know and understand'. The importance lies in recognising how the interplay of multidimensional aspects of 'mother,' 'academic,' 'researcher,' 'writer,' 'wife,' that creates a 'whole' person can lead to paths of inquiry which evolve into theoretical and conceptual ideas within research designs. Moreover, I did not merely interview teachers, they are also parents, academics, people who have struggled and are visionary in their attempts to include all. They are beset by the confines of macro ecological concepts that I found myself in when trying to look for a school for my son or spent many hours considering teaching styles, was he happy, how they could help him reach his potential and so on. Strangely, a lot of my concerns were borne out in the narratives of the teachers' personal ecologies and constrained by the macro ecologies that I feel dishearten my son at times.

Parent researchers do not simply reproduce the learning of their children as an autonomous phenomenon isolated from the social and emotional cores of the human situation, but also influence the social and emotional aspects of their children's lives in many ways. Because of the

interplay of the multiple social positions that are available to me, I am not innocent in creating an agenda for my son to be who he is. As a result, reflexive accounts and personalised tales from the field, parental meetings and my role as a teaching practitioner became an invaluable tool for me to deal with the complexity of my research. It is also true that my personal pursuit to assure my child is educated well and in accordance with his needs and wants has led me to this thesis. Such pursuits have involved numerous conversations with practitioners regarding their pedagogic practice and how they deliver the curriculum, all of which have been likened to as 'cathartic release' (Kabuto, 2008). One must remember however, that we bring ourselves to the research process, one must "interrogate the self" in order to uncover the ways in which research is shaped and staged by personal lives (Reinharz, 1997, p.3, my emphasis).

Parent researchers cannot exist under the presupposition that we can take on the deliberate roles of parent and researcher or other roles, as if they are to be kept under a mask of invisibility and isolated from each other (Kabuto, 2008).

The use of reflexivity in parent-research cannot be isolated from a discussion of positionality, or how researchers position themselves or are positioned within research studies. Knowledge is constructed as researchers are repositioned and share similar types of experiences that raise questions or result in gaining insights into the behaviours that we observe (Salzmann, 2002). In other words, knowledge is the result of experiential circumstances evolving out of a social milieu with others and certainly this is true in my case having spent eleven years in the pursuit of the holy grail of a curriculum for my son that would enable him to 'achieve his full potential,' only to discover that such concepts are subjective and can only be viewed within multiple ecological frameworks of experiences and teaching practices, frequently hidden behind the personal exigencies and quests of teachers who were motivated by similar experiences to my own.

Parent researchers, like other researchers, have identities and roles that are fluid, multiple, situated and co-constructed and at times, compete with their participants. Indeed, one may end up spending more time defending 'research into their babies' than discussing findings (Kabuto, 2008). Narrative Individualistic research has invoked in me strong built-in self-reflection and I see myself as part of the research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Instead of denying or minimising the subjectivity, here I acknowledge and make it "as explicit as possible" (Ghesquière, Maes & Vandenberghe, 2004, p.173). By immersing my situationally created self into the teachers' emotions, I am able to understand and write about their experiences in a more powerful and empathising way than those without personal experience of SEN ever could.

Overall, although I have been transparent in my reasons for originally beginning the research and my place within it, there is an academic and practical justification here. I wish to investigate ecologies, practices and beliefs and how they shape the curriculum. Reflexive accounts construct paths of investigation or lead us to follow, as they empathise and envision new research and human possibilities (Mazzarella, 2002). Moreover, there is a social justification here in terms of the 'so what' and 'who cares' questions that are important in all research undertakings (Clandinin & Huber, 2002) to make visible the impact of teacher ecology.

In this way, to understand the landscape of a teacher and their identity and belief systems as inherent in shaping pedagogy is of critical importance here. Where many have studied these concepts as singular entities, this thesis will take a holistic view of teachers within specialist settings to cement their narrative as the key ecological construct that will define their practice in years to come. Indeed this thesis may serve to define teaching training practice overall and view the inclusive curriculum as being part of the educator.

## **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 The Research Aims and Motivation**

This thesis explores how the curriculum that teachers adopt transacts with beliefs about SLD/PMLD curricula and students' 'ways of being' to produce particular pedagogic practices. Through the lens of individual narratives this thesis examines the intersection of curriculum decision-making and teachers' ecologies to understand teachers' pedagogic practices in the context of SLD/PMLD schools. Bronfenbrenner's (1989) theory of the role one plays in personal development and PPCT (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) was thought conceptually appropriate as the holistic framework. However, during collection and analysis of narratives a more individualised ecological structure emerged elucidating how, why and in what way teachers' beliefs, identity and ecology had culminated in different pedagogies set apart from mainstream teaching. This in turn, impacted upon notions of inclusion and curriculum purpose and content. These issues are challenging because they call for a unique portrayal and coverage of teachers' lived experiences and personal journeys from teacher training into mainstream and then into the special needs settings that Norwich & Lewis (2005) speak of. There have been few attempts to clarify the fusion of historical individual realities set amidst ecology and more often than not they are presented as a universal collection of important ecological 'separate entities' that are served well academically, each singly and thoroughly explicating a multitude of issues; the salience of such concerns is rightfully reflected worldwide.

This thesis however, goes beyond such important critiques to consider another dimension, contending that teacher ecologies sit at the core of the nature of teaching pedagogy. Henceforth, there is a need to conceptualise how ecologies impinge and impact upon practice because they are engrained and serve to form and reform the identity of teachers' inclusive practice and self efficacy. Findings will serve to show how identities are shaped by historical and current political and personal experiences and ideology, which are fused within personal ecological structures.

### **4.2 Analytical Structure of the Findings**

There are two distinct parallel dimensions to these findings, the first of which requires recognition of the nature and origin of teacher ecologies and how they come to impact upon pedagogy and the student schooling experience and will be analysed through the first two research questions:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?
2. How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies?

The second is a direct exposition of narratives and their interaction with pedagogic practice and will be discussed through questions three and four:

3. How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these 'special ecologies' to themselves and others?
4. How do these 'special ecologies' shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?

Within the findings, the original literature review section titles are used to organise the teachers' ecological life stories. A narrative is used to frame the findings for each participant within this study, to unravel the discourse of the teachers and portray professional landscapes both current and historical.

The use of exemplar quotes allows one to place the temporal unfolding of realities into particular concepts (beliefs, identity, curriculum, inclusion, etc.). Exemplar quotes will be grounded within literature alongside a discussion citing where literature has supported and contended with the teachers' realities and how ecologies shape teachers' ways of being.

Often researchers have ascribed particular sections of findings within research to show how 'results' or 'statements' answer a certain research question overall. However, because this thesis uses a narrative approach to capture complex and often messy ragged ecologies, to 'partition' findings into each particular research question was not viable as this would dissolve the essence of teachers' storied lives which do not follow a particular course but are all interrelated and multi layered.

Findings mirror the reality of lives lived and so exemplar quotes are pertinent to and indeed weave in and out of all four questions in some regard. Histories impact upon the present and past experiences serve to inform beliefs and identities which are grounded within teachers very ways of being and unique ecology. Like the ebb and flow of the sea, life stories are not sequential; they are ever changing and are the product of deep reflection, contemplation, experiences and ever moving professional landscapes.

Lives take no particular route but for the sake of clarity, literature sections are mirrored where possible to the research questions. Figures 11 and 12 have been tied to literature sections.

There are two distinct parallel dimensions to these findings; Figure 11 represents the nature and origin of teacher ecologies and how they come to impact upon pedagogy and the student schooling experience:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?
2. How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies?

Figure 12 represents the second and direct exposition of narratives and their interaction with pedagogic practice:

3. How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these 'special ecologies' to themselves and others?
4. How do these 'special ecologies' shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?

**Figure 11: The Interrelationship Between Research Questions 1 and 2 Narrative Exemplars and Literature Sections**

Research Questions	Narrative Section Findings
<p><b>What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being an SLD/PMLD teacher?</b></p>	<p>4.3 School Ecologies: Management Constructs</p> <p>4.4 Teacher Beliefs and Values in Context</p> <p>4.51 Historical 'Inclusive' Mainstream Ecologies</p> <p>4.52 Teacher Training Ecologies and How They Intersect With Pedagogic Practice</p> <p>4.53 Teacher-Parent Ecologies Paradise or Purgatory?</p> <p>4.62 Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies</p> <p>4.63 Historical Narratives - Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: The Temporal Unfolding Of Lives</p> <p>4.72 Conflict and Corrosion in the Curriculum: The Current Misfit Between Political Curriculum Ideals, Inclusive Practices and Pedagogy</p> <p>4.73 Assessment, Ability and Accountability, the Impact of Macro Systems upon Student and Teacher: The 'Acid that Rots Away Self Worth'</p> <p>4.74 Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula</p> <p>4.81 Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?</p>
<p><b>How do these meanings and experiences enable teachers to construct 'special' pedagogical ecologies?</b></p>	<p>4.4 Teacher Beliefs and Values in Context</p> <p>4.53 Teacher-Parent Ecologies Paradise or Purgatory?</p> <p>4.61 Historical Ecologies and the Impact upon Teachers as Reflective Carers</p> <p>4.62 Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies</p> <p>4.63 Historical Narratives - Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: The Temporal Unfolding Of Lives</p> <p>4.71 The Purpose of a Curriculum for an SLD/PLD Student: The Teachers' Views in Context</p> <p>4.74 Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula</p> <p>4.81 Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?</p>

**Figure 12: The Interrelationship Between Research Questions 3 and 4 Narrative Exemplars and Literature Sections**

Research Questions	Narrative Section Findings
<p><b>How do SLD/PMLD teachers narrate these ‘special ecologies’ to themselves and others?</b></p>	<p>4.3 School Ecologies: Management Constructs.            4.4 Teacher Beliefs and Values in Context            4.51 Historical ‘Inclusive’ Mainstream Ecologies            4.53 Teacher-Parent Ecologies Paradise or Purgatory?            4.62 Teacher Practice Narrative – Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies            4.63 Historical Narratives – Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: The Temporal Unfolding Of Lives            4.71 The Purpose of a Curriculum for an SLD/PLD Student: The Teachers’ Views in Context            4.72 Conflict and Corrosion in the Curriculum: The Current Misfit Between Political Curriculum Ideals, Inclusive Practices and Pedagogy            4.73 Assessment, Ability and Accountability, the Impact of Macro Systems upon Student and Teacher: The ‘Acid That Rots Away Self Worth’            4.74 Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula            4.75 The Piccadilly Circus Narrative, the Ecology of Being Peripatetic            4.81 Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?            4 .82 The SLD/PMLD teachers’ Identity: Self Reflection</p>
<p><b>How do these ‘special ecologies’ shape the enacted curriculum in SLD/PMLD schools?</b></p>	<p>4.51 Historical ‘Inclusive’ Mainstream Ecologies            4.52 Teacher Training Ecologies and How They Intersect With Pedagogic Practice            4.61 Historical Ecologies and the Impact upon Teachers as Reflective Carers            4.62 Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies            4.63 Historical Narratives - Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: The Temporal Unfolding Of Lives            4.71 The Purpose of a Curriculum for an SLD/PLD Student: The Teachers’ Views in Context            4.72 Conflict and Corrosion in the Curriculum: The Current Misfit Between Political Curriculum Ideals, Inclusive Practices and Pedagogy.            4.73 Assessment, Ability and Accountability, the Impact of Macro Systems upon Student and Teacher: The ‘Acid That Rots Away Self Worth’            4.74 Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula            4.75 The Piccadilly Circus Narrative, the Ecology of Being Peripatetic            4.81 Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?            4 .82 The SLD/PMLD teachers’ Identity: Self Reflection</p>

### 4.3 School Ecologies: Management Constructs

Within school ecologies, management constructs, teacher practices and their links to government policies, inclusion statements, human rights, economic interests and society's perceptions and reactions to SEN, all influence the educational experience and curriculum offered. Analysed through this lens, the management ecology is of paramount importance having an overall effect upon a child's micro ecology and schooling experience and possibly the curriculum undertaken (Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985).

Research began with the personal (and experiential) belief that the curriculum is not a fixed aspect of the mesosystem as each SLD/PMLD school designs and delivers its curriculum in unique ways. Indeed, there are a superfluity of ways in which schools and teachers interpret the nature and prescriptions of a national curriculum to each particular assessment of need and ability within their own pupil diversity. When visiting the schools and meeting management and heads for the first time, the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1979a, 1979b) ecological theory proved attractive at first to view narratives through the different structures impacting upon practice and self efficacy and to verify and capture the whole school ethos or ecology. It became apparent very quickly however that such a systems approach was not sufficiently unique and in fact constrained investigation of teacher reality. The systems Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1979b) speaks of do not encapsulate all of the teacher's ecological constructs. That said, there were relevancies within his later research in 1989 and the PPCT model 1998 in encapsulating notions of accountability regarding ones role but still one needed to understand why; in what way development occurred and here narratives were crucial. Interestingly, the first meetings with all four heads of school identically stated (almost word for word) that:

“Specialist settings are different from mainstream, the students require multiple types of teaching styles, they all learn in a very unique way, class sizes are smaller and multiple curricula are running all at once” (School 1).

It was apparent that inclusion notions were different from mainstream where good practice could only come from viewing students as a different entity in a positive manner. Students were described in emotional terms unlike historical mainstream narratives in later sections which verify students described as academic ability types where inclusive practice of 'slight differentiation' holds a more negative connotation. Within mainstream, a static curriculum utilises aims and objectives with learning goals to be followed, which is akin to Yero's (2002, p.31) “road to race,”

notions. Teachers aspire to include all and ensure students 'get to the end' somehow in various chaotic formats with many falling at the hurdles, or as one manager stated:

"Oh at mainstream it was erm full on... a lot of pressure to get targets, really large classes, all spouting the inclusion rights but secretly concerned about what was being achieved, which was kind of a mess" (School 2).

Such excerpts serve to support teachers' historical mainstream narratives where Heads of school often possessed low academic expectations of 'cognitively impaired' students with regards to potential (Aloia, Maxwell, & Aloia, 1981) and so set up special units to deal with the issue to be ran by teachers who had a rapport with them. Sadly, prior to such units of excellence (or exclusion, depending on whose ecology one follows), children suffered similar emotional and physical retaliation from teachers that Corbett (1994, p.9; Rogers, 2007; Humphrey, 2008) refer to. What is of great interest is how Heads of SLD and PMLD schools commentaries echoes current SLD/PMLD teachers' beliefs in that they continue to question what is being achieved, often using the National Curriculum stick to beat themselves with because the government warrants this. Whilst findings show that teachers become the curriculum, they also unveil despondency around so called failed attempts to include or deliver the National Curriculum. It is remarkable to discover that teachers speak of doing some good within mainstream specialists units and yet feel personal inability and pessimism (which they hide from managers and those in authority for fear of retribution) around current practice. Teachers within this thesis are aware that the curriculum does not fit the students and yet appear totally innocent of the fact that what they do deliver enriches student lives. Such inability to reveal remarkable work speaks once again to the necessity to unmask the hidden, to reveal the altruism and 'new shore line' of SEN found within this thesis and encourage teachers to shape ecologies within teaching practice; to cease from trying to fit "a square peg into a round hole"(Participant 4). Here the assertion is that SEN behaviours are square pegs and teachers try to fit them one way or another into a round hole and rather than looking at the fit, they try to shape the child.

Narratives revealed that mainstream pedagogic practice is far removed from specialist provision viewing difference as impairments – SEN schools see diversity and student's personalities. Heads, Deputies and School Managers talked of 'potential,' of 'divisive inclusion' and of all achieving some sort of 'accredited course no matter what their level' with words such as 'fun,' 'fabulous teachers' and 'happy students' bandied around regularly.

Whilst such concepts were borne out within narratives to a certain degree, such dialect did little to unveil the actual ecologies in which teachers' pedagogic practice is formed and the intersection with macro structures upon them. Often management made decisions that impacted upon the delivery of the curriculum and the notion of inclusion that they heralded.

Well there is a lovely soft play, but management decided upon in order to offer and 'include' students during play time but they put it upstairs to save money and now we cannot all go as I do not have enough people to help move the students upstairs so really I can only include a couple at a time in the part of the curriculum (Participant 6).

Here it almost felt as if managers, Headmaster/Headmistresses were adrift from teachers' realities utilising a very different ecology, reticent to suggest that extra needs were problematic and that inclusion had been considered. I argue that moving rooms upstairs does little for wheelchair users and that merely offering inclusion in reality is not redeeming. Having a soft play 'on the books', so to speak, may look good in school brochures but if it is not accessible then it cannot be inclusive. Resources, both physical and human, are important as is support from the Head Teacher (Marshall, Ralph, & Palmer, 2002). Whilst restructuring of the physical environment and organizational changes may also be necessary for successful inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2002), doing so without the partnership or knowledge of the teachers' needs serves to exclude. Hence teachers may have positive attitudes in principle but they are tempered by a number of practical considerations (Croll & Moses, 2000; Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang, & Monsen, 2004) often out of their control. This is particularly the case with respect to meeting curriculum demands rather than addressing social inclusion (Flem & Keller, 2000) and attitudes may vary with curriculum subject (Ellins & Porter, 2005).

In truth, literature about inclusion as being redeeming is subject to bias; moreover notions of how one measure a concept can alter perceptions and conclusions. Pijl & Hamstra (2005) reported that 29% of students who attended schools with a full inclusive model of education had social-emotional development judged as worrying by independent assessors yet the teachers and parents were more positive about such schools. Such findings echo the need to consider the personal ecology of teachers, managers and school staff – there is a great need to immerse oneself within the participants' lives to fully understand concepts of inclusion, only then can one research specialist schools.

On entering schools and engaging in initial informative discussions with managers to gain acceptance, the static macro, meso and micro structures that Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1979b), speaks of stood out almost immediately. Interestingly (though perhaps unsurprisingly), the ecology of the school managers and Heads appeared to be suffering from the same propaganda found in mainstream, echoing government vernacular macro statements of need, inclusion and academic achievements, followed closely by statements around teachers' ability and the need to keep training 'realistic and effective' so students could 'reach their potential within the school'. Indeed the term 'we' was used throughout as if to indicate that both management ideals and teaching reality were identically set within a universal ecology of school ethos and practice.

Whilst Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, proximal concepts seemed pertinent, without the use of narratives to capture the essence of the actual practitioners' ecological pedagogy, one may accidentally take management narratives as verbatim and ecologies as static structures. Certainly, narrative findings were rather guarded and not as frank as teacher narratives – perhaps the government ideals serve to dampen commentary down due to the need to always be seen as flourishing or running in the race Yero (2002) asserts to, thus masking the true ecologies.

There is so much pressure on the Head to hit targets, if we cannot get high percentages I fear we may be asked to do booster classes that will be so wrong for my students. The Head asks for things and I shut the door and think no chance, it's like that scene from Matilda where Miss Honey knows Miss Trunchbull is coming and asks Matilda to hide the colours (Participant 7).

It was apparent very early on in the research that teachers seemed reticent to voice such opinions with management; perhaps due to a sense of dishonour at appearing unable, where rather like an Ofsted inspection one has to be achieving at all times. Blame remains ascribed to teachers and students rather than a burdening curriculum coupled with a need to include at whatever cost. Whilst ecologies are personal, during research analysis it became apparent that discourse had yielded thematic experiences and realities that whilst not identical, had similarity and were salient points for many special needs educators. Interestingly, their ecologies spoke of uneasiness within the rigid structures that management used and praised and in fact narratives unveiled almost two different school ecologies. Such juxtapositions allowed one to explore a reality that sat deep within the 'subjective warrant' of the need to reflect on pedagogy in order to aid SEN training and teaching practice that Almog & Schectman (2007) advocate.

#### **4.4 Teacher Beliefs and Values in Context**

On entering classrooms it was evident that often teacher knowledge was an overarching concept that summarises a large variety of cognitions, from conscious and well-balanced opinions to unconscious and unreflected intuitions (Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001, p.446, added emphasis).

Such intuition and balanced opinions are immersed within the identities of SLD and PMLD students as well as teachers and professional practice, all of which are founded on personal ecologies rather than set macro cultural belief systems. Certainly for Heads and teachers alike, issues about content, curriculum and pedagogy could not be separated from emotional or political issues and all are inseparable to a teacher's practice (Zembylas, 2007, added emphasis).

Overall beliefs draw power from previous episodes and colour subsequent events (Nespor, 1987). Pre-service, vivid images influence interpretations of classroom practices playing powerful roles in how one undertakes pedagogy in teaching environments (Calderhead & Robson, 1991, added emphasis).

Teacher micro ecologies seemed to show internal struggles with the juxtaposition between their personal beliefs regarding their place within mainstream schools to begin with and then later practice within SLD and PMLD. Larger macro structures are often shaped by dominating forces regarding cultural belief systems that co-existed through management ideals, government rhetoric and management mission statements regarding the purpose of their roles, schools, curriculum ideals and parent and teachers' partnerships overall.

Regardless of what the Head says I believe we also have moral purpose here to work in partnership with the students to endeavour to aid spirituality and overall self esteem; although sometimes I am not sure if i am doing things right, or even if there is a right way, a better way, there's no measure stick (Participant 2).

If one takes such findings to assume teachers become aware of a personal lack of self efficacy then notions of belief systems and identity formation are critical in their practice. Thus the way teachers perceive themselves is transactional with classroom behaviours and practice (Cross & Hong, 2012), which is significant if linked to shame and uncontrollability (Weiner, 2007). Such research essentially highlights how teachers' beliefs influence how they understand and assess student abilities and behaviours.

Findings verify that people are irreducibly connected to their social, cultural and institutional setting (Alaszewski, 2006). It is imperative to note that the temporal unfolding of lives serves to highlight the differing ecologies of teacher and manager; a certain complex 'cloak and dagger' effect where managers talk for both teacher and school, yet teacher narratives unveil individual practice differing from management knowledge. Teachers follow their own rules for the sake of the student rather than academic ideals, a concept which is elusive and remains hidden from those above, an ecology of subterfuge if you will.

"I nod to the Head, shut the door and that's it, I do what I want and what is right for the student" (Participant 7).

Whilst the importance of micro ecologies as being unique was apparent, there was a certain feel of a kindred spirit amongst teaching staff. Negative historical personal experiences seemed to shape current ideology pertaining to issues around empathy, respect and care. This exposed a deep commitment to equality and rights which was different from, and often in opposition to colleagues they had worked with in mainstream. Intuition and balanced opinions regarding how to teach SLD students were immersed within the attributed identities ascribed by the teachers themselves where respect and an enabling approach was posited by many.

"I would never treat anyone the way I was treated, never abuse them or ridicule them; you must not rot away their self worth" (Participant 7).

"Unlike my mainstream colleagues I care, you have to, you should want to" (Participant 5).

However I also felt a sense of innocence and hopeless affliction that necessitated support within PMLD cohorts.

"They are disadvantaged on so many levels, they need love expressed to them, empathy, It's a very different practice from mainstream; I would never use such emotional language in mainstream" (Participant 1).

A great sense of despondency was unveiled that reached far beyond their own micro levels but also served to consider macro structures of rights, societal views and strong views that opposed Christianity's historical beliefs around afflicted children needing sympathy.

“As a society we could help with more social skills, stop saying ‘ah bless him’. This culture is wrong, it leads to bullying, they should not be the class clown - that’s so wrong” (Participant 4).

Overall there was a sense of unity and similar pedagogy within the teaching team that was intrinsic to their roles thus ensuring that students received appropriate care. Pedagogy seemed to stem from the heart and head (Shulman, 2005), but impacted deeply upon the student’s ecological experiences and shaped their ecology.

“The emotional curriculum is entrenched in what we do here, we care for one another and it goes beyond the student and me but the whole class team” (Participant 1).

“It’s all about social and emotional support for them and get them to laugh and play and join in with them and making the child belong, help them be the best they can be” (Participant 3).

## **4.5 School Structure and Purpose**

### **4.5.1 Historical ‘Inclusive’ Mainstream Ecologies**

Historical narratives indicated that within teachers’ prior mainstream roles, inclusive education had failed. This is despite the Salamanca Statement, (1994); The Equality Act, (2006) and Human Rights Declarations, (1948) being resonant in championing the rights of all individuals to an inclusive education based on the acceptance and celebration of diversity. Indeed, overall accounts exposed a lack of conceptual clarity in the way that pupils designated as ‘special’ were able to take part meaningfully leading one to question if such pupils were able to compete in the race to get through the curriculum that Yero (2002, my emphasis) eluded to at all. This assertion suggests that rather than being a constructive process of recognising difference in all people and their abilities, inclusion is a principled response to something inherently complex and messy, with no systematic way to accommodate difference at all. Interestingly though, narrative analysis appears to have unearthed a universal language of inclusion within special teaching units; a meeting of kindred spirits if you like.

“These kids were deemed underachievers by the Head and fit nowhere in the national objectives; my room became a place to dump them” (Participant 1).

Predictably, teachers struggled with the phrases 'Inclusion for all,' 'curriculum for all,' and 'differentiation for all'. Within mainstream special units there appeared to be no iron clad pedagogic practices, accounts verified Warnock's statements that "there is increasing evidence that the ideal of inclusion... is not working" (Special Educational Needs: A New Look, 2005, p.35) and it involves "a simplistic ideal" (p.14). Certainly, narratives echoed Rose (1998), who contended that within mainstream for these teachers the curriculum is neither accessible nor applicable to all students with special needs.

I worked with so many unrealistic targets set by the government, at my other school. The kids were disadvantaged, sort of 'sink schools' with massive social economic issues and varying low level SEN such as slight autism, dyslexia and ADHD (Participant 1).

Narratives presented as partial ecologies here exposed a very different view of inclusion between mainstream and SLD/PMLD schools. They unearthed how history had shaped their current SEN practice and ongoing ecologies, leading to a shared rhetoric of experience, disharmony and the empowering of the downtrodden. Within mainstream, inclusion involved the creation of special units for those who could not achieve, 'were problematic' (Brock, 1976; Carpenter, 1998) or were 'socially inferior' (Stainton, 2001). Such places carried with them stigma, ridicule and negativity, echoing feelings of internal exclusion, segregation and hiding the uneducable, rather akin to the abuse Rogers (2007) and Barton (1986) referred to. Henceforth the rather static ecology of inclusion impacted upon pedagogy revealing notions of teacher inability to become projected upon 'unable' students. This differs from the narratives that will be exposed in later analysis within this thesis, where attention is turned to current specialist setting ecologies within which students are viewed in a more emotional and humanitarian way. For many teachers such pathology did not fit with the conscious identity they assumed.

They really stood out and I hated this, the children were seen as below average and I know they were bullied in the playground. Inclusion rights had no place really as they were seen as different. The children would say to me "oh I am at the bottom of the tree aren't I!" inclusion offered a way to differentiate and produce prejudice in mainstream (Participant 4).

On reviewing educational aims and objectives, a real sense of corrosion within mainstream school structures and purpose emerged along with a sense of shame and disillusionment to have ever been a part of such a disheartening moment in time. Perhaps as Barton (1986) argues, despite

good intentions, educators and professionals do not know a great deal about 'handicap' and grossly underestimate people. Certainly, concepts of capability postulated by Sen (2005) and Terzi (2008), add weight to such arguments where teachers possess low academic expectations of 'mentally retarded' students in mainstream with regards to potential (Aloia, Maxwell, & Aloia, 1981). Unremarkably, narratives echo previous research where special needs students' academic performances are affected by the ways in which teachers treat them and failure to achieve often correlates with expectation to fail (Good, 1981). Indeed the two different views of what special education looked like for managers as opposed to teachers was of great interest and exposed a decaying of ethics and basic needs of belonging on the behalf of macro structure government ideals which were ill matched to teachers' realities. Narratives indicated internal exclusion hidden within the premise of inclusive differentiated practice and special units; where stigma was a key factor for student and school mission statements, akin to the hierarchy that allows one to differentiate (Foucault, 1982, cited in Copeland, 1999).

Previously, I worked in a support base as they called it but it was at the end of a dark corridor, people sort of shuffled off their into X/Y bands. 'X' for exceptional 'Y' for why bother, that's how it felt. The Year 4 kids were very aware of where they sat in the pecking order when taken for 'withdrawal' sessions. They were removed from class for one to one work, very low level stuff. I had to deliver a curriculum that was no use to them at all (Participant 3).

Such erosion of responsibility to a child's emotional and social needs were bridged by eclectic practitioners whose identity and tenacity shaped their student and personal 'ways of being'; a sense of sanctity as enabling sanity was evoked .

"We should care with a capital C, we should really want to educate and enable, not disable through the very curriculum that is supposed to enhance potential" (Participant 5).

Alarmingly, but predictably, mainstream narratives served to enlighten one to another sub culture; that of students who did not have profound problems but perhaps moderate or severe problems that did not fit the social mould, but had to be enabled/included or dealt with somehow. Narratives revealed multiple accounts of special units for those with 'non conformist ability' and behaviours and pointed to a culture akin to deviators from social norms (Wright, 2001, p.60) and of lesser able students, (who I argue may also have had social issues) deemed as

different. Managers constructed special rooms and units for them and handed them over to teachers thought to have special skills. No one really knew what was happening, or if any curriculum was being followed. Overall there seemed to be a culture of secrecy and lack of humanity or empathy for children, which alarmingly echo the historical assertions of Gilbert's Act (1781, cited in Shave, 2008).

In other classes kids were included but staff objected to this, someone had an Idea of an Special Needs Room, for the 'difficult' students, I asked what levels they would work at but no one knew, I questioned the differentiation; they just said well we just sort of do what we want (Participant 4).

Indeed, students knew they were different and reacted to such labels, which in essence did little to enhance their school experience and suggests an embittered result from inclusive strategies.

"Lots of the kids behaviours escalated way out of control, there was lots of crying, and lots of money available, but it was deemed best to be given to other areas of need" (Participant 7).

Ironically, teacher narratives concurred that often management felt that they had successfully included the student and enabled diversity which serves to further highlight the differing and opposing ecologies of management and teachers working alongside each other within schools. Moreover it continues to exemplify the reason for this thesis, to give voice to those oppressed, unheard and unworthy. Certainly narratives expose a complete lack of management knowledge regarding what happens in the units and the impact on teacher and student. Rather like the forgotten hidden uneducable, or impoverished Victorian asylums there was a general undercurrent of teachers also being placed away from the more able students; purveyed only when results were needed all set within notions of inclusion or differentiation of the curriculum.

Whilst discourse revealed a negative side to special secluded units, skilled practitioners often changed the students' lives for the better within them thus heralding the emergence of a new ecology, unique and visible only to teachers.

When I was in mainstream I ran an EBD class of 10 boys, they needed more fun, more sport to get their anger out. I found that doing half the curriculum In the morning, all the basics, English, Maths, Science (diluted down) and half fun things In the afternoon really

worked – they had spent so long being forced to do the full curriculum and they were demotivated and pissed off to say the least, it's so wrong they were just not capable. My role was to protect them from that level of abuse, I appreciate academic is part of an educational right but forcing them set up a natural adverse reaction. I matched their ability and strengths and skills to their syllabus, we did art, sports, bits of literature, they felt so positive and their bad behaviours vanished (Participant 7).

Here it is clear to see how the curriculum and teachers' beliefs and values bound within ecologies are inextricably and potently linked in SLD and PMLD schools and thus how their intertwined outcomes determine in a complex and profound way, the learning experience of these pupils. Indeed, findings verify how students' academic performance can be affected by the ways in which teachers treat them. Failure to achieve often correlates with expectation to fail (Good, 1981). Certainly when one considers that the timeline of the teachers' ecologies span over twenty five years, a plethora of academic findings remain substantial evidence for ongoing issues that in reality remain problematic and unaddressed. Such findings stand as testament to the macro ecology that looms over teachers' heads that seems to be suspended in time and remains rather like a great 'family secret' that no one speaks of. The differing ages of interviewees, stand as evidence that chronologically curriculum content, function and their delivery remain complex and messy. Narratives support a dearth of research as they are still concerned about how to articulate such a 'special' curriculum, how to differentiate the curriculum (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Kelly, 1989; Watson et al., 2000, p.135), how to decide in practice what topics should be covered (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009) and that they do not have enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate at all, (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010).

Narrative timelines highlight notions of segregation (for the good of all) set within SENDA (2001) which highlighted that a child's right to education within mainstream should not impact on the 'efficient education for other children'. Certainly findings echo Rouse & Florian's (2006) assertions that special educational needs students within teachers' mainstream practice negatively affect the achievements of other mainstream pupils, lower standards and conjure up shame and notions of the 'uneducable' that Warnock (1986) spoke of.

At my old SEN school, I felt exclusion all around me, the PMLD students seemed to be off in some mystical place that once you entered you never got out, like an old fashioned asylum, an old folks' home; they were wheeled in for assemblies and never seen again (Participant 7).

Whilst smaller units can be excellent for more one to one work, findings concur with Burnard (1998) who argues that some children do not perform well in classrooms. The premise of the narrative above however, struck a sour chord for both researcher and interviewee, contending that hiding 'unable' children away under the veil of differentiation was not acceptable. Such personal ideas stood in opposition to Sax (2001) who maintained that those who naturally come from a non-academic background or have a short attention span probably prefer to be outside more in general and learn better this way!

Unsurprisingly, teachers' narratives here have been incredibly valuable in explaining why research concludes low social acceptance increases the risk of victimisation for students and why they often do not ask for help through fear of drawing attention themselves (Nakken & Pijl, 2002; Carter & Spencer, 2006). In truth there is a fine line between 'for their own good' and exclusion. Such notions are tied to the lack of self efficacy that Slobodzian (2007) and Humphrey & Lewis, (2008) advocate effects treatment of students and may also lead to the muddling through that MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath, & Page (2006, p.3), assert to.

Inclusion, well that's a tricky one isn't it...my colleagues are not wholly inclusive, they worry about being responsible. One boy is not allowed to jump in puddles, apparently he has autism.... mainstream inclusion, God what a mess, exclusion rooms for one to one, different things at play time; thank God I am no longer there (Participant 9).

Here there seemed to be a great sense of relief at leaving mainstream, exiting one ecology to reform another yet such important decisions were still made without teachers feeling able to voice concerns before merely moving into a 'different job'. There is an argument that whilst managers appear unaware of teachers' ecologies it is possibly due to a culture of shame, secrecy and an inability to admit the great struggle to include for fear of being deemed to have failed in some way. Perhaps this is due to problems around the notion of accountability that Au & Blake (2003) assert to and of even more concern, Gove (2013) saw as acceptable.

Predictably, staff felt overwhelmed by the amount of expertise they are expected to have (Garner, 1995), which is perplexing when narratives reveal that their training rarely includes SEN teaching. The real issues appears to be fixed firmly within macro structures of ill fitting curricula, government ideology of training initiatives and a general apprehension to admit a lack of understanding for the complexity that is SEN, or as Oliver (1996) so rightly exclaimed, the problem with SEN is everyone seems to think that we all know what we are talking about. Overall this

thesis demonstrates potently that there remains a dearth of literature to enable teachers to voice and unveil the reality of their ecology.

#### **4.52 Teacher Training Ecologies and How They Intersect With Pedagogic Practice**

Although the Importance of Teaching White Papers, e.g. Achievement for All (DfE, 2011) promotes the idea of a highly trained and suitably prepared workforce designed to recognise and harness aspiration and effort, historical narratives show the experiences of many children in educational terms are poor and frequently found wanting, especially in terms of SEN education.

Historically there appears to be major confusion and deficits within reality and academic literature regarding how to articulate and differentiate the curriculum (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Kelly, 1989; Watson et al., 2000, p.135), how to decide in practice what topics should be covered (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009) and whether teachers have enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate at all (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010). Despite widening participation and compositional diversity becoming the norm in teacher preparation programs, narratives serve to track historically that there are still few teachers educated upon the variety of specific difficulties and disabilities that are found reflected in their classrooms and captured within narratives. What is of concern is not merely the lack of training but the constant reticence to admit it, such concerns serve once again to highlight the importance of aims of this thesis and further narrative research.

Due to ineffective training, the nature of teaching and the teacher's work is often so ill defined that educational beliefs are particularly vulnerable to becoming what Nespore (1987, p320) called an *entangled domain*. When a teacher encounters these domains, previous schemas or experiences do not work and the teacher is uncertain of what information is needed or what behaviour is appropriate. I argue that if teachers are unable to fathom out what to do in such situations, then they must rely on their belief structures, with all their problems and inconsistencies. Without narratives one cannot truly immerse oneself into the essence of that person who is unique as every single special needs child and begin to understand problems that ensue from overarching ecological constructs. Findings are significant highlighting that the teachers are the curriculum, not all one universal SEN curriculum but nonetheless a curriculum. One needs to shine a light upon the ripples of politics, school ethos and personal challenges lapping at the edges of one's being, eroding parts but enabling and breathing new landscapes and possibilities along an ever changing shore line. As previously mentioned, special educational needs students are dynamic, aiding personal transformation, all leaving their personal footprints

upon the teachers' shore line, merging with the beach rather than as separate entities that sit within an ecological construct, they become part of the teacher's narrative. Narratives reveal that with each new experience and child encountered, teachers evolve and change practice. Their "professional landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p.28; Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p.163) becomes an embodiment of the nuanced way of being as opposed to a mainstream teacher that Jones (2005) speaks to.

"To be honest I got into school and wondered how on earth I could integrate any slight special needs in class, it was just not mentioned, I sort of trained to deliver knowledge rather than enable" (Participant 3).

Findings supported the vast amounts of research highlighting the need for more teacher training in mainstream, (Norwich, 2010; Buell et al., 1999; Richards, 2010) and SEN issues such as inclusion as a right (Reid & Weatherly-Vale, 2004, p.468), indicating that staff feel overwhelmed by the amount of expertise they are expected to have (Garner, 1995).

Whilst there are clear reasons for the lack of representation and general agreement within research that SLD or PMLD or particular SEBDs, are diverse and complex categories, ecologies echo previous investigations that highlight teachers are rarely exposed to deep and sustained Inclusive pedagogical theory and practice during their initial preparation that would prepare them adequately for such contexts (Stowitschek et al., 2000, p.142; Hodkinson, 2009; Ekins & Grimes, 2009; The SALT Review, 2009; Richards, 2010). Overall there was a chiasmic void within teacher ecologies, where lack of training or direction caused tension both personally and professionally.

My B.Ed. in 1980 had special needs as an option, but at the time there was lots of emphasis on child development, you know Piaget was in vogue and Bruner's work on culture etc, so lots on diversity but ironically nothing on SEN (Participant 4).

Such concepts sit alongside within macro ecologies where inclusion rhetoric runs through all premises that stand behind teaching initiatives; with little understanding of resources needed to deliver any educational concept or its effect on practice. Whilst all micro ecologies are personal, universally all teachers confirmed an initial lack of the requisite background knowledge, skills and dispositions to effectively teach children from diverse backgrounds due to limited social and cultural knowledge and exposure to issues of diversity. In addition, teachers' narratives verified major deficits regarding whether they have been given enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate at all, (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Ofsted, 2008; Maddern, 2010).

Where I did my degree was really big on inclusion but offered no modules on special needs, how bizarre is that! There was no specialist training and no school visits or placements, nothing to show me the way so to speak (Participant 4).

As Slee (2003) asserts, such discourse raises concerns as teachers' beliefs influence how they understand and assess the abilities and behaviours of others and thus how they teach and understand diversity. Moreover, some courses seem to promise SEN elements, but notions of how this equates into actual practice lacks substance or any relevance.

Well when I did my PGCE there were some SEN modules in this which I enjoyed. However I got to use none of the practical things I had learnt within mainstream; it was not user friendly for my school. There was no differentiation offered in ordinary classes and they badly needed it to thrive. Overall the inclusive support and ethos of inclusion in that school was rubbish, barely visible (Participant 5).

I was a new NQT and had spent a total of one and a half hours on SEN during my training, which I felt was not enough I wanted to know and develop for my students' sake. Mainstream 'training' indicated one had to get those results whatever (Participant 8).

Sadly, such findings echo my own ecology in that my special needs teaching qualifications only considered mainstream ADHD or mild autism and none of my other teaching qualifications mentioned SEN despite a very engrained ethos of equality and diversification! Overall it is no wonder that teachers lack the self efficacy to teach and remain frustrated and disillusioned within mainstream (Slobodzian, 2007; Humphrey & Lewis, 2007, added emphasis). As afore mentioned, this does little to alleviate concerns around notions of accountability that Au & Blake (2003) allude to and Gove (2013) supported. I argue such surveillance cannot be good for teacher and student alike, leading to a mindfulness of teachers as scapegoats for lack of governmental training initiatives. It is important however to recognise that research evidence is only one factor in policy formulation. Politics is also about values and ideology and indeed about expediency and the art of the possible (Lindsay, 2007).

There were some positives to be taken from training however particular modules whilst not wholly about SEN were transferable and proved to be vital in their ability to engage with students in a positive manner offering a glimmer of hope for future practice. Here the teachers became animated and a sense of pride was exuded, shown both in voice tone and a general joy to

at last be able to speak of positive reflective practice a term that was never insinuated or spoken when revealing mainstream ecologies.

“My B.Ed. primary was geared towards foundation stage children with play as a background which I use all the time, it comes in well for SEN, and they need more play”  
(Participant 8)

Teachers’ ecologies revealed that first degree training is just the beginning. Indeed Jones (2005), heralds the need for specialist training post-teaching qualifications. As narratives unraveled it was apparent that once within post, a more hands on approach coupled with postgraduate courses proved useful in deepening understanding and helped towards people developing a more thorough sense of difference and professional special needs landscape.

When I got promoted to this school I had no experience of SLD or PMLD but wanted to be supportive so I enrolled on a post grad course that enabled you to choose your own routes. It prepared me to work in moderate difficulty cohorts, but not severe or profound, but I think this enabled me to become a really reflective practitioner (Participant 1).

After my degree I did an Advanced Diploma in special educational needs that had a sort of diversity as opposed to equality feel to it. I chose the modules I wanted to do; I had a great tutor to help me. In a way my placements sort of allowed me to experiment on students and try new things, look, explore and see how to do things (Participant 3).

Whilst encouraging, there are concerns that postgraduate work is an afterthought and one which many NQT teachers may not pursue. Indeed as narratives are not universal there are concerns that other schools may take the stance found by & Bayliss & Simmons, (2007, p.45) where Heads declared “if staff want to learn more, then it’s up to them personally to join a course off their own back – though we don’t have time to do that at the moment.”

Such notions sit alongside concepts of teacher ability and motivation so pedagogic practices may vary greatly. It would be foolish however to assume that whilst the findings of this thesis support Mackenzie (2012, p.22) where some teachers are resilient to the challenges special educational needs students pose and cannot imagine doing anything else, gathering joy from working with students, there still remains lip service given to training, set amidst inclusion rights and utopian ideals that someone somewhere knows what they are doing.

Recent political change to move teacher preparation out of institutions and into schools has increased the exposure of teachers to potential sources of learning (Norwich & Nash, 2011) but also decreased the time available for in-service teachers to engage in critical reflection. Although Richards' (2010) research indicates that training is becoming much more appropriate to PMLD and trainees feel confident, there is an argument that such findings are post-training and do not offer a longitudinal approach.

Lorraine Petersen Chief Executive of the National Association of Special Educational Needs rightly considered that "We need to make sure special schools are actually willing and able to take on students because they've never had to in the past." (Salt Review, 2009, p.76),

Overall there are concerns that partnerships have to be successful and 'open' for it to work (Norwich & Nash, 2011). Within the SALT Review (2009), schools reported that retention of newly recruited teachers for SLD/PMLD was sporadic as they either left very soon after being appointed or stayed for a long time citing that teachers apply to schools without sufficient knowledge of the nature of SLD/PMLD work. This thesis sits amongst a plethora of research where predictably there appears to be pedagogical dilemmas on how to 'dispense' the curriculum, inflamed by the lack of teacher training available for SEN within mainstream (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007; Richards, 2010), let alone an SLD/PMLD school (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009). I argue that my work is distinct in its focus upon teachers as a curriculum; narratives do reveal pedagogical dilemmas but also serve to uniquely show teachers as a curriculum rather than merely continuing the argument that differentiation training is not available.

Discourse posits that teachers are continuing training within the job and becoming the curriculum itself, rather than a prior to placement knowledge base.

"We all seem to experiment on students and try new things, look and personally explore and see how to do things" (Participant 3).

Whilst in favor of in-house training, I am concerned with the surveillance and egotistical beliefs that professionals hold which often feels like an 'it is for their own good' ecology that being an SEN trainee teacher professional affords.

When reflecting upon in-house training, narratives revealed that many teachers admonished the usage of video equipment within training classrooms – such a concept sat uneasily with them and myself, yet appears to be an important part of teaching programmes. Within a ‘get to know the student’ premise; many teachers questioned its usage and ethical stance.

University students come in and they are gobsmacked, just standing with their mouths open and video camera on watching and recording. Social perceptions constrain students, they come in and say “Ah bless them,” what the hell does that mean? No one wants to appear awful so they never ask questions, they pathologise them and it’s horrendous; do people look at your son like that....is that too personal? (Participant 8)

This narrative account hit a personal note with me and my answer was yes, they do say “ah bless him,” yes they never ask questions or equally ask too many to the point of rudeness, yes they pathologise him, yes SENCo’s in mainstream had never met anyone ‘like him’ before and yes it feels horrendous and cuts like a knife. Considering the lack of training, knowledge and social milieu around SLD and PMLD, my academic readings regarding lack of training, awareness and practice and my thirteen years experience of ‘having an SEN child’ or as I prefer to refer to him as ‘my son’, ten years of researching confirms that it is impossible to tell if such behaviour is malicious or motivated by anything other than a lack of knowledge. Certainly my research has led me to discover and understand ecologies shape practice and demonstrate that however it looks, any discourse is a personal reality.

To return to the matter of postgraduate personal development then, despite there being a subjective warrant’ in terms of SLD/PMLD teacher pedagogy for teachers to reflect on the personal experience they may have had, when studying the ITE curriculum (Stowitschek et al., 2000, p.142; Almog & Schectman, 2007), my research indicates often there is little time afforded to such luxuries and teachers are self taught. Certainly my thesis narratives serve to show that teachers are training within the job itself, rather than prior to placement.

“Experiment on students and try new things, look, explore and see how to do things”  
(Participant 3).

Such a lack of uniformed monitoring of self taught skills is concerning, especially when the identity of the practitioner and their ecologies they create for themselves within their classroom is key.

I moved to a rough school and there cut my SEN teeth, they gave me a library with ten of the worst behaved boys as they could not be taught by anyone else. The Head thought it would be great as I had a good rapport with my students, this new group was supposed to target hard to reach students. I had carte blanche; I used my professional judgment..... they felt so successful, they could do Math, English, Art, as a team we achieved goals; by the end they had all had a positive experience of curriculum targets (Participant 7).

Whilst such practitioners are to be praised and the 'cutting of SEN teeth' liberating, where perhaps one has to 'learn the classics before moving onto jazz' (Participant 7), this still does little to allay ones fear regarding the other SEN practitioners that may not have such an easy and positive experience or even get the chance to find the proverbial piano. Moreover, in amongst all of this turmoil sits the student; as one teacher poetically put it:

"All sitting there pissed off, to say the least, feeling useless and unwanted" (Participant 8).

Predictably, one questions the validity of government reports that unlike narratives stifle the true dichotomy of teacher experience. In support of such concerns, Bayliss & Simmons (2007) found that a school classed as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted was in fact failing in its ability to deliver appropriate curricula and teachers were rather negative about students. The distinct lack of understanding of PMLD could be attributed to the lack of appropriate training opportunities. Unlike the schools within this research extra training was not always part of professional development:

"If staff want to learn more, then it's up to them personally to join a course off their own back – though we don't have time to do that at the moment (Bayliss & Simmons, 2007, p. 20).

Moreover, whilst findings serve to indicate teachers appear to learn more within school placements rather than university courses, their pedagogic knowledge comes from TAs and not the teachers themselves. Unsurprisingly, an Ofsted (2008) study found the quality of special needs experience students received depended largely on the school they trained in, suggesting good mentors can be valuable and life savers. The notion of teacher identity cannot be purely taught but emanates from a personal ecology is strengthened here;

“It was not until I worked in disadvantaged schools did I realise I could do some good. I moved into pupil referral units and sort of cut my teeth there, watching colleagues, researching and asking questions” (Bayliss & Simmons, 2007, p.22).

“I am just sort of new one year in and finding my feet. The staff are supportive of each other, we share ideas and anecdotes, I read a lot, I learn with the students” (Participant 5).

Norwich & Lewis (2001) rightly contest that there are systematic differences in pedagogic practice within special needs sub groups. Discourse revealed that there is also a greater need for adaption for those with more severe needs which goes beyond normal adaptations often found in mainstream. This alongside the deficit of research regarding what a PMLD curriculum should be as well as case studies regarding actual practice and beliefs illuminates even further the importance of my thesis aims.

Whilst often unprepared for the difficulty and complexity that meets them in many schools, findings offered support for previous academic research into mainstream (Clements, 2004) and SLD/PMLD settings (Mackenzie, 2012a) verifying that teachers can learn to work more effectively with students with SLD and PMLD which may begin with experience gleaned from working with students with more moderate problems.

I learnt on the job, saw what worked and did not but it was here at XXX School where I got my taste of all things special needs, working with good colleagues. I feel I have achieved a lot, it's like playing the piano, you have to learn the classics before you can do jazz (Participant 7).

Whilst temporal historical narrative ecologies exposed disillusionment with their identities within mainstream aided by a distinct lack of training and most have entered into the SEN teaching profession as unskilled practitioners, all possessed a great empathy for their cohorts coupled with tenacity to ensure empowering practice. Identities became reshaped and ecologies reformed and certainly within all four schools utilised for research, positive role models enhanced practice and reshaped ecologies.

Years of research and working with great colleagues who had very different ways of working positively and reading up on everything has helped a great deal, but you have to live it every day, you have to have a desire to change student lives (Participant 1).

Lots of research and good colleagues have educated me, I learn with every child that comes in here, but at first I was so unsure I was doing anything right and honestly that's hard after twenty years of teaching (Participant 2).

This thesis serves as evidence that personal and pedagogic lessons have been learnt and practice has become fitted to needs. One interview dialogue served to show how in house training could and should be monitored to ensure more skilled practitioners. Positive practice was noted in that some managers have listened and taken note of the wealth of experience within the classroom.

I have got a new job and I am pleased to say it involves initiating a range of programmes in this school which will slowly over three years change the attitudes and values of teachers in terms of levels of professionalism. The idea is to have a mentor and look at pupil progress, work better as a team and share ideas and support students better and look at keeping the energy of teachers buoyant as often they become lethargic. Hopefully we can get NQT teachers and make them less scared (Participant 7).

#### **4.53 Teacher-Parent Ecologies Paradise or Purgatory?**

Glashan, Mackay, & Grieve, (2004) argue that reflective practice, school and parental-co working is a fertile area in which perspectives are better understood and teachers' aims for this group of children are frequently articulated for the first time. Indeed Bronfenbrenner (1989) resonantly highlights the need to consider a child's micro ecology (personality and parenting) which ripples throughout other layers of life.

Many parents have discussed at length with me that a professional diagnosis is often very mismatched to the actual child. Fisher (2007) indicated that one parent preferred to see their child as presenting a completely different way of being and others reported that their children learned much more when they are valued on their own terms and when people work with them as an individual. Such sentiments also resonate with Kittay's (1999, cited in Hanisberg & Ruddick, 1999) account of parents' experiences of caring for disabled children, where even with the special care their impairment necessitates, they make life worth living and such research is helpful in pointing to how children with special needs enrich lives.

That said, Blacher's (1984) comparisons of studies reveals a stark contrast, involving parental adjustment, shock and mourning processes that parents go through. Amidst this there are feelings of sadness, isolation and difficult emotions when comparing their child to friends in terms of ability and sociability. Whilst this offers another view, thesis findings serve to illuminate the impact of ecological systems that shape and change a child's life. The occurrence or recurrence of experiences varies which suggests that no one service or assessment is enough to ensure correct education. Parents seem to want their children to be to be individualised and accepted for all their foibles and a major push is needed in making society teachers and parents gain the transition to acceptance.

Mindful of such concepts within the thesis, attention was given to the notion that the ecology of the parent is important and impacts upon student ecological micro and exosystem levels overall. Such notions piqued personal interest to investigate teachers' views on parental ecology enabled through the utilisation of a very poignant and moving piece written by Emily Perl Kingsley (1987) entitled 'Welcome to Holland' (see Appendix L) which metaphorically refers to the whole change of scene, sense of loss and differences of giving birth and living with a child that has special needs. Emily asserts she thought she was going to Italy to learn Italian and so, bought books and primed herself for the new adventure. After her son's birth she 'woke up in Holland' with different landscapes and experiences she had not prepared for.

For one particular teacher the notion of Holland as the only 'other' place to go to was questioned and using Emily's metaphorical stance, narratives exposed how one different way of being seemed to be swapped for another rather than an acceptance of individuality. Considering the complexity and multi factors, stereotypes, behaviours and deficits that sit within SEN this is a very poignant view.

Holland, very nice but Norway would have been better to use, more hills, dimensions, so different in a way that's interesting not bad. This Holland metaphor does not pick out the complexity of special needs and disability it's a nice metaphor but does not touch on...it's limited in the scope of 'the real thing. Look, let's be flexible and realise there's more places than Holland (Participant 1).

Many believed that Emily's piece that whilst beautiful and thought provoking (and challenging to me as a mother for multiple reasons). There was a sense of the vignette failing to capture the reality and the roller coaster of emotions, physical difficulties and challenging micro ecologies of

parents. Their words echoed the many thoughts and conversations I have had over the years with those with a child who is 'special' in their own way.

“Reality is far more dreadful and tiring for the parent; we bring our own baggage I guess. There is no single way of dealing with disability, flexibility is the key (Participant 1).

For many though there was an awareness of the great difference between their own ecology as teacher and how that shaped beliefs in terms of it representing a partial utopian ecology and that of the parents more realistic micro ecology.

Not sure where to go with this piece, now is she sort of saying it's a bereavement, a loss of something she thought she was getting and got something new? Oh it's so personal I do not want to infer the wrong thing. I guess it depends on the parent and the child (Participant 3).

Another teacher's dialogue revealed that school had become a 'dumping ground' for an autistic boy who was high dependency and described as 'taxing for parents to deal with'. This was both thought provoking and unsettling, conjuring up for the teacher memories of special units where students had no place and were adrift from their personal ideals of empathy and care. In truth the revelation that not all parents view their child as merely a different 'way of being' but rather something more derogatory did not fit Emily's Utopia and was painful to listen to. Interestingly, like Phillion (2002) asserted, I too felt distressed but the tension created forced me to deepen my understanding of this dilemma, to accept that some mothers' ecologies do not match my own.

Some people would not agree with Emily's views, one mother has told me she wishes she had never had him; he is a burden to her. I believe that all kids have enormous potential, I know society does not recognise this; but I guess I am sitting from a lofty position as I do not have such daily battles (Participant 4).

Unquestionably, for most teachers there was an awareness of the great difference between their own ecology as teacher and how they shaped beliefs in terms of Emily's piece representing a partial utopian ecology and that of the parents more realistic micro ecology.

Holland conjures up to me XXXX mum, she seems to live in a hellish world and I know that the utopian view painted by Emily does not really capture life for all parents of SLD and

PMLD children. I think you probably have to adjust your expectations of perhaps what you wanted for your child and look beyond the pain and live in the now; but that's easy for me to say, my children do not have such extra needs (Participant 7).

#### **4.6 Teacher- Practice Narratives**

An ecological systems framework, based on the work of Bruner's work on cultural narrative is the second structural strand that stands behind the research in this thesis. Bruner (1996) postulates that individuals construct realities based upon cultural narratives and symbols therefore their reality is intersubjective through social interaction rather than external or objective. Narrative constructions can only achieve unsubstantiated evidence or 'verisimilitude', they are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity' rather than by empirical verification (Mertens, 1999). Accessibility to personal and prolific ecologies here, served to strengthen further agreement that:

"Discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also who can speak, when, where and with what authority" (Ball, 1994, p.21).

Immersion within teachers' ecologies has enabled a historical journey permitting realities to emerge, because:

"Knowing what ecological structures have harboured and shaped pedagogy, allows one to know why" (Eagleton, 1991, p.98).

Collectively, findings advocate that the voices of SLD and PMLD teachers seem to be heard only by those working within these settings. Their historical ecologies within mainstream and style of curriculum delivery appear to be an almost bipolar narrative to current practice.

The proverbial 'cutting of SEN teeth' appears to emerge through a turbulent storm of mainstream battles, personal shame, frustration and disillusionment. Such notions are borne out through the work of Phillion (2002) who contends that to immerse oneself in a life, there is a need to examine the interaction between the personal and social dimensions of a narrative inquiry. Clandinin & Connelly (1996, 2000) argue for the need to view ecologies inwards, outwards, forwards and backward, which echo Dewey's, (1938) concepts of interaction, where one needs to analyse and explore the temporality of experience inwardly and outwardly to gather experience, to write the

story of a life lived uniquely. Such a 'roller coaster ride' often leaves one shaken but deepens understanding of the person within the study (Phillion, 2002, added emphasis).

Exploration of such discourse is at the heart of this thesis and verifies Zembylas' (2007) arguments in that content, curriculum and pedagogy cannot be separated from emotional or political issues and are inseparable to a teacher's practice. Their reality of the here and now unveils a different ecology, whereby curricula are not constructs to deliver but in essence become merged within identity. As Phillion (2002) posits, one cannot be sure of an identity until working alongside that person; to enter into the relationship with teachers as partners and to reconsider their path in life, to be honoured and be ingratiated into.

Thesis dialogue illuminated how SEN concepts of 'teacher knowledge' summarise a large variety of cognitions, from conscious and well-balanced opinions to unconscious and unelected intuitions (Verloop, Van Driel, & Meljer, 2001, p.46, added emphasis).

The next section will engage the reader within the narratives that transcend the ecological constructs in terms of 'practice,' 'curriculum' and their 'overall ecological narrative' to create customs that stand at the very heart of SEN pedagogic practice.

#### **4.61 Historical Ecologies and the Impact upon Teachers as Reflective Carers**

Narrative findings illuminated that changes or conflict in any one ecological layer rippled throughout other layers (Zembylas, 2007) to form a new individualised ecology of the teacher. In fact, the teachers themselves became an ecology within their own right, a way of being that sculpted practice, belief and curriculum design that was unique and uncharted academic territory. Unlike Bronfenbrenner's (1979a, 1989) theories, original structures could not be used in totality to analyse and explain the nature of teachers' pedagogic practice within specialist settings. They rarely remained stable as student cohorts are more complex and constantly in fluctuation. Resources and student identity impacts upon how teachers find themselves placed within curriculum delivery.

Findings supported McAdams, (1993, 1996, 2001) where developing a sense of self as a teacher begins with a life story or identity forged from adolescence onwards. Historical temporal ecologies unveiled how current personal reflective thinking and an awareness of identity was shaped by negative, embittered, dominant and powerful past experiences both as a student and teacher. Such distinct moments within the partial micro ecologies of mainstream teaching

practice served to mould teachers' pedagogy in terms of values they held. The difference between macrosystem political initiatives and mesosystem ecological teaching proposals, practices and ethos and their own practice, served as maps to guide current pedagogy. Overall, teachers appear to be affected by the worlds they try to affect (Britzman, 2003, p.5, added emphasis). Teachers are allowed through discourse to express and consider why they care about students needs, what they have found tolerable and intolerable and how historical narratives have shaped such beliefs. I argue this reflection upon the unknown self or life affirming incidents is not merely an experience that leads to correcting and perfecting teaching but constructs ecology of becoming an empathising practitioner for special needs. Explicit messages are conveyed that teachers need to be able to 'teach,' 'enable' and 'educate', implicit messages are shaped by historical ecologies, where what they are trying to achieve comes from themselves as being decent human beings and not educators. Vivid images influence interpretations of classroom practices playing powerful roles in how one undertakes pedagogy in teaching environments (Calderhead & Robson, 1991, added emphasis).

I have always known the type of teacher I wanted to be, in truth a horrible experience when I was at school shaped me. I was rubbish at maths and had a very strict teacher. She made me go to the front of the class and I felt such shame, she laughed at my inability so did everyone else. She never tried to engage with me or nurture me to be able to do set tasks. She never changed her delivery or approach even though it was obvious I was struggling, she was not inclusive at all. I decided that I would never ever do that to anyone; I would always try to look for positives (Participant 3).

Such findings echo Nespor (1987) who suggests:

“Crucial experience or some particularly influential teacher produces a richly-detailed episodic memory which later serves the student as an inspiration and a template for his or her own teaching practices” (p.320).

Narratives have major implications for teacher training initiatives, emphatically highlighting the need for collective partnerships between school management and teachers. Anxiety was a common theme within narratives and many had experienced deep emotions as students at school. It is possible that their teachers' negative practices may have been borne out of frustration, but there is also a chance that behaviours are a manifestation of lack of empathy – if so, then this is something that teacher training needs to address. Narratives reveal the great need

for teachers to feel comfortable in voicing concerns around inability to include or deliver curricula to the struggling student. This is critical as discourse revealed a great distrust in highlighting such concerns for fear of possible retribution.

Many narratives gave a voice to similar historical micro experiences and made the preconscious, conscious. This was a revelation to them as interviews progressed, which was both cathartic and rather like an epiphany. Teachers alluded to a culture of restrictive responses used within schools more often than helpful responses. Threats, preaching, punishments and withholding of privileges were used upon those deemed different which, whilst uneasy to hear, served to support academic literature (Almog & Schectman, 2007; Rogers, 2007). Such support serves as testament to the significant contribution that developing a sense of self as a teacher begins with a life story or identity forged from adolescence onwards (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001). Here findings poignantly echo how “we are affected by the worlds we affect” (Britzman, 2003, p.5).

I never wanted to teach, it was a business of cruelty, the science teacher made me stand up and answer questions for 35 minutes, to humiliate me; in the end I just refused to answer I would not give in to him because he indulged in the image of making ‘thick’ students suffer (Participant 7).

In an attempt to analyse the reasons behind such treatment one must turn to Plato and Aristotle who associated human worth with personal ability and quality of intellect. People who lacked the capacity to reason were considered barely human and therefore socially inferior (Stainton, 2001). Teaching efficacy and personal feelings of his/her own capacity to successfully facilitate learning has been found to be related to student outcomes such as achievement (Ross, 1992) and motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968) showed that when teachers held expectations of particular students they interacted with their students in differing ways and their initial, sometimes erroneous, expectations were fulfilled (the self-fulfilling prophecy effect). Whilst practices revealed within the teachers’ discourse may indicate how insufficient knowledge, as well as additional factors such as a lack of experience, skills, time and resources (Witt, Martens, & Elliott, 1984) can lead to ill treatment. Whilst it would be most comforting to think that such practitioners perhaps merely needed to be trained and unveil their real caring attitude, one would be remiss not to consider that personal identities projected a deep rooted pathology, analogous to Rogers’ (2007, p. 57) findings where the Headmaster “could not be fucking well bothered” and “was not aware I had a retard in school.” Rogers (2007) tales of

'daffodil picking', are substantiated by my son's inability to join a football game at school – instead he helped wash some tea towels.

For one particular teacher, historical ecologies exposed the ethos at school where intuition and balanced opinions regarding how to teach 'trouble makers' or the disaffected student were immersed within the attributed identities of the students' families ascribed by the teachers themselves. Such 'parent profile' approaches were dually noted by Walker-Gleaves & Walker, (2009).

That was me, a bright lad who was polite and opened doors for teachers. Then in secondary school I fell short of the mark, not because of incapability but I was sort of branded as my parents were divorcing. I was perceptive you know, I knew right from wrong and how to treat people having seen some awful things at home; teachers were in the business of cruelty, make the 'thick' students suffer, what they saw as thick was in fact my reaction to the divorce and their manner not my ability (Participant 7).

Garcia & Guerra (2004) strengthen such concepts suggesting professionals tend to locate the problem within students, families and communities, often failing to examine the link between school practices and student outcomes as the root causes of failure. Lasky (2005) revealed that the macro systems of politics and social contexts along with early teacher development shapes a teacher's identity and purpose, through the dynamics of core beliefs. Olsen (2015) correctly identifies that teaching transcends the cognitive and technical notions of education, rather it becomes a complex and personal set of processes embedded with one's ecology. Narratives allow this complex phenomenon to unfold enabling a glimpse of the formation of the whole persona and not just 'the teacher'. Holistically, identity is constructed and reconstructed as people view themselves in relation to other people and notions of unprofessional purpose. Positively though, it was the culmination of past experience and current personal ecological concepts that shaped their move into teaching and enhanced their identity to become an empathising and reflective practitioner.

I was kind of beaten down by life you know, not going to a great school being 'rubbish' well so they told me. I know how it feels to be vulnerable and I draw empathy from my own personal experience I want my students to feel the security I never had but give to my own kids (Participant 6).

I thought when I am a teacher I will never ever do that; I will be the teacher I never had. I want to protect my students from the kind of oppression I suffered; they do not need to be kicked any further down. I had no extra need, just complete bullies for teachers. I want them to feel worthwhile, a relationship of respect. I want them to know that it's worthwhile to be here, you are decent, they know I trust them and they trust me (Participant 7).

#### **4.62 Mainstream Mayhem Ecologies**

In understanding teachers' inclusion ideals one must attend to the role of emotion and environmental issues. Cross & Hong (2012) contend that these factors are relational; they do not exist independently. For one particular teacher it was developing a disability itself that shaped and continues to shape a compassionate and caring pedagogy; to embrace and grow a student's potential and self esteem. The rights this teacher believes should be afforded to them are rooted very firmly within identity and an ethical stance taken to ensure students with profound and multiple difficulties reclaim their right to enjoy education. Such ideas are driven by personal opposition, maltreatment and overall difference of views (between their own and management levels), regarding the identity given to mainstream students which continues to an even deeper level within a specialist setting.

I became a primary teacher in disadvantaged schools which I loved and then my disability struck and I could no longer work in mainstream, the noise levels, my ongoing deafness... In truth I could not manage a mainstream class, it was too big, too loud and too much happening, rather like how it probably feels for an SLD student funnily enough. I worked in disadvantaged schools, the kids were all labelled underachievers by those higher up and other colleagues whom I hated and I felt I could make a real difference here and we all liked each other (Participant 1).

Such narratives offer an inside view of SEN, a person who lives with and works within it, a reality both personal and professional. Of key interest was the portrayal of feelings of inability regarding teaching efficacy as the disability worsened and despondency at the lack of support put in place to 'include' him as a practitioner within the mainstream 'inclusive' educational setting grew. Such findings echo Noddings (1984, p.114) who contends that caring is an essential quality of meaningful teaching informed by what must be done and a sense of what ought to be done yet this disability is not a yard stick used to measure ability, deter practice or self efficacy within the specialist educational setting. Such differences in practice raise concerns as to how practitioners

are to become inclusive and differentiate when they themselves are excluded due to differences or deficits. This is critical, as a teacher's unique beliefs are situated in both context and content which over time shapes their identity and is crucial to the way they make judgements within the classroom (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Lasky 2005). Overall, the way a teacher perceives themselves or makes specialist teaching meaningful to them influences curriculum choices and judgements regarding what they see as appropriate for their students.

For another, it was a mother's plight, deemed revolutionary that served to shape and change professional and personal panorama for the better. Experience awakened a new empathising identity that Mackenzie (2012a) alludes to offering 'a reason to stay' that was both challenging but liberating and continues to have a lasting impact on pedagogy and how the curriculum is diversified. Once again the edges between curriculum as static and internalised become merged.

I was inspired by a lady who ran the voluntary sports group in the community for special educational needs. Her son had died from muscular dystrophy, she was such an inspiration, she was prolific in my change to the specialist sector, I was inspired and I knew I had found my calling and perhaps do things a little differently (Participant 5).

Often, a change in pedagogy sprung from opposition and a disgust at the almost disposable attitude to students with extra need driven by a personal ecology that served to include students and work in partnership as equals rather than a pathological belittling manner that according to this teacher stems from a fear of difference contending with notions found within academia (Rogers, 2007; Almog & Schectman, 2007).

I knew I loved to teach but could not just sit and watch that little boy be sort of pushed out by other colleagues, just because of his autism, I knew he wanted to learn and I sort of challenged myself to help. I read around the 'problem' and decided to just try him on a carpet, It worked – he was happy and so was I (Participant 9).

Overall, having a unique ecology that exudes empathy, beliefs grounded in inclusive practice and a strong commitment to special needs students can anchor teacher identities. These tend to bode well for achieving positive outcomes when faced with external powerful and political macro systems. Narratives reveal that whilst SEN is often uncharted territory, the impact on teachers appears to be dependent on personal ecology, identity and morality. Such 'ways of being' strengthen this thesis' justification for the collection of narratives that span entire ecological

temporal systems in which knowledge develops (Zembylas, 2007), allowing one to track the progression of professional pedagogy and elucidate readers to maps used within partial ecologies. In essence, one can begin to conceptualise professional learning as an apprenticeship of the hand and heart that Shulman (2005) alludes to.

Transcripts have served to view educational practice as stemming from the teacher's ecology and identity rather than merely a training programme universally delivered to cover 'how to teach, hold a discussion group' etc. Teachers are allowed through discourse to express and consider why they care about students needs and what they have found tolerable and intolerable and how historical narratives have shaped such beliefs. Narratives represent the creation of a more complex and multi-faceted practitioner, a caring individual who does not see SEN as something wrong or derogatory, if truth be told, something to hide away or remove from a duty of care (as historical narratives envisioned) but a person who wants to educate through empowerment. To offer further analysis of such a concept, teachers revealed much more spiritual and personal reasoning for going into and remaining in SEN teaching as more than just to educate, to help achieve, to offer knowledge; but moreover to heighten children's self efficacy.

#### **4.63 Historical Narratives - Inclusion Prejudice and Purgatory: The Temporal Unfolding of Lives**

It has been disheartening to be party to current discourse which supports literature spanning over fifteen years. Rather like a 'Groundhog Day' effect, findings reveal that children are still treat and feel differently in the knowledge that they do not belong. Narratives served to support previous academia, where often children felt social pressures entwined with fear and prejudice, suffering emotional retaliation from teachers, (Corbett, 1994, p. 9; Rogers, 2007; Humphrey, 2008) and students, (Nakken & Pijl, 2002; Carter & Spencer, 2006). The macro ecological construct of the school as a whole certainly did not mirror Government 'all for one' ethos. Despite the Salamanca Statement, (1994) the Equality Act, (2006) and the Human Rights Declarations (1948) on the rights of all individuals to an Inclusive Education based on the acceptance and celebration of diversity, historical narratives indicate that within their prior mainstream ecology, inclusive education had failed. Accounts undeniably exposed a lack of conceptual clarity in the way that pupils designated as 'special' were able to take part meaningfully. This leads one to question if such pupils were able to compete "in the course for racing" that Yero (2002, p.31) alluded to at all. This assertion suggests that rather than being a constructive process of recognising difference in all people and their abilities, inclusion is a principled response to something inherently multifaceted and messy, with no systematic way to accommodate 'difference' at all.

My job was to support children in class but I was not trained, they really stood out and I hated this. I know they were bullied in the playground, Inclusion rights had no place really as they were seen as different. The children would say to me “oh I am at the bottom of the tree aren’t I”. I think inclusion offered a way to differentiate and produce prejudice in mainstream (Participant 4).

For teachers within mainstream the need to include all at whatever cost became a turning point for their pedagogic practice and challenged not only their beliefs but elucidates concerns around inclusion for all. This often masks the reality of the fear and ridicule children suffer when forced into ‘extra work’ under the guise of ‘rights’ and ‘extra help’. Such rights are often in direct opposition to the values of positive teacher identities and professional landscapes overall. In fact narratives echoed Ekins & Grimes (2009) concerns that inclusion challenges teaching practice, but another concern should perhaps be that of the student caught in the crossfire, or the notion of inclusion at whatever the cost (Rogers, 2007, added emphasis).

Having taught in mainstream for twenty years, I remember being asked to take an extra class for the ‘underachievers,’ those not able to reach Key Stage Four. They offered them a disco at the end of the term if they did well...they were forced to do extra....I remember being asked to find and take a girl to the lessons, when she saw me she ran and hid behind a bush and cried...I was appalled, this was wrong, surely a child’s emotions matter more than results,’ I left soon after (Participant 2).

There is an overabundance of research that considers effectiveness, assessment and inclusion (Howieson & Closs, 2006) but it fails to focus specifically on conflicts that teachers’ experience, especially more specialist SLD and PMLD teachers (Norwich, 2010). Teaching ecologies serve to concur with Baker (2007) who strongly insists that special needs schools can be inclusive and are capable of offering a student’s right to a diversified curriculum within an appropriate setting. Discourse revealed that within specialist settings, inclusion is not merely a right but a way of appropriately teaching and serves a more emotional and spiritual practice. Rather than inclusion being merely curriculum based within special settings it becomes a sense of belonging overall a way of enablement through diversity.

Lacey & Ouvrey (1998) propose teaching should encompass a collaborative approach looking at the abilities of, as well as appreciating the extensive difficulties encountered by, those young people, rather than focusing on including.

School pressures and social changes reared their ugly heads and the attitude was kids were not making progress even though I argued they were set unrealistic targets. With a weak head teacher who believed the inclusion hype and yet had no concept of special educational needs at all, I left disillusioned (Participant 1).

This is not to imply however that inclusion as a 'right' or what teachers feel a curriculum could or should be does not remain a major impact upon ecologies. Whilst teaching practice is rather universally taught, in essence there is no such manual for the SLD/PMLD teacher (Rogers, 2007).

Remarkably, for one particular teacher the range of student need was vast. At most times major attempts were being made to deliver five separate curricula in one room, a task which would challenge even the most exceptional of teaching professionals. Multiple pedagogies and ecologies merged like a melting pot but served to highlight the complexities that teachers face every day. Such practices certainly did not echo mainstream narratives regarding peers, who believed specialist teachers have a relatively easy teaching time. Such ecologies however, serve to reinforce the inner strength and relentless pursuit for student fulfilment that appears to emanate from teachers working within SLD / PMLD settings. Although one is concerned that here also we see inclusion at whatever cost driven by school management (albeit due to macro political pressures to succeed) and certainly not the practitioner.

I have such a range of students in my class; some have moderate difficulties that were not deemed salvageable in mainstream as they were on the cusp so to speak. Others have more severe difficulties and yet I would not say they had PMLD, that said there is a severely autistic boy who is regarded by other staff as a nightmare, as he has multiple needs which are hard to manage as he really needs a more appropriate class setting. Others have moderate difficulty but are really F.E. students so need a watered down National Curriculum so all the basic premises are there but just on a lower level you know – plants, science, maths etc. and they are working towards exams but not the regular Key Stage One and Two Government ones but another governing body. I guess the three with SLD sometimes have a good stab at things (Participant 7).

Teachers' ecologies appear to be formed within the educational context and certainly identity becomes immersed within daily battles and shapes their practice. Overall I am concerned with the notion of 'having a stab at things' and such narratives led me to contemplate if this was inclusive practice or even acceptable. Further analysis of the inter relationship between inclusion and

curriculum within multiple lenses of the spatial environment, emotional and corrosive curriculum visions require careful analysis and as such will be addressed.

#### **4.7 Teacher-Curriculum Narrative**

##### **4.7.1 The Purpose of a Curriculum for an SLD/PLD Student: Teachers' Views in Context**

Curriculum can be defined as prescriptive, descriptive or both. Prescriptive [curriculum] definitions provide us with what 'ought' to happen and they more often than not take the form of a plan, an intended program, or some kind of 'expert' opinion about what needs to take place in the course of study. One argues this is the macro ideology of the government and findings show that such notions are entwined with inclusive rights ill fitting to specialist settings.

"An appropriate curriculum does not entrench pressure or expectation it should not be about achieving unrealistic targets, best fit and not driven by inclusion in every mortal thing" (Participant 1).

This is parallel to the prescribed curriculum for schools where the teacher, like the patient, ultimately decides whether the prescription will be followed, rather like a personalised micro ecology for both student and teacher.

The descriptive or experiential definitions of curriculum go beyond the prescriptive terms as they force thought about the curriculum "not merely in terms of how things ought to be . . . but how things are in real classrooms" (Ellis, 2004, p.5). Unlike the rather transparent mainstream curriculum, this is a complex and multifaceted undertaking at Special Schools. There appears to be major confusion and deficits within academic literature regarding how to articulate such a 'special' curriculum, how to differentiate the curriculum (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Kelly, 1989; Watson et al., 2000, p.135) and how to decide in practice what topics should be covered (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009).

Narratives confirmed that there is a superfluity of ways in which schools and teachers interpret the nature and prescriptions of a national curriculum to each particular assessment of need and ability within the pupil diversity of each school. There appears to be no one particular way, theme or even hard-set modules, unlike the National Curriculum; certainly a narrative focus has enabled teachers to convey the reality of their practice. The temporality experience is testament to purvey the curriculum as an extension of teacher identity, once again stressing the need for a remodeled teaching practice. Viewing issues through a teacher lens allows one to sit on the coal face of

teaching and survey what students really need and supports the idea that curricula are driven by social change; those in power have a vested interest in churning out good citizens but offer no reference to differing needs or abilities (Apple, 1979, cited in Grundy, 1987).

“Attainment levels are low and so access to an appropriate curriculum means a sound and light room, not academic manuals, they need a physical, social and emotional syllabus, one that’s in tune with their needs” (Participant 1).

More often than not, dialogues illustrated a range of teachers’ perceptions where appropriate curriculum content correlated with personal beliefs regarding a student’s cognitive, social and emotional range and outcomes viewed through the lens of their own philosophies and experiences. Unsurprisingly, curricula plans were often ignored or modified.

“The Head asks for things and I shut the door and think no chance, it’s like that scene from Matilda where Miss Honey knows Miss Trunchbull is coming and asks Matilda to hide the colours” (Participant 7).

Curriculum purpose and structure differed according to practitioners with cohorts of severe learning difficulty students and those whose teaching classes consisted of more students having more complex and profound difficulties. Narratives unveiled the need for a sense of individuality and personalisation that was based within the premise of being included within National Levels, rights and enablement, all of which were entrenched within personal beliefs regarding creation of an appropriate background they deemed ‘best fit’.

For those who cannot read or write, they definitely need a social curriculum; their hand malformation would make it very hard. Yes I cover curriculum topics but in a very different way from mainstream, I suppose I cover literature but it’s not adverbs, nouns you know more like talking through books and me pulling their fingers through sensory tactile stuff to feel the letters, as language is not accessible (Participant 8).

Here inclusion is seen as a different entity, a way of enabling as well as a right to have an education. Unlike mainstream it changes daily and practices move with the ebb and flow of students ‘ways of being’ from day to day rather than an all-out determination to give students what Governments feel they are entitled to no matter what the cost. Notions of ‘will be offered’ and ‘will do XXX’ become ‘will be tried out to see if it fits their need and emotional wellbeing’.

I kind of start with what they like, can do and what they need educationally, I think a variety should be offered, so they have an awareness of it and can then talk to others about it. I do Macbeth, it's good for experience; they can engage and become included with others on a better level, that's important (Participant 4).

Whilst all were keen to highlight inclusion and attempts to diversify, it was refreshing to hear teachers openly admitting that students have a variety of skills where the curriculum offered to severe or profound difficulty students should differ in accordance to ability. Writers such as Lewis (1999) would argue that this suggests pathology, but an overall review of narratives evoked a sense of truth around actual capabilities, rather than that of them being 'unable' or 'unworthy'.

Those with more complex needs who are chair bound need and respond totally to different curriculum than those who have say, more cognitive ability and less physical boundaries. It's hard as educationally they do not appear to achieve National Levels, it's like we dare not say that they desperately need differentiation; but then don't we all? (Participant 6)

PMLD students need a physical intervention they require sensory curricula and experiential things, they need a diversified curriculum to enable independence at whatever level that may be. My autistic students need social skills just to say hello how are you, you know fit in with life's little social etiquette; for others it's a totally different ball game (Participant 3).

Nodding (1984, p.113) maintains that needs and wants are not necessarily the same thing in curriculum and justice terms. The 'needs' of children with SLD or PMLD are contested and subsumed frequently under discussions of philosophical wants that relate more to frameworks of rights than concrete outcomes and intentionally fitted and designed curriculum.

Whilst such diversification is important, the need to implement the 'experienced' curriculum is a deeply problematic issue for SLD/PMLD schools because of two considerations – the relative lack of critical engagement and the vulnerability of the pupils in relation to salient curriculum outcomes. Additionally, the diversity and variability of the staff engaged in the education of children often sits amongst an undercurrent of unease that student boundaries and abilities are not pushed hard enough; this was a moot point for one teacher.

I wish people would stop taking kids out of my class and into cookery classes, I mean stop bloody feeding them, there is more to life than tea and cake (Participant 7).

School leaders, teachers and parents alike should view the curriculum as an action that rests critically on how teachers are teaching. Narratives revealed that the teachers are the curriculum and that it is not a static thing that is being delivered down like one finds in mainstream. Imposing immovable curricula in specialist settings is unhelpful, and teachers felt that they were “muddling through” (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath, & Page, 2006, p.33) and constantly weighing up the satisfaction felt through their commitment to the children with the stress that the job engendered.

In view of the particular significance of teachers’ experiences, beliefs and values in relation to their pedagogic practice and especially in the context of SEN, it is clear to see how the curriculum and teachers’ beliefs and values regarding students’ needs are inextricably and potently linked in schools with SLD and PMLD cohorts. Thus their intertwined outcomes determine in a complex and profound way the learning experience of these pupils. Parallel to Vygotsky (1978), teachers also asserted that cognitive development was rooted in the context of social relationships. They often viewed disability as a product of the individual’s interaction with society. Grigorenko & Sternberg’s (1998), ideas were also echoed within narratives where they focused upon that person’s abilities rather than impairment leading to an overall more social and ‘best fit’ curriculum .

I adapt the curriculum no matter what – I do not hold back If I need to use red balloons for counting or CDs for tactile feelings or spaghetti for throwing to implement weight I bloody well will, people think they cannot do things, yes they can just give them a chance and use a different pair of binoculars ( Participant 6).

Findings also exposed teachers’ awareness of the need to move beyond educational experiences and consider social skills that would enable one after school age. Here a sense of continuity and education as a lifelong experience rather than merely school years was key, echoing Tomlinson’s (1996) suggestions to widen participation beyond school years.

The government does not fight for them, there is nothing after school age, further down the line parents do not know what the hell to do. It’s really sad, I get so frustrated; to think of people just sitting in the house in their 20s is heart breaking (Participant 4).

Such notions envisage practice as dynamically constructed in a range of ecologies. In terms of training, the need for experiential training practice that is more than a placement in one place but sits alongside the ability to reflect upon the multiple ways to deliver a key concept without the crutch of appropriate resources is critical. Teachers need to contemplate upon transferrable skills as this is the complexity in which practitioners work. Whilst Piaget's work has influenced the National Curriculum, interestingly teachers' narratives revealed it differed greatly from the SEN curriculum. Certainly I argue that the reality appears to be that age educational norms and capabilities serves to oppress special needs students.

Bruner (1996) argued for a spiral curriculum considering environmental and experiential factors where intellect develops in steps dependant on how the mind is used, highlighting how previous concepts presented were related to knowledge later presented or experienced. Certainly, this notion of practically using knowledge seemed to serve as a way to emancipate the students and offer life skills rather than a base knowledge of something they would never use.

A practical independent approach is needed geared towards independence ...things such as washing and dressing oneself are very important. They need environmental numeracy and literacy like getting on a bus and reading a timetable, help with social signs and filling in forms (Participant 4).

Narratives served to support Dewey (1938) who argued for mis-education as being knowledge delivered without any reflection upon content which if unused fades away. Narratives exposed the need for social skills, experiential learning is designed to give one the freedom to explore and find the learning path that is most suitable for him or her (Armstrong, 1977).

Following too much concrete numeracy and literacy work is too much for them. Socially they need to be out in the community learning about life as it is, just use real life tools, read signs, talk about events, it's necessary beyond school years (Participant 5).

#### **4.72 Conflict and Corrosion in the Curriculum: The Current Misfit Between Political Curriculum Ideals, Inclusive Practices And Pedagogy**

Inclusive Education has as yet failed to find a consensus as to a most profound question and the one that lies at the heart of this thesis – what is the curriculum for and who decides this in the context of special education? Previous sections infer teachers decide what a curriculum should be

regardless of guidelines; instead opting to look at the student rather than the objectives set.

Having spoken to teachers of students with profound and multiple difficulties, they appear to favour the Barrs Court Curriculum which focuses on smaller curriculum developments areas and works within individual needs. They do note however, that it is still limited in terms of how to deliver the curriculum rather it contains objectives and so once again personal ability and 'out of the box thinking' is necessary. For some the EYFS (Special Educational Needs) syllabus was found to be very user friendly and whilst descriptive, it breaks down skills into finite areas from which teachers can use to implement an individual curriculum alongside PIVATS<sup>20</sup>.

Other schools favour Routes to Learning and Margaret's Curriculum which has led me to question if teachers are diversifying to students or if there is in fact, a rather eclectic pedagogy forming and perhaps not all schools are teaching effectively. Such curricula are still set within diverse personalised practices of the teacher's beliefs systems, self efficacy and their awareness of their social identity; in fact the curriculum has almost become a reflection of the teacher themselves. The St Margaret's Curriculum has been written and is the foundation for the school itself and appears to offer a broader PMLD curriculum as it is used for students within the educational setting for which it was intended and practitioners appear to review and refresh as new students come in. Routes for Learning, the first systemised attempt to break away from a linear developmental model for those with profound learning difficulties post-National Curriculum, should be regarded as a seminal piece of work (Imray & Hinchcliffe, 2007); certainly pilot study interviews propose that it is effective when used alongside PIVATS. Interestingly, the multiple types of curricula being used on a personal / experiential basis confirm the need to uncover the reality of the teacher as being in essence 'the curriculum'. Such diversity within mainstream may take a different meaning where the curriculum is a hard, cold manual to work from, echoing my own historical ecology where I was instructed to ensure everyone got an 'A' grade. Indeed I once received a proverbial slap on the wrists when attempting to 'go off course a little' where I used my life as a lens from which to analyse theories; such 'rogue' teaching did not fit the examination board 'style or objectives'.

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<sup>20</sup> PIVATS is an assessment programme used nationally to measure pupil progress through the 'P' Scales and up to National Curriculum Level 4. Progress is measured by a **PIVATS** level description and an equivalent point score. Pupils can be assessed in English, Mathematics, Science, ICT and Personal and Social Development.

This stands in contrast with mainstream education curriculum, where the end points and goals are explicit and the curriculum adjusted to meet those. Pupils are accommodated to meet those goals, the variability dialogues exposed that notions of adaptation are entwined with inclusive rights and unsurprisingly, a great variance in the 'ideal curriculum' is reported. Overall, realities serve to illustrate that the special education curriculum appears to be a 'rabbit in the headlights' with multiple interpretations of diversification and content knowledge. Certainly teachers' ecologies impact upon how they understand diversity (Slee, 2003) as they are set amidst teachers' beliefs and multiple sensory, educational and physical approaches akin to Bruner (1996). Whilst teachers appear to take comfort in achieving humility and ignoring the curriculum (Senyshyn, 2011, my emphasis), this adds to the problem within special settings where outcomes appear hard to assess and track for government targets supporting arguments around the impossibility to get through an exam when delivering such a diverse curriculum (Stenhouse, 1975, p.142).

Within a mixed cohort class (SLD, PMLD and others somewhere in-between) there was a real sense of the ill fit between inclusion rights, curriculum objectives and student ability which came from multiple macro factors such as government targets and parental wants all under the guise of rights, needs and inclusion. Demands hindered progress, the National Curriculum became a straightjacket that Hodkinson (2009) alluded to rather than a tool to enable inclusion. Ecologies of muddling through and multiple variations of inclusion and differentiation emerged. Such ecologies' support the notion that one should achieve humility and ignore the curriculum altogether (King-Sears, 2008); that said, to disregard a curriculum altogether may be seen to take incapability approach (Terzi, 2005; Nussbaum, 2000, cited in Terzi, 2005).

It should be child led, not bloody modules, often topics are skimmed, yet parents demand progress as a right, it does not help that I am trying to cover multiple topics in several sensory and written styles. They are all doing something that was written on my daily objectives, is that inclusion, well it's my form (Participant 3).

This great need to cover topics no matter what and thus meet 'objectives' seemed to corrode students' educational experience rather than enhance them, steering them towards goals that were unachievable and mismatched with ability, supporting concerns around rigid blanket styles achieving nothing (Carpenter, 1992, added emphasis).

Ecological narratives failed to illuminate if macro system ideals of inclusion and diversity or 'all doing something' was a reality. Teachers questioned what they were achieving, if it was

worthwhile, enjoyable and applicable to students which led to constant guilt and trepidation. Such emotion verified affects upon self efficacy that Slobodzian (2007) and Humphrey & Lewis (2008) assert. Findings unveiled the need to consider an ecology of 'can you' and 'do you want to' as well as 'how can you do it'. Whilst the purpose of this thesis was not to serve as a 'how to differentiate the curriculum' skills based data set, it is still the cement that shapes ecology and practice.

God the government is so frustrating, always saying what we need to do but never telling us how to do it or giving us any leeway to do it. These ridiculous grades, marks and objectives do not fit my students, when I was in mainstream children were so upset, pushed to their limits and feeling like little failures; I sometimes feel just like that (Participant 9).

Narratives exposed a consistency of beliefs, through which a sagacity of empowering, experiential and individual needs led as opposed to cognitive target led curriculum outcomes. A sense of inclusion transcended notions of it being exclusively rooted within curriculum objectives and extended beyond the classroom where diversification of curriculum objectives could enable socialisation, a sense of belonging and 'inclusion' within peer groups. Findings echoed Vygotsky (1987, cited in Glassman, 2001) who like the teachers, saw education as consisting of an integration of culture and social goals whereby engaging in an activity would lead the child towards mastery, arguing that free enquiry was eclipsed by culturally significant and appropriate enquiry.

I think a variety should be offered, so they have an awareness of it and can then talk to others about it. I do Macbeth, it's good for experience, and they can engage and become included with others on a better level, that's important (Participant 4).

Overall, to be able to engage with peers is a positive thing and certainly a number of studies, most commonly focusing on pupils who have severe learning difficulties, have reported the development of positive and caring relationships by peers towards classmates who have special educational needs (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman & Hollowood, 1992; Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994). Such findings are positive in that low social acceptance increases the risk of victimisation and special educational need children typically experience higher levels of bullying than their classmates (Carter & Spencer, 2006; Monchy, Pijl, & Zandberg, 2004).

That said, discourse constantly resonated an undercurrent of distress caused to students and often teachers when having to achieve objectives that were hard to accomplish consistently or to fit in with descriptions of achievement. These issues were set amidst a real reluctance to report upon grades as 'unobtainable' or a student that 'has not reached the target yet'. One questions why this is so, teachers seem to be constantly masking student potential; afraid to highlight that student special needs stop them from achieving government objectives. Once again I argue that this is down to a real sense of lack of efficacy borne out of a fear of retribution from Ofsted or being given the label of 'unsatisfactory' teaching.

Here the national curriculum is way off the mark for my profound students, my students make very minute progress, they plateau and they do not have the skills to reach higher levels. Even P scales do not fit here, expressive language is not there, yet the national curriculum demands it (Participant 1).

Some areas of the curriculum are ridiculous. Roman numerals, who on earth uses those now and counting up to 100 or 1000 for higher curriculum levels, that's never going to happen, I cannot imagine I would ever need it never mind the students (Participant 4).

This is both concerning and annoying and certainly evoked memories of a boy I had taught deemed 'unable to get to an A grade,' when in truth his dyslexia (which school and parents denied existed) stopped me from offering any extra tools to enable his learning. At the time I took such issues personally, but this thesis serves as testament to placing the issue onto school inability and draconian thought processes rather than oneself.

#### **4.73 Assessment, Ability and Accountability, the Impact of Macro Systems Upon Student And Teacher: The 'Acid That Rots Away Self Worth'**

Findings also unearthed deep concerns regarding assessment and its ability to be meaningful or in fact if it served to enable inclusion at all. Certainly such practices may stem from insufficient knowledge as well as additional factors such as a lack of experience, skills, time and resources (Witt et al., 1984). Teachers however, are often knowledgeable but experience difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and practice (Almog & Schectman, 2007). Accordingly, like Copeland (2001) I contend that the very notion of curriculum and testing appears to homogenize pupils into groups Identified by their level of attainment to set up competition and exclude.

“Some objectives are crazy, I mean pronouns and similes I am just trying to get people to write; yes I diversify but the whole government ideal is ludicrous” (Participant 5).

The terms SEN and SLD are used more when student difficulties exceed the schools capacity to deal with them which enables a reduction of accountability and responsibility (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007, p.18; Molloy & Vassil, 2002). Multiple macro-ecologies around assessment, objectives and tracking had a major impact on the teachers’ ability to develop a curriculum and the child’s time spent within class. Often it emerged as a reaction to inappropriate Key Stage levels, exams and objectives that did not match the student aptitude, nor seemed to take account of physical barriers such as hand movements, verbal speech, writing ability and motor and physical difficulties’ which rendered students incapable of producing the data that government statistics require.

The government wants everyone to be included, don’t we all. Logistically I cannot do this due to students’ physical problems which are exasperated by room constraints and so some are ferried off into other rooms due to curriculum needs. I know I am diluting things so everyone feels included but that’s not right (Participant 5).

Curricula were lists of ill fitting objectives, things that students had to be seen as able to achieve thus lacking in any attention to their social and emotional needs, macro political inclusion rhetoric was in juxtaposition from a teacher’s personal beliefs for the more nuanced skills people have.

Even here at XXX School I dread the SATS coming in, it’s ridiculous. What on earth am I supposed to do? I mean how am I supposed to include all in the syllabus, no way can they access it. They will fail objectives but they have so many other lovely skills and a way of being that makes your heart sing when you see them, but it’s unworthy of a test (Participant 3).

Whilst one is aware of the need for monitoring devices to ensure good schooling, Ofsted often stood akin to a stick to beat the teachers with, there was little understanding for the reality of teaching within specialist teaching, which further impacted upon teaching ecologies overall.

Ofsted was not at the forefront then, you know we had freedom with the curriculum much more than now, to work without being monitored, surveyed and you could experiment without worrying (Participant 1).

Ofsted is a hindrance, the National Curriculum is evidence led, I can only record eye movements and use objects of reference to record 'progress' which may happen once or twice, certainly not consistently. I have to suss out new materials or ways to do things, none of which is official, its trial and error (Participant 2).

There was a sense of similar humanitarian and altruistic ideals for the welfare of these students as a basic right to ensure students felt a sense of being included, belonging and acceptance in a world in which assessments and ability grades often denied them.

"This notion of difference, surveillance and testing, it becomes acid and slowly rots their self worth away" (Participant 7)

Notions of assessment and progress impacted on pedagogy and achievement targets rarely matched the students' way of learning or seemed inappropriate and out of reach. There seemed to be a management driven need to succeed or produce some sort of qualification or evidence that learning had occurred.

Even today, Government assessments are dreadful, is she a 2B or not a 2B – where do I put these students? The school has to put a tick in the box when they can count up to 10 with help. One assessment asks to count up to 100 and a higher level 1000, why, who the hell does this, such a National Curriculum does not fit them – it stops them being included, makes them feel like failures (Participant 4).

Like Au & Blake (2003) assert, assessments were also key to recording the teachers' ability to ensure education was delivered successfully within schools and low grades used to highlight teacher failings to succeed; which becomes "the acid that rots self worth away," (Participant 7).

You have to put them higher though otherwise it comes back to you as a teacher you should be 'able'. The data goes off and assessed to reveal if the school is succeeding which we all know means are the teachers able. We have pivot levels but some never really achieve high on these, yet they have to appear to make progress. The assessments are so far away from what's needed to record nuances of learning (Participant 4).

Where assessment tools did not fit, teachers were forced to attempt to capture nuances of learning in different ways. More often than not it seemed to aggravate the problem further and

although attempts were valiant, one questions how they fit with the rather concrete National Curriculum objective assessments. That said, it did not deter teachers from becoming resilient, 'gave them a reason to stay' (Mackenzie, 2012a) and they took up the quest beautifully.

If I used the National Curriculum as my yard stick, none of my students would look as if they could do anything. This sort of reflects society's view, they do not appear to achieve targets nationally but that does not mean they are incapable of anything, a National curriculum does not fit, I throw that book out of the window (Participant 6).

Deep problematic issues were exposed to question the need for ill fitting examinations that pressurised both student and teacher serving to intensify feelings of inability further and question what purpose they held in the world for students. One teacher was concerned about the worthiness of the exams and if they were merely justifying that someone could do something, a tokenistic gesture if you like.

Even today, Ofsted spoils things; we have to do exams, to be seen to get results. The Head decided to change the exam board as it had more clout and its way above the students' abilities, they were happy with last year's papers. In truth I am not sure about these ASDAN awards and the functional level 2 skill certificates. Yes it shows functional skills gives students a taste of what is out there so to speak and academically a chance for students to show off. However I worry if they are doing them for nothing, I mean what impact will they have – will it integrate them into mainstream life, am I stressing them out for nothing? (Participant 7)

#### **4.74 Spatial Micro Ecologies and Resources: The Impact on Pedagogy and Inclusive Curricula**

Like Phillion (2002) contends, the need to explore the setting of exploration was paramount and so consideration of spatiality in terms of constraining or enabling was important.

Personal narratives illuminated that enquiry is bound by place as well as time and interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Overall, there was a very diverse range of factors that impacted on the teaching environments, room size, ill fitting, old and/or lack of resources seemed most prevalent but merely strengthened determination and a school camaraderie attitude to ensure children's school days are supported, full, varied and not thwarted by spatial and physical boundaries. Findings revealed just how overly optimistic macro ecological Government rhetoric was regarding plentiful and adequate resource. Such findings question the authority of

Governments to continue to write legislative papers under the guises of inclusion without any tangible 'hands on' experience. Narrative realities strengthen the argument for more research by teachers for teachers' to be commissioned.

This sound and light room is on its last legs, stuff here is ropery and very makeshift - it's not polished at all. Staff ratios are generous but there are massive financial restraints, we make do but that's not good enough (Participant 1).

Ofsted (2008; Maddern, 2010) suggested teachers have gained enough training and pedagogic knowledge to be able to differentiate within specialist settings purely borne out of time spent there. Unsurprisingly, narratives reveal a complex dichotomy of concerns around how to balance the aspirations of an overarching curriculum theory without the resources to help them flourish and prevail. I contend that 'time spent there' is not good enough and ponder on what actuality happens before teachers are 'brought up to speed'. I firmly believe that students within classrooms cannot and should not have to wait for teachers to become self taught on inclusion and diversity. Now more than ever teachers need to be trained to hit the ground running, special needs wait for no man!

Discourse identified frustrations at the lack of fit between teaching environments and the ability to deliver an ill fitting curriculum. This 'ill fit' seemed to exasperate rather than enable inclusive practice and failed to account for individual student needs; all of which is immersed in a complex marriage between macro political rhetoric and a lack of appropriate teacher training. Whilst the SALT Review (2009) and Richards (2010) labour the point of being able to teach adequately, ecologies served to illuminate the 'need to reflect upon practice' (Almog & Schectman, 2007) involved a more nuanced pedagogy, that of innovator, inventor and skilled abstract thinking.

I am not sure what the hell I am doing sometimes. I spend time fixing things, which was not in teacher training, and it did not incorporate the multiple ways I need to use resources or the five ways to use shaving foam to deliver curriculum objectives (Participant 6).

It is unsurprising then that professional identities are multifaceted; the construction of which is a 'continuing struggle' between conflicting identities (Lampert, 1985; Samuel & Stephens, 2000). Lasky (2005) revealed that macro systems of politics and social contexts along with early teacher development shapes a teacher's identity and purpose through the dynamics of core beliefs.

Teaching transcends the cognitive and technical notions of education rather it becomes a complex and personal set of processes embedded with ones ecology (Olsen, 2015). Narratives allow this complex phenomenon to unfold enabling a glimpse of the formation of the whole persona not just 'the teacher' where holistically identity is constructed and reconstructed as people view themselves in relation to other people and notions unprofessional purpose. Here, identity becomes a negotiation of meanings and yet there is an argument that teachers within this thesis or as a whole may be grounded within feelings of inadequacy and guilt over political and financial constructs out of their control.

Narratives revealed a sense of underachievement and melancholy alongside a consistent thread of despondency and feelings of inability to achieve what they felt students had a basic right to (and what Governments appear to infer they get) due to lack of resources and inappropriate surroundings.

"I feel a real sense of guilt that I am not achieving what I should. I know it's not my fault, I am only human but I still feel this way, that I have not given them what they need totally"  
(Participant 3).

Problems ranged from the logistics of moving students around to be included (often those chair bound or students with less mobility) or even access to different parts of the class or school due to small rooms or abodes that were totally in the wrong physicality for access to be enabled at all.

I have been given a space for a sensory garden it's got three steps leading down to it and no room to get five chairs in. My old room was huge, lots of space for a tracking system for lifting and all the sensory tunnels. This room can only accommodate one tunnel so they all have to take turns, logistically it takes all day just to sort and resort everyone I cannot get my objectives to come to full bloom (Participant 1).

"The new sensory room is perfect, but upstairs, I cannot get everyone up there without twice as many staff. Funding was reduced so management put it up there; I have been twice" (Participant 2).

Rather like a postcode lottery however, curriculum resources varied from school to school and class to class within establishments, often ranging from scarce to bountiful set within a complex and ever changing yearly battle.

“Last year’s room was great, really big, but here, I suffer with access - it makes me cross, its chronic, these doors are not wide enough to get stretchers in and out without skinning my knuckles; no one considers this” (Participant 1).

On paper these mix of students look fine, in reality there are too many needs and not enough support. There is no tracking system in class or hoist which makes moving some students very hard to do as all staff have to get involved, I have to stop teaching and I cannot get all the equipment in if all students are present that day (Participant 3).

Inclusion took on a different meaning when viewed through the lens of spatiality; problems centred on space, time and resources rather than academic rights - teachers’ vehemently aired their frustrations.

I need a much bigger teaching area to be honest; the mix of students dictates this. I need more T.A’s for the one to one stuff, certain students need focus on things like hand writing. It’s like plate juggling really trying to ensure everyone gets something with limited staff, room sizes, I keep trying though, but it’s not quite happening (Participant 5).

“Put four stretchers and two wheelchairs in here and its small, you have to be resourceful and no doubt the government feels we are adequately resourced, bollocks!” (Participant 6)

For many, the spatial ecology not only affected curriculum delivery but raised health and safety issues, serving to strengthen concerns that teachers have for such vulnerable children. Parallel to Bayliss & Simmons (2007) contentions, the whole staff team has to be on board. Within classrooms inclusion transcended student and teacher to include TAs, and team work was vital.

This room is great but all the different areas are busy and dangerous for XXXX. If she falls over she could die, so she wears a hat but the back of her head is not formed correctly. Someone needs to support her in swimming, this leaves me short staffed and I cannot carry out my aims fully, but she needs that time in the pool (Participant 6).

Teachers asserted that with different complexities of cohorts every year, often a good class cohort was followed by dilemmas around personality clashes between students or too many differing needs in one room. Therefore often “social maps no longer fit social landscapes” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 9); which further aggravates the notions of training and self efficacy.

To be fair, we do well for resources but it all depends on the cohort year to year. I will have more students with profound and multiple problems coming in next year and so things may be different. Things change so quickly, for example, last year two boys hated each other and it threw the whole class ethos off (Participant 8).

One does not merely teach the same material in the same way year after year. Each year denotes the need to re arrange one's personal ecology, to reconsider the needs of the students and to learn from similar student issues but never to treat as identical. Overall, ecologies appeared to be in state of in constant flux requiring a new map in unstable territory. Such issues seemed to be adrift from managers. Their awareness of such issues was often unspoken and certainly teachers were not overly keen to make their struggles known. Such findings highlighted the needs of managers to become familiarised with student class constructions and to work in partnership with teachers to produce a more harmonious set. Such issues echo Bayliss & Simmons (2007) who signified the need of allowing staff more access to cohort decisions and training needs.

#### **4.75 The Piccadilly Circus Narrative: The Ecology of Being Peripatetic**

Unlike research that argues for a reduction of accountability and responsibility (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007, p.18; Molloy & Vassil, 2002), narratives exposed a great personal need to overcome barriers at all costs. Here, to become peripatetic was ensconced within the fluctuating ways in which curricula were being delivered, often utilising multiple rooms desperately trying to include and deliver curriculum objectives. Casualties involved costs to children's education and teachers' sanity, all borne out in testimonies. One was left wondering if curricula here were 'rabbits in the headlights' or if they had been run over and reassembled under the guise of diversification, inclusion and education for all.

I have paired up with next door's class to try to deliver the whole of the syllabus and curriculum objectives but that has its problems as well. The needs of the students with severe difficulty cannot be ignored - whilst I attend to MLD student topic needs, some go elsewhere for literature and others stay for maths while PMLD students stay here and so I deliver social stuff. It's Impossible to logistically plan anything, very hard to arrange this room, too many needs and mixes of resources needed here; it all takes up time this moving around (Participant 3)

One narrative summed up teachers' key ecological conflicts, encapsulating the problems that occur within my son's school and also for many teachers that I have spoken to informally over the years. These excerpts stand as testimony for Clandinin & Connelly's (1996, 2000) professional

knowledge landscapes. Teachers' excerpts illuminate that they are chaotic, multifaceted and distressing for teachings to express, henceforth they raised multiple concerns.

It's like Piccadilly Circus here; everyone is constantly moving about and I wonder where the hell they are going. The huge range of special needs in my teaching class is ridiculous, one girl is partially blind and so she needs a certain space and syllabus, another has hearing difficulty so she is wheeled out into another room; not sure where she goes but she takes my materials and she comes back and they are sort of done. My moderate guys stay with me in this room and we do cognitive things, read and write, exam tests etc, although they go off to do I.T. somewhere else and the very severe students are in and out and in truth, I am not sure if they are engaging. We fire fight with XXX, this school is so wrong for him, he is almost forced to fit in. Its everything autistic children loathe, loud, over stimulating, ever changing, I feel like he is just passively observing. Other staff see him as a nuisance to the school, he needs to be in a unit that can support him, amongst kindred spirits, friends you know. It sickens me (Participant 7).

Teaching efficacy pertaining to one's unique feelings of their capacity to successfully facilitate learning and ensure student support has been found to be related to student outcomes such as achievement (Ross, 1992) and to motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). One narrative construct that remained stable was the distinct lack of support staff. Teachers vehemently asserted they were a necessity to ensure students were kept safe, happy and able to access all educational objectives. It only took an incident or someone 'becoming distressed' to dilute support networks. Such problems were a real bone of contention amongst teachers and TAs who loved their work and had a great empathy for the students, but found the impact on them unsettling.

I really need more staff, but there is not enough TA staff to help. If I need to assist a child then others are sitting bored and become frustrated, If XXXX becomes upset two staff support her but that leaves me virtually alone (Participant 2).

I sometimes feel my TA is stretched a little, the students swim but that's a problem as females need female staff and boys need men, the shortage of staff means they cannot shower, that's just not on you know what I mean (Participant 4).

## **4.8 Overall Pedagogic Practice Ecological Narrative**

### **4.8.1 Teacher Identity and Ecologies; Mainstream and SEN Pedagogy: Separate or Misunderstood?**

Thesis findings have extensively shown the need to consider that teachers do not merely deliver a curriculum but indeed are the curriculum; what they bring to the classroom surpasses objectives, aims and units of knowledge. Narratives serve as testament for serious consideration that SLD/PMLD teacher training must begin with the psychology of being an empathising practitioner rather than someone who delivers a static entity that does not fit the student and serves to become a hindrance rather than a tool of advancing potential. Findings revealed that inclusion notions were different from mainstream where good practice could only come from viewing students as a different entity in a positive manner and students were described in emotional terms unlike historical mainstream accounts. Henceforth, with each new experience and child encountered, teachers evolve and change practice; their “professional landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p.27; Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009) becomes an embodiment of the nuanced way of being as opposed to the mainstream teacher that Jones (2005) advocates.

Interestingly, within all four schools utilised, the delivery methods of curricula, all of which are founded on personal ecologies sat amidst an almost bipolar stance between the teachers’ values and philosophies and those who were seated outside their SEN school setting within more macro ecologies (professional diagnosis, society views and mainstream educators).

Collectively, teacher narratives concurred with research, where teachers in SEN schools were ‘special’ teachers, where identity, practice and thought was subject strongly to discourse and contextual practice in a more nuanced way than in mainstream schools (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Schemer, 1999; Jones, 2004).

I am not a formal teacher; I am out of the mould. I like teaching liberally, kids need an experiential teacher and it’s a privilege to work with them. I understand more than a mainstream teacher; I have a deeper understanding of them. You want to... you do care for them; they respond in different ways, mainstream holds no such relationships for the student or I (Participant 1).

Certainly, teachers’ pedagogic practice is entwined with their identity as a practitioner (Jones, 2004). Teachers’ characteristics, experiences and personal decisions regarding how to diversify and deliver education in multiple forms meant working with students rather than a top down hierarchical stance.

It is imperative to consider that the narratives themselves become ecologies thus transcending, indeed reconceptualising Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ideas around an individual's place within ecologies as a layer of experience. Here narratives become a new structure which helps the other ecologies to exist, life and research are inseparable and the temporality of narratives show that SEN practice ecology differs from mainstream teaching ecology.

It was evident that teachers have begun to view themselves as separate entities from a mainstream teacher, supporting each other in the unique difficulties that they encounter. Notions of a possible mistrust of academics or professional ecologies that Fisher (2007) alludes to and a culture that does not appear to value SLD and PMLD teachers or their pupils (Jones, 2004) impacted upon the ecology they created within the classroom and how they perceived themselves. Holistically identity is constructed and reconstructed as people view themselves in relation to other people and notions of professional purpose. Here, identity becomes a negotiation of meanings taken from societal ideals of teacher purpose which conflicts with specialist provision.

Yes, I am separate from a mainstream teacher, we understand why they do not progress we have a deeper understanding of child development.... you want to care for them and respond to them. Within special needs you need sensitivity, my mainstream colleagues do respect me but say they could never do that at all, they say all the equipment, the personal needs, its intimidating like a hospital, they are frightened by the unknown (Participant 2).

Working within specialist settings offered an emotionally charged work life which involved a lot of personal internal strife and yet gave teachers a reason to stay (Mackenzie, 2011a, 2012). Narratives exposed historical episodes where society ideals were juxtaposed to theirs; this shaped their steely attitude towards empowerment for special educational needs students and shifted professional landscapes, in their minds for the better.

I know mainstream colleagues are astounded at what I do now, they are amazed I can do anything with 'those students' or can achieve anything at all. Some have even said I am not a real teacher; I have it easy as I only have ten students. They are amazed I have achieved such a lot with my students; they see the students as having problems, being unable (Participant 3).

Often the teachers themselves had formed new identities born out of fear of the unknown, a concept which did not sit well with them and yet marked the beginnings of a new ecological chapter within their lives, rather akin to uncharted territory.

Oh I was terrified of SEN when I was in mainstream because I did not know and I desperately wanted to help students. But when I moved here, wow it all changed, it was my sort of level and I saw a complete culture change of the way to teach. At my mainstream school it was very them versus us. Mainstream teachers have said “God you are lucky I bet you do nothing except wipe bottoms,” that’s a bloody cheek. I had a trainee here once who came in all qualified, full of it, she was totally horrified (Participant 4).

Here as Cross & Hong (2012) assert, emotions are relational to contexts. Teachers appear to be beating themselves with an ecological stick that does not fit their purpose or identity, an instrument borne out of society’s ideals around educational aims and the more able students. One must become a specialist teacher, immerse themselves within in it to truly understand a person’s world - the concern is that mainstream teachers do not want to, or find the whole idea abhorring. Teachers often found themselves as an outsider during training days which seems paradoxical as one would assume personal development was about expansion of knowledge and pedagogy rather than creating more division.

When I go on courses I am always the odd one out in discussion groups, mainstream teachers have no idea what I am on about, they sort of cast me out (Participant 9).

Jones (2004, p.162) findings indicated mainstream teachers assumed that specialist teachers had “hearts of lions.” I asked all my interviewees to comment upon such a notion, did they see themselves within this light; was this part of their identity?

Heart of a lion, that’s very patronising, very egalitarian sounding, it’s like it’s only seen as a job we are paid to do. In mainstream you do not have as good a relationship with students or staff within all areas. At the PRU (pupil referral) units I realised I had an affinity with challenging students, I guess that’s altruistic, but a lion, oh come on (Participant 1).

For some, such discourse uncovered very powerful deep seated ecological episodes that impacted upon inclusive practice, a sense of morality that conjured up awareness of altruism within a team rather than individual egoism.

I have not got a heart of a lion, I just want to help. Yes I am a different teacher here, I am so happy that I can share things with colleagues, you know problems, how to do something. At mainstream you never really ask for help - it looks weak, everyone moans all the time; you never really feel appreciated (Participant 5).

The heart of a lion, what on earth does that mean? Does that mean I have a big ego, I hope not, or does it mean that I am caring and want to help....hmm I hope so. I suppose I am different from mainstream colleagues, most mainstream teachers I met hated teaching and disliked students, they saw them as naughty and were tired of their ways, sort of pissed off most of the time (Participant 8).

Where working within SEN was an emotionally charged work life, it gave teachers a reason to remain in post (Mackenzie, 2012a). This was unlike their narratives within mainstream, which signalled despondency and as suggested within The SALT (2009) review marked the decision for all the teachers to leave. Narratives revealed mainstream did not fit their ethos nor the identity they ascribed to students; overall different ecology and identity was sought.

SEN is actually for me less challenging than mainstream possibly due to the lack of exam pressures and it is certainly gives me a reason to teach. Some colleagues I met in mainstream were disenchanted and unhappy, actually calling special needs students stupid, daft or not worth bothering about. They often had no compassion for students; they appear to feel they represent some other teaching entity (Participant 7).

#### **4.82 The SLD/PMLD Teacher's Identity: Self Reflection**

Overall, teachers were very aware of their identity which projected poignant ideas about what professional landscape specialist educators required. What was interesting was that most of the skills came from within; they cannot be taught, they emanate from the persons personal ecology, experiences and ways of being - their narrative reality has become an entity and an ecology.

Someone who understands the value of working in a team, supporting colleagues as you cannot do it alone, we should give help sensitively. Look for someone who is not all talk and no empathy, no real understanding. You need to be a sensitive person who respects

the value of the work we do here; to really have passion for the kids, their needs and challenges, you need to rise above and carry on (Participant 1).

You must work as a team and have a sense of humour but need empathy for the students; really a background of child development is ideal. It's more than qualifications, some staff are very qualified but have no idea what to do practically nor do they want to. You must respond constructively to criticism and not take age as ability; adapt every single day, which is difficult, you must be able to think on your feet (Participant 3).

Fun, ready for a challenge and open to learning more - unafraid to try things and push the students. Learn with them and play around with ideas but also you need academic training with experience. Do not be afraid to lean on colleagues, its okay to fail so accept criticism as long as it's constructive. Let's not treat them like they're treated in mainstream, not the poor child syndrome (Participant 4).

Try to guide the child but do not be afraid to be guided by them, know your limits and get help. Above all though be passionate and want to make a change (Participant 5).

Compassion and fairness, someone who is assertive and can get the balance between delivering and fun; be a rebel, never give up (Participant 7).

A picture is painted of a fragmented soul that has been buffered by the mainstream storm without any training to shelter them, a journey through a tumultuous history of frustration and reflection. Like a Phoenix, a new identity has emerged - the narratives have allowed such a concept to happen, they have awakened a new ecology where the teachers are the curriculum, it is part of their identity, like the shores of the sea they are ragged and ever changing.

### **RESEARCHER'S TESTIMONY**

Teachers are fully aware that personal experience has brought me to this thesis, and like Strauss & Corbin (1990, p.42), I see familiarity as positive where personal experiences enable understanding of how things work within that environment. Certainly, others share my beliefs that positive self-reflections ensue during emotionally charged work (Miller, 1996, added emphasis).

One touching and challenging moment during data collection was a class observation where an autistic student was ill matched to the environment (not the teacher's fault) but was just left to sit whilst a TA looked on and shuffled papers. I had to use all my counselling skills to put a professional brave face on and this triggered some long lost projection of anger within me as I was incensed at the lack of assistance.

This incident made me reminisce about an event where I ran across the floor during a Christmas play to stop a boy punching my son. This culminated in a very curt discussion with the teacher in front of parents. Strangely, the teacher had not noticed he was being hit (she was sitting next to him) and yet punished my son when he hit back. She was so unprofessional and uncaring and seemed detached and lost to consideration of the humanity of her pupils. This also reinforced to me that mainstream was not the right place for him. I was often called out of my teaching practice due to a very quick onset of illness on his behalf only to find him sitting on a beanbag, and prior to his move to a specialist school this seemed to happen with alarming regularity.

Further affiliation and mirroring of ecologies with teachers is woven through my research and I recalled my own abuse at school in the 1980s because my sausage rolls were wrong so a teacher smacked my legs. My sentiments echoed Participant 7, where I recollect thinking that I will never ever do that to anyone; is that the kind of practice I would want for my son, indeed would anyone? Such events seemed to personify all the frustrated, upset and misunderstood students that teachers narrated always seemed to end up in EBD units.

Narratives unveiled the complete lack of fit between training and practice which impacted upon teachers' struggling to include all within a mixed cohort classroom. I likened this to a noisy screaming girl in my son's class; teachers informed me he could not concentrate and he started pulling hair again which stands as a testament to the impact of spatial and macro ecological concepts on student school experiences.

Many conversations struck a personal chord and from the very beginning and I found that being a mother and a teacher opened up conversations that perhaps other researchers would not have found possible. Many narratives made me smile and reflect upon my time with my own son and daughter at home.

I want my students to be resilient to hard knocks, teach them its okay to cry and take it on the chin, change is not bad it's just new, sometimes it all goes horribly wrong (kind hands please!) But we pick up the pieces as a team and charge ahead (Participant 6).

Other teachers' lives echoed almost identically some of my earlier experiences.

I was kind of beaten down by life you know, not going to a great school not getting good exam results, being 'rubbish' at maths and physics, working as a dental nurse though I knew I had good patient skills. I know how it feels to be vulnerable I draw empathy from my own personal experience I want my students to feel the security I never had but give to my own kids (Participant 8).

As narratives evolved, consistency of beliefs and a sense of empowering, experiential and individual needs led as opposed to cognitive target led curriculum outcomes emerged. There seemed to be an undercurrent of distress caused to students and often teachers when having to achieve objectives that were hard to achieve consistently or to fit in with descriptions of achievement but a real reluctance to mark this as 'unobtainable' or 'has not reached the target yet'. As a parent I have felt sorrow at such descriptions of my son, laid out by mainstream teachers and professionals all his life. The care and empathy that exuded from teacher narratives echoed my feelings towards my son and enhanced my awareness of how I would like to engage pedagogically if I taught in a specialist setting and how I want my son to be taught and valued by teachers.

The emotional curriculum is entrenched in what we do here. We care for one another and it goes beyond the student and me but the whole class team, its vital to have good relationships a shared work ethic. I appreciate these students have massive rights, they need all the breaks they can get, they are disadvantaged on so many levels, they need love expressed to them, empathy not sympathy. However they also need to come to terms with the outside world and vice versa (Participant 1).

My personal need to see both my children happy, content and enjoying education was thwarted by some commentary, evoking a sense of infuriation regarding how people continue to judge and pigeon-hole children's educational ability without considering their emotional intelligence.

If I used the National Curriculum as my yard stick, none of my students would look as if they could do anything, this sort of reflects society's view, they see them as uneducable.....yes, educationally they do not appear to achieve targets nationally but that does not mean they are Incapable of anything, they have limitations possibly more than others, whatever that means (Participant 6).

There was one particular observation that sat very uneasily with me, in truth I had to draw on my many years of counselling practice to control my body posture, to hold back tears and control my anger. In a way this event also induced strong memories of multiple incidents with my son, not in terms of identical actions but others' reactions towards him. My emotions were mirrored by the teachers discourse after the lesson where we discussed a particular student, his class behaviour and ability to thrive within the school.

The severely autistic student sort of sits in class when he will come in, or sits on the floor tearing at his clothes, I am not sure how much of my differentiation of the curriculum is getting through; it breaks my heart, he should not be here. I am not just putting him out, I will not give up he needs to feel welcome (Participant 7).

I found that as a mother my role echoed participants where one needs to:

To protect them from that level of abuse, I want them to feel worthwhile, a relationship of respect. I want them to know that it's worthwhile to be here, that I will never bully them or humiliate them that I value they are nice people, yes you may have SLD but you are decent (Participant 7).

Other narratives evoked a strong sense of disgust regarding how people have viewed my son. I recall two educational psychologists who I had politely asked to leave my home for usage of condescending and downright insulting rhetoric. For the first time in many years I felt the impact of being a mother of a boy with a special need, which took me back to a conversation with a 'professional' when he was two years old where this 'professional' person declared he had one leg shorter than the other, but would "make a canny gardener". I mulled over what he would become, would he work, be independent, all quite strong thoughts to deal with as a parent, and often upsetting. Once again, narratives served to encapsulate my feelings of sycophantic muses of those 'in the know'.

Social perceptions constrain students, they come in and say "Ah bless them," what the hell does that mean? No one wants to appear awful so they never ask questions, they pathologise them, and it's horrendous; Do people look at your son like that...Is that too personal? (Participant 8)

In truth, the thought of people coming in and ogling my son offends me. There is a fine line between teacher training and surveillance of the needy and I hate it. I dislike especially diaries with notes regarding his actions all day and a particular bug bear is 'has he had a bowel movement' - would you ask other people this? I was not alone in this loathing of surveillance.

The notion of University students coming in upsets me; they are gobsmacked at 'these type of students', just standing with their mouths open and video camera on watching and recording (Participant 8).

Per-Kingsley's 'Holland' raised a lot of emotions within me regarding my ecology and how it felt after the birth of my son where I was abruptly told he was "the worst case of microcephally (small head) I have ever seen," and he was going to have "massive problems, so I hope you are ready." Which had been preceded by an almost obsequious question, "erm... are you happy with him?"

But I agreed then and still do with Participant 7's commentary that "one must find happiness in the now," I cannot deny there have been times of melancholy and periods where I have felt disappointment, but it is with the system and not directed at my son. Such thoughts were personified in one teacher's commentary:

'Holland' conjures up to me XXXX whose mum I know wishes she never really had him, she seems to live in a hellish world and I know that the utopian view painted by Emily does not really capture life for all parents of special needs children. I think you probably have to adjust your expectations of perhaps what you wanted for your child and look beyond the pain and live in the now (Participant 7).

I agree totally that my expectations were adjusted in a different way, but I feel Emily's metaphor does not represent a holistic metaphor of my life or view of my son, nor that of numerous mothers. I cannot say that 'Holland' is better, worse or challenging, since it's made me who I am though and that is to view the obscure as ordinary. The ground in my life has never been as flat as Holland and has many mountains to climb, and climb them I will with my son, daughter and husband hand in hand.

Whilst I am concerned, I am not naive of society's fear and ridicule of difference but I am apprehensive when contemplating how some teachers see SEN children. Literature searches have proven this, but also highlighted that a lack of training often creates a negative identity. That said,

some people are also just born not to teach and never should, certainly teacher narratives echoed my melancholy:

“Most mainstream teachers I met hated teaching and disliked students they saw them as naughty and were tired of their ways, sort of pissed off most of the time” (Participant 8).

I questioned if it is this how mainstream teachers and perhaps SLD/PMLD teachers saw my son and considered if this was part of the teachers identity (not caring) or if this is a projection of frustration due to lack of training.

Management issues regarding students being incapable or troublesome or cast offs were reminiscent of my son’s mainstream school where the Head wanted to help but lacked the skills and management drive to make it happen, coupled by ill trained and very nonchalant staff who seemed to demonise or infantilise him.

Moreover I recalled the exasperation that some mainstream teachers showed when I observed them in class, he seemed so frustrated and often lashed out or got into trouble for spoiling children’s games, he tried so hard to be understood in a world that denied him a voice.

With reference to corrosive curricula it seemed that he was forced into a curriculum that did not fit but he had to be included for the sake of government standards.

I was loudly informed in front of thirty two other mothers that he could not use a fork and had struggled to get dressed, and on an emotional level he began to need the toilet seven times a day (he liked the quiet time) within one week of starting mainstream - very upsetting.

Like looking through a periscope, notions of ill fitting ASDAN<sup>21</sup> awards and low level certificates corroding the notion of a curriculum struck a chord with me. In an attempt to make him have ‘better self esteem’ he was always in assembly to receive certificates for good work, he really hated going up there; he never knew what they were for and was upset when I asked. I am growing tired and my waistline expanding under all the scones, cakes and pies he is making within independent living skills! As Participant 7 so poignantly put it there is more to life than tea and cake.

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<sup>21</sup> Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network

Overall this diary has allowed me to voice the unknown, to give expression to emotions that have often been hard to deal with throughout this thesis production. It has been both cathartic and provoking but I feel it has allowed me to tell my 'truths' and so enable my ability to analyse narratives without prejudice.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This overview attempts to weave the exposition of the beliefs, identities and ecologies of teachers and show such factors impact upon the pedagogic practices and curriculum content and delivery. The framework is built upon separate but interrelated bodies of research in the field of SEN and yet is hard to partition as narrative findings capture the essence of complex and chaotic lives. Indeed, as one can see from Figures 6 and 11 (analyses of the concepts), they all weave and merge into each other and are inextricably linked because they illuminate a storied life.

### 5.1 Thesis Overview

This thesis has been driven by many objectives and academic thought processes, particularly the idea that that narrative is ecology; and in fact the critical ragged ecology that ironically helps the other ecologies to exist at all. Narratives in this area of study are absent and as such, Bronfenbrenner's older models (1979a, 1979b), obscure the nature of teaching in these places and spaces. Having said that however, his latest version of PPCT (1998) seems to enable contemplation upon the development of the self.

I assert that a piece of academic knowledge is not enough - educators and in fact education cannot move forward without a more holistic view of pedagogy within SEN schools. Unveiling ecologies could serve to enhance future practice or put up 'red flags' of concern. Although unpredictable, it was completely fascinating to discover that as narratives were gathered, a new dimension emerged; that of an SLD/PMLD teacher as a partial and new ecology. This new 'way of being' stood apart from mainstream educators and indeed was not part of a macrosystem or exosystem structural training approach that posits 'how a teacher should be, how to teach and how to deliver curriculum materials,' which verified Shulman's (1987) notion of teachers having their own professional knowledge of understanding. Narratives served to expose how in actuality teachers develop an emotional understanding of students thus filling the void of current informative research that concerned Denzin (1984) and its application regarding students with profound and multiple learning difficulty and severe learning difficulty (Hargreaves, 2001, 2005).

This study has not only exposed these narratives but has revealed them to be resilient and as much a part of teachers' lives in these contexts as the structural ecological elements. Thesis findings serve to go beyond previous studies in several ways and fittingly offer a glimpse into the historical, personal and professional development of teachers and the implications that separate ecological structures have upon pedagogy. Ecological constructs of inclusion practices and

dilemmas, curriculum content and appropriateness and a teacher's ability to deliver diversity remain within personal reflective practice. They are also perplexingly exposed as being in constant flux due to ever changing macro constructs of politics and guidance alongside teachers' ecologies that are shaped and ever evolving in accordance to cohorts of student needs. Without narratives one cannot truly immerse oneself into the essence of that person who is unique as are all children with special needs. Discourse allows one to understand problems that ensue from overarching ecological constructs. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) rightly contend that life and research are inseparable. Becoming a narrative enquirer in teachers' professional landscapes has developed a new understanding of teacher ecology where no literature has resided.

## **5.2 Establishing the Thesis Contribution In Relation To the Major Concepts Within This Research**

### **5.2.1 School Ecologies: Management Constructs**

Within schools, management ecologies were of paramount importance having an overall effect upon students and teachers micro ecologies, schooling experience and possibly the curriculum undertaken. Inclusion notions were different from mainstream where good practice came from viewing students as a positive entity (unlike mainstream narratives suggested), something needing diversity and care. The exosystem of management however, made financial and structural decisions that impacted upon the delivery of the curriculum and the notion of inclusion that they heralded. Whilst such decisions have to be made, there was little evidence that they involved teacher input, the very people at the 'coalface' of the school.

Managers and Headmaster/Headmistresses were adrift from teachers' realities utilising a very different ecology and henceforth became almost a part of a macro structure impacting on teachers. Discourse revealed usage of Government vernacular macro statements of need, inclusion and academic achievement. The premise appeared to be that all within the school operated within the same reality; this was untrue and narratives revealed a very different and nuanced practice and teaching ecology. One is aware however, of the great need for schools to be seen as flourishing or running in "the race" that Yero (2002, p.31) alludes to. Teachers seemed reticent to voice any concerns with management, a sense of shame emerged around notions of inability where one has to be 'achieving' at all times, without formal training and where curriculum goal posts are ever changing. It appeared that both management and teachers were slaves to the Ofsted inspection.

## **5.22 The Nature of Inclusive Education and the Education Provision That Constitutes 'A Special Education'**

Narratives revealed a static universal ecology in which teachers felt overwhelmed by the amount of expertise they are expected to have (Garner, 1995) which is perplexing when findings revealed that teacher training rarely includes SEN modules. Macro structures of ill fitting curricula, government ideology of training initiatives and a general apprehension to admit a lack of understanding for the complexity that is special needs was problematic, it impacted upon teaching efficacy, yet it served to mould a better caring ecology. Historically there appears to be considerable confusion and deficits within reality and academic literature regarding how to articulate such a 'special' curriculum, how to differentiate the curriculum (Heubert & Hauser 1999; Kelly, 1989; Watson et al., 2000, p.135) and how to decide in practice what topics should be covered (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009).

Teachers were rarely exposed to deep and sustained inclusive pedagogical theory and practice during their initial preparation that would prepare them adequately for such contexts (Stowitschek et al., 2000, p. 142; Hodkinson, 2009; Ekins & Grimes, 2009; The SALT Review, 2009; Richards, 2010). Where some courses seemed to promise SEN elements, notions of how this equated into actual practice lacked substance or any relevance. Teachers spoke of apprehension around having little time to practice or reflect upon any learning before being thrown into the preverbal SEN deep end.

Whilst the lack of training was concerning, there was a constant reticence to admit this to colleagues (in mainstream practice) and to managers which equated to a rather unappealing professional landscape to operate within and one entered into SLD/PMLD settings as a semi-skilled practitioner. Whilst postgraduate training courses proved encouraging and useful, they were often only an afterthought for many NQT teachers. Narratives verified that in-house training from excellent mentors and for some working their way through the ranks from TA through to teacher proved liberating where the 'classics were learnt before jazz'. Certainly managers need to be aware of the wealth of experience within the teaching cohort and encourage it to be shared more positively.

## **5.23 The Espoused and Explicit Curriculum Adopted**

Like Copeland (2001), findings confirmed that the very notion of curriculum and testing appears to homogenise pupils into groups identified by their level of attainment to set up competition and exclude. Whilst inclusive education is progressively being accepted worldwide as an effectual

means by which biased attitudes towards student with disabilities may be reduced (Subban & Sharma, 2006), narratives suggest that they remain exclusion tools to some degree. Historical narratives suggested that within mainstream teaching, notions of 'Inclusive education' had failed. Overall there was a lack of conceptual clarity in the way that pupils designated as 'special' were able to take part meaningfully. Rather than inclusion being a productive process of recognising difference it was a messy and inherently complex affair with no systematic way to accommodate 'difference' at all within classrooms. Within mainstream 'special units' however, a different ecology emerged. Whilst chaotic and often referred to as a place for the problematic and underachieving student, on occasion there was a meeting of kindred spirits if you like, an empowering of the downtrodden where inclusion was positive and learning outcomes achieved.

Unsurprisingly then, narrative realities reinforced Stenhouse's (1975) assertions that it is rather difficult to get students through an examination. Findings illustrated that this was because the curriculum teachers delivered was unresponsive and not inclusive to the student as it sat alongside a National Curriculum that had 'fixed' written exam objectives - some, if not most of which PMLD and SLD students will have learnt in a different context to that of the written word. Findings showed that managers are victims of such examinations because the dominating government structures enforce this upon them, yet paradoxically to not offer students a chance to sit examinations or gain certificates is seen as disabling inclusion. Illogically it is such inclusive dialogue and rhetoric that serves to disable the teacher from including all students. Narratives revealed that teachers pedagogy rests upon what they do behind closed doors (both within mainstream and SLD/PMLD schools) and it is deeply embedded and shaped by their beliefs and attitudes towards the students they face daily (Cuban, 1995).

Narratives also unveil the harsh reality that students are disadvantaged if education is merely about creating a workforce (Terzi, 2005). Capability and social arrangements of schooling for special educational needs students should be considered otherwise curricula exclude the child (Sen, 1992). With regards to SEN specialist roles, teaching ecologies serve to concur with Baker (2007) where special needs schools can be inclusive and are indeed capable of offering a student's right to a diversified curriculum within an appropriate setting. Rather than inclusion being merely curriculum based within special settings it becomes a sense of belonging overall, a way of enablement through diversity. All was not positive however, often the range of student need was vast and at times teachers attempted to deliver five separate curricula in one room; a task which would challenge even the most exceptional of teaching professionals.

## 5.24 The Beliefs and Identities of 'Special' Teachers

Olsen (2015) suggests teachers' identity impacts upon practice where one needs to take a holistic approach to teachers and not just their practice. In essence, one may train to be a teacher but cannot become or assume the identity of a special needs teacher until one has experienced the phenomena. As argued earlier, there are concerns that teachers (student or experienced) may be searching for a proficiency that does not exist because they are in essence, the curriculum. In understanding teachers inclusion ideals one must attend to the role of emotion and environmental issues. Cross & Hong (2012) rightly maintain that these factors are relational, they do not exist independently. Winograd (2003) deems emotions to be social and psychological interactions reflecting teachers' beliefs and motivation. If we take a belief to be a personal thought process, accumulated through ecological experiences and social groups (Cross & Hong, 2009) then it stands that teachers pedagogic practice is relational to emotions regarding how they shape the curriculum and what inclusion means to them. As Kagan (1992) suggested, a teacher's unique beliefs are situated in both context and content which over time shapes their identity and is crucial to the way they make judgments within the classroom (Day, Kingston, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Lasky, 2005). Historical narratives exposed the proverbial 'cutting of SEN teeth' as emerging through a turbulent storm of personal shame, mainstream battles, frustration and disillusionment. Their reality of the here and now still stands amongst the partial ecologies that are framed within Bronfenbrenner's account of the role a person plays in their own development (1989) and his later work on PPCT (1998). Narratives however, reveal a different ecology whereby curricula are not constructs to deliver but in essence become merged within identity; they become ecologies in their own right and shape all the other ecologies.

Historical ecologies detail how current personal reflective thinking and an awareness of identity is shaped by negative, embittered, dominant and powerful past experiences both as a student and as a teacher where historically their schooling was cruel and professional exclusion was all around them. Often when teachers (colleagues) and managers held expectations of particular students they interacted with them in differing ways as such that their initial, sometimes erroneous, expectations were fulfilled (the self-fulfilling prophecy effect) as posited by Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968). Personal opposition, maltreatment and overall difference of views between management and their own levels with regard to the identity assigned to mainstream students and continues to an even deeper level within an SLD/PMLD specialist setting was rooted very firmly within identity and ethical stances. Often a change in pedagogy sprung from opposition and a disgust of the almost disposable attitude to students with extra need (within mainstream), driven by a personal

ecology that served to include students and work in partnership as equals rather than a pathological belittling manner.

Such findings highlight that this belief system stems from a fear of difference contending with notions found within academia (Rogers, 2007; Almog & Schectman, 2007). Educational practice came from prior ecologies and identities forged during training where teachers spoke of the disillusionment around modules that aimed to enforce notions of universal curriculum delivery or 'how to teach'. From such trepidation a more spiritual and caring practitioner arose rooted firmly in a personal belief to enable. Such issues impacted greatly, serving as maps to guide current pedagogy; shaping their move into teaching and enhancing their identity to become an empathising and reflective practitioner.

Teacher micro ecologies seemed to present internal struggles regarding the juxtaposition between their personal beliefs regarding their place within mainstream schools to begin with and then later practice within SLD and PMLD settings. With each new experience and child encountered, teachers evolve and change practice; their "professional landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p.28; Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p.163) becomes an embodiment of the nuanced way of being as opposed to a mainstream teacher that Jones (2005), speaks of. Such findings have major implications for teacher training, school management and how we understand inclusion, not merely a macro ecology 'positive' concept supported by Government rational but the harsh reality of it in action. Collectively teacher narratives concurred with research, where teachers in SEN schools are 'special' teachers whose identity, practice and thought is subject strongly to discourse and contextual practice in a more nuanced way than in mainstream schools (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Schemer, 1999; Jones, 2004).

Narratives revealed mainstream did not fit their ethos or the identity they ascribed to students; overall a different ecology and identity was sought and formed thus a new ecology emerged and served to shape all other ecologies often in a fragmented away.

Narratives unearthed apprehension, revealing teachers as reticent to voice concerns within mainstream and initially SEN placements for fear of being labelled, possibly due to a personal or universal truth as being unable to become the wholly inclusive practitioner that macro politics ironically assume all should and can be. Coupled with this there seemed to be a general malaise of low self efficacy, a belief that served to shape practice but had been a hard mountain to climb which had taken many years of stressful experiences and casualties along the way - this is not

acceptable. Intuition and balanced opinions regarding how to teach SLD students were immersed within the attributed identities ascribed by the teachers themselves, respect and an enabling approach was posited which became critical once teaching within SEN schools. Such events served to evoke a sense of unity within teaching staff who followed their own rules for the sake of the student rather than academic ideals or management direction. Unbeknown to managers, an ecology of pretence resonated throughout narratives.

These ecological maps or metaphorical shorelines are significant and sit amongst an expansive historical academic trail. There appears to be confusion regarding the ability to articulate and differentiate such a 'special' curriculum (Heubert & Hauser 1999; Kelly, 1989; Watson et al., 2000, p.135), decide on appropriate objectives (Senyshyn, 2012; Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009) and define whether training and pedagogic knowledge content can enable diversification (Norwich & Lewis, 2001; Maddern, 2010). Teachers perceived themselves as separate entities from mainstream teachers, supporting each others' uniqueness often within difficult encounters, set within notions of a possible mistrust of professional ecologies (Fisher 2007) and a culture that does not appear to value them or their pupils (Jones, 2004). Whilst working within specialist settings involved a lot of personal strife and was at times emotionally charged, it gave them a reason to remain (Mackenzie, 2012a, 2012b, added emphasis). Such unity evoked a sense of morality, conjuring up an altruistic team camaraderie rather than the individual egoism they had encountered within mainstream.

With regards to such important concepts, findings served to show the impact of beliefs and identity upon both teacher and student which confirms the significance of conceptualising and understanding of teachers' beliefs systems. Furthermore, it also demonstrates my trepidation that prior to this thesis few had sought to challenge and explore the reasons for such a dearth of literature, to question the premise or reality behind the findings or to use such important concepts to envision a new type of teacher training.

To conclude, whilst ecological constructs impact greatly, skills come from within; they cannot be taught and emanate from personal ecology, experiences and ways of being. What is interesting is the major finding that a teacher's identity is a driving force behind inclusion and the curriculum overall. This was a powerful finding and rather unexpected in that whilst being aware that identity was important, I could not have foreseen just how overarching it has become within SEN provision. Historical narratives have shaped teacher ecology, bad experiences serve to mould current ecology enabling them to embrace student on an emotional and educational level.

Narratives serve a dual purpose within this thesis, that of spearheading the need for a review of teaching training altogether and allowing one to delve into the reality of teacher practices. Rather than being able to merely deliver, teachers must be enabled to self reflect upon practice to not only understand their place within education as a deliverer of knowledge, but their place as an empathising enabler.

Findings suggest that one should not be afraid to look within oneself to ensure that education is an enriching rather than painful experience for all involved. Narratives reveal that one's ecology and the ability to become aware of its impact on current pedagogy is crucial. I remain surprised that until this thesis there has been a relative lack of focus upon the narratives of those at the very core of the childhood formation and the everlasting experience that is school.

### **5.25 Teachers' Practices in SLD/PMLD Schools**

Narratives exposed how the SEN curriculum differed from the official curriculum. Teachers asserted to its presence on paper where knowledge is absolute, in that Governments expect "teachers to teach it; they assume all students can and will learn it" (Yero, 2002, p.32). Teachers voiced concerns around the curriculum which was fully 'rolled out' in 2015. Teachers unsurprisingly highlighted the reality of a chiasmic void between what theorists argue is a curriculum and/or can be a curriculum and what in reality teachers produce and deliver not merely as a fixed objective scheme of work but as an extension of their being. Ironically, the static paper inclusive version of a curriculum is not responsive to student needs at all. If one is to view the curriculum through the lens of teachers' lives then I argue it is revealed as nonexistent; it has metamorphosed into a representation of their beliefs and skills gathered throughout ecological historical narratives.

The curriculum is overly structural and very much unresponsive to SLD / PMLD needs or abilities, relying on examinations as evidence that students cannot necessarily produce. To add further weight to such problems, the 'new and improved' Curriculum (DfES, 2013, fully operational in 2015) has proven challenging for teachers where Key Stages are condensed and later objectives placed into earlier stages thereby making the achieving of goals even harder for special educational needs students. Additionally, notions of inclusion being at the forefront for SEN without any account of training or resources which feels like a déjà vu experience found in all inclusion documents of old statements within the National Curriculum Framework For Key Stages 2 and 3 (DfE, September 2013).

The curriculum delivered within specialised settings appears more analogous to Aristotle's (cited in Thomson & Tredennick, 1976) notions, where human action calls forth practical action using personal judgements '*phronesis*' in order to act for the good or bad of man and society. The teachers work is informed by practical interactions with the student, meaningful objectives develop as teachers and students work together often in an experimental fashion. This means that curricula exist only within the realms of each individual class, each teacher's narrative and pedagogic practice.

Interviews and class observations yielded multiple apparent curricula operating within schools all sitting under the National Curriculum objectives but totally divergent in terms of what counted as evidence that objectives had been fulfilled. Whilst all teachers retained a paper trail of curriculum objectives, they were often merely tokenistic charts from which ecologies sprang forth and offered a personalised representation of teacher beliefs. SEN curricula therefore are not universal, thus supporting Stenhouse's (1975, p. 142) notions that they cannot be delivered in all realms of education or even within SEN special schools as they are unique to that teacher.

Narratives served to take on a more praxis model of curricula where meanings are socially constructed, not absolute and ethically rooted in notions of the emancipation of students. What a student learns is authentic to them but may not fit the world view. Paradoxically, teachers are attempting to deliver a vast National Curriculum that tries so hard to respond to all the needs of a person socially, emotionally and spiritually that it becomes non responsive. In its attempt to be wholly inclusive. It is rendered unresponsive as teachers have to become the curriculum and deliver in ways they personally find effective; ways which may never be replicated or at the very least will be delivered differently day in day out.

As Hodgkinson (2005) asserted, although teachers may construct their own reality of a curriculum, they still feel the burden of the official curriculum. Narratives unearthed a melancholy around one's ability and competency to include all ranges of SEN or to respond to the static National Curriculum. This was wholly true during mainstream teaching where their lack of training meant they did not know how to differentiate or respond effectively to the National Curriculum. Humphrey & Lewis (2008, added emphasis). This way of being often emanated from Government ideals but for teachers seemed rooted within their views of personal self efficacy transcending into teaching pedagogy. Findings served to show that the tested curriculum (results and scores used to show policy makers that students have gained the knowledge expected) was used to denote the effectiveness of schools and teachers, when in fact the learned curriculum portrays

reality within schools, and is perhaps the most influential in terms of the student, yet it is not employed to measure effectiveness

Curriculum research appears to focus on national initiatives, often in terms of inclusiveness (Howieson & Closs, 2006). Much is written about entitlement to the whole curriculum but these findings show that such noble ideas do nothing to respond to reality within specialist settings where as Carpenter (1992) contends, a rigid blanket style delivery achieves nothing. Teachers appeared frustrated and pessimistic regarding the continuous fallacy that they are required to 'cover' the entire curriculum, sometimes at a pace that King-Sears (2008) noted leaves students with disabilities behind. Findings support academic literature that in order to respect students' needs and individuality one should acquire humility and ignore the curriculum altogether (Senyshyn, 2012) or perhaps offer a more spiritual approach to curriculum activities for both SLD and PMLD students. Amongst all this goodness of heart however, narratives reveal a danger in the student becoming a victim of SEN the 'ah bless them' anthem that echoes notions of uneducable or "'X' for capable and 'Y' for why bother" (Participant 3).

Teachers' narratives illustrate the need for a socially interactive style of curriculum that encourages and allows special educational needs children to learn, drawing upon Vygotsky's (1978) earlier work, that champions parents and teachers as educators working in partnership with children; knowledge needs to be built rather than delivered passively (Watson et al., 2000, p.135). Narratives actively constructed curriculum delivery, sometimes within a depiction of a daily event that unintentionally enhanced knowledge or by designs used from previous episodic experiences that had proven historically effective. Overall, pedagogy was "kind of an ongoing process" (Participant 4).

Narratives confirmed that there is an abundance of ways in which schools and teachers interpret the nature and prescriptions of the National Curriculum to each particular assessment of need and ability. Through pupil diversity within each school, there appears to be no one way or theme or even hard set modules unlike the National Curriculum.

More often than not, dialogues illustrated a range of teachers' perceptions where appropriate curriculum content correlated with personal beliefs regarding a student's cognitive, social and emotional range and outcomes as viewed through the lens of their own philosophies and

experiences. Teachers stated that curricula plans were often ignored or modified thus supporting King-Sears' (2012) notions of spiritual curriculum.

Curriculum purpose and structure differed according to practitioners with cohorts of students with SLD and those whose teaching classes consisted of more students having more complex PMLDs. Certainly narratives showed the need for a sense of individuality and personalisation that was based within the premise of being included within National levels, rights and enablement.

As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) have found, spatial micro ecologies and resources impact heavily upon teachers. Personal narratives illuminated a very diverse range of factors that influenced teaching environments with room size and resource issues appearing to be most prevalent, but merely strengthened determination to include all and diversify the curriculum. Narratives revealed a nuanced pedagogy that of innovator, inventor and skilled abstract thinking enforced through the lack of resources and spatial issues. Teachers often felt a real sense of guilt from underachievement due to resources issues which often ranged from, scarce to bountiful, changing from year to year.

The need to include was ensconced within the fluctuating ways in which curricula were being delivered, often utilising multiple rooms while desperately trying to deliver curriculum objectives. Such problems were further compounded by a distinct lack of support staff that teachers asserted were a necessity to ensure students were kept safe and able to access all educational objectives.

Teachers recognised the need to move beyond educational experiences and consider social skills that would enable the student after school age. Here a sense of continuity and education as a lifelong experience rather than merely school years was key echoing Tomlinson's work on widening participation beyond school years (in the Kennedy Report, Learning Works, 1996).

Within a mixed cohort class there was a sense of the disparity between inclusion rights, curriculum objectives and student ability stemming from multiple macro factors such as Government targets and parental wants under the guise of rights, needs and inclusion. Demands hindered progress, the National Curriculum restricted rather than enabling inclusion set within ecologies of 'muddling through', and multiple variations of inclusion. Narratives failed to illuminate if macro system ideals of inclusion and diversity or 'all doing something' were a reality and teachers questioned what they were actually achieving.

### **5.3 Implications for This Field of Study**

Thesis findings have significantly shown the need to consider that teachers do not merely deliver a curriculum but indeed are the curriculum. What they bring to the classroom transcends objectives, aims and units of knowledge. Findings serve as testament for serious consideration that teacher training must begin with the psychology of being an empathizing practitioner rather than someone who delivers a static entity that does not necessarily fit the student and serves to become a hindrance rather than tool of advancing potential.

Because findings are significant in highlighting that the teachers are the curriculum, not all one universal SEN curriculum but a curriculum nonetheless; one needs to shine a light upon the ripples of politics, school ethos and personal challenges lapping at the edges of one's being, eroding parts but enabling and breathing new landscapes and possibilities along an ever changing shore line. As afore mentioned, special educational needs students are dynamic in aiding personal transformation, all leaving their personal footprints upon the teachers' shore line and merging with the beach. Rather than being separate entities that sit within an ecological construct, they become part of the teacher's narrative.

I contend that although nine teachers were used as part of this study, their narratives often paralleled each other's lives and identities while their beliefs seemed to emerge from similar ecologies adding weight to the small sample and thus confirmability. Whilst positivistic academics may highlight notions of transferability, validity and reliability of findings with regards to wider SEN cannot be made (Brady & Wolfson, 2008). That said, this does not detract from the ability of the thesis findings to impose questions that in an attempt to uncover answers could serve to shape future practice.

Without narratives one cannot truly immerse oneself into the essence of that person who is as unique as every single child with special educational needs and begin to understand problems that ensue from overarching ecological constructs. Such findings have major implications for teacher training initiatives, emphatically highlighting the need for collective partnerships between school management and teachers and for a new teacher training programme that takes on board interactions skills and the unique personal ecology of being and becoming an SLD/PMLD teacher, that has to differ from the standard mainstream teaching courses.

#### **5.4 Directions for Future Research**

This thesis serves to show that a significant element of developing a sense of self as a teacher begins with a life story or identity forged from adolescence onwards (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001). Identity should be seen as the history of one's own making set amongst social and political impositions that remain a hidden force (Phillion, 2002). Here the narrative plays its part holistically exposing teacher and school values alongside the purpose of school structures within government and education systems encapsulated within overarching beliefs of teachers.

Teacher views and/or experiences, teacher practices and their links to Government policies, inclusion statements, human rights, economic interests and society's perceptions and reactions to SEN all impact upon pedagogic practice and the eventual learning experience of the pupils concerned. The hidden personal ecological reasons behind pedagogy and aspersions remain unknown; to merely consider teaching practices as the gathering of and adherence to procedural academic knowledge is inappropriate. Educators and education cannot move forward without an ecological view of pedagogy within SLD/PMLD schools. Unveiling ecologies could serve to enhance future practice or put up 'red flags' of concern. Such tensions sit amongst the concern that there is a lack of research-based evidence with which to inform opinion and practice (Wishart, 2005; Porter, 2005; Lacey, Layton, Miller, Goldbart & Lawson, 2007; Warnock & Norwich, 2010; Theodorou & Nind, 2010).

Further research and insight into practice, beliefs and what a curriculum is, can be and/or should be for special educational needs students is potentially a critical issue. One needs to contemplate the new curriculum, which has emerged largely without consideration of people at the 'coalface' of teaching in special contexts. Such a curriculum adds to fears that diversity voids will widen, possibly culminating in an increase of literature exposing negatives and mistreatment of special needs children as suggested by Rogers (2007). These tensions sit within the lack of guidelines to inform teachers how to assess or signify achievements, what scale to use for the three ability levels (developing, emerging and secure) or what this universally means in actuality. All schools will have varying ideas of what constitutes ability as being wholly learnt. Amongst all of this new chaos, policy still beats the drum of inclusion for all.

Many may highlight concerns that this study has used only nine teachers and whilst their narratives evoke strong and critical findings, they are merely a pebble within the professional shoreline however I strongly insist it is time to open the proverbial floodgates within that body of water! Now more than ever large-scale research is warranted and like Phillion (2002), I contend

that more research needs to examine the interaction between the personal and social dimensions of a narrative inquiry. Taking Clandinin & Connelly's (1996, 2000) analysis from four directions of a narrative inquiry; inward and outward, backward and forward to the temporal unfolding of lives that are presented within this thesis, one needs to look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes and beliefs and moral dispositions, all which I argue emerge through micro ecologies.

Rather than researching lives in separate studies there is a need for more and larger scale research across the country to consider notions of 'outward' existential conditions. These are akin to the exosystem of ecology that is the environment and delve into Clandinin & Connelly's (1996, 2000) concepts of backward and forward considering temporality, past, present and future, which I assert are analogous to historical narratives representing dominating forces in shaping future teaching practice and enabling the teacher to become the curriculum. I wholeheartedly agree with Clandinin & Connelly's (2000, p.50) suggestion that to engage within narrative inquiry is to experience all directions simultaneously moving backwards and forwards in time and to bring to life personal and social issues deriving from discourse to illuminate 'how such concepts have shaped a teacher's landscape. In the context of these tensions and developments, future research will centre upon three findings emerging from this study. These are:

1. Examining the SLD/PMLD Curriculum Through The Lens Of Teachers Narratives of Practice
2. SLD/PMLD Teachers: Diversifying the Curriculum
3. SLD/PMLD Specialist Settings: Practically Redefining Initial Teacher Training Routes

## **FINAL CONCLUSION**

### **Surprises and Dissonances**

The findings of this research show that the teachers **are** the curriculum, special educational needs students are a part of, indeed a major factor in transformation; with each student encountered ecologies change, students become part of the teacher's narrative. The importance of tenacity within teacher practice cannot be ignored nor the hard lessons and emotional turmoil that participants have suffered en-route to current practice. There may be a plethora of teachers out in the SEN wilderness remaining unheard and frustrated, unable to empathise or forge positive identities through no fault of their own.

### **Dissemination of Ideas**

This research has raised questions of paramount importance in regard to how one should progress within teacher education, training and SLD/PMLD teacher selection while noting the impact of beliefs and identities within pedagogy. Findings serve as testament for serious consideration that teacher training must begin with the psychology of being an empathising practitioner rather than someone who delivers only a static entity that does not necessarily fit the student and serves to become a hindrance rather than tool of advancing potential.

The findings that for me as the researcher, that are most significant, relate to the realisation that the teachers **are** the curriculum, not one universal SEN curriculum but none the less a curriculum that by its very nature, is inclusive in a highly personally nuanced and responsive way.

Such findings have major implications for teacher training initiatives, emphatically highlighting the need for collective partnerships between school management and teachers and for a new teacher training programme that takes on board interactions skills and the unique personal ecology of being and becoming an SEN teacher, that has to differ from the standard mainstream teaching courses.

More than ever there is an argument for teachers and parents to take up the academic mantle and fully immerse themselves in the existentiality of finding how identity forms within the context of SEN. Overall a new PGCE and Honours teaching programme is necessary to ensure enter the specialist arena prepared to teach in an empathising manner

## Appendix A: Glossary

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Belief	Assumptions and convictions that are held to be true, by an individual regarding concepts, events and people.
EBD/SEBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty/ Severe Emotional and behavioural difficulty, a rather confusing term to define as it covers social disorders as well as mild/moderate special needs problems.
Knowledge	Understanding or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally.
Mainstream Teacher	Teachers working in mainstream that most possibly have students with special educational needs (moderate, dyslexia, ADHD etc).
Management	Those who take more authoritative role within the school (Heads of Department, etc) and as such form part of the team to which teachers are answerable.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty taken to mean those pupils who can often attend mainstream and have needs that may or may not be global.
Pedagogy	The method and practice of teaching; within this thesis it thus concerns the study and practice of how best to teach children with SLD and PMLD.
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty, taken here to mean those with global delay and often neurological and motor dysfunctional disorders and gross cognitive delay.
Pupils and students	Identical in portraying those taught within the educational setting researched.
SEN	Special Educational Needs, taken here to mean all special needs encompassing the expansive range of needs, difficulties and disability.
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty - often defined as encompassing gross developmental delay with cognitive and some motor dysfunction delay, which in truth changes regularly in terms of symptomology.
SLD/PMLD Teacher	Teachers who work within specialised settings with SLD and PMLD cohorts.
TA	Teaching Assistant.
Teachers	A generic term to encompass professionals working in educational institutions, namely mainstream and specialised settings primary and secondary.
Teachers' practical knowledge	Experiential knowledge, "Which is embodied and reconstructed out of the narrative of a teacher's life," (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987, p.490).
Teachers' professional knowledge	A territory of private and public knowledge, of curriculum requirements and passionate explorations, of emotional knowing and cognitive outcomes
Value	Principles or standards of behaviour, ones judgement of what is important in life and professional conduct.

## **Appendix B: Request for Research Study Participants and Access to Schools**

From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

Dear All,

As a parent of a boy who attends a school for SLD and PMLD students, I have spent over 11 years discussing with teachers how their practice has been shaped by, beliefs, experiences and training, amidst government policies. As a teacher myself I am interested how all of these factors come together to make an inclusive and/or integrated curriculum. I am all too aware of the pressures on teachers to deliver a curriculum set amidst government ideals and dismayed at the lack of training that teachers need in order to excel but sadly do not always receive; as a parent I know how diverse SLD and PMLD students can be and how complex the needs of many students are. My professional and personal concerns have led me to undertake a Doctor of Education Qualification at Durham University. Two years of literature searches and some wonderful pilot interviews with teachers within SLD and PMLD settings have helped shape my interview questions and I am now ready to commence the research process itself and have been approved by the Ethics committee.

Please find below an overview of my research area with ethical guidelines and procedures explained and possible questions posed to staff members.

Please email me or phone directly to discuss any issues you may have, I look forward to undertaking my work within the school and hope that it will be an important and enlightening experience for all involved.

Kindest Regards

Catherine Stewart

## **Background to Study**

Although there is a great deal of research into how teachers' beliefs affect their teaching practices in mainstream school, there is almost none in the context of Special Schools, and none at all to date.

In SLD/PMLD schools, teachers in SEN schools are 'special' teachers whose identity, practice and thought is subject strongly to discourse in a more nuanced way than in mainstream schools (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer 1999; Jones, 2004) working in a culture that frequently does not appear to value them or their pupils, despite its inclusive intent (Jones, 2004).

Despite this, over the last few years, there has been an increase of policy and statutory guidelines as to the curriculum and training of teachers in Special Schools. But we do not know how teachers are reacting to such changes or in fact, what particular principles are adopted in PMLD schools. This thesis tries to understand this context better, and is of particular interest not only because of the importance of values and attitudes, and a growing critique of the expectations and aspirations of institutions providing education for those pupils with special needs.

## **Research Methods**

Each participant in the research will be interviewed 4 times individually and their teaching practices observed, and asked to reflect on their practice. In addition, each participant will be asked to document, in a reflective journal, their feelings, attitudes towards and experiences of the curriculum in the school. The key is to gather insights on the cultural values and experiences of the teachers and institutional practices, they are of paramount importance if we wish for students to achieve social and academic goals or illuminate professional practice.

## **Ethics and reliability checks**

All will be given verbal informed consent and written consent forms (previous multiple pilot discussions, focus groups and interviews over the last year, have shaped the end product of methodological styles and questions chosen). Data and other personal information will be collected in written form and pseudonyms will be ascribed.

Whilst aware of my status as a parent and insider research, multiple pilot interviews with staff have lessened any connotations of bias and this thesis stands to discuss teaches practices and beliefs and in no way assert capability, accountability or allude to measuring achievement targets within the school.

**Pilot Interview questions (not exhaustive and dependant on previous personal data and observational work). Some questions may be asked multiple times during individual interview rounds and new ones may arise out of personal diaries that teachers have kept.**

- 1. In an ideal world, what would be your ideal teaching and learning environment for pupils with PMLD?
  - a) School?**
  - b) A specialist unit?**
  - c) Something else?****
  
- 2. What class size?**
  
- 3. What do you feel is an appropriate curriculum for pupils with PMLD?**
  
- 4. Does it depend on individual pupils or on something else? What?**
  
- 5. Social / Emotional / Educational needs**
  
- 6. What constraints are placed upon implementing such ideas?**
  
- 7. What has influenced your work with pupils?**
  
- 8. With regards to their relevance for working with pupils with SD/PMLD can you tell me a little about your teacher training?**
  
- 9. If I walked into your classroom during an observation, what would I see you doing?**
  
- 10. What would the pupils be doing?**
  
- 11. Have any past experiences shaped the practitioner you are today?**
  
- 12. What was your schooling like?**

## **Appendix C: School Pilot Questions with Exemplar Notes**

1. In an ideal world, what would be your ideal teaching and learning environment for pupils with PMLD?
  - a. School?
  - b. A specialist unit?
  - c. Something else?
  - d. What class size?
  
2. What do you feel is an appropriate curriculum for pupils with PMLD?
  
3. Does it depend on individual pupils or on something else? What?
  
4. Social / Emotional / Educational needs
  
5. What constraints are placed upon implementing such ideas?
  
6. What has influenced your work with pupils?
  
7. With regards to their relevance for working with pupils with SD/PMLD can you tell me a little about your teacher training?
  
8. If I walked into your classroom during an observation, what would I see you doing?
  
9. What would the pupils be doing?
  
10. Have any past experiences shaped the practitioner you are today?
  
11. What was your schooling like?

Pildt (2) Nov 2018 @ School ~~meeting~~ meet ~~me~~  
@ me researcher

① Ideal world - ideal teaching - learning environment  
not a realy / all right

⑤ Ideally realy big room, lots of sensory stuff, resources  
etc, lots of space for chairs/music

Yes a school But a specialist school if you mean so?

Priva realy big - need tents / sensory / lots of stuff  
enough room to change things and realy

④ Yes I agree my room is realy big and lots  
of CD hanging down space to make them feel welcome  
Safe / secure / music centre.

Special unit - sounds terrible - reminds me of  
mainstream PRU!

\* realy? / not too busy

④-⑤ - Forget - God yes - it was hard, realy  
exclusion, no one understood

⑤ - I am lucky to have this room, hope it lasts.

## ② Worst class size

⑤ Oh if so about 6-8 realy to make sure  
all students included, can do lots of tasks  
and focus if someone needs help

Need 2 TA still though to ensure all kids  
get a go at things

④ Yes I know, class size matters! Too many  
needs special the prob, too many needs  
behaviors to consider

⑤ Yet I think resources can be issue and  
problems in extra needs / different ability  
cannot leave student out

3

3) Appropriate curriculum.

10) SLD/PMUD different

SLD - need (structure) lack of curriculum need  
Social & education, maths/English & KS but  
had to (really) curtail curriculum - they can  
not achieve it

5) - Feel pushed into a 9) - I did play therapy  
really good tool - was called mental handicap  
training - awful thing  
cog development diff for SLD/PMUD

How so

5) PMUD need fewer things/plans (but VERY)  
sensory, also need to incorporate headbands/le  
dan, soft music, sensory - sensory - sensory  
sprinkled/love/ empathy

1) Yes, empathy not sympathy - Skill structure - no  
do things (this)

Gov is ridiculous - what the hell are adjectives  
to the students - learning to speak upstart but  
structure of sentence was touched

How so

well it's their duty to engage need - cog dev 9)  
not saying delete stuff but different lens (if  
maths and I mean

How - lens?

5) view student as different needs & different  
view/needs/diff education based on NC  
Cums Skill

(2)

Does (C) depend on social?

(5) Oh yes, children who can't speak need to be taught in a different way - encouragement really - socially people think they should do nothing - they've all need (a) friends and (b) skills

(11) Christ - monster - stuck out like a sore thumb really - social skills not helped by teachers or students

(5) from my teacher friends were really frustrated

(11) - no training really, want/need to be socially but hard to do

Emotion (a) Yes (C) tied to emotions

(5) How they feel really

(5) Emotional intelligence important for kids

(11) - need to feel wanted then they are happier to try things out

Emotionally cut off at times - not their fault.

Education needs

(5) + (11) } Agree  
Very different (C)

Smaller classes, different for approaches needed here - still need to know to do/understand

(11) - NC DOES NOT FIT

St Marys (5)

(11) Pubs/BURFC

Self-c child - lack of their spectrum not decided on.

⑤, ⑥

Sensory - touch / sound / smell / taste

Taste ⑥ not following but prescriptive

④ look at individual Taylor et al. to them

⑤ what do they enjoy

⑤

and constraints

Training - (Austen) nothing ever gets told to you  
if nothing prepares you - thrown in & deeper!

④ ITT - learn more but its a procedure not  
a value - have to work to do this

I wanted to do this - people said fu med!  
physically - PMR - cog had as soon may not fit  
needs / too many physical probs - need to eye  
to eye contact

need to be open to suggestions - use - you can  
kids - ideal play thing / new manner

redly - yes - do not be afraid ~~AREA~~ →  
use lights over head - vestibular system

⑥ (Lever) ⑥ humble school - not son to do that  
④ my kids wish we see her (PLAY)  
works

redly great teacher in Manchester - taught  
me to respect student - go with my

(Guts) - do not go off diagnosis  
look at individual - believe eye contact  
to make things great

have fun - that's what I wish my school  
had too

(V) God yet! I remember which led at back  
of class - terrible  
never dismissed paper - comes from within

(J) Yes, me too, really had a hell of a time  
It's a personal thing, on identity - should not  
to teach kids, they did not - monster very  
tough really

~~Not in a match~~ - monster set of world  
did featured - toilet, bullying

(V) Monster - program (of me)

(7) Training

— so unprepared - feedback

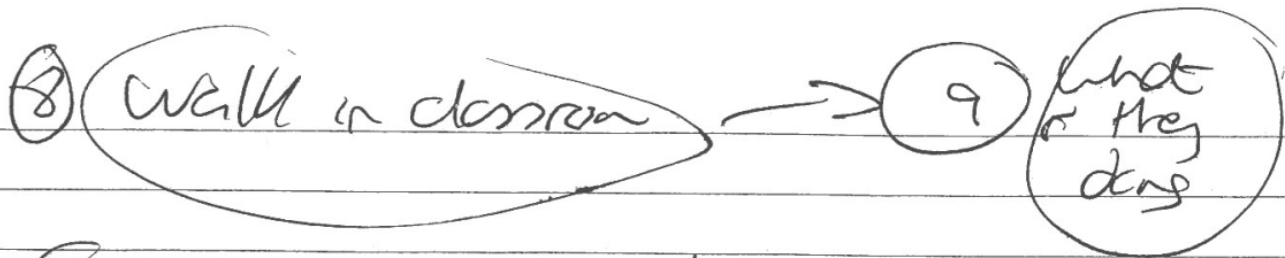
(u) Jesus! mentally retarded training 30 yrs ago  
left its patient - not offering the case for  
it was good way - left its C EYES SWIFF

(J) Bed - robbery - no medals - no bloods in  
white for for - lots of evidence taken for  
Osp  
did! Pr Dip - run better really - learnt a lot

(u) - TA / colleagues - learnt a lot! In school  
kids bring me along - read books

(J) 'Brightening' really no idea - in class it's

well I then you know  
wonder to do MA soon not return  
NE here and on post



⑤ have / excitement for / expect of what he paid  
 cash / singing / make her money  
 believe it or not study!  
 maths / English / geography (no sense only)

⑥ By ⑦ hard - how are they feeling the  
 more into what  
 set tables for tests - they know what to  
 do → Animes - keep on  
 class / for let them express really

⑧ sit in a circle or net - class today how  
 we feel the tests - focus on what part / paper  
 capture  
 lots of discuss really - under the  
 need - TA helps out to do other  
 things  
 maths topics - what have stuff - class in  
 corner  
 make believe class up to play & play  
 for have play me

Silly songs, stuff → lots of class

⑨ CD my dad - special for PMP child  
 really - me really sound & TA

(3)

(10) Post experience - SHAPE YOU.

1) yes bad time at school - since by social  
views - not me at all - manster  
dreadful  
needed to work to teach - mainly, bad,  
not a colleague - blamed it for - went  
to be different - extension of me  
in school

2) - manster was really poor - nursery nurse loved  
to play - saw kids excel  
Wanted - here I am  
now gave up

4 or 5 scholars?

Oh I suppose but maybe 'thick' noble  
really got it - terrible, teacher strikes!  
now spoke at it in noble - end up  
learn of feeling nothing

train to educate not teach respect!

3) very rough / got a with / kids don't  
pursue up! teacher frustrated  
misunderstood students - spurred me  
on - like that it a  
euphoric? - or no ever!

## **Appendix D: Introductory Letter and Consent Form to Headmaster or Headmistress**

**From:** Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study

**Title of Study:** Teachers’ Pedagogies and the ‘Special’ Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

Dear Colleagues

I would like to thank you sincerely for volunteering your kind assistance with research being undertaken at your school. I would like to conduct my research project at your school with teachers and some of your learners. My research topic is **Teachers’ Pedagogies and the ‘Special’ Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools**

I draw on a variety of qualitative methods allowing teaching practices to be ‘captured’ including 4 rounds of semi-structured interviews (45-90 minutes long and recorded manually over a course of 6 months) during which teachers will be asked to recall specific classroom events and decisions in order to further depict their understandings of pedagogical practices and enable a close analysis of the language teachers use to describe their thoughts and actions. The use of reflexive personal diaries and four rounds of observations of daily practices will further enable beliefs, decisions and practices to be captured.

Before commencing with any data collection exercise I will first come to the school and explain the research and what each of the participant’s role will be. I will explain how I will go about the research and how data collection will be done.

The information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidentiality with pseudonyms ascribed and will be used solely for this research purpose only.

I would like to thank you in assisting me in this research. I hope that the information obtained from this research will benefit you most in identifying how personal experience can shape practice and curriculum delivery.

Yours Sincerely

Catherine Stewart  
-----

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E: Introductory Letter with Research Information**

**From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study**

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

Dear Colleagues

Let me begin by thanking all of you for attending this focus group regarding my research. Today's intention is to discuss with you (and before commencing with any data collection exercises) a little background on myself, the research aims, your roles and ethical procedures. I will explain how I will go about the research, how data collection will be done and answer any questions.

After today I would like to come back and hold a focus group so you can get the general feel of the research before beginning the four individual interviews.

I am the parent of two children; my son has microcephally and autism, a heady mixture I can tell you. However, this has driven my desire to investigate an important matter, and a rather under researched area regarding you the teacher.

As a teacher myself and previously a SENCo, I know what training and teaching entails and as a mother I am aware of the challenges that the curriculum brings to my son and his class teachers regardless of their passion to teach.

What I really want to capture is your day to day lives within the teaching environment, I want to examine the reality of your route to and immersion within SEN teaching. I am interested in your thoughts on the curriculum as both a whole entity and also how and in what way you diversify it to make it inclusive. Naturally all of you will have different personal experiences, concerns and triumphs regarding the issues that unfold on a day to day basis. I feel strongly that these very things should be recorded and not just statistics around how many students who have managed to achieve a certain grade, although this is interesting as well.

Through your ecologies your lived experiences I want to capture your identity, how you place yourself within your teaching, I would like a frank and open interview with yourselves to uncover where your beliefs have originated from and the storied lives you have lead so far.

All will be given verbal informed consent and written consent forms (previous multiple pilot discussions, focus groups and interviews over the last year, have shaped the end product of methodological styles and questions chosen). Data and other personal information will be collected in written form and pseudonyms will be ascribed.

Whilst aware of my status as a parent and insider research, multiple pilot interviews with staff have lessened any connotations of bias and this thesis stands to discuss teaches practices and beliefs and in no way assert capability, accountability or allude to measuring achievement targets within the school.

I would be grateful if you can take part, and I will organise a focus group to talk generally around subjects when it suits you all, after which other visits will involve interviews and observations.

Thank you once again

Catherine

## Appendix F: Participant Consent Form

**From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study**

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

I would like to thank you sincerely for volunteering your kind assistance with research being undertaken at your school. My research topic is **Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools**

I draw on a variety of qualitative methods allowing teaching practices to be 'captured' including 4 rounds of semi-structured interviews (45-90 minutes long and recorded manually over a course of 6 months) during which teachers will be asked to recall specific classroom events and decisions in order to further depict their understandings of pedagogical practices and enable a close analysis of the language teachers use to describe their thoughts and actions. The use of reflexive personal diaries and 4 rounds of observations of daily practices will further enable beliefs, decisions and practices to be captured.

The information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidentiality with pseudonyms ascribed and will be used solely for this research purpose only.

I would like to thank you in assisting me in this research. I hope that the information obtained from this research will benefit you most in identifying how personal experience can shape practice and curriculum delivery.

Yours Sincerely

Catherine Stewart  
-----

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix G: Initial Focus Group Interview Schedule with Exemplar Notes**

**From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study**

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

- 1. How would you describe a student with SLD/PMLD?**
  
- 2. What constraints are there on students:**
  - a. Educationally?**
  - b. Socially?**
  - c. Emotionally?**
  
- 3. What do you feel the curriculum should be?**
  
- 4. What would you include and why?**
  
- 5. Where do you get these ideas?**
  
- 6. Who decides which area of the curriculum to cover?**
  
- 7. What sort of training have you had?**

Focus Group 13/3/13

1. How would you describe a student with SLD/PMLD?

Complicated - very hard to reach but try to, they need attention, love and a social kind of syllabus

Socially cut off, quite diverse, not their fault, artistic students need a great deal of structure.

Hard to describe all SLD students individually, but educationally they do not appear to achieve the NC levels found in mainstream

Delayed educationally across whole NC. ∴ need a different (C)

Look at what they can do, don't do descriptions, look at probs they have, think about what's best

Throw the book away

Hard to reach some goals, they can challenge you really

Can be isolated if SLD/PMLD.

Educationally hard to teach (C)

Need independent skills

Attention deficits, often upset, frustrated hard to reach

Available and great fun

Need space -

can't cross Educa, may be seen as or  
underestimated

Complex needs, behavior stereotypes

Very young, need compassion

Think differently

## 2. What constraints are there on students':

- Educationally?
- Socially?
- Emotionally?

Educationally  
see them on diff levels  
need solid syllabus - NC ill fit  
need slower pace  
see world differently

Can't do higher levels, can't read or write often  
Need diversity, NC does not fit at all

Need mix of resources often not available

try to fit into NC that does not fit them

limited due to processing ability,

Constrained by lack of teacher training

Struggle to interpret or merge data.

News - Jesus Christ

### Socially

Kids are cruel to them

may not be physically able to mix

Socially cut off without language or sight

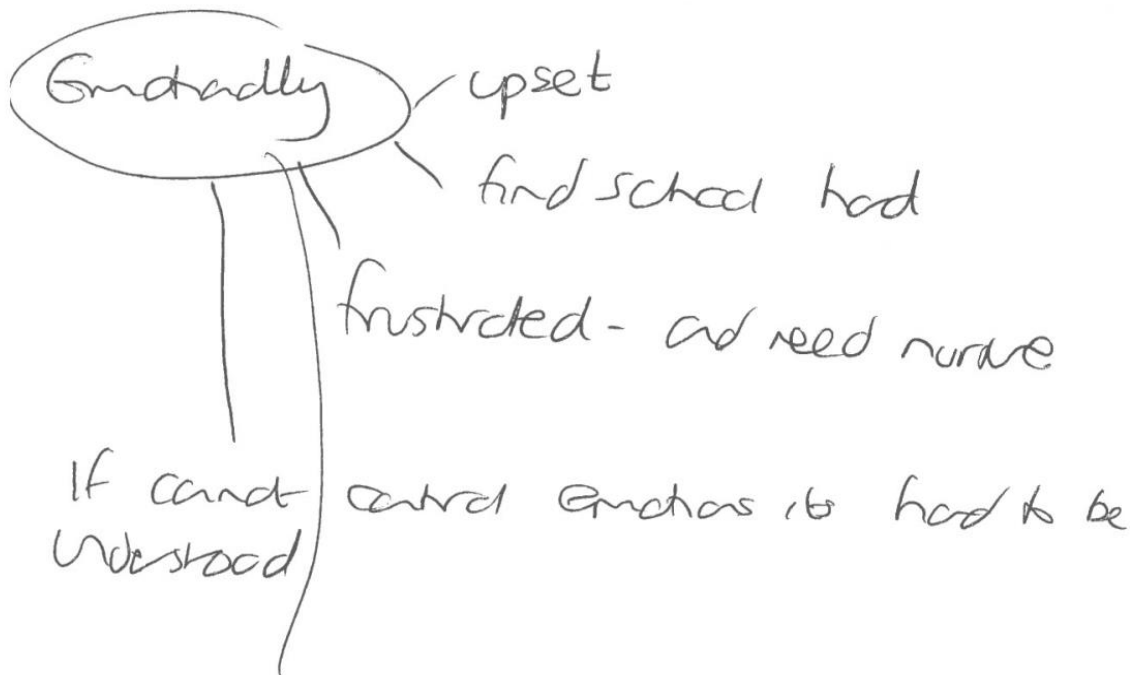
Want to play not sure how to - lonely

Social etiquette hard for them

Society blocks them

limited speech - do not understand play rules

over-laying - frightened off kids  
unable to be lonely, no social barrier  
up and down emotions - hard to engage  
may be angry - misconception for personality



Get upset so refuse to learn

Try to express emotion in way way  
Social skills mean they look at / misunderstood  
often

See world differently

Need care / love / attention so much more



Not sympathy / empathy

### 3. What do you feel the curriculum should be?

Social and inclusive with differentiation  
Safe/happy child - move with them  
Look at broad outcomes but in small chunks  
Take maths/english away @ higher levels  
not bloody nouns/adverbs  
more social curriculum  
more c student need  
tailored to include them  
promote independence  
include other things - use ~~seven~~  
look at what they can do  
what do they like  
watered down - diluted - with no  
need study but low levels - PIVATS.  
Tailored to their needs  
PSHE bits/bits of everything,  
not pushed down throats.

Not algebra!  
Clubs!  
we're slight bit  
need to  
incorporate to  
life.

4. What would you include and why?

Special skills - sensory nature stuff - can skill  
do maths/ English - this way - imagination

Independence - get a bus

Special skills - make friends, learn to control  
emotions

reinforce read/write/ symbols/ number - diff language  
not just www - use signs, express self  
skills to live

maths - slight English, Geography - get a bus

History but diluted down.

NC - no good - diversify it

Sensory education - light/sound/movement

Special awareness - geography!

How to manage in life

no nouns/ adjectives/ verbs

Adapt materials - Cant with abstract things.

Learn the time

Get dressed

Stories +  
in  
How to tell  
a tale  
I  
make friends

Survive

How it all fits not  
just static stuff down

5. Where do you get these ideas?

↳ collect PUFES

↳ my own children inspire me - to have the best to learn that way

↳ Empathy as a person, just think outside box  
years of experience as TA/nurse/ nuse/kids  
Ad - training

↳ TV ideas, in IKEA, think sensory then how much fun would I it had as a child  
look at younger children look how they explore  
mentors (peers/ colleagues - get source of inspiration)

think sense

coffee morness c' parents  
good

Mauds  
PWAAS  
ask someone

Sharon fear - at how  
always thinking

watch/read/listen - ask people what they do

Ask parents what they really like to do

Teacher stories/talks/ask them about their classes

Colleagues - great source of inspiration

6. Who decides which area of curriculum to cover?

Head sort of decides but not sure if she really knows

Head under pressure - so dilute down to me really

Look at child think what is best to do what do they like really

Government sort of tells us but I decide, its my class, I know the students

Play to strengths, know back cues

I plan the cues before hand, if it works ✓

See what child likes, struggles take it back a notch  
NA cues - take it

TA helps, tells me if struggling/ kills in gaps

Look at NC cues then think how to diversify it down

we but really also student led

Look at NC - think how can I take it  
what should I do

Include all bits but in a different way

Experience the (C) but touch/ feel DC items

meet student, Consider what they can do what  
is viable and push them a little

Head pushes for higher levels not really sure if  
I can

7. What sort of training have you had?

LAUGH Kids/Students trained me

Baptism of fire / Degree - no modules

mentors were great, think on my feet  
BA (Hons) rubbish BSc (Primary Ed) 1 module

PGCE nothing covered - placement in school  
good but short - no reflection Specialist unit  
worked in nurseries - saw that play worked

mentally hand cuffed teacher during 30 years  
ago very appropriate but now they're obsolete

Specialist training after BA Hons - TA trained me

(the hood was)

had MA - good modules

Play Diploma  
really great

School SLD/PRU unit - think on feet  
read books) papers (wanted to know  
on job! love the kids

wanted to educate not procedures really

## **Appendix H: Interview Schedules with Exemplar Notes**

**From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study**

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

### **Interview Schedule 1;**

1. **How long have you been in SEN teaching?**
2. **How long were you in mainstream?**
3. **What prompted your move to SEN?**
4. **What constraints are there on students:**
  - a) **Educationally?**
  - b) **Socially?**
  - c) **Emotionally?**
5. **Can you tell me about how you became an SLD/PMLD teacher, which route did you take, nursery nurse, T.A, mainstream to SEN?**
6. **What teacher training have you had with regards to SEN?**
7. **How has this training helped or enabled your current practice, did it prepare you:**
  - a) **Within mainstream**
  - b) **Within SEN**
8. **What if any issues occurred because of training deficits etc?**
9. **What would have been useful?**

## **Interview Schedule 2;**

1. **What does inclusion mean to you?**
2. **What hinders you from including, is it the actual curriculum, government objectives etc?**
3. **How well resourced are you, (rooms and materials) what is the impact of this?**
4. **Who decided upon these resources, what issues arose?**
5. **What do you feel the curriculum should be?**
6. **What would you include and why?**
7. **Where do you get these ideas?**
8. **Who decides which area of curriculum to cover?**
9. **What is the inclusive curriculum to you?**
10. **What issues do you have with the curriculum?**
- 11.
12. **Do you feel it fits the student?**
- 13.
14. **Are there problems with assessment, accountability, content etc?**
15. **Is it hard to diversify and if so then why?**

### **Interview Schedule 3;**

- 1. Historically what was inclusion like within your mainstream teaching or any other route taken?**
- 2. What issues emerged and how did it impact upon pedagogy?**
- 3. How has it shaped your role here in SEN?**
- 4. Historically what was school like for you, any problems and issues?**
- 5. How were the SEN students included?**
- 6. How where they taught, can you recall?**
- 7. Have any of these memories or incidents impacted upon your teaching or your beliefs in terms of how you see yourself as a teacher?**

#### **Interview Schedule 4;**

- 1. With reference to the Holland piece what are your views and comments?**
- 2. It has been said by Jones (2004) that SLD/PMLD teachers have the heart of a lion, what is your view; does it fit your identity?**
- 3. Have you found that mainstream and SEN roles differ and if so in what way?**
- 4. Do you feel that peers believe you to have a different identity or purpose?**
- 5. Why is this, have you experienced a difference in beliefs, identities, practices etc?**
- 6. What do you believe to be your purpose within the school?**
- 7. What skills would you say were important for an SLD/PMLD teacher?**

P3 I2

### SEN teaching

1) Oh been in about 10 or so years that way hey or.  
I was a nursery nurse to begin with in a special needs school for 4 years which I loved as we played a lot and it was great to see kids enjoying themselves, they were very young obviously. No idea what was to come to way the nrc would strike them.

So, or oh I did summer play schemes when I was a nursery nurse so at that school for 4 years then I went into TA work in mainstream even though I had no specific training for helping students further up the curriculum, students with problems, although I had no play training, the other TA had none, no skills and no empathy!

Disgusting really

So really 4 years in SEN then 6 years here so overall 10 years but very very different sorts of students, ages, ability and my role different

Did my degree in education lots of literature / theory then my advanced dip SEN - diversity not equality kind of feel to it

2) Mainstream - let's see I was doing TA work whilst doing my B.Ed Primary degree so 4/5 years there, ups & downs, God it was awful I think I have deliberately forgotten it!

Master's Degree - Behaviour Management in Education also when I moved here I chose the modules

At my old school it was horrible X for exceptional and Y for better - set of diff in a corridor screen

and they knew they were better of the three they

would say that "oh I am not as good as X" oh I

know I on speed" It was so nice, really pissed  
me off because should not do that for kids to feel that  
way its awful.

(3) prompted me - well the "X" for exceptional I suppose  
the bullying the way the kids felt - square peg round hole  
I did my Master degree and I chose the modules  
what I wanted to do so it helped, the tutor  
helped me as well it was great

In a way I could expect on students in  
Spw go in and talk to them, expect/desire  
what a TA I did a lot of that  
When staff said to cannot add up I would say he  
Can I help that student, different route needed  
So I will help him get there.

I hated the (C) its awful its those struggling  
K.O.D

(4) Constraints. Educationally they are not able to do  
the all (A) - but not sure if that matters not  
sure what some of the NC stuff is about - needs  
who uses them?

Get the best you can out of them whichever way  
buy lots of toys, its up to delivery as well/hom  
Can I / or kids need to focus on social  
skills esp 3 artistic things - if someone speaks  
to them you say hello you know teach them to  
fit in

Educationally they are lost yet they are forced to  
were forced in mainstream - no one asked why they  
did not fit did they just said they could not  
do it trying to fit square peg in round hole  
really

really needed to help the students - get some results  
Educationally they need more. too many targets at

P3

Mainstream level, how I reduced it could be better more play, need my own training.

I am going off today I suppose, look at that snail, stop to look at snail, why is he curled up?

When observed I put in plan I may go off from already. Students need bits of snail charcoal take it down a page or two, dilute it all a little bit make it fun for them, they are often real out and struggling.

They have neuro probs, physical / hand splints have functional that makes writing hard to do - not everyone can do this. Some still have no ephys. Its all about social and emotional support for them and get them to laugh and play and join in with them and making the child belong, help them be the best they can be.

Socially → my attitude is that they need to have feelings expressed to them, to be the best they can be.

Socially cut off must discover new interests at home/school, help them do better in groups, show DVD on for them - let them talk about the

checks, socially they are misunderstood and no friends as they find it hard to play - if you use an director of the K. Yes CP its great

Emotionally - its so bloody hard to use that they are often all over the place, frustrated, pissed off and frightened up and down like sudden

cup's! This makes it hard to make head of they are confused with teaching they may lose out, they just want all the time.

Can be so fragile its heartbreaking they are struggling to keep a lid on it at times

## ⑤ - Rate

Oh like I said in nurse in SAU school which was great like for some reason last the plot and went on TA into mainstream, God it was awful - sort of dark under, kids not sure where they sat in order of things, pecking order you know then did BED pretty much can no help to be honest

Spent early years doing summer schools in SAU really great

Also I was in the school did my MA in Behaviour management it really helped I chose the modules I wanted to do so it helped as I had a great MA as well

In a way I got to experiment on the kids - see what worked what does not

As I said I look at what they can do I say how can I help them - what resources needed.

⑥ Teaching train - Oh let's see BED-users for SAU, rather really wanted to be honest my nurses were here for better MA in behavior stuff was great

I was not educated to teach SAU in team got most from colleagues, learn on my feet on the job that is I suppose. After I have

⑦ a real sense of guilt that I am not achieving I know it's not my fault I am only human but I still feel this way, that I have not given enough to the staff that need really.

## ② Issues

Ideal world strong mix of students who on paper are fine supported but they range from P12-P34  
Very hard to engage in class

Gov and school want kids to work better but as a teacher its hard to include them all I do not feel I have done all I can for all the childrens needs/socially/educationally/emotionally because I was not sure how to - I know I wanted to teach/include

Too many activities to do yet I was not sure how to do distinct activities and did not want to exclude. For when I planned there was no idea what to do until I met the students to see what is needed and then I hope I can accommodate all the students, their needs change so much and without training it was very hard

I worked in a support base and it was horrible, I hated being a mainstream TA was not rel/ worked in 'support base' at the end of the corridor, 44 boards x for exception and 4 for 4 better.

44 kids aware where they sat in pecking order - take for withdrawal sessions 1:1 done and removed from class - students left doing work paper/pencil power law set stuff Helped to deliver a © no use to them at all no use yrs absolutely no use to them -

As a TA I had specific training for helping students with problems, although

I had no play training other TA had  
none, I think she hated the kids

@user1

Would have been really nice to have had  
more of the stuff I did at MA level  
You know the appropriate hands on experiential  
set of student led stuff I did  
My module choices helped so much  
and the practical side and tutor was a  
of God send

## Appendix I: Observation Schedule

<b>Observation Schedule Checklist</b>
<b>1. How many teachers</b>
<b>2. How many TA's</b>
<b>3. How many students</b>
<b>4. What are the cohorts?</b>
<b>5. How many have SLD/PMLD/Autism/ Sight Problems/ Hearing Problems/ Mobility Problems/ Speech problems?</b>
<b>6. In what way does cohort special need impact upon their ability to access lesson content?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physically</li><li>• Educationally</li><li>• Socially</li><li>• Emotionally</li></ul>
<b>7. What is the room like?</b>
<b>8. What is the curriculum objective/lesson aims?</b>
<b>9. How is the teacher including everyone?</b>
<b>10. What resources are used to aid learning and access to lesson aims</b>
<b>11. Are there any problems with the ability to include and what are they?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resources Issues</li><li>• Room Issues</li><li>• Student Issues</li></ul>
<b>12. What is the teacher doing?</b>
<b>13. Critical moments / anything else</b>

### Observation Schedule checklist

1. How many teachers (P702) 1

2. How many TA's 3

3. How many students ~~13~~ 14

4. What are the cohorts: How many have SLD/PMLD/Autism/ Sight Problems/ Hearing Problems/ Mobility Problems/ Speech problems?

- 4 C SLD - Speech, 2 with writing ability.
- 2 C SLD (Both in a wheelchair with keyboard to communicate)
- 1 C PMLD - wheelchair bound/limited speech, hand gestures
- 1 boy with severe autism, has limited speech
- 1 girl with hearing difficulty - communicate very well, verbally and signing, can read/write well.
- 3 with moderate difficulty - described as on the cusp' almost ok for mainstream
- 2 boys MLD almost ready for college, all speech, writing ability

5. In what way does cohort special need impact upon their ability to access lesson content?

- Physically
- Educationally
- Socially - MD can't socially mix.
- Emotionally (can't share very excited too much!)

socially  
low -

socially  
cut off  
slightly

2 students (SLD) need large physical space due to chairs, hand malformation makes writing hard so computer keyboard utilised - can't note take.

1 student (PMD, wheelchair bound, hand/foot malformation) make it very hard to move beyond palm grip so can't utilise any marking instruments - can't take notes (also doing different curriculum)

Educationally - 2 SLD (wheelchair) need desk (C) that can fit into computer system

Student (PMD) can't access full lesson content due to working memory problems & gross motor skill loss  
Student with hearing difficulty checked off schedule etc to do work

Severely autistic student not able to access any (C) via overhead - can't socially interact.

6. What is the room like?

Very large, lots of space, excellent heat system but lots of chaos to sit in, lots of tables, but not all can access resources so other rooms used.

Specialist teaching equip in another room

Student taken out to use it.

exam practice  
 mark making  
 insects  
 walking in hotel  
 writing news (PSHE)

7. What are the curriculum objective/lesson aims?

Very mixed, 5 different @ being delivered!

2 students in char c SD + captions done under  
 of lesson cons - doing insect work on computer with  
 help from TA.

PMED student marking making on sheets with legs  
 printed on, using textures/sensory equipment to  
 be 'included'

Older MED students practice for exam on walking in  
 a hotel, talking in groups, practicing writing CU  
 answering phrases etc (for examination paper)

Younger MED students doing PSHE, writing about  
 visits to restaurants and doing a review on that  
 with help from TA/teacher for grammar/punctuation  
 content.

Student with hearing problems goes off to access  
 a specialist program for hearing difficulty in  
 order to do the work to ensure she can be  
 assessed on learning

Student c autism sitting on floor, tearing at his  
 clothes, trying to make himself heard - very upsetting  
 for all around. Generally sits at table and  
 is encouraged to use sensory materials.

8. How is the teacher including everyone?

Fantastic → Wh. board work to cover the insect  
section of the (C) whilst talking  
walks to student checking papers to explain what  
they must do in other room. / Sets up student in  
discussion groups.  
Then produces sensory materials for student  
with PMLD runs hands over materials encourages  
touching, smelling, talking, empathy / respectfully.  
Goes to discussion group with TA support to  
discuss hotel scenario's based on ~~the~~ work  
Quickly highlight exam techniques - all  
the while including all in class talking, engaging  
multiple types of (C) and co-teacher using  
jokes, making all welcome.  
Younger students with PMLD in groups checks  
handwriting for PSHG task, talks to them  
encourages correct spelling, very encouraging, says  
that's a great name, God I would love to  
eat that.  
Goes down to floor level for student with  
cubism, encourages sitting, gives materials to  
student, talks respectfully - using jokes.  
TA is aiding this transition

9. What resources are used to aid learning and access to lesson aims

Whiteboard <sup>Visuals for student</sup>  
- display insects <sup>CPWD.</sup>  
- Key words  
- Tasks (insects/PSME/hotel/exam paper)  
gives all those to 2 students in wheelchairs with copies

Sensory, hardsaft materials for student with PMUD uses more visuals

Telephones/ropegrab chair set up for MUA student to practice for exam, exam papers given with appropriate covers

Specialist paper for girl with heavy difficulty, she is taken by TA to other room with specialist machine to complete tasks.

Faux menus, ropegrabs for other students during the exam or (PSME stuff) for restaurant tasks.

TA support other hand materials for the student with autism

Printed?

PICADILLY CIRCUS / upselling  
LOTS of © - very diverse  
requires great skill Exhausting

Stretched to limits!

10. Are there any problems with the ability to include and what are they?

- Resources Issues
- Room Issues
- Student Issues

Resources, part of program will not load onto Computer so have to come back to it later

TA overburdened, running around

Lovely sensory resources

Exam papers not really conducive to task covered as few exam board not yet fully given at examples yet exam is in 1 month!

No specialist equipment for girl with hearing prob gone elsewhere - comes back later but has missed bills.

Team - large group but not all equipment needed so students/core & go.

Other students have to leave to search internet for exam stuff that's not available in teacher room

In-out/in/out

Students - very mixed cohort / inclusion very good to do / cover - all @ topics very hard at any level of depth - Teacher stretched to limits!

## 11. Critical moments / anything else

Bay with autism very hard to engage, quite angry and stops some of lesson discussions.

Teacher stop/start on people going in and out of class to access other resources.

Not sure how much of © being delivered to depth for those with more complex needs

Teacher amazing, ~~is~~ demeanor is so empathising / tenacity / willingness to engage multiple © multiple complex needs (none appearing stressed / have reaction to stimuli in (-) manner

Piccadilly - quite chaotic at times

Atisha should not be feel upset!

## Appendix J: Researcher Diary Field Notes Example

23/5/14 (P9) thoughts.

Seems that not all teachers are inclusive or indeed want to include. One artistic boy was really held back according to xx at xx school. - She spoke of him not being able to jump in puddles due to autism! Other teachers seem to pathologise him, not really fair, never gave him a chance. This teacher thought differently - good for her, she's right to not give up - go the extra mile.

Excellent that shos worked on a form, got the kids dirty, like the idea, may do that myself, wonder if (A) has any wellies that fit.

Agree that (A) needs to be sociable, 'say hello' try to fit in/accepted/be able to communicate if he gets lost, not to panic.

Like the carpet idea, try things out, try to diversify things a little.

Really happy a full science/dinner/maths based day was happening - echoes (A) timetable must be hard to do but she is determined to try it out.

Love the get rid of the crap idea, love the not relying on one person idea, good for all kids really

Independence seems key as does wanting to look for other resources, the non fear approach to try it and see that seems to come from her rough and ready outdoorsy and childhood.

School ideals differ from hers, perhaps her life has enabled this - her words.

Here to push the NC but not sure it fits with student needs, here to get grades - at what cost, learning should be fun and make them feel they have accomplished something real not trodden down.

NC - my frustrations

Does not fit

Hoop jumping

Other teachers do not let them live at all treat them like they are made of China and limit their experiences.

They have used child's diagnosis to define what the student can/cannot do.

Do not like this labeling, teachers should see individual positives (which they seem to do) gets on my nerves, gets their passed off totally quite upsetting but great to much about they are uninvolved they have had parents that care that refused to sit around, not playing, being free.

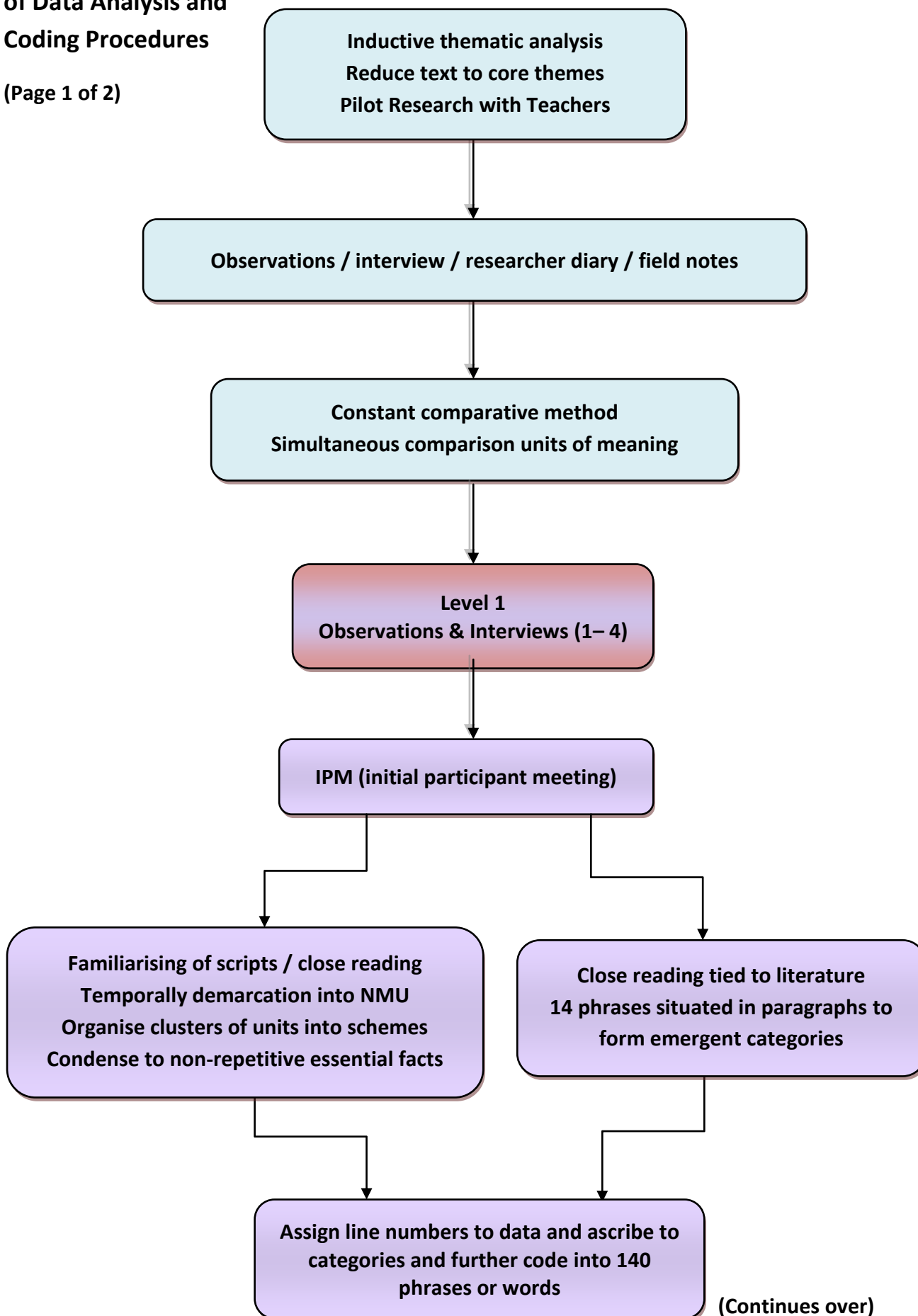
Learning without coercion

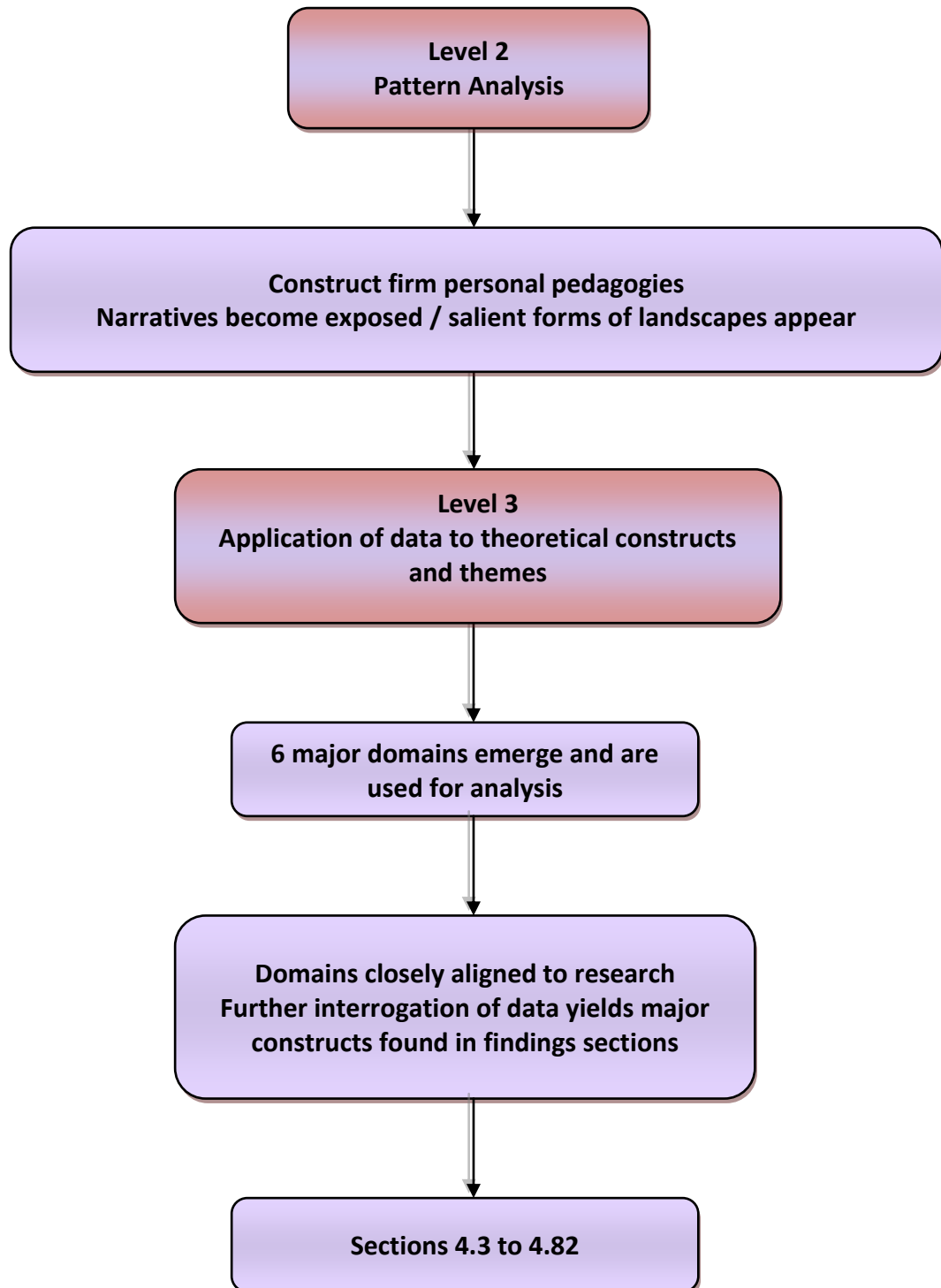
Different child at school 'hidden' away like the school pet like (A) disgusting yet think its including

Gov wants them to go to ITALY - GIVE THEM PIZZA EVEN IF THEY HATE CHEESE AND ITS BAD FOR THEM

**Appendix K: Illustration  
of Data Analysis and  
Coding Procedures**

(Page 1 of 2)





## **Appendix L: Vignette Piece by Emily Perl Kingsley**

**From: Catherine Stewart – Doctoral Research Study**

**Title of Study:** Teachers' Pedagogies and the 'Special' Curriculum: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Teachers That Shape the Ecologies of SLD/PMLD Schools

### **Vignette Piece by Emily Perl Kingsley**

WELCOME TO HOLLAND by Emily Perl Kingsley c.1987 by Emily Perl Kingsley. All rights reserved

WELCOME TO HOLLAND

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy." But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay. The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met. It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts. But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss. But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

"Welcome to Holland (Part 2)" by Emily Perl Kingsley

I have been in Holland for over a decade now. It has become home. I have had time to catch my breath, to settle and adjust, to accept something different than I'd planned.

I reflect back on those years of past when I had first landed in Holland. I remember clearly my shock, my fear, my anger - the pain and uncertainty. In those first few years, I tried to get back to Italy as planned, but Holland was where I was to stay. Today, I can say how far I have come on this unexpected journey. I have learned so much more. But, this too has been a journey of time. I worked hard. I bought new guidebooks. I learned a new language and I slowly found my way around this new land. I have met others whose plans had changed like mine, and who could share my experience. We supported one another and some have become very special friends. Some of these fellow travellers had been in Holland longer than I and were seasoned guides, assisting me along the way. Many have encouraged me. Many have taught me to open my eyes to the wonder and gifts to behold in this new land. I have discovered a community of caring. Holland wasn't so bad. I think that Holland is used to wayward travellers like me and grew to become a land of hospitality, reaching out to welcome, to assist and to support newcomers like me in this new land. Over the years, I've wondered what life would have been like if I'd landed in Italy as planned. Would life have been easier? Would it have been as rewarding? Would I have learned some of the important lessons I hold today? Sure, this journey has been more challenging and at times I would (and still do) stomp my feet and cry out in frustration and protest. And, yes, Holland is slower paced than Italy and less flashy than Italy, but this too has been an unexpected gift. I have learned to slow down in ways too and look closer at things, with a new appreciation for the remarkable beauty of Holland with its tulips, windmills and Rembrandts. I have come to love Holland and call it Home. I have become a world traveler and discovered that it doesn't matter where you land. What's more important is what you make of your journey and how you see and enjoy the very special, the very lovely, things that Holland, or any land, has to offer. Yes, over a decade ago I landed in a place I hadn't planned. Yet I am thankful, for this destination has been richer than I could have imagined.

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