

THE DYNAMICS OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examines policy development in special educational needs and explores provision and practice at the local authority and school level in England. These issues are analysed in a framework of public policy theory, with recent legislative developments providing the setting for field research. Based on surveys, case studies and in-depth interviews with key players in the provision of special education, the study is intended to illuminate the factors that impede or facilitate local responses to national policies.

The thesis begins by examining the origins of, and developments in, special education and the extent to which such needs are recognised, identified and accommodated. It then explores the key implementation theories that provide the context for an understanding of the local uptake of policies and the gaps between aspirations and achievements.

The policy discourse surrounding the concept of 'inclusion' is itself shrouded in ambiguity. The study investigates the various interpretations of the concept and examines the ways in which it is operationalised at the local level. LEAs and schools' responses to the new legislative requirements are analysed, as are the factors that influence its planning, resourcing and provision. Parents and voluntary organisations enjoy a special status in the implementation of national policies on inclusion and the extent to which they contribute nationally to the inclusion agenda, and work together with LEAs at the local level is addressed.

The thesis concludes by revisiting the empirical findings from an analytical standpoint, using the perspectives of implementation theory. Some concluding observations are then made to draw together the various strands of analysis and evidence that the thesis has presented.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ACF | Advocacy Coalition Framework |
| AEN | Additional Educational Needs |
| CM | Communications Model |
| CSIE | Centre for Studies on Integration in Education |
| DES | Department of Education and Science |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| EBD | Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EiC | Excellence in Cities |
| EPS | Educational Psychology Services |
| ESN | Educationally Sub-Normal |
| FSM | Free School Meals |
| GEST | Grants for Education Support and Training |
| GMS | Grant Maintained Status |
| HMI | Her Majesty's Inspectorate |
| IEP | Individual Education Plan |
| ILEA | Inner London Education Authority |
| IRF | Implementation Regime Framework |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| LMS | Local Management of Schools |
| LSB | Local Schools Budget |
| MLD | Moderate Learning Difficulties |
| NASEN | National Association for Special Educational Needs |
| NCC | National Curriculum Council |
| NFER | National Foundation of Educational Research |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| PPO | Parent Partnership Officer |
| PPS | Parent Partnership Services |
| PRU | Pupil Referral Unit |
| SEC | Special Education Consortium |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| SEN | Special Educational Needs |
| SENAG | Special Educational Needs Advisory Group |
| SENCO | Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator |
| SLD | Severe Learning Difficulties |
| SpLD | Specific Learning Difficulties |
| SRP | Specially Resourced Provisions |
| SSA | Standard Spending Assessment |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

International context

The concept of inclusive education enjoys a high profile worldwide and has been incorporated into policy documents of several nations along with the United Nations (UN). Although the concept of inclusion is interpreted differently in various countries, it has common roots in the underlying theme of human rights and equal opportunities. Numerous declarations, covenants, conventions and protocols in international forums provide a platform to policy makers to develop, test and refine their inclusive education philosophy in the process of evolving their own education systems.

In 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* affirmed the right to education of every individual. It led to other declarations, such as the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, 1959 and the *Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled Persons*, 1975 that established the education of children with disabilities as a human rights issue. In declaring 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Persons*, a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, made a commitment to provide educational services to children with disabilities.¹ The *International Decade for Disabled Persons* 1983-92, adopted by the UN, strengthened the commitment of the international community to this cause and motivated other countries to

¹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (1981) *International Year of Disabled Persons*, World Conference on Actions and Strategies for Education, Prevention and Integration. Sundberg: UNESCO.

follow suit. The decade witnessed a number of decisions, legislative acts, and resolutions by individual governments. During the World Conference on *Education For All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs* held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, the world leaders renewed their pledge to ensure the right to education of every child regardless of individual differences.²

Providing for the special educational needs (SEN) of children is captured in the idea of 'inclusion', a concept that gained momentum in a series of international developments during the 1990s.³ The United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Conference on Special Needs Education of 1994 held in Salamanca released a *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. The conference brought 92 senior government representatives and 25 international non-governmental organisations' representatives under one roof to renew their commitment to EFA pledged in Jomtien four years earlier. It triggered the member states to formulate strategies that would support movements towards inclusive schooling. Article 2 of the Salamanca Statement stated that:

regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.⁴

² World Conference on Education For All (1990) *World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*. UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank: New York.

³ Ainscow, M. (1998) 'Exploring links between special needs and school improvement', *Support for Learning*, 13 (2), 70-75.

⁴ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (1994) *The Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

It laid down the principal guidelines for future national and international policies on education.⁵ Article 18 stated that, ‘educational policies at all levels should stipulate that children with disabilities should attend their neighbourhood school that is the school that would be attended if the child did not have the disability.’⁶

The series of UN initiatives raised a number of key issues. They emphasised upon the principle of equality of opportunity for children with disabilities and called for Education For All (EFA) to be incorporated into national policies of the member states. Greater planning and co-ordination between the agencies implementing those policies and support for inclusive schools from the agencies were highlighted. Partnerships between parents, voluntary organisations and governmental and non-governmental organisations were identified as crucial to achieving change.

The *World Education Forum*, 2000 held in Dakar mobilised even stronger national and international political commitments to EFA. It motivated the member states to develop action plans and enhance their financial investments in basic education. The EFA 2000 Assessment conducted at national, regional, and international levels provided an opportunity to assess the achievements, lessons and failures of the past decade. It concluded that efforts were being made by some member states in realising the vision of Jomtien Declaration on inclusion. Despite severe economic constraints and rapid population growth, primary school enrolments had increased

⁵ Sebba, J. and Ainscow, M. (1996) ‘International developments in inclusive education: Mapping the issues’, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26 (1), 5-18.

⁶ UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement*.

worldwide by some 82 million pupils since 1990. Progress, however, was limited in case of children with SEN.

Millions of children with SEN were denied their right to education. Although the concepts of human rights and equality of opportunity cut across national boundaries,⁷ their impact on policies and practices for providing education to children with SEN remained marginal. However, with the onset of the inclusive education agenda, governments incorporated the ideals of equal rights and opportunities in developing SEN policies.

Translating policies into practice was always a challenge as the gap between vision and reality remained constant. Several issues contributed to the customary gap between policy intentions and practices. Competing for limited resources, struggle with other policies, complex nature of the issue of inclusive education were some of the issues identified and analysed in research studies to comprehend the policy - implementation gap.⁸ Such studies joined the bandwagon of global debate about inclusive education throughout the world.

⁷ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (1996) *Legislation pertaining to Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO

⁸ Loxley, A. and Thomas, G. (1997) 'From inclusive policy to exclusive real world: an international review', *Disability and Society*, 12 (2): 273-91.

The development of policy for Special Educational Needs

Just as the education of children with SEN became an integral part of the inclusive education agenda of governments in various countries, so too in Britain, where such policies came to be firmly grounded on the notion of equality of opportunity. These new concerns are reflected in the current government's commitment to providing *Excellence for All* by 2002⁹, and policy is now explicitly informed by the concept of inclusiveness:

Inclusion is not a simple concept, restricted to issues of placement. Its definition has to encompass broad notions of educational access and recognise the importance of catering for diverse needs. Moreover, inclusive principles highlight the importance of meeting children's individual needs, of working in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers and of involving teachers and schools in the development of more inclusive approaches. Inclusion is a process not a state.¹⁰

This interpretation of the term 'inclusion', which implies a whole school policy within mainstream education and a celebration of diversity, is distinct from the former ideology of 'integration', which was to serve the purpose of 'normalisation'. The Warnock Report of 1978 was an important landmark in the development of special educational needs policies.¹¹ Its recommendations firmly established the principle of integration of children

⁹ Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs*. Green Paper London: DfEE.

¹⁰ National Association for Special Educational Needs (1999) *Position statement on Delegation of SEN Support Services to schools*. 23 November. Tamworth: NASEN.

¹¹ Department for Education and Science (1978) *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*. The Warnock Report, London: HMSO.

with special educational needs in mainstream education and influenced policy changes in legislation since the early 1980s.

In response to Warnock's recommendations, the Education Act 1981 required over a million and a half children with special educational needs to have equality of access to mainstream schools. The Act directed the local authorities to place children with SEN in mainstream schools, if certain important provisos could be met namely, that such placements were appropriate to the special educational needs of the pupils, were compatible with the efficient use of resources, and with the efficient education of other children in the school. Despite the increased rights of parents in decision making and redress of grievances, the implementation of the 1981 Education Act was fraught with problems, not least an insufficiency of resources and a reluctance to place pupils with SEN in mainstream schools.

The changes introduced by the Education Reform Act, 1988¹² reaffirmed 'integration' in principle and provided for a uniform National Curriculum for all children, including those with special educational needs. The Education Act 1993 sought, wherever possible, to ensure entitlement to education for children with special educational needs in a mainstream school. Subsequently, a statutory guidance document, the Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs was introduced.¹³ The Code set out a five-stage framework of guidance to LEAs and to the governing bodies of all maintained and non-maintained schools regarding the policies and practices

¹² Department for Education and Science (1988) Circular 7/88, *Education Reform Act: Local Management of Schools*. London: HMSO

¹³ Department for Education (1994) *The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*. London: DES.

aimed at ‘enabling pupils with SEN to reach their full potential’. This involved LEAs and schools formulating Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Annual Reviews of statements for children with SEN to assess and meet the special educational needs of such children.

Although most statutes and declarations strongly upheld the principle of equality of opportunity and social justice in all aspects of life, they differed considerably in their identification of the disadvantage they sought to remedy. For the UN, special educational needs were so defined as to incorporate disabilities. In 1993, The UN produced 22 Standard Rules on the Equalisations of Opportunities for Disabled Person:

States should recognise the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the Education System.¹⁴

In Britain, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities, but only in so far as it related to access to employment, buildings, services and the environment in general. The education of children, however, was otherwise excluded from the provisions of the Act. In contrast, under the Education Act 1996, disability and special educational needs were to fall under the same rubric.

¹⁴ United Nations (1993) *United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* Rule 6. New York: UN.

Recent developments under New Labour

The Education Act of 1996 extended the Education Act 1993 to enhance parent participation in decisions regarding provision for of their child's special educational needs. With the election of New Labour, policy for SEN moved rapidly. The Green Paper *Excellence for all Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs*, published in October 1997, promoted the inclusion of children with SEN within mainstream schools. The Green Paper marked the advent of a new approach to education, an approach that would address the issues of social justice and inequality in more depth. It sought to redefine the role of special schools and to remove barriers that inhibit the retention of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. The objective was to increase the number of mainstream schools that could accept a wide range of children with SEN. First few attempts were directed towards retaining children with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and learning difficulties. This was followed by subsequent increase in expenditure to secure provisions and remove barriers to inclusion in schools.

The Green Paper reaffirmed the significance of raising standards of all pupils, including those with SEN:

Our vision is of excellence for all. This inclusive vision emphasises children with special educational needs... Good provision for SEN does not mean a sympathetic acceptance of low achievement. It means a tough-minded determination to show that children with SEN are capable of excellence... The great majority of children with SEN will, as adults, contribute as members of society.¹⁵

¹⁵ Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Excellence in Schools*, White Paper. London: HMSO. p. 4.

The early identification of disabilities and appropriate intervention in order to raise standards of pupils with SEN were the key policy features of the Green Paper. These were an extension to the policies set out in the White Paper, which were expected to raise the standards of all children, especially in literacy and numeracy. Setting high expectations of children with SEN implied improved provisions for their specific needs, although some considered the claims to excellence and raising standards of children with SEN to be mere 'rhetoric'.¹⁶

A feature of the new policies enunciated in the White and Green Papers was the enhancement of the role of parents of children with SEN. The Green Paper recognised three broad aspects of parental empowerment: choice, entitlement and partnership. Increasing the choice of schools and ensuring that parents no longer had to depend upon statutory statements was the only way of safeguarding the interest of their child. Partnership involved the promise of multi-agency support from local education authority (LEA), health and social services and voluntary agencies along with the support of an independent advisor - the 'Named Person' - who would work with the parents during the assessment period.

Early intervention was seen as important in order to reduce the need for more expensive intervention at a later stage. The underlying aim was to achieve 'value for money' and cost-effectiveness in provision. The principal

¹⁶ Lloyd, C. (2000) 'Excellence for *all* children- false promises! The failure of current policy for inclusive education and implications for schooling in the 21st century', *Inclusive Education*, 4 (2), 133-151.

cost driver in SEN was the automatic attachment of funding to each child assessed as having special needs. This statutory process, known as ‘statementing’, centred on a full assessment and written statement of the individual child's difficulties and requirements. As a procedure, statementing raised many doubts and concerns. The significant increase in the number of statements made by schools, apparently as a means of their obtaining the extra funds attached to each statemented child, provided the incentive to new thinking.¹⁷ In 1997, 3 per cent children of the entire school population were identified as having statements of SEN, a figure comparable to that identified in the Warnock Report twenty years ago. Having remained broadly stable for many years, the number of children statemented had grown steadily since 1991 from 153,228 to 232,995 in 1997, with almost all this growth taking place in mainstream schools, where the number had more than doubled from 62,000 to 134,000.¹⁸ Reducing the number of pupils with statements was not just a measure to cut costs but it signalled government's commitment to promote inclusive practices in schools.

The 1997 Green Paper set out targets to be achieved in every LEA by 2002, including the provision of greater support for parents through parent partnership schemes, and a reduction in the number of appeals to SEN tribunals. Greater use of school-based assessment of SEN as prescribed by the Code and reduction in the proportion of children in need of a statement was required through improved co-operation between LEAs, social services

¹⁷ Duffield, J., Riddell, S. and Brown, S. (1995) *Policy Practice and Provision for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties*. Aldershot: Avebury.

¹⁸ Department for Education and Employment (1998) *Special Educational Needs in Schools in England*. First Release: National Statistics. (Provisional Estimates). London: DfEE.

departments and health authorities. Other targets were intended to achieve a more widespread use of information technology to support education of children with SEN, greater provision for speech and language therapy and for continuing professional development. Planned programmes of action to help primary schools to identify and tackle emotional and behavioural problems at an early stage were set out. The key to success of the new policy would be to achieve greater readiness among mainstream schools in accepting children with SEN and a corresponding change in the role of special schools. In 1998, the government announced a £60 million programme of action to improve the special education provision, including £21million to be spent in 1999/2000.¹⁹

In 2000 the government introduced the Special Educational Needs and Disability Rights Bill to amend the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, together with Section 316 of the Education Act 1996. The bill incorporated the education recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force as set out in its report entitled *From Exclusion to Inclusion*.²⁰ Specifically, the bill modified the conditional obligation upon LEAs under section 316 of the Education Act, 1996, which was to offer mainstream schooling to all children with SEN, unless it would not meet the needs of the child, were against the wishes of the parents, or affected the 'efficient education' of other children, or militated against the efficient use of resources. The bill removed all but two of these exceptions. The Special Educational Consortium (SEC), which comprises of voluntary agencies, local

¹⁹ Department for Education and Employment (1999) *SEN Update 2*. London: DfEE.

²⁰ Department for Education and Employment (1999) *From Exclusion to Inclusion: Report of the Disability Rights Task Force*. London: DfEE.

government associations and teaching unions, criticised the government for retaining two caveats of the parents' wishes and of other children's needs, on the grounds that it would reverse the progress made so far in inclusive education.²¹

Key issues in Special Educational Needs provision

Opinion on the government's 1997 proposals was divided, and responses mixed. While the majority of LEAs supported the principle of inclusion, reservations were expressed about the practicalities, on grounds of inadequate resources, staff training facilities and physical access. Many pointed to the need to change cultures and attitudes and emphasised the dangers of placing children in schools that were inadequately resourced or prepared to teach them.²²

LEAs identified potential barriers to realising their inclusion policies as arising from the unfavourable attitudes of parents and teachers and, of course, limited resources. Arguably, the incompatibility between the 'inclusive educational values' and prevalence of competitive environment

²¹ Education Act 1996, Section 316 stipulates that a child who has special educational needs and a statement may be refused admission in a mainstream school if this would be incompatible with (a) the wishes of the child's parents; or (b) the provision of efficient education of other children.

²² Coopers and Lybrand (1993) *Within reach: access for disabled children to mainstream education*. London: National Union of Teachers in association with The Spastics Society. See also Jordan, L. and Goodey, C. (1996) *Human rights and school change: the Newham story*. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. These studies examined the financial aspects of special needs provision and assessed the relationship between levels of expenditure

generated by increased parental choice and selection had resulted in a considerable increase in the number of SEN exclusions in mainstream schools.²³ Whilst inclusion is reiterated in official documents, the role of special schools remained elusive in the midst of increasing exclusionary practices.

Prior to the most recent initiatives, so few English local authorities moved towards fuller integration that it was difficult to draw any general conclusions about the implementation of inclusivity. There was, however, some limited evidence that the cultural changes commonly thought to be a pre-requisite of policy change were best fostered by the experience of change itself. That apart, there seemed little indication that either legislation or LEA policies were especially powerful forces of change. A review of the field concludes that the legislative framework for SEN in England and Wales, ‘maintains ambiguities, leading to wide variations in opportunities for inclusive education between and even within districts.’²⁴ This is supported by another analysis, which found that the majority of LEAs were committed to integration, but equally stressed the need to maintain a continuum of provision through special schools.²⁵

The initial impact of the Code of Practice on LEAs and schools was found to be highly variable despite the purpose of national policy being to reduce

²³ Corbett, J. (1999) ‘Inclusive education and school culture’, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3 (1): 56-61.

²⁴ Sebba, J. and Sachdev, D. (1997) *What Works in Inclusive Education?* Ilford: Barnardos. p. 74

²⁵ Lee, B. and Henkhuzens, Z. (1997) *Integration in Progress: Pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools*. Slough: NFER.

variations.²⁶ While some LEAs had only 2 per cent of pupils with statements, in others they exceeded 4 per cent. At the school level, the variations in the number of pupils on SEN registers were more striking - ranging from 5 to 40 per cent. Policy was accordingly directed towards practices that encouraged greater consistency in making statements. The government ruled out providing national or local criteria, or setting national expectations in the form of quotas so as to impose uniformity in the proportions of children with statements countrywide. Instead, reducing inconsistency was to be achieved by distinguishing between the educational and non-educational needs of the child and clarifying the responsibility of each agency involved in educational provision. The new regime for SEN was also geared to identifying good practice and investigating the causes of delays in completing assessments of pupils with SEN within the given statutory time.

Despite the pace of policy development, it remains the case that little is known about how far, or under what influences, inclusivity has been advanced at the local level. Indeed, one trenchant critic has characterised the entire SEN agenda as shot through with:

rhetoric... fundamental misunderstandings and confusion about the issues... There seems to be a complete failure to recognise that these are problematic and contentious concepts open to a number of different interpretations.²⁷

²⁶ Derrington, C., Evans, C. and Lee, B. (1994) *The Code in Practice: The impact on Schools and LEAs*. Slough: NFER/Nelson.

²⁷ Lloyd, 'Excellence for *all* children- false promises!'.

The criteria for assessment have been so vague as to raise the expenditure, especially by political and professional considerations, by parental pressures and by the operation of the appeals system. In London in particular, the rate of appeals is higher than elsewhere, and acts as a powerful driver of officer time, administrative costs and resource allocation.²⁸

Confusions surrounding the term inclusion have been largely responsible for the reluctance to interpret the policy in definitive and practical terms. Inclusion was understood as moving students from special to mainstream schools rather than a, ‘continuous pedagogical and organisational development in response to pupil diversity.’²⁹ The problem was to keep a balance between retaining parents’ rights to make their choice of a special school for their child and the pressure for inclusion in mainstream schools. Research studies revealed the reluctance of mainstream schools to admit pupils with SEN, as to do so would have a negative impact upon the schools’ performance tables published annually by LEAs and in turn on parents’ choices. In order to safeguard the admission arrangements for children with SEN in mainstream schools, the Green Paper recommended a transformation in the league or performance tables. However, to what extent such a change would enable the LEAs to include value-added data, to be more representative of the levels of achievement of children with SEN remains unclear at present. The conflict between the policy agendas on raising

²⁸ Evans, P. (1999) ‘Globalisation and cultural transmission: the role of international agencies in developing inclusive practice’, in Daniels, H. and Garner, P. (eds.) *World Year Book of Education: Inclusive Education*, 229-37. London: Kogan Page.

²⁹ Evans, ‘Globalisation and cultural transmission’.

standards of pupil achievement and promoting inclusion in mainstream schools further adds to the prevailing confusion.

The structure of the thesis

It is clear that there is considerable variation in special educational needs provision, and a lack of congruence between national policy statements and guidance and their implementation in practice by local education authorities and schools. In order to understand these patterns and the influences that gave rise to them, it is necessary to study the ways in which local responses to national policies have emerged. The thesis will explore implementation gaps and investigate the factors that bear upon the differential uptake of policy in contrasting areas of London. Specifically, it will examine developments at LEA and school levels, with particular reference to the ambiguities surrounding the concepts of inclusion and integration, how such concepts are interpreted in practice, and the way children are assessed and their provision resourced. The thesis will explore the involvement of parents and other stakeholders in these processes.

The following chapter traces the origins and charts the developments in educational provision for children with SEN. Post-war developments were significant, with the Warnock report of 1978 heralding a new era of integrated education system in Britain. The 1990s provided a further impetus with new legislative developments reiterating the importance of the principles of quality, diversity, choice and accountability. This chapter reviews key provisions of successive acts introduced in this decade

culminating in the 1997 Green Paper, which for the first time focused exclusively on SEN.

Chapter 3 *Conceptualising Policy Implementation for Inclusive Education* sets the theoretical context for understanding the process of policy implementation. The main debates in the approaches to implementation are critically reviewed, together with identifying the key factors that are central to achieving effective implementation. Such an analysis provides the framework for an understanding of the extent to which policy goals become translated – or not – into action at the LEA and school level.

Local authorities vary in their social, cultural, political and historical circumstances that shape approaches to inclusion and integration of children with SEN. Chapter 4, *Local Variations on a Theme*, presents profiles of the eight case study authorities illuminating developments in inclusion and equal opportunities policies in each of these localities, together with provision they make for special schools, statementing and parent partnership schemes. This analysis provides the background for the chapter to follow that focuses on the responses of boroughs and schools to changing legislative requirements. *Responding to the new agenda: LEAs and Schools* Chapter 5, examines issues such as the new funding arrangements, the implications of government initiatives for LEA plans for inclusion and their impact on LEA and school relationships.

The analysis of schools and LEA responses is taken further in Chapter 6. *Inclusion in Theory and Practice* examines the different interpretations of the concept of inclusion by LEAs, schools, parents and voluntary

organisations and shows how these varying perceptions impact upon their approaches to such policies as equal opportunities, special schools, mainstreaming and enhancing participation in learning.

Parents and voluntary organisations remain central to the Blair government's initiatives to provide excellence for all in education. *Parents as Partners* – Chapter 7 – draws upon interviews with parents and organisations that represent the interests of parents with children who have SEN and examines their role in building partnerships and influencing the national agenda. The nature of relations between parents, schools and voluntary organisations are explored as are their links with the local boroughs.

Having presented an empirical analysis of the responses of LEAs, schools, parents and voluntary organisations to legislative requirements, the concluding chapter on *Implementing Inclusive Education Policy* assesses the factors that bear upon the implementation of SEN policies in the light of the contributions made by implementation theorists. It concludes that for any future SEN policy to work effectively, it is imperative that ambiguities inherent in the inclusion discourse are set aside in favour of a consistent and explicit programme to which local compliance may be sought.

Research methods

The study draws upon primary and secondary sources, including press reports, local authority documents, committee papers and reports as well as specialist journals and official publications. The principal primary source

material was of two kinds. The first took the form of two surveys: a national census survey of all LEAs in England and a more focused survey of schools in the eight case study London authorities. The second involved in-depth interviews with LEA officials, DfES, teachers, head teachers, and representatives of voluntary organisations and of parents as service users.

A postal questionnaire was sent to all 150 LEAs, to which 87 per cent responded and was designed to seek information on LEA policies on inclusion or SEN; special educational needs service provision, and funding. The questionnaire, reproduced in Appendix B, explored the issues on policy decision-making and implementation, dynamics of statementing, closures of special schools, reorganisation of service provision and staffing, and delegation of funds. The school survey was aimed to elicit information that would complement and provide a context for the locally conducted interview programme. The questionnaire, at Appendix C, explored such matters as school-LEA relations, alterations in support services for pupils with SEN in school, barriers to promoting inclusion, factors influencing the statementing process and impact of changes in school funding systems.

Face to face interviews were carried out with 24 LEA officers; 32 school heads or teachers or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs); 17 national and local voluntary organisations' representatives or parents. Each lasted for about an hour and was tape-recorded for later transcription. Each of these methods used individually had their limitations. Using them in conjunction with one another rectified to some degree, the deficiencies by providing an element of complementarity or triangulation.

The case study authorities were so chosen as to provide a manageable range of variation. All are London boroughs; ostensibly similar LEAs, though some have a long history while others have been created only recently. They do not vary greatly in size but their social and economic conditions show sharp contrast ranging from acutely deprived inner-city areas to comfortable suburbs. These authorities exhibit not just different patterns of need but also marked differences in their responses to meeting the challenge of SEN. Restricting the choice of field sites to London places limitations upon the generalisability of this research. Such limitations and other issues arising from the methods employed and discussed in more detail in the methodological appendix at A.

The Origins and Development of Special Educational Needs

This chapter traces the journey of transition of education policies and provision for children with special educational needs from segregated settings to their integration into the mainstream schools and finally, into developing the concept and practices of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

From segregation to integration

Early developments

From the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century, insanity and idiocy were a part of everyday life.¹ The disabled were readily accommodated within the pastoral life of the feudal society in Britain. But the industrial revolution propelled the exclusion of ‘mad’ and ‘defective’ from the workforce. Perceived as a threat to the social order, they were incarcerated in the workhouses and those who were ‘defective’ as well as poor were kept in asylums. As the legislative response to the ‘needs’ of the disabled arose, several Lunacy Acts were enacted, which prescribed the ways to deal with insanity without referring to their training or education. It was not before the passage of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act 1868 that the deaf and dumb or blind child could go to school. Segregated ‘special

¹ Foucault M., (1967) *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London: Tavistock Press.

schools' were established as increasingly deaf and dumb, and blind children started going to school.

In the special school tradition, the first school for the blind was opened in 1791 that offered training in music and manual crafts, followed by schools for the deaf.² The religious sentiments of charity and compassion emphasised the need for more such special schools.

The Education Act, 1870 that made elementary education compulsory for all children made no exceptions to include children with disabilities into schools. Local School Boards established under the Act in 1874, in particular the London School Board took some deaf and blind children into ordinary schools after subsequent inquiries into the matter. By 1888, other school boards made sporadic efforts to follow the London School Board, although they had no legal obligation.³ However, high costs and inhospitable social attitudes⁴ severely affected the efforts of the local school boards in educating blind and deaf children in ordinary schools.

It was not until the passage of Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act in 1893 that the school boards were legally required to make educational provision for blind and deaf children. In response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, the 1893 Act required the school boards to make provision for the education

² Tomlinson, S. (1982) *A Sociology of special education*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

³ Pritchard, D. G. (1963) *Education and the Handicapped 1760-1960*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p. 76-81.

⁴ Heward, C., and Lloyd-Smith, M. (1990) 'Assessing the impact of legislation on special education policy - An historical analysis', *Journal of Education Policy* 5 (1): 21-36.

of blind and deaf children to receive elementary education. The financial support to the schools ensured by the Act removed the uncertainties of the 1870 Act with regard to the education of the handicapped in ordinary schools.

Progress in making educational provision for the physically and mentally handicapped children was, however, slow. Despite the recommendations of the Commission that made distinctions between the 'feeble-minded', 'imbeciles' and 'idiots', the emphasis remained on providing care more than education. The purpose of making such distinctions was to discredit 'the idiots' as uneducable. The feeble-minded were educable only in 'auxiliary' or special schools while 'the imbeciles' were expected to remain confined in segregated institutions. Only children with epilepsy could attend mainstream schools provided their attacks were less frequent. The physically handicapped were included in the category of the feeble-minded and were labelled 'defective'. The classification was by no means straightforward and confusion surrounding the categories and labels resulted in fewer children being admitted to the schools. The school boards had no legal obligation until the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act was enacted in 1899. It responded to the recommendations of the Commission and permitted school boards to provide education to the 'mentally and physically defective'.

Despite the legal statements affirming the educational provision for handicapped children in ordinary schools, in practice the segregated settings were more acceptable. It was also regarded as a way of safeguarding the education of the majority of non-handicapped children. This was the case in

most parts of Western Europe.⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century in Britain, special schools were established as the most appropriate form of education for ‘handicapped’ children. The expansion of the special school settings continued till the beginning of the First World War accompanied with the plea to have more schools under the school boards instead of the voluntary bodies. With the abolition of school boards by the Education Act 1902 and establishment of LEAs in their place, the basic structure and provision for the education of handicapped children remained much unchanged till 1944.

Post-war developments

The growth in welfare activities in Britain after the two World Wars was a significant development. The post-war period ushered in the spirit of ‘egalitarianism’ and efforts were made to reconstruct society from the ravages of war. However, the shortage of buildings led to using distant vacant houses, which reinforced segregated education. Progress in science and related fields of medicine further strengthened the segregated form of educational provision for children with disabilities during the late nineteenth century. While medical experts assumed a key role in ascertaining and making decisions about the placements and provision for educating children with disabilities, educational psychologists added to the existing knowledge and established their own supremacy. Psychologists, like Binet and Simon, contributed to the discipline by developing tests that were aimed at classifying children according to their ‘intelligence’. Cyril Burt, the first English educational psychologist appointed by the London County Council

⁵ Pijl, S. J. and Meijer C. J. W. (1994) ‘Introduction’ in Meijer, C.J. W., Pijl, S. J. and Hegarty, S. (eds.) *New Perspectives in Special Education*. London: Routledge.

in 1911, established a system of Intelligence Tests for 'sorting' children for placements. The education system catered to meet the needs of handicapped children who were divided under several categories and placed in special schools. Legislation gave much credence to medical professionals and educational psychologists in consulting about the placement of disabled pupils. Disability was therefore seen as inherent - an incurable and permanent condition - in a child, based on his/her heredity factors.

The Education Act 1921 was the first legal mandate that required the LEAs to provide special educational treatment for handicapped pupils in special schools. The Act listed four categories of handicap- blind, deaf, defective (both physical and mental) and epileptic- and laid down the foundations of using categories and labels in ascertaining and placing children in special schools. Early attempts to integrate children with disabilities and bring them closer to mainstream education emerged with the establishment of the Wood Committee in 1929. Its recommendations sought to clarify the understandings of mental defect and its treatment and bring special and regular education systems closer, both legislatively and administratively. These recommendations were, however, overlooked as they challenged the existing segregated system. They were also criticised for being a cost cutting exercise. Education policies continued to remain fragmented and lack of co-ordination led to perpetuating exclusion of the disabled from mainstream education.

Special schools were well established and strongly recommended by the Board of Education's Green Paper, titled *Education After the War*,⁶ where they expected the LEAs to ascertain and certify 'defective' children into different categories and ensure a suitable special school placement. The White Paper, called *Educational Reconstruction*,⁷ pointed to the need for a single framework of educational provision, which accorded a distinctive place to special education.

The Education Act 1944 incorporated a section on the education of children with disabilities for the first time. It extended the duties of LEAs and required them to make appropriate provision for children under eleven categories; blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially deaf, delicate, diabetic, educationally sub-normal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped and those with speech defects as listed in the Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations, 1945. Despite attempts to make provision for 'less handicapped' children in ordinary schools, the system remained largely special school-oriented for children ascertained as handicapped. A steady rise in the number of special schools from 528 in 1945 to 743 in 1955 and subsequently in the number of special educators/teachers indicated a boost in special schooling or 'special educational treatment' that had suffered a set back during post-war scarcity of building resources.⁸ Recognising the importance of early diagnosis, assessment and educational provision, the LEAs worked in close co-

⁶ Board of Education (1941) *Education After the War* quoted in DES *Special Educational Needs*, 1978. para. 2.37.

⁷ Board of Education (1941) *Educational Reconstruction* quoted in DES, *Special Educational Needs*. Para. 2.40.

⁸ DES, *Special Educational Needs*.

operation with the Health Authorities, because their 'medical opinion' was essential in making any decisions regarding the care and education of handicapped children.

Bringing the health and education sectors closer, Circular 347⁹ urged the development of Child Guidance Services by the LEAs that would involve school psychological services, school health services and child guidance clinics. With an increase in the role of professionals, like psychiatrists, psychologists and psychiatric social workers for providing child guidance services, the process of assessment, diagnosis, consultation and treatment gained prominence. As a result, a clear divide between the 'academic' and 'non-academic' children with handicapping conditions was consciously made to make special schooling more effective and efficient. The majority of children in need of 'special educational treatment' were already being educated in special schools, but the 'educationally sub-normal' (ESN) children were the only category that was considered incapable of education. As the number of children categorised as ESN steadily increased, they were 'handed over' to the local health authority. It was argued that by increasing the number of pupils in the ESN category, they could 'cleanse' the classrooms to help mainstream schools function smoothly.¹⁰ To arrest the increasing number of mentally handicapped children being excluded from mainstream schools, the Mental Health Act 1959 replaced Section 57 of the 1944 Education Act with less rigid provisions and made provisions for extra

⁹ Ministry of Education (1959) Circular 347, *Child Guidance*. The circular was based on the recommendations of the Underwood Committee's report.

¹⁰ Heward and Lloyd-Smith, 'Assessing the Impact of Legislation on Special Education Policy.'

time for parents to appeal to the Minister against LEA's decisions stating that their child was 'ineducable'.

The Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970 repealed the 1944 Act and mandated that no child was to be considered as ineducable. Administratively, the LEAs were made responsible for the Special Care Units and Training Centres while the role of Health Authorities diminished gradually. Multi-professional diagnosis and assessment of the nature of child's SEN, parental participation and special qualifications of teachers were the issues addressed by the Act. Clearly the emphasis was on improving the existing set of educational provisions for disabled children. Integration into mainstream schools as a better alternative to special schooling of children with disabilities gained momentum. The Chronic Sick and Disabled Act 1970 required LEAs to provide for the education of deaf-blind, autistic and acutely dyslexic children in ordinary schools. Initial attempts to arrest the rise in the number of special schools began after the release of the recommendations of Snowdon Working Party report in 1976. Legal sanction was later gained with the passage of the 1976 Education Act. The intentions were to shift the emphasis of placing disabled children from special to mainstream schools. Despite the law, the structural and attitudinal changes affirming integration were not substantial enough to merit the attention of practitioners and professionals. It was not until the release of Warnock Report, 1978 that segregating practices in education were challenged and a new era of integrated education heralded.

The Warnock era

Established by the Conservative government, the Warnock Committee was required to review educational provision for children with disabilities and make recommendations.

The Committee re-conceptualised the nature of educational provision for children with 'special educational needs'. This was a generic term introduced to describe the difficulties experienced by pupils at school as opposed to the terms of handicap or disability previously. The new terminology was contentious because it implied helplessness.¹¹ For some it reinforced the deficit model of disability that portrayed the disabled as weak and powerless¹² and led to even more segregation.¹³ A critic argued that, 'special educational needs' was a non-normative term that was relative to the needs of pupils and was therefore, subject to value judgement and inequality of provision.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the criticisms, the recommendations of the Committee remained largely influential in supporting a more interactive view of SEN affected by circumstances and environment more than being 'inherent' in the child, as suggested by terms like 'disability' or 'handicap'.

One of the primary concerns of the Warnock Committee was to set procedures for identification and assessment of children with SEN.

¹¹ Barton, L. (1988) *The Politics of Special Educational Needs*. London: Falmer Press. See also Roaf, C. and Bines, H. (1989) *Needs, Rights and Opportunities*. London: Falmer Press.

¹² Barton, *Politics of Special Educational Needs*.

¹³ Barton, L. and Oliver, M. (1992) 'Special needs: a personal trouble or public issue?' in Arnot, M. and Barton, L. (ed.) *Voicing Concerns: Sociological Perspectives on Contemporary Education Reforms*. Oxford: Triangle Books.

¹⁴ Hargreaves, D. H. (1975) *Interpersonal Relations and Education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

According to the report, one in five school children require special educational provision at some time in their school lives, of which two per cent need highly specialist educational provision. Policymaking, planning, allocating resources and making organisational changes suggested by the Committee firmly established the idea of integration. The report introduced the concept of the 'continuum of need', which removed the distinction between the handicapped and non-handicapped children, 'each child is an individual with a continuum of need and that there is no sharp divide between the handicapped and the non-handicapped.'¹⁵ It replaced all the categories of handicapping conditions with a single term 'special educational needs' and promoted their integration in mainstream schools.

The legislative response to the recommendations of the Warnock Report was formalised in the 1981 Education Act. Defining children with 'special educational needs' was a relevant response to the growing criticism against categorisation, but it had some inherent flaws that made the implementation of the policy difficult.¹⁶ The role of LEAs was redefined and they were required to review their policies and procedures to support schools, establish assessment and statementing procedures, conduct annual reviews and develop in-service training programmes for staff to meet the diverse needs of children. They were required to encourage greater flexibility and integration.¹⁷ It was argued that the non-prescriptive and more enabling nature of the Act was responsible for wide variations in implementation

¹⁵ DES, *Special Educational Needs*. para. 1.2.

¹⁶ Goacher, B., Evans, J., Welton, J. and Wedell, K. (1988) *Policy and Provision for Special Educational Needs: Implementing the 1980 Education Act*. London: Cassell.

¹⁷ Barton, L. and Landman, L. (1993) 'The Politics of Integration: Observations on the Warnock Report' in Slee, R. (ed.) *Is There A Desk With My Name On It: The Politics of Integration*. London: Falmer Press.

practices.¹⁸ Despite efforts to ensure that LEAs integrate pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, segregated practices persisted. Lack of resources failed to empower the LEAs to move towards integration. It resulted in *status quo*. A critic remarked that, 'England ... became the only developed country to attempt special educational needs reform without an allocation of funds to carry it out.'¹⁹

According to Section 1(1) of the 1981 Act, a child has SEN if, 'he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him.' The definition encompassed the needs of the estimated 18 per cent of pupils with less severe special needs to be educated in mainstream schools. Two per cent of pupils with more severe learning difficulties (SLD) were issued a statement following an assessment procedure. The assessment procedure ensured the involvement of pupil's head-teacher, an educational psychologist, a doctor and in some cases, a speech therapist and a psychiatrist. Their advice was vital for the LEAs to decide whether to issue a statement or not.

A number of policy-based studies made an attempt to understand the mechanics of policymaking and implementation in making radical changes in the special education sector. One such detailed investigation into the implementation of the Act found that the circularity and vagueness of the legal definition of 'special educational needs' was largely responsible for wide variations in interpretations and practices in the LEAs. Integration

¹⁸ Heward and Lloyd-Smith, 'Assessing the Impact of Legislation on Special Education Policy.'

¹⁹ Evans, J. and Varma, V. (eds) (1990) *Special Education Past Present and Future*, Sussex: Falmer Press. p. 23.

depended upon the 'willingness' of LEAs to provide extra resources to mainstream schools. The assessment of pupils' SEN also depended upon the availability of resources. Another study pointed out that the resource limitations 'compromised' the decisions and advice of professionals and resulted in LEAs making assessments that were too, 'generalised as to commit the LEA to no particular resource.'²⁰ Among several criticisms leveled against the enactment of 1981 Act, lack of adequate resources emerged as the main reason for policy implementation deficit.

Later in 1988, Circular 1/88 introduced grant related-in-service training of teachers for pupils with special needs but it had a negative impact on the intended reforms due to further reduction in the existing financial resources, as envisioned by the Act.²¹ It was strongly criticised that the duties placed on the LEAs were, 'loose and vague, leaving their enforcement more a matter of goodwill than duty.'²² Increase in administration and bureaucracy in making provision for children with SEN added to the problems in implementing the Act.²³

The changes in the special educational provision introduced by the Act were followed by a close scrutiny of research projects sponsored by the Department for Education and Science (DES) in 1988. The studies analysed the local authority support services, links between ordinary and special

²⁰ Goacher *et al.*, *Policy and Provision for Special Educational Needs*. p.140

²¹ Department of Education and Science (1988) Circular 1/88, *Training to meet the special educational needs of pupils with learning difficulties in school*. London: HMSO.

²² Hall, J. T. (1997) *Social Devaluation and Special Education*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. p. 24.

²³ Gipps, C., Gross, H. and Goldstein, H. (1987) *Warnock's 18%- Children with Special Educational Needs in Primary Schools*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

schools, and in-service training²⁴, besides exploring the nuances of policymaking and implementation.²⁵ Among them, the 'Policy and Provision for Special Educational Needs Project', based at the University of London Institute of Education investigated the implementation of the 1981 Act at the local level.²⁶ The findings indicated that lack of consultation and joint planning between education, health and social services led to serious problems in inter-agency collaboration and co-ordination. While at the implementation stage, inconsistencies were detected in methods used to implement the policy by LEAs, District Health Authorities and Social Service Departments in different parts of the country. Shortage of funds and increasing demand for services led to frustration among the LEAs attempting to implement changes in SEN provision. They failed to encourage greater involvement of parents in decision-making about their child's placement and schooling. New public opinion, changing professional views, altering financial policies and pressure group campaigns made a considerable impact upon SEN policies and their implementation. It was maintained that professionals in education, health and social services sectors competed for power and authority to advance their role and autonomy in decision-making instead of meeting the needs of the consumer.²⁷ The research studies also revealed that the consultation exercises feeding into national policy decisions on SEN were confined to the study of policy

²⁴ Hegarty, S. and Moses, D. (eds.) (1988) *Developing Expertise: Inset for Special Educational Needs*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

²⁵ Welton, J. and Evans, R. (1986) 'The development and implementation of special education policy: Where did the 1981 Act fit in?' *Public Administration*, 64: 209-27.

²⁶ Welton, J., Wedell, K. and Vorhaus, G. (1982) *Meeting Special Educational Needs: the 1981 Act and its Implications*. Bedford Way Papers No. 12. London: Heinemann.

²⁷ Evans, J., Goacher, B., Wedell, K. and Welton, J. (1989) 'The Implementation of the Act', in Jones, N. (ed.) *Special Educational Needs Review*, Volume 1. London: Falmer Press.

documents, activities and organisation of education and health authorities and opinions of professionals. The views and perceptions of the practitioners in schools like, the teachers, head-teachers, support staff were, however, less explored.²⁸ According to Tomlinson:

The educational reforms during 1980s were not notable for their grounding in research findings, and a large parliamentary majority enabled the government to push through policies whose nature and possible outcomes were unresearched. Indeed, Ministers of Education have been at pains to distance themselves from research, even at which they themselves commissioned, when the results did not accord with ideological preference.²⁹

An era of change

Education reforms

While the 1980s were preoccupied with meeting the requirements set out in the 1981 Act in a financially difficult environment, the decade of 90s was faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of children with SEN in a competing and conflicting policy climate. Since 1979, the political ideology of the Conservatives was opposed to the idea of liberal humanistic approach to education of children with SEN.³⁰ Instead they ushered an era of promoting targets, quality performance, standards, consumption, choice, value for money in a consumer-oriented environment that was driven by the

²⁸ Lawton, D. (1984) *The Tightening Grip: Growth of Central Control of the School Curriculum*, Papers 21. London: Heinemann Educational.

²⁹ Tomlinson, S. (ed.) (1994) *Educational Reform and Its Consequences*. London: Rivers Oram. p. 2

³⁰ Tomlinson, J. (1989) 'The Education Reform Bill- 44 years of progress?' *Journal of Education Policy*, 4(3): 275-79.

values of self-interest and personal profit.³¹ A considerable amount of New Right imprints of the Conservative government emerged in the Education Reform Act 1988.³² Politically, education was accorded a prime status in policy-matters with a strong emphasis on tradition and cultural heritage while supporting elitism and opposing multi-cultural and anti-racist education. Economically, the New Right thinking was guided by three basic tenets of market economy- individualism, choice and competition. The primacy of parents and parental choice was set against the domination of powerful bureaucratic interest groups. The 1988 Act bore the imprints of the political and economic policy of this New Right ideology. It created a new framework for primary and secondary education, but not for special education. With the emergence of strong market forces in the social and economic policies of the nation, the Act introduced a greater variety of schools competing against one another in the education market. A deliberate attempt was made to reduce the power and autonomy of the LEAs, and transfer them to the schools. As the financial and managerial responsibilities fell upon the schools, they had the option to ‘opt-out’ of the control of LEA and attain Grant Maintained Status (GMS). The purpose was to give greater autonomy to the schools by introducing open enrolment and Local Management of Schools scheme (LMS). The formulation of the National Curriculum³³ and national attainment testing increased government influence on what was taught and how it was assessed. The League Tables, which

³¹ Chitty, C. (1992) *The Education System Transformed*. Manchester: Baseline Book Co. See also Simon, B. and Chitty, C. (1993) *SOS Save Our Schools*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. And Whitty, G. (1989) ‘The New Right and the National Curriculum: State control or market forces?’ *Journal of Education Policy*, 4(4): 329-41.

³² DES, Circular 7/88.

³³ National Curriculum Council (1989) *Implementing the National Curriculum – Participation by Pupils with Special Educational Needs* (Circular no. 5). York: NCC.

displayed the test scores of pupils, depicted the level of school performance and helped the parents to choose the school for their child. Hence, the national control of the curriculum; school-based control over finance and management; and the introduction of a quasi-market via parental choice of schools radically changed the general education system.³⁴

Although the National Curriculum ensured entitlement to uniform curriculum to all children, including those with SEN, the overarching influence of the ‘marketisation’ of education threatened the onset of exclusionary practices with regard to children with SEN.³⁵ Imposing a system of performance indicators upon the educational achievements of pupils in a market-led school system threatened the successful integration of children with SEN. Education reforms introduced by the 1988 Reform Act were set to raise educational standards, but they were in marked contrast with the management of SEN provision.³⁶ The children with SEN remained a threat to the market driven schools competing to enhance their position in the League Tables. The idea of promoting integration was, thus, severely jeopardised.³⁷

³⁴ Ranson, S. (1992) ‘Towards the Learning Society’, *Educational Management and Administration*, 20 (1): 68-79.

³⁵ Wedell, K. (1990) ‘The 1988 Act and Current Principles of Special Educational Needs’ in Daniels, H. and Ware, J. (eds.) *Special Educational Needs and National Curriculum*. London: Kogan Page.

³⁶ Fish, J. and Evans, J. (1995) *Managing Special Education: Codes, Charters and Competition*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press. p. 7.

³⁷ Evans, J. and Lunt, I. (1994) *Markets, Competition and Vulnerability*. Institute of Education, University of London: The Tufnell Press. p. 8.

Identifying the drawbacks in the notion of 'parental choice' in the Education Reform Act 1988,³⁸ it was argued that more popular schools would choose their pupils rather than vice-versa, as intended. Research evidence on 'parental choice' indicated that choosing a school was not a single dimensional rational phenomenon as envisaged by the policy makers, rather it turned out to be a complex exercise by different groups of parents making choices based on different criteria.³⁹ While working class parents chose a school on the basis of safety, distance and convenience, middle class 'cosmopolitan' parents chose a school on the basis of exam results and discipline. The marketability of schools depended upon the performance of schools in the League Tables displaying the scores attained by pupils. These could severely affect the reputation of schools and their inclination to accept children with SEN in their school. The government policies encouraging integration were at crossroads with the policies that enhanced result-oriented practices in schools. The indirect impact of these conflicting policies and practices led to rise in truancy, exclusion and segregation.⁴⁰ More studies indicated an increase in exclusions of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)⁴¹ and moderate learning disabilities (MLD)⁴² from mainstream schools and subsequent rise in their special school placements.

³⁸ Housden, P. (1993) *Bucking the Market: LEAs and Special Needs*. Stafford: National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN).

³⁹ Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. J. and Bowe, R. (1995) *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

⁴⁰ Parsons, C. (1996) 'Permanent exclusions from school in England in the 1990s: trends, causes and responses', *Children and Society*, 10, 177-86. The League Tables combined with OFSTED inspections' rigorous attainment targets led to an increase in the number of children excluded permanently from schools, particularly in the primary sector.

⁴¹ Stirling, M. (1992) 'How many pupils are being excluded?' *British Journal of Special Education*, 19 (4): 128-30.

⁴² Swann, W. (1985) 'Is the integration of children with special educational needs happening? An analysis of recent statistics', *Oxford Review of Education*, 11 (1).

Exploring the reasons for deficiencies in identification of children with SEN, the official policy document titled *Getting In On the Act* revealed that lack of clear accountability and uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of schools and LEAs caused mismanagement of the entire process of special needs services.⁴³ It was suggested by another research study that the basic flaw was in the lack of clarity about their respective roles in the policy documents.⁴⁴ Lack of incentives was also envisaged as the probable cause of poor implementation practices. Increasing inability and unwillingness of schools to meet SEN provision from their own resources added to problems of the LEAs.⁴⁵ Therefore, to remedy the problems, guidance documents were produced by the government departments.⁴⁶ Administrative and management problems, like time delays in processing appeals to statements; inconsistent placement of children in special schools; failure to satisfy majority of problems were some of the issues that received attention. Addressing some of these problems, a consultation paper entitled *Special Educational Needs access to the System* was released by the DES.⁴⁷ It proposed to extend the rights of parents of children with SEN and became a prelude to the 1993 Education Act

Despite efforts to redress the challenges faced by the LEAs and schools in administering the policy initiatives of the 1988 Act, the problems continued unabated. The free market developments brought about by the New Right

⁴³ Audit Commission / HMI (1992) *Getting in On The Act*. London: HMSO.

⁴⁴ Wedell, 'The 1988 Act and current principles of special educational needs'.

⁴⁵ Evans, J. and Lunt, I. (1992) *Development of Special Education under Local Management of Schools*. London: University of London Institute of Education.

⁴⁶ Audit Commission / HMI (1992) *Getting the Act Together. A management handbook for schools and local education authorities*. London: HMSO.

⁴⁷ Department for Education and Science (1992) *Special Educational Needs: access to the system*. A consultation paper. London: HMSO.

ideology threatened the practices for making SEN provision in mainstream schools. Decline in the SEN funds held centrally by the LEA forced a cut down on support services for non-statemented children with SEN. As a result, the ones with statements were considered fortunate as they had access to extra funds in a climate of financial stringency.

The disparity in provision for children with and without a statement coupled with the separation of responsibility between LEA and schools explained the rise in demand for statements by parents and schools. A research project undertaken to explore these issues found that inequity in resource allocation for SEN by the LEAs was the result of wide variations in way SEN policies were formulated locally.⁴⁸ The House of Commons Education Commission⁴⁹ set up in 1996 declared that SEN was one of the biggest challenges facing the LEAs at the current time. The increased demands and raised expectations arising from the 1993 Act were likely to be disappointed and the needs of the most vulnerable children unmet unless adequate resources were provided.

Education reform primarily focused on ‘school based management and resources’ and ‘national control of curriculum’.⁵⁰ As the role of the ‘intermediate tier’ or the LEAs reduced, several new agencies and boards flourished as the ‘new magistracy’.⁵¹ The DES Circular 7/88 required the

⁴⁸ Goacher *et al.*, *Policy and Provision for Special Educational Needs*.

⁴⁹ House of Commons Select Committee on Education (1996) *Special Educational Needs: The Working of the Code of Practice and the Tribunal*. London: HMSO. p.19.

⁵⁰ Ranson, S. (1994) *Towards the Learning Society*. London: Cassell.

⁵¹ Tomlinson, J. (1994) ‘The case for an intermediate tier’, in Ranson, S. and Tomlinson, J. (eds.) *School Cooperation: New Forms of Local Governance*. Harlow: Longman.

LEAs to develop formulae to allocate the resources for SEN to schools.⁵² However, in practice the LMS policy made the task a complex one for the LEAs. They were forced to adopt ‘crude solutions to extremely complex problems’ because it was difficult to define the needs of pupils in order to make allocations. It was argued that identifying the needs of pupils with SEN was critical to making resource allocations through indicators, such as Free School Meals (FSM), socio-economic status with or without an additional factor.⁵³ Circular 7/91 was a step further in devising a model of allocating funds for pupils with SEN.⁵⁴ The lure of extra funds attached to statements increased the proportion of pupils seeking statutory assessments. Making educational provisions for pupils with statements in special schools obtained extra resources from the LEAs and reduced the pressure on the teachers to cope with the diverse educational needs in their classroom. Almost a decade later when integration was widely accepted in policy and practice, the education system for children with SEN faced the threat of rolling back into ‘segregation’.⁵⁵

The Education Act 1993 and the Code of Practice

The White Paper, *Choice and Diversity*⁵⁶ and the *Parent’s Charter*,⁵⁷

⁵² Department of Education and Science (1988) Circular 7/88, *Education Reform Act: Local Management of Schools*. London: DES.

⁵³ Lee, B. (1991) ‘Finding simple answers to complex problems: funding special needs under LMS’ in G. Wallace (ed.) *Local Management of Schools*, BERA Dialogue no. 6 Multi Lingual Matters.

⁵⁴ Department for Education and Science (1991) Circular 7/91, *Local Management of Schools. Further Guidance*, London: DES.

⁵⁵ Evans, J. and Lunt, I. (1994) *Markets, Competition and Vulnerability*.

⁵⁶ Department for Education and Science (1992) *Choice and Diversity*, White Paper. London: HMSO.

⁵⁷ Department for Education and Science (1992) *Parent’s Charter: Children with Special Educational Needs*. London: DES.

preceding the 1993 Education Act, renewed the commitment to integration. The Charter exposed the disadvantaged position of parents in decision-making and determining their child's SEN provision. The 1993 Act declared five basic principles dominating the legislation - quality; diversity; increased parental choice; greater autonomy for schools; and greater accountability. It was expected to extend parents' rights over choice of schools, making appeals against LEA decisions and expediting the appeals procedure. This aimed to satiate the 'consumerism' of education market, where the consumers were the parents of children with SEN. There was a conscious shift in the balance of power from the LEAs and professionals to the parents.⁵⁸

The Education Act 1993 reproduced the 1981 Act with a few changes. It added a new dimension to the statutory framework of SEN provision. The *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*, 1994 was a significant aspect of the Act.⁵⁹ It laid out a five-staged model of identification and assessment of pupils with SEN. The first two stages were based on mainstream school provision and specialist external support was only sought from the third stage onwards. The IEPs for pupils identified with SEN was a significant aspect of the Code and it was drawn at the second stage with successive monitoring and reviewing on subsequent stages. The Code also maintained the role of a SENCO for managing SEN provision at school level. The third and the fourth stage involved detailed multi-disciplinary assessments and a statement of SEN

⁵⁸ Tomlinson, *A sociology of special education*.

⁵⁹ DFE, *The Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs*.

was issued at the fifth stage. The Code of Practice was expected to resolve the tensions and difficulties of parents, teachers, and pupils with the educational reforms that were set into motion by the 1988 Act and also reduce the prevailing inconsistencies of the 1981 Act. Contrary to the expectations, the Act posed a new set of problems for the implementing agencies. First, the Code was not financially well supported for the range of extra duties and workload that fell upon teachers and SENCOs.⁶⁰ Second, lack of resources, inadequate time and extensive bureaucratic procedures thwarted the smooth implementation of the Code of Practice.⁶¹ The increasing problem of workload and other competing demands led the schools to refrain from making any reference to SEN provisions in their policy statements for parents. Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) reported that:

Many schools fear that a reputation for excellent SEN provision can result in a school attracting even more pupils with SEN and this, combined with the consequent performances in the local league tables and the subsequent publicity, are not necessarily seen as being to the school's advantage.⁶²

The Code of Practice was an advisory document rather than a mandatory one. The LEAs and schools had no legal obligation except to 'have regard' of its principles and procedures. Non-conformity to the Code could only be challenged by parents, the Secretary of State for Education and the SEN

⁶⁰ Fish and Evans, *Managing Special Education*.

⁶¹ Office for Standards in Education (1999) *The SEN Code of Practice: three years on: the contribution of individual education plans to the raising of standards for pupils with special educational needs: a report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*. London: OFSTED.

⁶² Office for Standards in Education (1997) *The SEN Code of Practice Two Years On*. London: OFSTED. p. 18

Tribunal. The 1993 Act had set up a Special Educational Needs Tribunal to empower the rights of parents to exercise jurisdiction and express their disapproval of decisions taken by the LEAs. As the implementation of the Code and the operation of the Tribunal began in 1994, the number of cases grew from 1170 in 1994/5 to 2051 in 1996/7 amounting to a 26 per cent rise during the first three years.⁶³ Thus, accentuating the tensions between LEAs, schools and parents. Some cases revealed the discrepancy in LEA decisions in making cost-effective 'adequate provision' as against the parent's wishes for gaining 'best possible provision' for their child.⁶⁴ The House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry on the Working of the Code of Practice and the Tribunal reported that:

There is a continuing tension between a Tribunal's decision, which is made 'in the interests of the child', and an LEA's allocation of resources to meet the needs of all children with special educational needs for whom it is responsible.⁶⁵

Concerns regarding resource allocation had, therefore, consistently affected the SEN provision for almost a decade.

One of the key principles of the 1993 Act was to encourage 'diversity' in schools, i.e. to become grant-maintained - a process initiated by the Education Reform Act 1988. Schools were no longer under the governance of the LEAs. Instead they were to be managed by locally elected and appointed governors. Research evidence suggested that schools with grant

⁶³ Harris, N. (1997) *Special Educational Needs and Access to Justice: The role of Special Educational Needs Tribunal*. Bristol: Jordans.

⁶⁴ Evans, J. (1999) *Getting it Right*. Slough: NFER.

⁶⁵ House of Commons Select Committee on Education, *Special Educational Needs*. p. viii.

maintained status were less tolerant of children with SEN, and especially of those with EBD.⁶⁶ The competitive market-oriented environment permeated the LEA maintained schools as they competed with grant maintained schools to adopt stricter codes in admitting pupils with SEN.⁶⁷

There was a growing discontent in the parent community about the rising number of pupils with being denied placement in mainstream schools. In response, the 1993 Act commissioned the schools to formulate and publish SEN policies ensuring equal educational opportunities for all pupils to regain parents' confidence in schools.⁶⁸ As for the LEAs, they had lost their financial powers over the schools and rendered ineffective in making positive interventions. The SEN provision suffered serious problems. Increasing politicisation of educational structures, regulation and control of education through central policies, introduction of statutory funding, and curricular and assessment frameworks had significant implications on the policy context in which schools operated.

Recognising the prevailing inequities in the provision of SEN, the Audit Commission published a study-based report in 1994.⁶⁹ The findings were incisive. Hall summed them up as:

⁶⁶ Halpin, D., Power, S. and Fitz, J. (1997) 'Opting into the past? Grant-maintained schools and reinvention of tradition,' in Glatter, R., Woods, P. and Bagley, C. (eds.) *Choice and Diversity in Schooling: Perspectives and Prospects*. London: Routledge.

⁶⁷ Evans, J. and Vincent, C. (1997) 'Parental choice and special education', in Glatter, R., Woods, R. and Bagley, C. (eds.) *Choice and Diversity in Schooling: Perspectives and Prospects*, London: Routledge.

⁶⁸ Swann, W. (1991) *Variations Between LEAs in levels of Segregation in Special Schools 1982-90*. Preliminary Report: CSIE

⁶⁹ Audit Commission (1994) *The Act Moves On: Progress in Special Educational Needs*. London: HMSO.

poor framework of policy and strategy; lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of LEAs and schools; poor targeting of resources; poor management and administration of assessment process; lack of delegation of learning support services.⁷⁰

Addressing some of these problems, the Education Act 1996 re-enacted the 1993 Act. It required the schools to publish information on their SEN policies for all children with SEN, including those without statements. The Act attempted to enhance the voice and role of parents and emphasise time limits on issuing statements. The purpose was two-fold - to set up a new appeals machinery in the form of the SEN Tribunal, independent of LEAs and the Department for Education Employment (DfEE), and to establish a new and comprehensive Code of Practice for coherent framework for SEN provision. The schools and LEAs were subjected to the discipline of the marketplace where parents acted as consumers and operated as arbiter of quality. The LEAs regained some of their lost powers under this Act. They were responsible for the education of children with SEN.

A series of legislative changes in the education system put enormous pressure on the schools to perform well in National Curriculum tests and league tables. It not only inhibited the intake of children with SEN in mainstream schools but also encouraged exclusion of children with SEN, mostly those with specific learning difficulties (spLD) and EBD. When the problem of exclusion reached crisis proportions, the Labour government

⁷⁰ Hall, *Social Devaluation and Special Education*. p. 29.

introduced inclusion policy to divert the attention from ‘school failure’ to ‘school improvement’.⁷¹

Recent developments

Towards inclusion

The idea of inclusive education soon acquired international recognition. The educationists and disabled activists led a rigorous drive to attain human rights as a prelude to their awareness raising campaigns and replaced the segregation-integration debate with a single term ‘inclusion’. The struggle to achieve anti-discriminatory legislation in Britain led the government to set up a Disability Rights Task Force in December 1999. The establishment of the Disability Rights Commission under the auspices of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, was a significant milestone in the disability movement. The activists consciously shifted their attention from adults to children and focused closely on their education. For instance, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People protested against the presence of special schools.⁷² Their campaign to raise public awareness about the rights and responsibilities of disabled persons and attain full civil rights was inspired by a series of UN Declarations and Conventions.⁷³ They succeeded in reminding the government to include children with disabilities and SEN in mainstream schools.

⁷¹ Armstrong, D. (1998) ‘Changing Faces, Changing Places: Policy Routes to Inclusion’ in Clough, P. (ed.) *Managing Inclusive Education: From Policy and Experience*. London: Paul Chapman.

⁷² Campbell, J. and Oliver, M. (1996) *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future*. London: Routledge.

⁷³ Sebba and Ainscow, ‘International Developments in Inclusive Education’.

Progress towards inclusion in Britain was limited to a few local authorities and schools. The number of children in special schools remained static. Exclusion, as a phenomenon, gained momentum. Faced with the challenge of making inclusion a reality, the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education (CSIE) and the Centre for Educational Needs at the University of Manchester developed an Index of Inclusive Schooling.⁷⁴ It was developed with the objective to review and develop existing policies and practices; and to help schools to determine where they are in terms of inclusion and exclusion.⁷⁵

In 1997, after the Labour Party won the General Elections, it reiterated its commitment to improve standards in education. The White Paper *Excellence in Schools*,⁷⁶ proposed bringing back the GMS under LEA control as Foundation schools. In so doing, it enhanced the role of LEAs under the New Labour. The Green Paper *Excellence For All Children*⁷⁷ further reinforced the ethos of promoting collaboration, rather than competition, between schools and developed the role of LEAs. By extending the role of LEAs, the government promoted local democracy. The intent was to mitigate the negative impact of market forces on education, especially on the education and lives of children with SEN. Hence, local schools and local community were envisioned as the prime contributors in enhancing the standards of schools.

⁷⁴ Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M. and Shaw, L. (1999) *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools*, Bristol: CSIE.

⁷⁵ Ainscow, 'Exploring links between special needs and school improvement'.

⁷⁶ DfEE, *Excellence in Schools*.

⁷⁷ DfEE, *Excellence For All Children*.

The government placed the issue of inclusion at the centre of discussions on the development of policy and practice for pupils with SEN. Endorsed by the National Advisory Group on SEN (SENAG), the government published an Action Programme for SEN in 1998.⁷⁸ The key areas identified by the Action Programme included promoting inclusion and partnership in SEN locally, regionally and nationally, revising the SEN Code of Practice and developing parent partnership links. The impact of the Code of Practice on schools and teachers was greater than all other government initiatives since the Warnock report.⁷⁹ However, in response to the teachers' complaints about heightened bureaucracy and excessive workload, the government proposed a revision to the Code of Practice. The draft revised Code dealt with the day-to-day practice of the Code, reducing the number of stages of assessment of SEN and providing guidance to teachers and SENCOs, but it failed to address the issue of inclusion.⁸⁰ It focused on identification, assessment and making additional support available but does not address the whole school restructuring and reform as a means of making schools more inclusive and challenging all forms of exclusion and discrimination. Although the government realised the need for overall radical structural and organisational changes to attain inclusion and social justice, particular issues relating to the role of SENCOs, curriculum and assessment, professional development and parent participation did not receive adequate attention at the policy level.

⁷⁸ Department for Education and Employment (1998) *Meeting Special Educational Needs: A programme of action*. London: The Stationery Office.

⁷⁹ Mittler, P. (2000) *Working Towards Inclusive Education Social Contexts*. London: David Fulton. p. 87

⁸⁰ Ramjhun, A. F. (2002) *Implementing the Code of Practice for children with Special Educational Needs: A practical guide*. London: David Fulton.

Despite national commitment to inclusion, there remained a gap between policy and implementation. Lack of consensus among professionals, parents and policy makers about what constitutes SEN and what level of provision is required in a particular need, was identified as the probable cause of this policy-implementation disconnect.⁸¹ Currently, the ideas of inclusive education are central to the government's education policies. They are incorporated in the education consultation documents of the new Labour government.⁸² It has been noted that the government attempted to make a break from the Conservative agenda of market-led educational provision by asserting that inclusive education reflects a moral commitment to social justice.⁸³ However, some critics maintain the contrary. They believe that the New Labour government made no significant shift in policy from the previous government. Raising the standards in school is still at the heart of government policy,⁸⁴ and is pursued simultaneously with the agenda of promoting inclusive education.

Although inclusive education embraces a political dialogue that pivots around competition and effectiveness, subsequent changes in curriculum, pedagogy, organisational structures and ethos of the institution as a fundamental requirement towards inclusiveness remain disengaged from political commitments. A complex situation has emerged, where higher

⁸¹ Evans, J., Lunt, I., Wedell, K. and Dyson, A. (1999) *Collaborating for Effectiveness: Empowering schools to be inclusive*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

⁸² Tilstone, C., Florian, L. and Rose, R. (1998) *Promoting Inclusive Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁸³ Riddell, S. (2000) 'Inclusion and choice: mutually exclusive principles in special educational needs?' in Armstrong, F., Armstrong, D. and Barton, L. (eds.) *Inclusive Education: Policy, Contexts and Comparative Perspectives*. London: David Fulton.

⁸⁴ Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Way Forward for Early Years Education announced*. London: DfEE.

standards and excellence are at one end and demands for more inclusion while maintaining parental choice and diversity on the other. The argument continues between political rhetoric of inclusion and maintaining status quo in organisation, curriculum and assessment. Hence, equal educational opportunities in Britain remain a myth.⁸⁵

At the core of our perspective is an unwillingness to accept market-led approach to planning, provision and outcomes of education. It entails a narrow view of ability and exacerbates and maintains existing inequalities while placing the responsibility on the individual and encouraging self-interest on the part of the individual consumer.⁸⁶

At the heart of this debate lies the interpretation of the term 'inclusion' as understood by policymakers and practitioners. Some definitions focus on institutional perspectives that involve making organisational arrangements and school improvement,⁸⁷ while others regard it as a, 'process of increasing participation in and decreasing exclusion from mainstream social settings.'⁸⁸ Problems arise not so much in the definition of inclusion but its meaning, which is highly contextual⁸⁹ and depends largely upon the situation. However, there is consensus about the fact that inclusion is not about

⁸⁵ Lloyd, 'Excellence for *all* children- false promises!'

⁸⁶ Barton, L. and Slee, R. (1999) 'Competition, selection and inclusive education: some observations', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3 (1): 3-12.

⁸⁷ Rouse, M. and Florian, L. (1996) 'Effective Inclusive Schools: a study in two countries', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 26 (1): 71-85.

⁸⁸ Booth, T., Ainscow, M. and Dyson, A. (1997) 'Understanding inclusion and exclusion in the English competitive education system', *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 1 (4): 337-55. p. 338.

⁸⁹ Katsiyannis, A., Conderman, G. and Franks, D. J. (1995) 'State practices on inclusion: a national review', *Remedial and Special Education*, 16 (5): 279-87.

placement of children in mainstream setting, but about creating a learning environment for all pupils to achieve success in the curriculum.⁹⁰ The Index for Inclusion that was sent to schools and LEAs enabled the schools to make their own assessments of inclusive practices.⁹¹ A repertoire of approaches to inclusion was found as every practitioner had an individual style of ensuring participation and inclusion.

New legislation

The statutory framework for inclusion was frequently reviewed and updated in a host of recently released government documents and policy papers. *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs*, released by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in November 2001 sets out the statutory guidance to the schools and LEAs on, ‘actively seeking to remove barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude pupils with special educational needs.’⁹² Strategic planning and improved systems of accountability in delivering services to pupils with SEN are reinforced. Even the OFSTED inspection systems are in place to monitor how inclusive the schools and local education authorities are. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 delivers a strengthened right to a mainstream education for children with SEN. It also proposes a new Disability Rights Code of Practice for Schools⁹³ to co-exist with the revised

⁹⁰ Mittler, *Working Towards Inclusive Education Social Contexts*.

⁹¹ Booth *et al.*, *Index for Inclusion*.

⁹² Department for Education and Skills (2001) *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs*. London: DfES. p. 1.

⁹³ Disability Rights Commission (2001) *Disability Rights Code of Practice for Schools*. London: DRC.

SEN Code of Practice.⁹⁴ The Act sought to enable more pupils with SEN to be included successfully in mainstream schools. It not only safeguards parents' rights to choose a special school if they want to but places increased emphasis on partnership with parents. These developments encompass the policy framework for the education of children with SEN.

The heart of the thesis addresses the ways in which legislative developments and practices are working out at the local level. But before examining empirical evidence, it would be useful to define a theoretical framework that would set the background against which such an assessment can be made. This is the subject of the following chapter, which draws together contributions of policy implementation theorists and researchers.

⁹⁴ Department for Education and Skills (2001) *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. London: DfES.

The field of policy implementation studies is cumulative and complex: cumulative because it inherits the knowledge of several theoretical developments from over a period of time and complex because it has an applicability that cuts across the boundaries of a single discipline of study - economics, politics, sociology, anthropology, planning, management, geography and applied sciences. The scale of interest is immense and the contributions are intellectually astounding.

This chapter seeks to draw upon the insights of the theoretical developments that influence implementation research, of which the top-down bottom-up debate occupies centre stage. Three pre-dominant theories namely, *bureaucracy*, *democracy* and *governance* are discussed to show how they laid the foundations of imminent developments in the field of implementation studies. A link is identified between *bureaucracy* and the well-mandated, top-down approach to implementation studies. Similarly, *democracy* finds expression in the pluralistic bottom-up perspective that allowed alternative 'synthesis' approaches to flourish. *Governance*, a relatively recent phenomenon, gave birth to the concept of policy networks. Interspersed are the related theoretical developments in the fields of organisation theory, public administration, inter-organisational relations and network management.

Implementation studies have grown as a discipline and have incorporated the theoretical knowledge of the disciplines of political science, public

administration, institutional sociology and organisational theory but the complexity within the field reflects a lack of theoretical coherence.¹ The discipline is dominated by case studies and prescriptive advice from academics, which is not necessarily accompanied with empirical evidence. However, there has been a long list of empirically based recommendations from academic researchers to compensate for the lack of a single unified theory.² Research designs, models and variables that grew in number with the proliferation of studies in implementation have firmly established the interest of researchers in implementation studies as independent from the traditional political science or public administration studies. The rise in implementation research has been well recorded.³ Whereas some academics have heralded a decline of interest among the researchers in implementation studies,⁴ others have made a strong case for the resurgence of interest, mainly due to the prevalence of policy failures in society.⁵

¹ O'Toole, L. J. Jr. (1986) 'Policy recommendations for multi-actor implementation: An assessment of the field', *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (2): 181-210.

² O'Toole, L. J. Jr. and Montjoy, R. S. (1984) 'Inter-organisational policy implementation: A theoretical perspective', *Public Administration Review*, 44 (6): 491-503.

³ Sabatier, P. A. (1991) 'Toward better theories of the policy process', *Political Science and Politics*, 24 (June): 147-56. See also O'Toole, L. J., Jr. (1986) 'Policy recommendations for multi-actor implementation: An assessment of the field', *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (2): 181-210.

⁴ DeLeon, P. (1999) 'The missing link revisited: Contemporary implementation research', *Policy Studies Review*, 16 (3/4): 311-38. See also DeLeon, P. (1999) 'The stages approach to the policy process: What has it done? Where is it going?' in Sabatier, P. A. (ed.) *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press. p. 19-32.

⁵ Hill, M. (1997) 'Implementation Theory: yesterday's issue?' *Policy and Politics*. 25 (4): 375-85.

The debate

Pressman and Wildavsky have been regarded as the founding fathers of the implementation studies on account of their seminal work on *Implementation*.⁶ Hargrove's⁷ 'missing link' study took conventional implementation studies forward. Throughout the 1980s, the authors contributed from other disciplines⁸ while in the meantime, other authors, like Van Meter and Van Horn used the knowledge of organisational theory along with the knowledge of judicial decisions and inter-governmental relations to develop their own theoretical model of implementation analysis. However, not all academic researchers found the repertoire of theoretical knowledge from other disciplines particularly valuable.⁹

The researchers have been divided in their conceptual understanding of the term implementation as evidenced in the top-down/bottom-up dichotomy. Some scholars make a clear distinction between policy mandate and action on behalf of policy, whereas others have shown policy-action continuum as a basis of their systematic knowledge and research. The literature has also been made more complex with re-conceptualisations by some researchers.

⁶ Pressman, J.L. and Wildavsky A. (1973) *Implementation*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁷ Hargrove, E. C. (1983) 'The search for implementation theory', in Zeckhauser, R. J. and Leebaert, D. (eds.) *What Role for Government? Lessons from Policy Research*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

⁸ Van Meter, D. and Van Horn, C.E. (1975) 'The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework', *Administration and Society*, 6 (4): 445-88. The authors point to an array of theoretical and empirical work in the disciplines of public administration, political science, organisational studies, institutional studies and sociology.

⁹ Hargrove, 'The search for implementation theory'. The author argued that work from other disciplines was abundant but did not necessarily answer the 'contemporary problems of policy implementation'. p. 280.

For example, the multi-actor implementation, intra-organisational cases,¹⁰ advocacy coalition approach,¹¹ and network analysis¹² were instrumental in making policy implementation studies more complex conceptually. They not only enriched the field of study but also created a marked shift away from understanding implementation from the traditional public administration and organisational theory base. The multi-actor approach offered an alternative to the conventional organisation theory.¹³

Since the 1970s, research in implementation analysis has stimulated many debates around the top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation. The top-down perspective offered a valuable guide to those researchers studying policy implementation from an elevated position; whereas, the bottom-up approach extended the analysis to a much larger number of variables affecting policy at the ground level. It has been established that the top-downers began with a policy mandate or statute and the bottom-uppers shifted their focus to complex web of interactions influencing policy outcomes. Several researchers gave an elaborate account of the top-down and/or bottom-up debate dominating the policy implementation literature.¹⁴ They summarised the list of (at least three hundred key) variables that directly influenced implementation in some way. Most of the reviews conducted by researchers were an effort to arrive at some coherent

¹⁰ O'Toole, 'Policy recommendations for multi-actor implementation'.

¹¹ Jenkins-Smith, H. and Sabatier, P. (1994) 'Evaluating the advocacy coalition framework', *Journal of Public Policy*, 14: 175-203.

¹² Kickert, W. J. M., Klijn, E-H. and Koppenjan, J. F. M. (1997) *Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector*, London: Sage Publications.

¹³ O'Toole, 'Policy recommendations for multi-actor implementation'.

¹⁴ O'Toole, 'Policy recommendations for multi-actor implementation'. See also Sabatier, P. A. (1986) 'Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: A critical analysis and suggested synthesis', *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (1): 21-48.

theoretical model of implementation analysis beyond the conflict ensuing between the two schools of thought. Almost every attempt highlighted the valuable contribution that each school of thought and its proponents made to the discipline.

Top-down approach

The seminal work on *Implementation* by Pressman and Wildavsky is a classic example of the top-down approach.¹⁵ The authors highlighted the degree of co-operation required between the agencies or actors involved in implementation processes and noted that the lack of it inevitably leads to ‘implementation deficit’. Having recognised the role of multiple actors in policy implementation, the authors proposed to reduce the number of linkages involved in implementing policies. There is an underlying presence of a rational model approach predominant in their study, where policy formation distinctively separates from implementation and firmly establishes that the successes in implementation can be measured by the extent to which the policy goals are achieved. They declare:

Implementation, to us, means just what Webster and Roger say it does: to carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, complete. But what is it being implemented? A policy, naturally. There must be something out there prior to implementation; otherwise there would be nothing to move toward in the process of implementation. A verb like ‘implement’ must have an object like ‘policy’.¹⁶

Two American scholars, Donald Van Meter and Carl Van Horn deduced from their studies that, ‘implementation phase does not commence until

¹⁵ Pressman and Wildavsky *Implementation*.

¹⁶ Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation*. p. xxi.

goals and objectives have been established (or identified) by prior policy decision.’¹⁷ Policy objectives provide a concrete and specific standards for assessing performance and appear at the top of their variables’ list. Having given the policy goals and objectives their due place in the implementation analysis, the authors turned to the relative power of implementing actors or ‘subordinates’ in influencing the policy outcome. They use the knowledge of organisational theory along with the knowledge of judicial decisions and inter-governmental relations to develop their own theoretical model of implementation analysis.¹⁸ Lured into the temptation of providing a generalisable model of effective implementation, they produced a theoretical model based on six variables. Compliance and stability were identified as key factors. Besides defining the characteristics of the implementing agencies, the authors also acknowledged the place of inter-organisational communications and enforcement activities as vital to successful implementation. Among all the variables within their theoretical model, the most significant entrant was the disposition of implementers - a factor almost overlooked by all other top-down theorists. By the term implementers’ disposition the authors meant three elements of their response: their cognition or understanding of the policy objectives; direction of their response to it, which could vary from acceptance, neutrality to rejection; and the intensity of that response that had a direct bearing on their performance. The variables were clearly inspired by the organisational theory along with a collection of influential texts and studies from other researchers.¹⁹

¹⁷ Van Meter and Van Horn, ‘The policy implementation process’.

¹⁸ Van Meter and Van Horn, ‘The policy implementation process’.

¹⁹ Kaufman, H. (1960) *The Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behaviour*.

Encapsulating the top-down approach, Mazmanian and Sabatier described implementation as a process of translating policy decisions incorporated in a statute, executive orders or court decisions.²⁰ They proposed a set of factors responsible for successful implementation of policies. Among the list of factors, the achievement of the legally mandated objectives remained as the singularly most important one. Attention was also given to the tractability of the problem, which meant looking at the causal relationship between the problem and the solution offered by the policy statement. In other words, the extent of behavioural change required in the target group was kept under close analysis. Some of the key non-statutory variables affecting implementation were the socio-economic conditions, media attention, public support, attitudes and resources of the constituency groups. The list of variables was by no means small, but the most significant of their variables that almost became an epitome of their theoretical model was the need for 'clear and consistent objectives' as a pre-requisite for successful implementation, almost bordering on keeping a tight hierarchical control over implementing agencies.

In developing their ideas on *Policy Analysis for the Real World*, Brian Hogwood and Lewis Gunn offered a set of propositions to the policy makers on how to attain 'perfect implementation'.²¹ Here the top-down perspective is idealised to an extent that it attains unreal proportions in practical terms - for instance, adequate time, sufficient resources, valid theory of cause and

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins. See also Etzioni, A. (1961) *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organisations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates*. NY: Free Press.

²⁰ Mazmanian, D.A. and Sabatier, P.A. (1983) *Implementation and Public Policy*, Glenview III: Scott, Foresman.

²¹ Hogwood, B. W. and Gunn, L.A. (1984) *Policy analysis for the real world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

effect, single implementing agency, agreed objectives, perfect communication are the pre-requisites to successful implementation. The authors seem to have succumbed to the temptation of providing a generalisable and normative model to measure implementation success or failure. Being highly prescriptive and focusing on implementation as a purely administrative process, the top-down approach, therefore, provoked criticism from several researchers.

Bottom-up approach

Matland sums up the criticisms leveled against the top-downers. According to him, critics found their classic advice to keep policy goals clear and consistent and minimise the number of actors involved in implementation as inherently flawed.²² It ignored the very nature of passing legislation or arriving at a politically mandated decision, which is far from being clear and consistent. Instead it was a process that involved ambiguities and contradictory roles. It was also believed that the initial stages of policymaking before any legislation is passed were often ignored by the top-downers. This prevented them from understanding implementation in its entire perspective. According to the bottom-uppers, the top down models suggested that the local actors were no more than impediments to implementation and, therefore must be controlled or kept few in number. This view met with severe criticisms. Hjern and Porter were instrumental in shifting the focus from the hierarchical view of measuring policy goals to analysing successes through sociological studies of organisations. They

²² Matland (1995) 'Synthesising Implementation Literature: The ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation', *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, 5 (2): 145-74. p. 146.

argued that implementation could only be understood from the perspective of the local actors or ‘service providers’.²³ Or else how could one explain wide variations in implementing the same legislation or national policy statement at the local level? The bottom-up critics warned that ignorance of local level implementers and the contextual factors affecting the environment and policy outcome can lead to implementation failure.²⁴

Lipsky introduced a novel term for the actors involved in implementing policies - ‘street level bureaucrats’.²⁵ They remained the single most significant factor influencing implementation for bottom-up scholars. Eminent researchers empirically tested the concept. Hjern *et al.* conducted a highly influential piece of empirical work that involved using the strategy to map a network of ‘microlevel actors’ about their perceptions of the policy goals and activities, and their problems and contacts.²⁶ This study of Swedish manpower training programmes took the interactions between unions, governmental employment agencies, local governments and industrial firms as the starting point and then moved on to those responsible for planning, financing and executing the programmes. The technique,

²³ Hjern, B. and Porter, D. (1981) ‘Implementation structures: a new unit of administrative analysis’, *Organisation Studies*, 2: 211-27.

²⁴ Palumbo, D.J., Maynard-Moody, S., and Wright, P. (1984) ‘Measuring Degrees of Successful Implementation’, *Evaluation Review*, 8 (1): 45-74.

²⁵ Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Regarded as the ‘founding father’ of the bottom-up perspective, the author argued that the front line staff implementing policies was far removed from what was expected of them in terms of goals and objectives because they only tried to ‘cope’ with the pressures they faced in delivering services. Resource pressures and time constraints were real and shaped their behaviour and responses.

²⁶ Hjern, B., Hanj, K. and Porter, D. (1978) ‘Local networks of manpower training in the Federal Republic of Germany and Sweden,’ in Hanf, K. I. And Scharpf, F. W. (eds.) *Interorganisational Policy Making: Limits to Coordination and Central Control*. London: Sage.

according to the authors, helped unravel the dynamic nature of policy implementation. It had the potential to understand why central initiatives failed in certain local conditions and what led to success in others. They concluded that success in implementation was entirely dependent on the skills of individual local actors.

However, these bottom-up suggestions were not free from criticisms. The top-downers argued in favour of the strong influence of centrally determined policies even when the focus of attention shifts to variations in local actions. Having conceded that the policy makers do not act at local level and play only a limited role, Sabatier argued that the ‘policy designers’ could not be ignored altogether because they formulated policies and made resources available for local implementers to act.²⁷ The organisational theorists pointed at the discrepancy between the goals perceived by local implementers and those envisioned by policymakers that could make the strategies used by bottom-uppers inappropriate in such circumstances.

The implications of the debate on methodological and normative concerns of implementation studies were enormous. The prescriptive tendencies of the top-downers to strongly advise on conditions for successful implementation were in stark contrast with the descriptive nature of bottom-uppers, who preferred to adopt a flexible strategy allowing enough scope for local and contextual variations. Having analysed and understood the nature of debate between the top-down models and bottom-up studies, alternative models and theoretical approaches were proposed. However, despite the efforts of several scholars to find an alternative in the form of synthesis of the two

²⁷ Sabatier, ‘Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research’.

‘schools of thought’, the debate remains alive and a challenge to future researchers.

Synthesis

The normative and descriptive information contained within each of the two approaches to implementation studies had the tendency to bring out different conclusions to the study depending upon the choice of method. This revelation from a study conducted by Allison made a considerable impact on the deliberate choice of methodology in forthcoming studies and understanding of the implementation process.²⁸ It led Elmore to argue a case for using different theoretical models and triangulating them to understand what really goes on in most complicated cases of implementation.²⁹ His concept of forward and backward mapping was the result of arriving at some sort of synthesis of the two approaches in debate.³⁰ While forward mapping was about the top down way of starting from a stated goals and measuring the success of implementation against the well-defined outcome criteria, backward mapping was the bottom-up perspective of following the behaviour patterns and interactions of local actors trying to find possible solutions to problems posed by policy objectives within the given circumstances. Particularly noticeable was the influence of the ‘organisational models’ in his works, as is evident in his definition of implementation analysis:

²⁸ Allison, L. (ed.) (1971) *The Utilitarian Response*, London: Sage.

²⁹ Elmore, R.F. (1978) ‘Organizational models of social program implementation’, *Public Policy*, 26 (2): 185-228.

³⁰ Elmore, R.F. (1985) ‘Forward and backward mapping: Reversible logic in the analysis of public policy’, in Hanf, K. and Toonen, T. A. J. (eds.) *Policy Implementation in Federal and Unitary Systems: Questions of Analysis and Design*. Dordrecht: Nijhoff. p. 33-70.

Defining implementation analysis as a choice between market and non-market structures diverts attention from, and trivialises, an important problem: *how to use the structure and process of organisations to elaborate, specify, and define policies...* In fact organisations can be remarkably effective devices for working out difficult public problems, but their use requires an understanding of the reciprocal nature of authority relations. Formal authority travels from top to bottom in organisations, but the informal authority that derives from expertise, skill, and proximity to the essential tasks that an organisation performs travels in the opposite direction... For purposes of implementation, this means that formal authority, in the form of policy statements, is heavily dependent upon specialised problem-solving capabilities further down the chain of authority.³¹ (emphasis in original)

This 'mixed methods' approach derived from systems management, bureaucratic processes and organisational theory still holds ground in the face of many criticisms from top-downers and bottom-uppers. His later works pointed to his particular preference for backward mapping, inasmuch as it was 'free of predetermining assumptions' unlike the top-down methodology.

Attempting to synthesise the two approaches, Sabatier in his later works with Jenkins-Smith proposed an 'advocacy coalition framework' (ACF) that reflected his approval of some of the methodological advantages of bottom-up approach,³² being a staunch top-down proponent himself.³³ According to Sabatier, the evaluative criteria of the success of a policy was less clear in

³¹ Elmore, R. F. (1980) 'Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Design'. *Political Science Quarterly*, 94 (4): 601-616. p. 605-6

³² Sabatier, P.A. and Jenkins-Smith, H. (1993) *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

³³ Sabatier, 'Towards better theories of the policy process'. In this essay, the author argued that the bottom uppers 'overemphasised the ability of the Periphery to frustrate the Centre'.

the bottom-up approach because their focus remained on the nature of interactions, making plans and strategies more than the 'extent of attainment of formal objectives'.³⁴ Strongly arguing the case of top-down approach in situations where there is a 'dominant piece of legislation', 'research funds' and 'structured situation', the authors managed to arrive at a synthesised theoretical framework that not only gave them a methodological choice to conduct the study, but also the use of top-down approach for making such a choice.³⁵ The ACF, despite being employed by a large number of research scholars in various studies and having undergone several revisions, gave a new unit of analysis termed as 'policy subsystem':

A [policy] subsystem consists of actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue, such as agriculture, and who regularly seek to influence public policy in that domain.³⁶

Synthesis of the two approaches being the only way forward in developing a theoretical body for policy implementation studies, scholars offered new models and frameworks to work out the basic problem of 'how to evaluate success of implementation'.³⁷ The communications model (CM) of intergovernmental policy making proposed by Goggin *et al.* was conceived as a synthesis of the top-down and bottom-up approaches. Their synthesis or

³⁴ Sabatier, 'Top-down and bottom-up approaches'.

³⁵ Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, *Policy Change and Learning*.

³⁶ Sabatier, P.A. (1998) 'The advocacy coalition framework: revisions and relevance for Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5 (1): 98-130. In this article, Table 1 lists 31 studies conducted by research scholars on 'Cases applying the ACF in critical fashion 1987-97'. p. 99.

³⁷ Cline, K. (2000) 'Defining the Implementation Problem: Organisational management versus Cooperation', *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, 10 (3): 551-571. The author compared the models of Goggin *et al.*'s CM with Stoker's IRF to understand the problem of implementation.

'model' revealed an inclination to rest authority and control of implementation with the federal policy makers. Lester and Goggin explained that, 'in order to resolve the implementation paradox... ways must be found to enhance the control over the implementation process that national formulators enjoy.'³⁸ They acknowledged the presence of multiple actors in implementing processes as in network situations, but their 'institutional view' restricted them to give the power of responsibility for success to anyone other than the policy designers. Using the communications theory, the authors devised a framework that established the importance of communicating or sending 'inducements and constraints' from the top and bottom levels. However, their contribution to understanding policy implementation in terms of emphasising on clear and consistent communications, as a pre-requisite to compliance, was limited in its approach and applicability.³⁹

By now it was established that the top-downers chose clear and consistent policies, preferably statutes, as a measure of successful implementation. While in contrast, the bottom-uppers preferred to comprehend the interactions of those who implement policies at the local level and asked for a much broader evaluation of implementation success.⁴⁰ This led researchers to conjure up possible explanations of what was meant by 'successful implementation'. Every probable reason was an addition to the existing

³⁸ Lester, J.P. and Goggin, M.L. (1998) 'Back to the future: The rediscovery of implementation studies', *Policy Currents*, 8 (3): 1-9. p. 22.

³⁹ Ostrom, E. (1998) 'A Behavioural Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action', *American Political Science Review*, 92 (1): 1-22. The author took the communications theory of Goggin *et al.* further to establish its importance in developing 'trust, reputations, and norms of reciprocity among participants in the implementation process'. p. 13.

⁴⁰ Palumbo *et al.* 'Measuring Degrees of Successful Implementation'.

repertoire of variables determining the success levels in implementation. For some it was easier to use different variables or approaches to understand successful implementation for different settings. According to Berman, it was better to use a bottom-up approach to situations that involve conflictual settings with no dominant policy goal, whereas the top-down strategy would suit better in a case where there was a strong central steering.⁴¹ However, the popularity of synthesising the two approaches to arrive at a single theoretical model that balanced both perspectives into one was a temptation hard to resist.

Stoker's Implementation Regime Framework (IRF) was a classic example of a comprehensive synthesis approach. According to him, an implementation regime, 'can be an arrangement among implementation participants that identifies the values to be served during the implementation process and provides an organisational framework to promote those values.'⁴² It was based on the premise that implementation was successful if co-operation between the agencies was achieved, especially among participants in 'mixed motive games'. The mixed motive context referred to the presence or absence of incentives for the participants to either co-operate or enter into a conflict situation. For example, committing resources could be one of the incentives to promote co-operation and trust among the participants and lead the programme or policy to its successful implementation.

⁴¹ Berman, P. (1978) 'The study of macro- and micro-implementation', *Public Policy*, 26 (2): 157-84.

⁴² Stoker, R. P. (1991) *Reluctant Partners: Implementing Federal Policy*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press. p. 55.

Drawing upon the game theory,⁴³ Stoker argued that over a period of time the implementation regime led to stronger relationships by virtue of good communication. The IRF was distinctively different from other models and frameworks that expounded better communication and co-operation as virtues. It gave enough credence to the presence of conflict in the implementation process in terms of 'reluctant participants'. It was within this conflict-cooperation paradigm that the importance of strategic interactions in institutional contexts was set in the IRF.

The idea of 'conflict' was further examined by Matland in his ambiguity/conflict model.⁴⁴ He acknowledged the central role of 'conflict' in understanding the implementation process, as it was within the 'conflict resolution mechanisms' that the analytical tools of persuasion, bargaining, and coercion were best employed to solve problems. Raising the profile of policy conflict in implementation analysis, the author challenged the conventional wisdom that regarded ambiguous policy goals as the very reason for conflicts and thus, dysfunctional to successful implementation. According to him, ambiguous policy goals were more likely to limit conflict because they were vague enough to engender any conflict. Most importantly, an ambiguous policy had scope for various interpretations that sufficiently reduced the threat of disagreements among the implementing agencies or actors. He argued:

⁴³ Klijn, E. H. and Teisman, G. R. (1997) 'Strategies and Games in Networks', in Kickert, W. J. M., Klijn, E. H. and Koppenjan, J. F. M. (eds.) *Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

⁴⁴ Matland, 'Synthesizing the implementation literature'.

One implicit concern underlying this model is that ambiguity should not be seen as a flaw in a policy. Despite its being blamed for implementation failure, ambiguity can be useful. Ambiguity can ease agreement both at the legitimating and the formulation stage... Widespread variation provides an abundance of knowledge which should be actively nurtured.⁴⁵

Each of the four policy implementation paradigms developed across the conflict-ambiguity model were a kind of synthesis of the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. It focussed more on the conditions or settings that determined the use of a particular set of variables to understand policy implementation rather than add to the long list of existing variables. Hence, it gave more 'structure' to the body of literature by exploring theoretical implications of those variables.

Side stepping the top-down and bottom-up argument, attempts were made to find alternative ways of using implementation theory in research. Reviews of studies in policy implementation have offered a coherent and applicable approach to the body of literature. Sabatier and O'Toole separately reviewed the literature in 1986 and produced a set of variables from the most widely accepted theories. These variables emerged time and again in the empirical studies conducted worldwide. Some variables were more popular with scholars and researchers in the USA while others were regarded as absolute essential in a European context. Their relevance to the body of implementation theory per se remains indisputable.

Research studies conducted in the recent past have explored the idea of using a list of variables to test the hypothesis instead of having a

⁴⁵ Matland, 'Synthesizing the implementation literature'. p. 157.

conventional theoretical model. The study on child support legislation conducted by Keiser and Meier, enlisted a set of ten variables under two sets of hypotheses - 'policy design' and 'local level implementation'.⁴⁶ The first hypothesis rested upon the assumption that policy design flaws lead to policy failure and then explored a set of variables such as, policy coherence and tractability, within the hypothesis. Similarly, alternate hypothesis suggested that local implementation environment as defined in terms of commitment of resources, bureaucratic values and local variation of needs also affected the policy outcome. Although the list of variables did not make it any easier to test the hypothesis, it offered an alternative to committing the study to a single top-down or bottom-up approach or a synthesis of the two.

Hill and Hupe delineated 'dependent' and 'independent' variables along with their methodological implications in their recent work.⁴⁷ They range from policy formulation to its implementation, including policy characteristics; policy formation; policy transfer processes; responses of implementing agencies; inter-organisational relationships; responses of 'those affected by the policy'; and, wider macro-environmental factors. According to them, identifying a dependent variable against which to measure the success of policy implementation was most essential to their analysis. The entire argument was built upon the examples taking different alternatives to measure implementation success given that the dependent

⁴⁶ Keiser, L.R. and Meier, K.J. (2001) 'Policy Design, Bureaucratic Incentives, and Public Management: The Case of Child Support Enforcement', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 6 (3): 337-64.

⁴⁷ Hill, M. and Hupe, P. (2002) *Implementing Public Policy: Governance in Theory and in Practice*. London: Sage Publications.

variables were inherent in unambiguous and readily identified legislation or on the other hand, as rarefied as understood by the researcher:

Many studies use outcomes as dependent variables. In these cases it may be that policy 'goals' have been made very explicit, but equally they may have been attributed by the researcher. The extent to which the latter is problematical may depend upon the extent to which there is seen to be an uncontroversial shared goal.⁴⁸

Differentiating policy output from policy outcome, Winter defined policy output in terms of 'implementation behaviour' and added that analysing the behaviour of implementing agencies or actors as a measure of policy output resolved the problem of finding a dependent variable in case of ambiguous policy goals.⁴⁹

This research draws extensively on the contributions of implementation theorists over several decades, but it is the understanding of wider concepts, like *bureaucracy, democracy and governance* that enrich the findings of this study.

Other contributions to theoretical developments

Studies in policy implementation are a product of theoretical contributions from the disciplines of political science, sociology, organisation theory, public administration, institutional theory, inter-organisation theory, new

⁴⁸ Hill and Hupe *Implementing Public Policy*. p. 121.

⁴⁹ Winter, S. (1999) 'New directions for implementation research', *Policy Currents*, 8 (4): 1-5.

public management and post modernist theories. These, in turn, are interminably linked with the broader ideas and contexts inherent in *bureaucracy*, *democracy*, and *governance*. While the organisational and institutional theories thrive within the ideology of *bureaucracy* and hierarchy, the inter-organisational theories contribute to policy analysis as the ideas of *democracy* gain prominence. The concept of *governance*, however, found expression in the policy network and new public management studies.

Bureaucracy

The roots of modern policy analysis can be traced back to the works of scholars and theorists in the nineteenth century trying to find solutions to social problems of the times. Most notable was the work of the German sociologist, Max Weber, on *bureaucracy* as the most rational form of rule. He postulated a theory to examine state autonomy and the power structure operating within *bureaucracy*. Introducing the concept of hierarchy, he stated, ‘the organisation of offices follows the principle of hierarchy; that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one.’⁵⁰ Weber’s approach to the concept of *bureaucracy* stressed the importance of hierarchy and authority, which contributed to the development of organisation theory. Inspired by the concept of bureaucracy and its ideology to understand administration, the organisation theorists gave a formal structure to organisations. It required them to formalise and set out rules and maxims to understand ‘organisational life’, as also manifested in an ‘ideal typical bureaucracy’. It was essentially about understanding the formal ways

⁵⁰ Weber, M. (1947) ‘Rational-legal authority and bureaucracy’ quoted in Hill, M. (ed.) *The Policy Process: A Reader*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf. p. 107.

of control exercised by the superiors over their subordinates without any regard to their attitudes and emotions. Organisations were assumed to operate in a purely rational and hierarchical style. This hard approach, devoid of any human emotion, was criticised by some organisation theorists who wanted to understand organisations from a more 'human perspective'. According to them, such an approach would attribute the importance of interpersonal relations among the members of the organisation, which would eventually lead to the evolution of the sociology of organisations.⁵¹ Crozier's work on 'strategic contingencies theory' added yet another dimension to the understanding of organisations. According to him, the theory explained why some participants became more powerful than the others and controlled their behaviour.⁵² Within the realm of rationality, the study of organisations had thus grown to examine administrative behaviour and decision-making that made valuable contributions to the field of implementation studies. Inherent in these developments were the seeds of future implementation studies that held a typical 'top-down' view of the policy process.

While advances were made in implementation studies and theoretical development of the field so as to evaluate the policies and find ways of making the government programmes work, the contribution of organisational theory became an absolute essential.⁵³ Definitional links between implementation and organisation were established by a host of

⁵¹ Pollitt, C. (1990) 'Performance indicators in the longer term', *Public Money and Management*, 9 (3): 51-55.

⁵² Crozier, M. (1964) *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁵³ Hill, M. (1972) *The Sociology of Public Administration*, London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

authors.⁵⁴ Among them was a simple statement on ‘organisational control’ borrowed from Etzioni. He described the implementation process as a way to ensure that orders from the top were followed.⁵⁵ Implementation was understood as a corollary of control by superiors on their subordinates to carry out prescribed decisions. The organisational theory was the fountainhead of the key words used in implementation studies, like leadership, authority, co-ordination, compliance and hierarchy. The research studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s showed the influence of organisation theory and concepts of bureaucracy and hierarchy on implementation studies.

Kaufman’s study used the idea of administrative feedback systems to show how superiors kept themselves informed of their subordinates’ activities and ensured their compliance.⁵⁶ His approach was particularly influenced by the Weberian interpretation of relationships in a bureaucratic organisation.

Elmore, in his classic essay on *Organisational Models of Social Program Implementation*, addressed the problems in deriving from an already established complex field of organisation theory by developing ‘four organisational models representing the major schools of thought’.⁵⁷ One of his models described organizations as ‘problem-solving systems’. He

⁵⁴ Van Meter and Van Horn, ‘The policy implementation process’.

⁵⁵ Etzioni, A. (1964) *Modern Organisations*, Englewood Cliffs N. J.: Prentice Hall.

⁵⁶ Kaufman, H. (1973) *Administrative Feedback*, Washington: Brookings.

⁵⁷ Elmore, ‘Organisational models of social program implementation’. The four models developed by the author were based on the knowledge of organisation theory, they are - systems management model; bureaucratic process model; organisational development model; and conflict and bargaining model. It was based on the assumption that since public policies were being implemented by large public organisations, it was imperative to understand the way they functioned and managed tasks.

attributes 'discretion' and routine' to individual actors in an organisation because it was all about controlling discretion of 'front-line workers' by 'high level administrators' in order to change the routines that deliver services.

Simon's concern with decision-making and rationality had drawn a much wider net over a range of disciplines - public administration, economics, organisational sociology, psychology, management and political science - that also shaped his 'bounded' rationality model.⁵⁸ His prime contribution to the field of implementation studies was an understanding of limitations on human rationality in organisational contexts. Policy analysis and related studies helped to unravel the decision-making processes. Lindblom's 'muddling through' the decision-making process with mutual adjustments and negotiations contradicted Simon's rational decision-making model.⁵⁹

The Eastonian 'black box' model over-simplified the complex policy processes into policy inputs and outputs.⁶⁰ The influence of systems approach on these models and theories of policy analysis was unmistakable.

Among the works of institutional theorists, Selznick's work on institutions was of critical relevance to the implementation studies.⁶¹ There emerged a deliberate move towards understanding implementation from institutional and not organisational perspectives. He argued that all organisations had 'institutional matrix', which helped in understanding of how organisations

⁵⁸ Simon, H. A. (1945) *Administrative Behaviour*, New York: Free Press.

⁵⁹ Lindblom, C. E. (1959) 'The science of muddling through', *Public Administration Review*, 19: 78-88.

⁶⁰ Easton, D. (1953) *The Political System*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf and Easton, D. (1965) *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs N. J.: Prentice-Hall.

⁶¹ Selznick, P. (1957) *Leadership in Administration*. Evanston III: Row & Peters.

functioned. Bringing the focus down to the members of the organisation, he showed how decisions were made not in the formal structures of an organisation but within the informal environment of an institution. Thus, institutionalism was an explanation of the values, interests and impact of environment on individual actions within an organisation. Theoretical framework of policy analysis shifted from behaviourist approaches in policy analysis to institutional approaches within sociology. But institutional approaches could not be used to deliver simple answers to problems of implementation. In the words of Immergut, 'Institutions do not allow one to predict policy outcomes. Yet by establishing the rules of the game, they enable one to predict the ways in which policy conflicts will be played out.'⁶² However, all the different approaches to implementation and policy studies used by the academic researchers remain ungeneralisable. Nevertheless, the use of variables in the recent implementation studies bear a strong resemblance to the work in the institutionalist tradition.

The organisation and institution theory combined to provide probable explanations of how individuals or agencies acted in a particular way and if there were more than one, their interactions and relationships had the key to understanding implementation in a democratic society. Moving on to more complex fields, inter-organisational theory began with exploring the exchange relationship between organisations and institutions. Use of inter-organisational framework by some academic researchers was only a reflection of the increasing number of organisations or agencies getting

⁶² Immergut, E. M. (1992) 'The rules of the game: The logic of health policymaking in France, Switzerland and Sweden', cited in Hill and Hupe, *Implementing Public Policy*. p. 63.

involved in the implementation of a policy.⁶³ Hjern and Porter saw the process of implementation being undertaken by a cluster or 'pool of organisations' with an obvious complex pattern of interactions.⁶⁴ Inter-organisational studies based on exploring a number of organisations involved in the process of joint decision-making were relevant to the democratic-pluralist theory. In studying implementation, inter-organisational pools were reworked as a complex set of policy networks. Further extending the idea of inter-organisational relations to inter-governmental relations, policy networks also became a useful implementation tool to study central-local government relationships, primarily confined to decision-making more than implementation studies. These developments were growing under the phenomenon called *governance*.

Democracy

Political scientists had broadened the usage of the term *democracy* not only to explain power and representation, but also to seek out the role of actors in government institutions. *Democracy* was first associated with bureaucracy inasmuch as it extended the idea of controlling the activities of the subordinates in a 'representative bureaucracy'.⁶⁵ But within the 'pluralistic approach', *democracy* replaced the dominant political authority in decision making with greater local participation. Its implications in conceptualising 'control of implementation process' were enormous. The proliferation of institutions within the government and an equal presence of pressure groups

⁶³ Hanf, K. I. and Scharpf, F. W. (eds.) (1978) *Interorganisational Policy Making: Limits to Coordination and Central Control*. London: Sage.

⁶⁴ Hjern and Porter, 'Implementation structures'.

⁶⁵ Page, E. C. (1985) *Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power: A Comparative Analysis*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.

improving the practice of democracy had convinced the policy analysts of the need for using a pluralist approach to policy analysis. One of the leading proponents of these approaches was Dahl, who suggested that conflict was 'democracy's lifeblood'.⁶⁶ His worldview of policy process was dominated by the idea of pluralism as against elitism that explained how power was distributed between different groups. An alternative to pluralism was proposed by the elite theory that confined power to a few groups or individuals by virtue of their access to certain resources, like wealth, expertise, knowledge or institutional position. Both pluralists and elitists' perspectives oscillated within the boundaries of the democratic theory and thus, produced another basis for policy implementation analysis.

With the inevitable rise in the number of organisations becoming responsible for the implementation of a policy, the prime responsibility to carry out the policy effectively became dispersed among different organisations. The result, as envisaged by Scharpf, was greater 'organisational conflict and policy paralysis'.⁶⁷ At this stage, inter-organisational theory was the single most significant tool in exploring the exchange relationship between organisations and institutions.⁶⁸ Inter-organisational studies based on exploring a number of organisations involved in the process of joint decision-making were the obvious response to such proliferation of organisations in policy implementation. At this stage Rothstein introduced

⁶⁶ Dahl, R. (1961) *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁶⁷ Scharpf, F. W. (1986) 'Policy failure and institutional reform: Why should form follow function?' *International Social Science Journal*, 38 (2): 179-91.

⁶⁸ Hanf and Scharpf, *Interorganisational Policy Making*. See also Aldrich, H. E. (1976) 'Resource dependence and inter-organisational relations: Local employment service offices and social services sector organisations', *Administration and Society*, 7 (4): 419-54.

the concept of 'democracy's black hole'.⁶⁹ With increasing number of organisations sharing the power and responsibility of implementing a single policy at the same time, there occurred a 'responsibility drift' that allowed no single organisation to take full responsibility. However, the problems of coordination among such multifarious organisations remained a challenge. The traditional methods of determining the success of implementation gave way to the backward mapping technique of tracing the origin of policy intent by asking a range of organisations involved in its implementation.

Yet another problem with involving a number of organisations in connection with implementation of a policy, as stressed by several implementation researchers, was the political conflicts emanating from working together with different organisations in designing implementation programmes. Rothstein argued that, 'to a great extent, implementation research is misery research, a pathology of the social sciences, if you will.'⁷⁰ In an effort to reach consensus and overcome 'political conflicts' among the organisations involved in implementation programme, the policies were translated into ambiguous programme objectives with unclear texts that allowed each organisation their own favoured formulations and interpretations.

In keeping with the changing ideologies - from democracy to governance - the 'inter-organisational pools' as units of implementation research were then reworked as a complex set of policy networks to study policy implementation. Further extending the idea of inter-organisational relations

⁶⁹ Rothstein, B. (1998) *Just Institutions Matter - The moral and political logic of a universal welfare state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁰ Rothstein, *Just Institutions Matter*. p. 93.

to intergovernmental relations, policy networks also became a useful implementation tool to study central-local government relationships, primarily confined to decision-making more than implementation studies. *Democracy* steered the theories and ideas that developed the image of government driving policies from a strong rational and 'representative' political core. There existed a division between politics and administration in which implementation failure was explained as an administrative flaw. However, *governance* offered an explanation of implementation problems as originating from interdependencies of various social actors. From the theoretical roots of governance, policies were the result of multiple goals and strategies emanating from complex interactions of government with many actors or agencies.

Governance

While the political scientists attempted to explain the changes taking place in government functions and management, new terms were coined to elucidate new trends. The relation between government and society had undergone fundamental changes and were expressed as *governance*. Combining the insights of political science, public administration, organisation theory and inter-organisational relations, the phenomenon of governance was explained in terms of policy network - a network of public, private and voluntary actors participating in a particular policy area. To advance the theoretical explanations of how policy networks operated and contributed to the implementation of policies, it was necessary to find an appropriate setting within which to conduct policy analysis. The term *governance* afforded such an opportunity. Rhodes attempts to define the term and then goes on to find its distinct meanings:

The term 'governance' refers to a change in the meaning of Government, referring to a *new* process of governing. There are many new uses of governance: for example, it refers the minimal state; corporate governance; and the new public management...governance refers to self-organising, interorganisational networks characterised by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state.⁷¹

The discussion on governance as the new public management was extended to 'managerialism' and 'new institutional economics'. While the former term stressed on using measures of performance and standards in conducting public affairs, the latter introduced the element of competition and consumer choice to enhance government functions. As these features became inherent in the idea of governance, further connotations were added to the term. It was not just 'about managing networks' and involving multiple interactions but also included ideas of new public management that, 'stress a businesslike approach to government focusing on performance indicators, deregulation and privatisation, and making government 'function like a firm'.⁷²

That the government now lacked the capacity to execute its policy initiatives on its own was clear from the models and frameworks developed in the late 1990s. Inter-organisational involvement in policy implementation was a new phenomenon and had already led to the new concept of networks.⁷³ The metaphor of 'hollow state' suggested an increasing use of quasi-

⁷¹ Rhodes, R. A. W. (1997) *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham: Open University Press. p. 15.

⁷² Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, *Managing Complex Networks*. p. 3.

⁷³ O'Toole and Montjoy, 'Interorganisational Policy Implementation'.

governmental, private and non-profit agencies to deliver public services that needed greater co-operation and co-ordination.⁷⁴ The theoretical constructs of network analysis were then conducted by the so-called 'third generation'⁷⁵ of implementation researchers, who defined it as follows,

An implementation network, like any other policy network, is the pattern of linkages traced between organisational actors who are in some way interdependent. It is also a socially constructed vehicle for purposive action... The image of the 'policy implementation network' can be used to convey the idea of the highly differentiated and complex array of public and private organisations that are involved in the translation of the policy intentions of the national political community into appropriate measures or actions for the realisation of these objectives at the 'level of the consumer'.⁷⁶

Taking a multi-actor approach to understand implementation, the theorists and researchers developed network analysis approach to policy implementation. This led to a shift from the traditional organisational sociology and public administration to a more sophisticated inter-organisational theory and 'new' public management. Modelling on the role of management in structural characteristics of networks, O'Toole and Meier evolved a theoretical framework.⁷⁷ According to them, policy networks and traditional hierarchies existed on the opposite ends of implementation

⁷⁴ Milward, H. B. and Provan, K. G. (2000) 'Governing the Hollow State', *Journal for Public Administration, Research and Theory*, 10 (2): 359-79.

⁷⁵ Goggin, M. L., Bowman, A. O'M., Lester, J. P. and O'Toole, L. J., Jr. (1990) *Implementation Theory and Practice: Toward a Third Generation*. Glenview III: Scott Foresman/Little, Brown and Company.

⁷⁶ O'Toole, L. J. Jr., Hanf, K. I. and Hupe, P. L. (1997) 'Managing Implementation Processes in Networks' in Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, *Managing Complex Networks*. p. 139.

⁷⁷ O'Toole, L. J. Jr. and Meier, K. J. (1999) 'Modelling the Impact of Public Management: Implications of Structural Context', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 9 (4): 505-26.

structures. The implementation structures were hierarchies if there existed dominant authoritative linkages among the organisations involved in policy processes. Whereas, if there were networks, those linkages were less formal and 'fluid'. In a hierarchy, the management strategies were obviously those of command and control whereas in networks, the managers resorted to negotiation and compromise. Having identified the structure of delivery systems of a policy or a programme along with environmental variables, the authors predicted the impact on implementation management strategies. For instance, there was a direct co-relation between less direct government action and more actors being involved in implementing activities. It was within this heuristic model that the authors attempted to hypothesise the role of administrators in managing structural links. By understanding the characteristics of the implementation structures (hierarchies or networks per se) and their accompanied management strategies, the administrators could manage the implementation programmes more effectively.

A similar approach in defining the structures of policy networks was identified in the works of Smith.⁷⁸ According to him, policy networks were categorised on the basis of the relationship between the government and various groups. 'Policy community', with highly restricted access to the network, with greater consensus and a fairly consistent number of members over a long period was markedly different from the 'issue networks', that had a large membership with fluctuating access and greater degree of conflict. The knowledge of the types of policy networks was beneficial to comprehend the nature of policy making, but it had little relevance to

⁷⁸ Smith, M. J. (1993) *Pressure, Power and Policy*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

implementation studies until they were used in conjunction with the concept of 'intergovernmental relations'. Rhodes' typology of policy networks was arranged along a continuum ranging in their stability, memberships, and interdependence.⁷⁹ It explained the nature and reasons for the existence of different types of policy networks in a country but whether they were able to resolve the implementation problems with this knowledge remained undetermined. However, the impact of policy networks on policy change was clear, 'the existence of a policy community acts as a major constraint upon the degree of policy change [and] policy networks foster incremental outcomes, thereby favouring the status quo or the existing balance of interests in the network.'⁸⁰

The way forward

The policy implementation literature has developed several hypotheses regarding a policy becoming successful in practice. It can be concluded that policy characteristics are of crucial importance for a policy is more likely to succeed if it has clear and consistent goals. The conventional wisdom is that clarity is a pre-requisite to success, but more recently, it has been suggested that higher level of ambiguity facilitates greater success in implementation. Ambiguous policies reduce the chances of disagreements and conflicts among the implementing agencies/actors, which are likely to impede the implementation process. This proposition challenges the notion that clearly stated policy objectives and goals must be ensured and the research reported

⁷⁹ Rhodes, R.A. W. (1999) *Control and Power in Central-Local Government Relations*. Aldershot: Ashgate

⁸⁰ Rhodes, *Control and Power in Central-Local Government Relations*. p. 154.

in this thesis examines the ambiguities inherent in the policy of inclusion in order to determine the extent to which they become a measure of success or failure in implementation?

It has been acknowledged that the term 'inclusion' can be interpreted in many different ways. Since it embodies an ideology, it may be easier to agree with in principle than in practice and it may lend an air of ambiguity to the policy objectives outlined by the government as they become subject to various interpretations. As a human rights issue, it can be extended to provide equal educational opportunities to all children and thus, secures parents' right to choose either form of schooling - mainstream or special - for their child with special needs. The policy raises the issues of choice between special and mainstream schools for pupils with different special educational needs, the role of special schools, the significance of issuing statements so as to guarantee additional support services or funds, and the extent and nature of changes required in the existing schooling system to promote inclusive education.

So to what extent do these national policy goals project ambiguity and successfully reduce conflict situations while offering greater chances of successful implementation? For instance, the government says that special schools will remain an integral part of the schooling system but their role will change. Does it mean that the decision to maintain, close, restructure or re-designate special schools in the community is left to the discretion of the LEAs? These and other related issues with reorganising SEN provision raise another set of questions. How do the LEAs interpret government policies and implement them in response to local priorities? In what ways do the

schools respond to the national and local expectations in everyday practice? An attempt is made to provide answers to these questions in the following chapters with the help of the approaches discussed above, as they put the study of the education policies in the implementation analysis perspective.

Some scholars argue that policy implementation is effective when the channels of communication between the administrative layers of the system are well established. Policy formulation and decision-making processes are extended to different levels of the public administration system: central government departments, LEAs and schools. However, implementation is the prerogative of individual institutions or actors. The schools interpret the local and national policy expectations, as laid out in the form of guidance documents, to make provision for children with SEN. The interactions between the LEA and the schools enable them to develop strategies that promote inclusion or plans that enhance standards of achievement - both of which may not be mutually compatible. Or, the interactions may prove futile in establishing a consensus over the national and local priorities. Either way, the LEA-school interactions prove critical to the implementation of policies at the local level. The channels of communication are also significant between the government and the LEAs, which are normally well established through policy documentation including, guidance and codes of practice. Although the flow of information from the central to local government is to reduce variations in practice, the transfer of knowledge from the schools and the professionals to LEAs results in such variations. Examining this 'vertical public administration' from both perspectives is likely to reveal the reasons for variations in practice along with the gaps in implementation, if any.

Cognition, response and intensity of the response to the policy objectives by implementing agencies/actors account for the level of success achieved in implementing the policies. Understanding and defining inclusion becomes an integral part of accepting or rejecting the policy objectives by the ‘front-line implementers’. The attitudes of LEA officials, professionals and specialist staff contribute equally to define inclusion and establish a sort of ‘institutional disposition’ towards inclusion as a policy meeting the local needs. Whether the schools share the institutional disposition of the LEA or not, depends on the behaviour of individuals or ‘front-line implementers’. Individual behaviour and attitudes to policy objectives are guided by their interactions with the authorities as well as clients. School staffs interact with the LEA officials, professionals, specialist staff, interested agencies and parents. In examining the nature of interactions between them, it enables one to understand the factors that shape policy implementation and determine its success or failure. Financial incentives from the government, LEAs and schools’ governing bodies also contribute substantially in establishing their priorities and hence, determining the intensity of their responses to the policy objectives.

To complete the feedback loop of the implementation process, the responses of those affected by the policy are critical to establish the level of success in achieving effective implementation. Parents of children with special needs are already given a significant attention in the national policy documents by making it a statutory duty for the LEAs to establish Parent Partnership Services. Supported by financial resources, parent partnership has been made as one of the important policy objectives of the inclusion agenda. It has been channeled down through the LEAs to the schools to involve parents

as partners in their child's education. Their relationship with the schools and LEAs, therefore, becomes an important part of the study to determine how it shapes the 'institutional disposition' of the implementing agencies towards the idea of inclusion in general and inclusion as a policy. Then there are voluntary organisations, both national and local, that influence the policy outcome at two different levels. While national voluntary organisations lobby the government to represent their views and influence policymaking, local voluntary groups provide a network of assistance, knowledge and advice to implementing actors. These inter-organisational linkages without any hierarchical accountability or resource dependency negotiate their influence on regulating policy implementation.

Besides the broader demographic, political and economic changes in the policy environment, there are local socio-economic circumstances, over which the central or local governments have no control. These can have an impact on policy implementation. Policy analysts have taken these factors into account to explain the phenomenon beyond the probable explanations. They deserve the attention they are given in policy implementation studies and in particular, in cases of individual boroughs responding to the inclusion policies within their historical, political and socio-economic environment.

The above factors help to provide a framework for an understanding of the local implementation of inclusion policies, factors impeding or facilitating their uptake and the gaps between aspirations and reality. The following chapters present evidence gathered from key players in this field, while the concluding chapter draws together the theoretical perspectives and empirical data.

Abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in 1990 marked an end of the century old tradition of a single local authority providing education in the inner London area.¹ Individual LEAs established their Education Committees and developed plans and strategies to meet local challenges and make provision for pupils with SEN. The inner London LEAs were at different starting points in delivering their education services. The outer London boroughs were formed as a result of the reorganization process following the Local Government and Housing Act, 1965. Some of the new boroughs were the result of incompatible mergers of two or more urban district councils into a single borough. The socio-economic and political changes that accompanied these mergers became part of the legacy of the outer London boroughs. Each borough was, therefore, unique and different socially, economically and demographically. Rising proportion of pupils with statements; spiralling costs of out-of-borough placements of pupils with SEN; alterations in support services as a result of delegation of budgets to schools; reorganization of special schools in response to inclusive education; and, making adequate provision for pupils with SEN in

¹ Inner London Education Authority (1989) *Educating Inner London: Annual Report*. Since 1965, ILEA had been the education authority for the City of London and twelve inner London boroughs. Established under the Local Government Act 1963, ILEA managed 28 residential special schools, 72 day special schools and 6 hospital schools, of which 30 schools were for pupils with EBD, 23 for pupils with MLD, 16 for pupils with SLD, 12 for 'delicate' pupils, 8 for pupils with motor disabilities, 4 for pupils with hearing impairments, another 4 for pupils with autism and 3 for pupils with visual impairments. The authority was responsible for the education of 6,000 pupils with SEN with a budget of £4.7 million. It was abolished in 1990 despite severe opposition from the ILEA members.

mainstream schools with limited resources were some of the challenges facing the LEAs and their schools.

In responding to these challenges, the LEAs exhibited their understanding and commitment to the policy of 'inclusion'. The variations that emerged in the way LEAs and schools chose to meet these challenges and make effective provision for pupils with SEN over a period of the last ten years or more, are laid out in this chapter. The social, economic, political and cultural characteristics of the eight case study authorities – Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Islington, Richmond, Brent, Hillingdon and Enfield – are delineated as they have developed their statutory role as providers of education services for pupils with SEN.

Lewisham

Social and demographic characteristics

As a third largest inner London borough with a population of over 240,000, Lewisham serves a multi-ethnic community. Almost 50 per cent of its population belongs to the minority ethnic groups. Educational achievement in schools is generally low,² which is linked to a high proportion of lone parent families, youth unemployment and youth crime, low levels of adult literacy and numeracy across the borough. In the year 2000, about 41 per cent of pupil population was entitled to FSM almost double the national average. It indicates the level of economic deprivation in the community,

² London Borough of Lewisham (2002) *Learning Futures: Education Development Plan 1999-2002*. London: Lewisham Council. As an indicator of educational achievement standards, only 68 per cent pupils in the borough gained Level 4 at Key Stage 2 in the year 2000.

which is a nationally acknowledged correlative to pupil underachievement and incidence of SEN. Lewisham has 4 per cent of their pupil population with a statement of SEN, which is again double the figure projected nationally. The number of children requiring SEN provision in schools is continually rising. However, the main concerns are about the falling standards of pupil achievement and growing cases of exclusion of pupils from Black and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. High economic deprivation and low educational achievement are the characteristic features of Lewisham. The borough has gained the status of the eleventh most deprived district in England according to the Department of the Environment's Index of Local Conditions.³

In the 1930s, Lewisham was well known as a 'residential suburb of London'. Less than 50 per cent of its population lived in poverty. However, the demographic changes in the next 50 years left the borough economically poorer and educationally disadvantaged. Firstly, with greater influx of immigrants during the 1960s and 70s, the white community in the borough felt 'dispossessed' by the predominantly black immigrants and grew increasingly intolerant. Thus, what was then the cause of 'racism, one of the greatest ills of urbanisation' later became the reason for borough's struggle with poverty and deprivation. Secondly, in 1965, the borough was combined with a much poorer neighbouring borough of Deptford to form the new London Borough of Lewisham. It became economically much weaker and politically reliant on the voting behaviour of the residents of Deptford. The amalgamation of the two very different boroughs was not smooth. It had

³ OFSTED (2000) *Inspection of Lewisham Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission.

schisms that affect policy decision-making even now. The education policies, however, had remained unaffected by the local political activities up until 1990 due to the presence of an overarching authority, ILEA. With the abolition of ILEA, the inner London boroughs, like Lewisham, took the responsibility of making education provision for the first time. The schools and special educational needs provision that was shared by the inner London area was now distributed to individual boroughs. Lewisham got only two special boarding schools for children with EBD in its share.

The Policy and Resources Committee of the council had set up a shadow Education Committee in 1989 to enable smooth transition of responsibilities from ILEA. The task of setting service standards and performance indicators for the new 'Education Service Programme Framework' was particularly daunting because the information database inherited from ILEA was inadequate. The LEA had its very first Education Development Plan drawn up in 1990 with a separate section on Special Educational Needs that recommended a phased review of the provision in the borough.⁴ A draft review document was produced for public consultation. It emerged that the main concern during the time of review were the high number of exclusions, especially of boys from Caribbean background having EBD. There were also concerns about meeting the needs of pupils with other difficulties, like MLD, speech and language disorders and dyslexia.⁵ The plans to establish special schools to meet the provision of children with different SEN were curtailed by the severe budget cuts following the abolition of ILEA. The

⁴ London Borough of Lewisham (1990) *SEN: Reorganisation of Provision*. Report (No, 5) of the Shadow Education Committee. 29 March. London: Lewisham Council.

⁵ London Borough of Lewisham (1991) *Report of Policy and Resources Committee in Meeting of the Council*, 6 Nov. London: Lewisham Council.

financial problems also affected the staffing costs and resourcing levels of schools across the borough, thus making the task of planning and providing for children with special educational needs more difficult for the policymakers.

Inclusion policy

Education policies in the borough have been governed by a host of factors. Race equality and curriculum were the local and national factors, respectively that shaped the concept of inclusion since the early 1990s. They continue to play a dominant role in promoting inclusive practices in the borough.

Rising number of exclusions of pupils from Afro-Caribbean background in the borough complicated the issue of raising achievement levels with race equality.⁶ High levels of exclusions, characterised by over-representation of black pupils, was directly linked to race. As a result the education officers were advised to work with the Lewisham Race Equality Council to reduce exclusions.⁷ The Education Committee had also set targets to reduce exclusion of children from black and ethnic minorities, which had risen to 26 per cent of the entire pupil population in the borough. The principles of inclusion laid out in the Education Act, 1993 were used as a template to frame strategies to deal with the growing problem of racism in education.⁸

⁶ London Borough of Lewisham (1990) *Race Equality in Education: The Policy*. Race Equality Action Plan. 6 March. London: Lewisham Council.

⁷ London Borough of Lewisham (1995) *Exclusions from School*. Report (No. 2) of the Education Committee. 14 February. London: Lewisham Council.

⁸ London Borough of Lewisham (1993) *Provision made for the education of children out of school and the implications of the 1993 Education Bill*. Report (No. 1) of the Education Committee. 31 March. London: Lewisham Council.

Equal educational opportunities became the governing agenda in steering inclusive education policies for most part of the decade. The Lewisham Education Service Equality Plan - 1996/97 clearly stated its key areas for combating disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity in education. The plans laid out how the LEA would monitor black and ethnic minority achievement levels and SEN provision in schools as a way of ensuring equal educational opportunities. Projects and schemes that were undertaken by the LEA to address the serious issues of exclusion of black pupils were assumed to lead naturally towards the 'inclusion way'.⁹

The inclusion policies were also greatly influenced by the introduction of National Curriculum. The SEN reorganisation process that began with the abolition of ILEA triggered changes in special schools by bringing them 'into line with contemporary practice and educational requirements such as, the National Curriculum'.¹⁰ By 1997, the borough's commitment to National Curriculum was firmly established in the LEA's new SEN policy that matched their draft curriculum statement. Both documents shared the same goal, i.e. 'to provide equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils'. In 1999, the Education Sub-Committee proposed to fund their special schools as a way of promoting inclusion because, 'Special schools will need to be held to account for increased inclusion.'¹¹ Additional funds were provided to special schools so they could release their staff to support pupils with SEN

⁹London Borough of Lewisham (1996) *Education Initiatives to Reduce the Number of Exclusions. Equalities Committee Meeting*. 29 October. London: Lewisham Council.

¹⁰ London Borough of Lewisham (1991) *Education Committee Meeting*. 19 July. London: Lewisham Council.

¹¹London Borough of Lewisham (1999) *Making a Difference - Raising GCSE Achievement*. 10 February. London: Lewisham Council. An additional funding amount of £150,000 was allocated for special schools to promote inclusion.

in mainstream schools and help them access the curriculum. Alternatively, they could also develop the expertise of mainstream teachers in differentiating the curriculum according to the needs of individual pupils with SEN. The idea of developing the expertise of special schools to meet the curricular needs of pupils with SEN were strongly influenced by the 1997 Green Paper.¹²

Special schools

Lewisham has seven special schools, one pupils referral unit and two special units attached to mainstream schools for children with SEN. Two of the special schools are for pupils with severe learning difficulties, another two for pupils with MLD, one for 'delicate' children, and two for pupils with EBD. The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and attached units also accommodate pupils with EBD. The provision has grown in strength since the first recommendations were made in March 1992, when the borough had only two special schools.¹³ At the time, the LEA proposed setting new specialist schools, 'to especially develop the expertise in delivering full National Curriculum in small classes and personally tailored teaching programmes.'¹⁴ These changes were to follow the closure of a residential special school for pupils with EBD but severe opposition from the parents and community led the LEA to defer the decision.

¹² DfEE, *Excellence For All Children*.

¹³ London Borough of Lewisham (1990) *SEN: Reorganisation of Provision*. Shadow Education Committee. 29 March. London: Lewisham Council.

¹⁴ London Borough of Lewisham (1992) *Provision for Special Educational Needs - Issues for 1992/93*. Education Committee. 9 July. London: Lewisham Council.

The specialist provision for pupils with EBD remained unaltered until the OFSTED inspected the LEA in 2000 and pointed out the 'shortage of provision' for pupils with EBD in the borough.¹⁵ The report was followed by the LEA's Best Value Review conducted in 2000. It helped the LEA officials to look closely at the borough-wide provision for pupils with EBD. The review also drew attention to the drawbacks of residential placement and benefits of a pupil referral unit for children with EBD. The two special schools offering EBD provision were criticised for lack of co-ordination, which had led to 'unnecessary expenditure'. The review then proposed closure of one of the special schools and re-designation of the other as an autistic primary school accompanied by an expansion of the PRU to meet the increasing demand. However, these proposed changes were regarded as a 'threat signal' by mainstream schools, as they suspected an increase in the inclusion of pupils with EBD in their schools. The proposals were strongly opposed during public consultations.¹⁶ Any change in the SEN provision proposed by the LEA was subjected to close scrutiny by the schools and they exercised enormous control over the education policy decisions. The borough had a tradition of encouraging greater involvement of schools and community in policy decisions even at the time when it was advised otherwise by the government¹⁷ and discouraged by ILEA. Lewisham had kept that tradition alive by setting up Consultative Forums for providing

¹⁵ OFSTED (2000) *Inspection of Lewisham Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission.

¹⁶ London Borough of Lewisham (2001) *Special Educational Needs in Lewisham: Determining the outcomes of the Council's Best Value Review 2000-2001*. Public Consultation Document. Directorate for Education and Culture. London: Lewisham Council.

¹⁷ Under the Education Reform Act, 1988 and the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989 the government ensured that decision-making at the local government level could not be abdicated to representatives of staff and community groups.

representation to parents, head teachers, school governing bodies, and black and ethnic minority groups.

Provision for pupils with MLD was also reviewed recently and found 'inappropriate' because the secondary provision far exceeded the number of places in the primary MLD special school. Proposed reduction in the number of places in the secondary MLD special school was aimed to reduce the trend among parents opting for MLD special school after a mainstream primary. However, the proposals were strongly opposed by the protective campaigns undertaken by the schools and parents.¹⁸ The decisions were deferred to a later stage. The specialist provision in two special schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties was found exceptionally good in the review and in need of expansion to meet the growing demand. There was no indication of reducing segregated provision in the borough.

Only pupils with sensory and physical impairments were encouraged in mainstream schools. Inclusion found expression only in terms of improving access to wheelchair users in mainstream schools and developing provision to meet the needs of pupils with hearing and visual impairment. Additional funds from centrally sponsored schemes, like the Private Finance Initiative and Schools Access Initiative had helped generate new posts of Mobility officers in mainstream schools for pupils with visual impairment. A Dyslexia Unit was established to meet the high incidence of pupils with specific learning difficulties in mainstream schools, which was a relatively

¹⁸ London Borough of Lewisham (2001) *Consultative Paper for Parents, Carers and Local Residents. Best Value Review*, Directorate for Education and Culture. London: Lewisham Council.

new phenomenon. The challenges facing the LEA were to meet the needs of pupils with autism and specific learning difficulties. These children were traditionally placed in out-of-borough schools due to lack of provision within the borough. But with increased pressure on controlling expenditure from out-of-borough placements, the LEA was compelled to develop their own provision for these pupils.

Statements

Less than half of the children having a statement of SEN (i.e. 682 out of 1491) were placed in mainstream schools while the special schools in the borough had over 54 per cent of them.¹⁹ In addition, the costs incurred on making provision for statemented pupils in special schools were three times the costs in mainstream - £2,865 per pupil in mainstream and £7,321 in a special school. This trend was in stark contrast with the other boroughs that were shifting their SEN funds from special to the mainstream sector in order to promote inclusion. The rise in the number of statements issued to pupils was phenomenal: from 1320 in 1997 to 1494 in 2000, an overall increase of 18 per cent in three years. There were no clear strategies to arrest the rising numbers of statements in the borough. However, the paucity of educational psychologist's time to make an assessment acted as a control mechanism and caused much grief and discontentment to the parents and schools staff. The LEA had incurred high expenses on SEN budget in supporting children with statements. Even the funding or 'matrix' system used by the LEA since 1994, which was based on the level of child's 'intellectual difficulties' and

¹⁹ London Borough of Lewisham (2000) *Special Educational Needs - Best Value Review: Statistics and Information*. Appendix 2. London: Lewisham Council.

related ‘barriers to curriculum access’, had proved expensive.²⁰ It was criticised as ‘too fragmented’ to meet the demands of a changing profile of specialist support within the borough.²¹ Eventually, the LEA proposed the ‘underlying need’ model to calculate the SEN budget delegated to schools on the basis of the number of children entitled to free school meals.

Financial transfers from individual based funding to supporting whole schools were being considered with the aim of reducing reliance on statements. In one of the official documents, Lifelong Learning Select Committee, it was stated that:

We were attracted to the idea that it is better to resource schools to meet the diverse needs of their community rather than to pin resources to individuals who have been appropriately labeled.²²

Lewisham was a ‘high delegating authority’. They delegated 83.6 percent of their Local School Budgets to the schools in 1999, higher than the London average at the time. It left them with fewer resources to maintain their central reserve of SEN support services.

SEN provision

The LEA provides *Education Psychology and Learning Support Services* and maintains *SEN Assessment and Placement Team*. The *Learning Support Services* include peripatetic specialist teachers for children with sensory impairment, EBD and specific learning difficulties. They provide advice on

²⁰ London Borough of Lewisham (1999) *Parents Information: Special Needs*. London: Lewisham Council. p. 38.

²¹ London Borough of Lewisham, *Best Value Review*.

²² London Borough of Lewisham, *Best Value Review*. para. 10.7

the assessment, planning, intervention and Annual Reviews of pupils with statements of SEN. Besides providing advice, specialist teachers offer individual support to pupils with severe and complex needs. With increasing delegation of SEN funds to schools, the LEA decided to reduce their specialist support staff for children with EBD and cut down on the educational psychologist's time. These changes aroused severe criticism from the schools and parents as they have failed to acknowledge any substantive increase in the schools' SEN budgets to compensate for the loss of centrally provided support services.

LEA - School relations

Schools within the borough operated in isolation and did not have many links with other schools and local groups. The Education Select Committee affirmed that, 'there was no coherence to the inclusion process across the LEA because individual schools have their own policies that are operated on ad-hoc basis.'²³ This made it very difficult to establish sound comparisons between the schools within the borough and with those in neighbouring boroughs. However, a benchmarking exercise conducted by the LEA's SEN Advisor stated that, '[there were] considerable differences between schools, in terms of expenditure on SEN and the number of pupils identified at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice.'²⁴ Although the Link Inspectors were advised by the LEA to monitor curriculum delivery, target setting and progression of pupils with SEN in schools across the borough, the schools still remained isolated units. The LEA-school relations had not altered much since the

²³ London Borough of Lewisham (1999) *Making a Difference- Raising GCSE Achievement*, Education Select Committee. 10 February. London: Lewisham Council.

²⁴ London Borough of Lewisham (2002) *Education Development Plan 1999-2002*. London: Lewisham Council.

borough became responsible for providing education services. Formal links were established in 1990 when the first consultation was conducted with schools, parents and wider community on proposed SEN reorganisation. Despite ILEA's tradition of not involving school heads, staff and parents in decision-making, the LEA initiated a 'partnership link' with the schools and community.

Parent partnership

A formal partnership agreement called 'Partnership Working' was established between the LEA and schools, as envisaged by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the *Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations*, 2000. It involved head teachers, school governors and LEA officers who looked closely at the areas of weaknesses, identified by the OFSTED reports. The idea of partnership was also extended to parents but only as a statutory obligation of establishing a new post of a Parent Partnership Officer. The dominating presence of schools in the LEA's public consultation exercises left the local parent groups less than influential. Although a *Citizens Panel Survey* and a *Residents Survey* conducted by the LEA in 1998 revealed that 62 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the SEN provision in the borough,²⁵ it failed to capture the numerous differences in the views of individual parents on LEA decisions.

²⁵ London Borough of Lewisham, *Education Development Plan*. Appendix D. p. 176.

Newham

Social and demographic characteristics

Newham is an outer London borough situated in the east end of the city and serving a population of 234,000. The borough has exceptionally high levels of social and economic deprivation with low-income rate, poor health, and overcrowding and housing problems.²⁶ Primary schools in Newham have a, ‘history of underachievement, widespread underperformance, poor teaching and poor school management’, especially during the 1990s.²⁷ The borough also has majority (i.e. 57 per cent) of its school population from ethnic minorities and an equally high number of primary age pupils eligible for FSM, which is also linked to the incidence of SEN.²⁸ The LEA uses it as an indicator of pupil underachievement. About 18 per cent of pupils in the borough have SEN.²⁹ The constantly rising population of children with refugee status in the schools has further added to the problem of low academic standards.

In 1965, two urban district councils merged to form the borough of Newham, one of which was a great industrial centre that had a large population of the poorest in the county.³⁰ During the time, the LEA made a

²⁶ Based on the 1991 census, the Department of Environment’s Local Conditions Index ranked Newham as the most deprived borough in the country.

²⁷ London Borough of Newham (2002) *Education Development Plan*. London: Newham Council.

²⁸ Dyson, A., Lin, M. and Millward, A. (1997) *Effective Communication between Schools, LEAs, Health and Social Services in the field of Special Educational Needs*. Special Needs Research Centre, University of Newcastle for DfEE and DH. According to the authors, there is a correlation between entitlement to FSM and the incidence of SEN.

²⁹ London Borough of Newham, *Education Development Plan*.

³⁰ Pugh, R. B. (ed.) (1973) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England*. The University of London. Institute of Historical Research. University Press. Oxford.

commitment to provide ‘welfare services’ for the vulnerable in the community and made pioneering attempts to provide educational provision for children with disabilities.³¹ Newham was one of the first local authorities in the country to open a centre for ‘deaf and dumb children’ in 1893 and a school for the ‘mentally and physically defectives’ in 1903, respectively.³² By mid-1960s the LEA added 13 special schools to the existing education provision for children under nine categories of disabilities. They retained two special schools, one for pupils with EBD, and the other for pupils with SLD. Provision for pupils with SEN had gone through radical reorganisation. Similar efforts were made to raise the academic standards and levels of achievement of pupils in mainstream schools and retain pupils at risk of being excluded from school for behavioural or educational reasons.

Inclusion and equal opportunities

In the early 1990s, the LEA made a landmark decision with their first equal opportunities policy long before it was ratified by the government in the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act. It followed a report that reviewed a rise in the level of exclusions of pupils from school in 1990/91 and recommended all school governing bodies to adopt an ‘overarching equal opportunity policy’ along with developing policies on discipline. The governing bodies were also advised by the LEA to set standards in order to recognise pupil achievement as a way of controlling exclusions. Although the problem of rising pupil exclusions afflicted the schools nationally, Newham became the pioneering authority to address the problem with a

³¹ The term ‘special educational needs’ was not introduced until the release of The Warnock Report in 1978. The majority of pupils considered ‘vulnerable’ were the ones with disabilities.

³² Pugh, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England*.

formal policy that laid the foundations of inclusion policy. The link between equal opportunities and inclusive education policies was evident. One of the reports, reviewing the impact of equal opportunity policy on education practices, it was stated that, 'there was considerable development in understanding the needs of bilingual pupils and pupils with special needs... schools reported the benefits to overall teaching which had been brought through the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.'³³ The idea of inclusion emerged as a panacea to the problem of high rate of exclusions.³⁴

Inclusion policy was officially adopted for the first time by the government in 1997 in the Green Paper but the LEA had already set up a Working Party on Inclusive Education as early as 1991. The minutes of the Education Committee meeting held in April 1992 recorded the implications of implementing the recommendations of the Working Party to promote inclusion and provide 'equal educational opportunities to pupils with special educational needs'. Discussions, consultations and conferences with school heads were held to develop strategies to close special schools and establish a 'new service' in their place. The first closure of a special school (awaiting the approval of the Secretary of State for Education) was proposed by the LEA on 27 March 1992. Within the next three years, the LEA closed all but two of its special schools. This trend was not emulated in any other borough in the country until the late 1990s when a few LEAs started to close their special schools in response to the government's inclusive education agenda.

³³ London Borough of Newham (1992) *Equal Opportunities- Policy and Implementation in Newham Schools*. Education Committee Minutes 18 Feb 1992. ED/164/91-2. London: Newham Council.

³⁴ London Borough of Newham (1992) *Exclusion from School - Action Required of Schools and Governing Bodies*, 28 Jan 1992. PRE16/AD/ST. London: Newham Council.

Special schools

Closure of special schools was not an undisputed issue in the borough. It disclosed the underlying tensions in the relationship between the LEA, schools and parent community. There was evidence of severe opposition from the parents and schools in a 'letter of objection' in response to the proposal of a special school closure in December 1992. It was proposed that the LEA would convert one of its mainstream schools into a 'resourced school' to meet the needs of pupils with MLD. A resourced school received additional teaching and non-teaching staff to enable the staff to enroll a specified number of children with SEN who did not fall within their standard catchments. Despite strong opposition, the Director of Education persisted with the decision. He argued that, 'the fundamental reasons for closure have not changed and the case for closure remains as strong as ever.'³⁵ Two more special schools were closed by the end of 1995. These closures established the inclusive education policies as envisioned and pursued by the LEA. The schools and parents were expected to, 'eventually see the benefits in due time.'³⁶ Although the schools and parents participated in public consultations, their real contribution in shaping LEA decisions remained peripheral. The core policy decisions were predominantly made by the LEA officials and council members only.

SEN provision

The support services for pupils with SEN grew incrementally to meet the increasing demands of support in mainstream and resourced schools. Having

³⁵ London Borough of Newham (1993) *Minutes of Education Committee Meeting*. 7 July. London: Newham Council.

³⁶ London Borough of Newham, *Minutes of Education Committee Meeting*. 7 July.

delegated only 69 per cent of the SEN funds to the schools, the LEA retained an extensive central reserve of SEN support staff. By 1999, the number of support staff had risen to 385 Learning Support Teachers and Assistants, which was an exceptionally large number of central reserves to maintain. When the members of the Education Committee decided to delegate over 85 per cent of the education budgets directly to the schools, it was because the, 'central support services had grown to a size which made management and recruitment difficult.'³⁷

Initial response to LEA's *Review on the Impact of Delegation of the SEN Budgets to Schools* revealed that the schools felt the impact of subsequent reduction in central reserve of support staff the most.³⁸ Teachers' Focus Groups, in particular, felt that there was better continuity of provision because the support staff was now part of the school team. The school heads were of the view that delegation of funds had provided them with greater flexibility and responsiveness in making management decisions. However, the parents groups were critical of the changes in SEN provision and budget allocation. A parent group representative, cited in the review report, found that delegation of funds had given too much power to schools and made parents powerless. It was suggested by another parents group that the power equation between the parents and professionals had altered. They opposed any change in the SEN provision proposed by the LEA. There was a clear divide between the statutory and voluntary sectors in the borough. The LEA

³⁷ London Borough of Newham (2000) *Minutes of Education Committee Meeting*, June. London: Newham Council.

³⁸ London Borough of Newham (2002) *Review of the Impact of the Delegation of the SEN Budgets to Schools*, Final Report, 22 June. London: Newham Council.

and schools, despite their differences, were on one side of the divide that separated them from parents. Parents were regarded as a threat, especially after they organised themselves into groups and lobbied actively for their rights.

The new school 'clusters' and 'exceptional needs procedures' benefited most from the directly delegated school budgets for pupils with SEN. The funds were delegated to schools on the basis of exceptional needs, which were identified by the schools and discussed in cluster meetings represented by at least ten schools. School cluster meetings, held by SEN officers, school representatives and other learning support professionals, discussed the pupil cases eligible for exceptional needs funding. Although these procedures were controversial, they prevented schools from taking undue advantage of the funding system.

For the last four years, the LEA had maintained only a Learning Support, Development and Advisory team and a Behaviour Support, Development and Advisory team.³⁹ The number of staff in the central reserve was reduced drastically. However, there was now greater advisory support available for the schools to help them meet the needs of statemented pupils. They no longer provided direct intervention. The LEA also shifted its focus from pupils with low incidence disabilities, who were being increasingly placed in mainstream or resourced schools to pupils, who were on the autistic spectrum, or had specific learning difficulties and those with EBD. They

³⁹ London Borough of Newham (2001) *Inclusive Education Strategy 2001-2004*. London: Newham Council.

were more likely to remain in special schools or units.⁴⁰ Newham was spending £53.54 per pupil in special schools as against the national average of £145.37. It retained £106.30 per pupil centrally for a statemented child as against the London average of £60.98.⁴¹ The centrally maintained support services also included the statutory SEN Assessment team, the Education Psychology Service and the Monitoring and Standards Service. Some of these services came from the money saved from reduced special school placements after the closures.

Statements

According to the recent data released by the Education Committee, there was a reduction of 90 per cent in the number of statements issued to pupils since the previous academic year.⁴² The number of pupils with statements placed in mainstream schools (0.3 per cent) was well below the national average (1.6 per cent). In 1992, there were 772 pupils with statements of SEN and they accounted for over 2 per cent of the entire pupil population in the borough. The rise in the number of referrals during that time indicated an impending pressure on the funds that did not grow with the number of statements. The LEA concurred with the DfES that rise in statements ‘above the 2 per cent norm’ would result in a reduction in the resources available to support each pupil with a statement.⁴³ The financial pressure had

⁴⁰ London Borough of Newham (1997) *Review of Resourced Provision*. London: Newham Council.

⁴¹ OFSTED (1999) *Inspection of Lewisham Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission.

⁴² London Borough of Newham (2002) *Report on Proposed and Final Statements*. London: Newham Council. The number of pupils with statement had fallen from 360 in 1999/2000 to 41 in 2000/01.

⁴³ London Borough of Newham (1993) *Minutes of Education Committee Meeting, 27 July*. London: Newham Council.

compounded with the early closures of special schools. As a result pupils who did not get specialist support within the borough were placed in out-of-borough day or residential special schools, most of which were for pupils with visual and hearing impairment. In 1992/93 the LEA also had a target to save £83,000 by reducing out of borough residential school placements of pupils with statements. However, placement in residential special schools were strongly discouraged more because it was incompatible with the idea of inclusion than being a drain on finances. A residential special school placement cost £20,000 per annum per child according to LEA official statistics. These placements were mainly for pupils with EBD and SLD only. The number of placements had come down from 102 in 1983 to 36 in 1992; a similar trend observed later in the issuing of statements. In both cases, the LEA had driven the idea of inclusion as the prime reason for change, whether it was reducing out of borough placements or reducing the number of statements. Finances were projected as a secondary reason for any change.

The LEA had evidenced a sharp rise and fall in the number of statements issued to pupils within a few years gap. Issuing statements was at its peak when the LEA believed that inclusion meant mainstreaming pupils with SEN, with or without the legal security of a statement. The number of pupils issued a statement had risen from 829 in 1994 to 1565 in 2000.⁴⁴ To reduce the number of statements issued to pupils with SEN had become a high priority of the LEA. Over the years, the idea of inclusion had evolved locally from mainstreaming to increasing participation and raising standards of achievement. There was a paradigm shift in the way inclusion was

⁴⁴ London Borough of Newham *Inclusive Education Strategy*.

understood and it came primarily in response to the need to control rising expenditure on SEN.⁴⁵ Inclusion now meant increasing the responsibility and ownership in the schools to make SEN provision and meet the needs of all its pupils. At this stage when the LEA had already placed a large majority of its pupils with SEN in mainstream, it embarked on to the next stage of reducing reliance on statements for SEN support provision. Parents' concerns about reducing statements were strategically directed to the schools. The schools became responsible for making SEN provision from within their own budgets and thus, directly answerable to the parents. Evidently, the nature of interactions between the LEA, schools and parents was redefined in the changing policy contexts.

Parent partnership

The term 'partnership' was defined first time in an official policy document of a local education authority when the Education Committee in Newham requested a report on the concept of partnership between local authority and voluntary youth organisations in 1992.⁴⁶ The idea was extended to parents only when they had become a powerful lobby, particularly for children with specific learning difficulties. Known as the 'dyslexia lobby', parents sought specialist residential provision within the borough, with which the LEA

⁴⁵ London Borough of Newham, *Report on Proposed and Final Statement*. Each statement cost approximately £2,500 only to finalise, not including support costs that amounted to a total of £ 797,500.

⁴⁶ London Borough of Newham (1992) *Minutes of Education Committee Meeting*, 15 October. London: Newham Council. Partnership is described as, 'Relationship based around common concerns, interests and identified needs. They are mutual relationships involving recognition of the values, knowledge and strengths of each partner in order to achieve the best outcome for clients. It is essential partnership is seen as a two way process to which all contribute from their strengths. Each side of the partnership depends on the other(s) for support.'

disagreed. The LEA argued that residential special schools thwarted the borough's policy commitment to inclusion. To control this conflict situation, the LEA designed a new policy on parent partnership, Parents in Partnership (PIP). The PIP was adopted officially when the LEA extended parent representation from just the school governing bodies to the Education Committee meetings. In addition, teachers were given specific responsibilities to develop parental involvement and partnership with a grant-aid of £10,000 divided among all schools in the borough. One of the parents support groups, financially assisted by the LEA, conducted integrated projects for parents. Over the years, the parents support group had opened a channel of communication between the LEA and parents in the borough. It proved an effective way of gaining parent support.

Having adopted the policy of parent partnership, the LEA had to make certain adjustments in their parent advisory services to meet the national expectations. For instance, the grant aid to the parents support group had to be discontinued in 1997. The LEA reinstated the entire staff under a new company as independent advisors to parents, so that they could run the 'named person scheme' as stated in the paragraph 6(b) of schedule 10 of the Education Act. Although the new company gained a charitable status and became autonomous, it continued to receive funds from the LEA along with other donors. Parental concerns were addressed and dealt with on individual basis. There were other parent support groups in the borough, for instance, parents of children with autism, but they only offered support in terms of leisure, respite care and after school playgroup. Support with statementing processes and school placements were provided by the parents support group only that had its staff employed by the LEA. The LEA had managed to

retain as much control over the schools and parents' group activity as possible within the changes administered from 'the top'.

Tower Hamlets

Social and demographic characteristics

Tower Hamlets differs from other boroughs in many respects. Unlike other inner London boroughs, it has a high majority of population from a single ethnic minority group.⁴⁷ This is reflected in an unprecedented rise in the proportion of bilingual pupils in the borough since 1981- from 21 per cent to 62 per cent. The proportion of pupils entitled to FSM, indicating the incidence of SEN, is almost three times the national average. Health and housing are serious issues that adversely affect pupil achievement levels. The borough has a history of poor housing conditions.⁴⁸ Currently, it has 61 per cent of households with annual income below £9,000 and one in eight homes are overcrowded. The borough has the lowest levels of pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy in the country, although the trend has been reversed recently.⁴⁹ The education provision in the borough particularly benefits from the Standards Fund provided by the DfES and Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant, because it was the highest in the country

⁴⁷ Tower Hamlets is stepping stone for immigration and has the largest Bangladeshi community in Europe. Source: http://www.towerhamlets_pdc.org.uk/policies.php/id=12.

⁴⁸ Palmer, A. (1989) *The East End: Four Centuries of London Life*. London: John Murray. "Just as the East End has characteristically been the home for manual labourers...the same pattern of deprivation has continued well into the twentieth century, where decline in manufacturing has not been balanced by any increase in what we have come to know of the 'service' sector. The conditions in some of the housing estates in the East End boroughs are worse than anything elsewhere in London."

⁴⁹ The proportion of pupils in Key Stage II attaining Level 4 rose from 30 per cent in 1995 to 68 per cent in 2000. Source: http://www.towerhamlets_pdc.org.uk/policies.php/id=12.

owing to its demographic constitution.⁵⁰ It is regarded as a ‘well-funded authority’ and allocates high proportion of funds to education, which is given a top priority.⁵¹ As finances are not a constraint, the LEA is faced with the challenge of promoting inclusive practices whilst maintaining eight special schools.

The transfer of responsibilities of education provision from ILEA to the borough of Tower Hamlets on 1 April 1990 involved a hand-over of 100 schools, of which 5 were special schools. Although the council’s preparation for the transfer of responsibilities was well planned and thorough,⁵² there were problems with regard to devolving those responsibilities to seven Neighbourhoods, instead of a single authority. Service Level Agreements were developed to define and regulate decision-making responsibilities and accountability between the LEA’s Education Strategic Group and the Neighbourhoods. However, the decentralised system of Neighbourhoods making education provision in their constituencies was criticised for being highly bureaucratic and ‘unwieldy’. With a change in local political leadership in 1994, the system of Neighbourhoods was abolished and replaced with a single Education and Community Services Committee. By then the damage was done. The SEN provision in the borough was left

⁵⁰ OFSTED (1999) *Inspection of Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission. The report stated that the Standards Fund had increased to £25,367,001 in 2001 and the Ethnic Minorities Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) funds amounted to £8 m.

⁵¹ OFSTED, *Inspection of Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority, 1999*. According to the report, Tower Hamlets has the highest Standard Spending Assessment for education in the country at £3701 per pupil.

⁵² London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1992) *District Audit Service Report- January 1992*. London: Tower Hamlets Council. The report commended the Chief Education Officer and her staff for their efforts to make the transfer of responsibilities a smooth affair.

'fragmented'. A Special Educational Needs Review, commissioned by the LEA, revealed gaps in SEN provision.⁵³ There was lack of peripatetic teaching support for pupils with visual and hearing impairment and pupils with language and communication difficulties. The traditional Victorian school buildings were inaccessible for wheelchair bound pupils. Pupils from ethnic minority groups were under-represented in special schools. There were plans to reorganise special schools in the borough. The review proposed to set up an 'arms length' quasi government agency called, Support for Learning Service, to deliver the SEN support services to schools and specialist institutions. The idea was welcomed by the authority officials as well as the school community and Tower Hamlets became the pioneering authority to institutionalise support service provision for SEN, an idea later encouraged as good practice by the government.

SEN provision

The Support for Learning Services continued as a quasi-government agency, monitored by the LEA as it delivers a range of SEN support services. Its provision was, however, reviewed in 1997 when a number of support services were amalgamated into one.⁵⁴ Currently it has a team of advisory staff that provides support to schools in developing policies for inclusion, providing advice on statutory assessment, and delivering teaching programmes to prevent exclusion. It also manages a Language and Communication Team, Physical Impairment Team with two advisory teachers, Sensory Impairment Team with peripatetic teachers for pupils with

⁵³ Galloway, P. (1991) *Special Educational Needs Review*. Lancaster University.

⁵⁴ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1997) *Review of Statement Support in Tower Hamlets*. March 1997. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

visual and hearing impairment. Some of these services are also provided on a buy-back arrangement. The LEA also provides Educational Psychology Service and manages Special Educational Needs Team that are responsible for making statutory assessments and advising schools and parents on making SEN provision. It was the only borough to have a Standards and Monitoring Team just for SEN. They monitored Annual Reviews, conducting data and budget analysis. The LEA maintains a wide array of SEN support services, some of which are funded by centrally sponsored projects. For instance, the SEN Assessment Team was set up as a part of a project to improve early identification and quality of provision for Bangladeshi pupils with SEN. The Multi-Agency Behaviour and Social Inclusion Team that used a 'validated model of behaviour assessment and intervention' for pupils with EBD was funded by the Standards Fund.

Only about 79 per cent of the LSB was delegated directly to schools in 1999/2000. The rest was retained centrally by the LEA to maintain the above SEN support services. Within a year the centrally held money was reduced from 3.5 to 0.4 per cent of the LSB to meet the delegating targets set by the government. Financially, the LEA had to devise strategic plans to re-focus the resources for closer alignment to the incidence of needs in schools. OFSTED Inspection report highlighted the high cost of support for SEN in the borough that called for a radical programme of reorganisation of structures and procedures for SEN. The main challenge was also to cut down the overall costs of central support services that were very high, about £170 per pupil. Involving external providers capable of delivering services was a significant step to 'quality assure' the provision. In order to reduce the costs, an overall reduction of £1.2 million in central services was achieved by

freezing vacancies, renegotiating costs of services and reducing the use of consultants. The beneficiaries were the schools because all the funds saved from excessive expenditure on central posts were then given to the schools. However, the downside of it all was the rapid increase in the number of pupils getting a statement in mainstream schools. The placement of pupils with statements in mainstream schools reflected a move towards inclusion and it also showed a remarkable increase in the number of statements from 300 in 1993 to 839 in 1996.

Statements

Over 4.8 per cent of the entire pupil population in the borough had a statement for SEN, more than double the figure projected nationally. One of the reasons for the high number of statements was the LEA's inability to forecast accurately the level of statement support required and plan accordingly. The costs of making provision for pupils with statements had plummeted by high volumes. The borough had only 566 of the 1130 pupils with statements in special schools. The LEA based its strategy to reduce statement related costs from the SEN budget by developing their mainstream sector to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils with SEN and in turn, reduce the reliance on 'expensive' statements and special schools.⁵⁵ In 1996, an independent study on the resource management for SEN in the borough was conducted by Coopers and Lybrand.⁵⁶ Their recommendations to streamline the services and 'recycle resources' into more preventative

⁵⁵ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2001) *LEA and School Information Service*. London: Tower Hamlets Council. The LEA spent £3,701 per pupil in a mainstream school compared with £12,703 in a special school in 1999/2000.

⁵⁶ Coopers and Lybrand (1996) *The SEN Initiative: managing budgets for pupils with SEN*. Society of Education Officers: Chartered Inst. of Public Finance & Accountancy.

work were aimed to reverse the growth in the number of statements. It had a significant impact on the policies adopted by the LEA since then. The emphasis is now on early years provision to arrest the rising need for assessments at the stage when any additional provision is recommended. The Educational Psychologist Service was expected to focus at least 15 per cent of its time on early intervention and prevention. The statutory assessment criteria were under priority review. There were three panels for making statutory assessments –the Pre-Assessment Panel that included head teachers and made decisions about the assessments; the SEN Panel of LEA officers only issued statements and made financial arrangements; and the Joint Commissioning Panel involving health and social services because 90 per cent of the statements in the borough were funded jointly by education and social services. The length of bureaucracy involved in the statementing procedures was unwieldy and left the head teachers dissatisfied.⁵⁷

To address the problem of growing number of statements, the LEA had also set targets to attain 30 per cent reduction in the number of statutory assessments by April 2002 and reduce central maintenance of every 30 statements annually.⁵⁸ Besides the targets, the LEA established new posts to reflect the need and response to change in management and organisation. A Childcare Information Officer responsible for maintaining and publishing a database of information for parents was appointed and another 2 posts were

⁵⁷ OFSTED (2000) *Inspection of Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission. Para. 54.

⁵⁸ London Borough of Tower Hamlets. (2002) *Development of Inclusive Education in Schools: Action Plan*. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

created for Officers monitoring the progress of pupils with statements and evaluating the use of resources.

One of the LEA's major challenges was to make adequate provision for bilingual pupils with special educational needs. The OFSTED report noted that most pupils were well behaved and keen to succeed, but due to difficult family circumstances they suffered from low self-esteem causing emotional difficulties in learning. The schools were faced with the challenge to provide learning environments and support services to minimise the disadvantage facing these pupils.

For cultural reasons the ethnic minority community in the borough strongly favoured mainstream schools for their children with SEN.⁵⁹ Special schools were rejected by these parents as it attached a social stigma on their child having SEN. As a result, they were partly responsible for having attained high levels of mainstreaming of bilingual pupils with statements.

Special schools

In October 1999, the LEA formulated a new policy and strategy of moving towards inclusive education, *Towards Inclusive Education in Schools: Policy and Strategy* and the subsequent action plans and strategies required a review of the role of special schools in the borough.⁶⁰ Another accompanying policy document proposing radical reorganisation of SEN

⁵⁹ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1997) *Responses of Parents' Consultative Group to the Green Paper 1997*. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

⁶⁰ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2002) *Development of Inclusive Education in Schools: Policy and Strategy and Action Plan for 2000-02*. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

support services was aimed to develop the capacity of mainstream schools.⁶¹ The Inclusive Education Steering Group comprising of LEA officers, head teachers, parents and other agency representatives was particularly influential in bringing, 'a significant attitudinal change in many schools in regard to responsibility for supporting pupils' special needs.' The OFSTED report on LEA inspection pointed out that, 'most head teachers have a clear understanding of their school's role in the implementation of the inclusion initiative.'⁶² The review of special schools was conducted in response to the OFSTED recommendations and the changing profile of SEN in children. It suggested a closure of two special schools. Only one was successfully closed, while the other was retained due to the pressure from school staff and governors.

Since the abolition of ILEA, the borough had nine special schools and one PRU - of these, three were for pupils with EBD, two for pupils with profound, multiple and severe learning difficulties, three for pupils with MLD and one pupils with physical and complex medical needs. There had not been any change in special school provision before 1998, when one special school for pupils with MLD was closed due to fall in roll, as most of the pupils had been placed in mainstream schools.

Tower Hamlets had one of its special school head and governors' request for the closure of their special school for pupils with physical disabilities and accompanied learning difficulties and/or complex needs because their

⁶¹ London Borough of Tower Hamlets. (1999) *Development of Inclusive Education in Schools: working plan for LEA Services*. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

⁶² OFSTED, *Inspection of Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority, 1999*. para 53.

numbers on roll had fallen drastically. The declining numbers on roll also reflected successful inclusion of most of their pupils in mainstream schools.⁶³ Parents' consent for the closure was not hard to come by as the school staff had already convinced them of its possible benefits, viz. better mainstreaming opportunities. The alternative provision was to establish small units attached to one primary and one secondary mainstream school to make the transition of pupils and staff easier, without losing any specialist expertise and skills in the process.

However, the mainstream school staff and parents expressed their discontent with inaccessible building and inadequate staff expertise. They also raised their apprehensions about inclusion having adverse effects on their children and they stated that they did not want more than one pupil from the special school to be placed in one class. Since the financial implications of the changes were 'cost-neutral' because the special school budget was being transferred to the mainstream, the reasons to oppose the proposition were few.

In the case of the special school for pupils with SLD, the proposal for its closure was shelved in the face of strong opposition from the school and parents. Since lack of adequate accommodation and 'pressure on space' was not considered a reason good enough to close a school, the staff suggested making alterations to the building to save it from closure. The LEA readily redirected resources from the *New Deal for Schools* programme, a centrally

⁶³ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2000) *Consultation Document*. London: Tower Hamlets Council. The number of pupils in the special school had fallen to 26 in 2000, whereas it could accommodate 60 pupils.

sponsored revenue source, to undertake improvements in the school building and facilities.⁶⁴

The LEA also proposed to completely ‘change the character’ of one of its special schools, which originally made provision for pupils with MLD. There was a sharp decline in the number of pupils with MLD in special schools locally as well as nationally. The LEA was compelled to review their provision in 1999. At that stage, the school had begun to make provision for pupils with severe language and communication difficulties including those with autism. However, the need was felt to improve the provision and build expertise to meet increased incidence of pupils with severe language and communication difficulties, and those identified as autistic.⁶⁵ The most recent LEA proposal was to build upon the process of change that started in 1999 by making the school a centre for multi-agency provision, most essential to meet the full range of needs of children with these difficulties. It meant bringing in services from Health, Social Services and voluntary organisations and also providing outreach services to families, schools and other centres with these children. The proposal did not receive a single objection from the school and parent community during the public consultations and went through the implementation process almost instantaneously.⁶⁶ Currently, provision for pupils with SEN is divided between mainstream schools, 8 special schools, 3 special units attached to

⁶⁴ London Borough of Tower Hamlets (2002) *Development of Inclusive Education in Schools: Policy and Strategy and Action Plan for 2000-02*. Policy and Implementation Committee Report January. London: Tower Hamlets Council.

⁶⁵ London Borough of Tower Hamlets, *Consultation Document*. The number of pupils identified as autistic- through the process of multi-disciplinary statutory assessments of special educational needs- rose from 8 in 1998/99 to 18 in 1999/00.

⁶⁶ London Borough of Tower Hamlets, *Development of Inclusive Education in Schools, 2002*.

mainstream schools and one PRU. Future plans involve modification of one of the special schools that caters for the needs of pupils with MLD and EBD in a joint venture with PRU to set up an Inclusion Support Centre. The changing profile of the pupils with SEN in the borough and LEA's inclusion policy has combined to steer the changes in the specialist provision.

Inter-agency relations

The reorganised and modified educational provision for pupils with SEN in special schools had saved the LEA additional costs of placing pupils with severe language and communication difficulties and autism in out-of-borough schools. It also enabled the LEA to build specialist expertise in mainstream schools by having small specialist units for pupils with physical and complex learning needs. Although there were pupils with SLD and EBD keeping the special schools in the borough still running, practices promoting inclusion had begun. The plans and strategies drawn out by the LEA were highly influential in presenting a strong case of cost-neutral changes in provision and making inclusion possible, but the co-operation of schools and parents made the implementation of LEA's plans possible. As the OFSTED stated in its report:

The LEA lines of communication with schools are now secure and support the focus on continual improvement. Head teachers now believe that the quality of their partnership with the LEA enables them to contribute to the shaping of services to match their pattern of needs.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ OFSTED, *Inspection of Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority, 1999*. para 69.

Parent partnership was institutionalised in the borough and worked under strict guidance and principles of the LEA. The parent partnership workers operated from an independent site but were funded entirely by the LEA. They provided advice, support and information to parents of pupils with SEN; majority of them were from other ethnic minority groups. The presence of the voluntary sector in the borough had always been very limited. Parent group activity was ad-hoc, although individual parent representatives were represented on the Pre-Assessment Panel for making statutory assessments.

Islington

Islington is unique in its position because the responsibility of providing education services in the borough is transferred from the LEA to a private contracting agency, except for the budgeting and monitoring duties, which are still retained by the LEA.

Social and demographic characteristics

It is an inner London borough with great contrasts of wealth and severe economic deprivation. The borough has social problems of grave severity like drug abuse, high crime rates and vandalism - and a high rate of unemployment.⁶⁸ It is a small borough with a population of about 177,854, which has only marginally increased since 1997. Historically, it had the

⁶⁸ OFSTED (1999) *Inspection of Islington Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with Audit Commission. The report had stated that the unemployment rate in the borough was 12%, much higher as compared with the inner London average of 9.5%.

largest population of all London boroughs with very little open space and above average over-crowding.⁶⁹ It even acquired a reputation of, ‘a rather seedy and run down part of inner London.’⁷⁰ In 1971, special centres for bilingual pupils from immigrant families and ‘persistent truants’ were first set up.⁷¹ Although only 19 per cent of the population currently belong to the ethnic minorities, at least one-third of pupils in the schools are believed to have English as an additional language (EAL). About 45 per cent of the pupil population is entitled to FSM, reflecting the level of pupil underachievement and incidence of SEN in schools.

Islington was a part of ILEA from 1965 to 1990. After the abolition of ILEA, the borough was scrutinised for their provision for children with SEN. Budget overspends were a common feature in all the inner London boroughs at the time. It has been officially recorded in the *London Charter for Education* that, ‘the break-up of the Inner London Education Authority and the government’s continuing squeeze on local government expenditure are both producing a shrinking education service across London.’⁷² Islington was one of the boroughs severely hit by the financial crisis. The council commissioned an independent study of the SEN provision in the borough to the Institute of Education in 1989 and it predicted an impending series of financial cuts that were to adversely affect the provision in the next few

⁶⁹ Baker, T. F. T. (1985) *The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*. Volume VIII. University of London Institute of Historical Research: Oxford University Press. In 1951, Islington was London’s most densely populated borough with 70 persons per acre.

⁷⁰ Richardson, J. (1988) *Islington past: A Visual History of Islington*. Worcester: Historical Publications.

⁷¹ Baker, *The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*.

⁷² London Borough of Islington (1991) *London Charter for Education*. Council Agenda. 23 April. London: Islington Council. para 1.

years.⁷³ By October 1990, the borough was already facing, ‘a severe crisis over the size and shape of its educational provision within the legal, financial and corporate frames.’ The council had sought to make savings of six per cent in 1991/92 that involved a reduction of £4.6m on a budget of £76.8 m. However, it did not recover from this financial crisis until very recently. Years of mismanagement and lack of financial foresight in planning led up to a crisis that could only be resolved by a radical reorganisation of senior management positions within the LEA.

SEN provision

The LEA’s Education Support Services Division was formally made responsible for making provision for pupils with SEN in the borough in 1990. Much of the work of this division was making statutory assessments and arranging appropriate placements for the pupils. The LEA had a Special Educational Needs Advisory Group that formed a working group of parents, school and LEA representatives to make recommendations to the decision-making procedures of statutory assessments. The LEA had also decided to establish a novel structure of Community Education Support Area to involve the community and neighbourhood forums in developing support services for teachers and other professionals working with pupils with SEN. There were four such teams across the borough in addition to a team of eight educational psychologists. The LEA had centrally held peripatetic teachers for pupils with hearing and visual impairment. The SEN provision was well covered by the specialist teams held centrally by the LEA. With the

⁷³ Evans, J. (1989) *Children with special educational needs: key considerations and implications for services*. Loughborough: Techmedia Ltd.

introduction of the LMS Scheme by the central government,⁷⁴ the LEA had delegated over 83 per cent of the potential schools budget to the school governing bodies. It was recorded as, ‘the highest level of delegation to schools in the first year of operating local management in any inner London Borough.’⁷⁵ However, the level of delegation had increased only marginally over the years helping the LEA to retain a central reserve of SEN support services. The services were adequate but lacked strategic overview in planning to meet the rising demands for those services. With the private contractor taking over the responsibilities for making SEN provision, the support services were subjected to a complete makeover.

The OFSTED Inspection of the LEA in 1999 identified serious flaws in the management of education services including ‘a large budget deficit’. The LEA had failed to provide adequate support and advice to the schools, leaving them highly insecure and seriously doubtful of LEA’s capacity to provide support. Any efforts by the LEA to address these problems and make positive changes in the education services were thwarted by the unstable financial climate. In August 1998, the Chief Executive of the Education Department of the Council published a paper called *Modernising Islington*. However, it failed to rescue the LEA’s highly criticised lack of strategic direction in planning pupil support services and management services.⁷⁶ With another OFSTED Inspection after one year, it found the

⁷⁴ DES. Circular 7/88. *Local Management of Schools*.

⁷⁵ London Borough of Islington (1991) *Council Agenda*. Education Committee 17 October. London: Islington Council.

⁷⁶ OFSTED, *Inspection of Islington Local Education Authority, 1999*. Section 3, para. 35. In August 1998, the Chief Executive of the Education Department of the Council published a paper, *Modernising Islington* that laid out a programme of reform to rescue the LEA’s highly criticised education planning and services.

progress unsatisfactory. The LEA services were eventually contracted out to a private agency.

To an extent, the change was also political. The Liberal Democrats had won the local elections and taken over from the Labour. They set about reforming the education services by first setting up an Independent Commission to develop a strategy for achieving improvements in educational attainment, which had become a serious issue of concern. Along with the Independent Commission, there was a private contractor, new director of school services and senior management team. They all were set to work out the problems and define their new strategic roles. By this time, the LEA had won two Charter Marks of Excellence in 1996 and again in 1999 for providing good special educational services.

The contracting agency has since produced a *SEN Framework for Action*, following wide consultations during the autumn term of 2000, to reorganise the specialist provision on the four nationally identified SEN Service Areas, namely - Learning and Cognition; Emotional, Social and Behavioural; Communication and Interaction; and, Physical and/or Sensory.⁷⁷ These four categories listed a range of support services that could only be retained centrally with a matching budget. The current provision in the borough include Learning Support Services, specialist teachers for pupils with specific learning difficulties, educational psychologists and teaching assistants. A Behaviour Management team has learning mentors and

⁷⁷ CEA@Islington. (2000) *Capturing Success. Special Educational Needs Framework for Action 2000-2003. Consultation Paper Full Report*. London: CEA. The proposal of SEN Service Area model was widely accepted, with more than 80 per cent of the responders in favour of the approach.

outreach support staff in addition to the advisory teachers. A Language and Communication team has two specialist teachers working with speech and language therapists. A Sensory Impairment team has two advisory teachers for pupils with hearing impairment and a specialist teacher for those with visual impairments. Meeting the local schools budget delegating targets set by the government, the LEA was delegating only 82 per cent to the schools although it planned to increase it to 89 per cent in 2001/02.⁷⁸ The wide range of support services maintained centrally were therefore being financially managed by the additional funds the borough received from winning the bids to have gained centrally sponsored schemes with attached monetary benefits. Inclusion Project resourced by Standards Fund, Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zone, and Health Action Zone were some of the sources of additional funding for education in the borough. Having reorganised the support services, the contractor reviewed the schooling provision for pupils with SEN in the borough and proposed some radical changes.

Statements

Nearly 4 per cent of the entire pupil population in the borough has a statement for SEN. The number of these children in mainstream schools had risen steadily since 1990 although the number of children in special schools had not decreased. The rise corresponds to a significant increase in the number of children with learning and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools than those with low incidence disabilities, like physical disability. There has also been a rise in the number of children with autistic spectrum disorder in the borough, as has been the case nationally. There is an upward

⁷⁸ CEA@islington. (2002) *Scheme for Financing Schools 2002/03: Responsibility and Accountability*. London: CEA.

trend in the number of children with statements in out-of-borough special school placements. The trend is neither in line with the national inclusion policy nor the local agenda of 'supporting the inclusion of children with low incidence disabilities in mainstream schools'.⁷⁹ Special schools in the borough have served the traditional purpose of meeting the needs of pupils with SEN in a segregated environment. Their new role as 'centres of excellence', as envisioned by the government, is envisaged by the contracting agency.

Special schools

At the time of the transfer of responsibilities from ILEA, Islington had 5 day special schools for pupils with EBD, MLD, SLD, physical disabilities and autism; one residential special school for boys with EBD and another 5 specialist units for pupils with hearing and visual impairments, and speech and language difficulties. The schooling provision remained largely unaltered for several years, with the exception of the closure of the one residential special school due to falling rolls.

Currently, among the four special schools maintained by the LEA, one is for pupils with severe learning difficulties, one for moderate learning difficulties, one for pupils with physical disabilities and one for autistic children. In addition, there are two special units attached to mainstream primary schools for pupils with hearing and language impairments,

⁷⁹ CEA@islington. *Report of the Director of Schools' Services to the Director of Education: Provision for pupils with SEN*. 2002. London: CEA. para. 24. 'The involvement of mainstream schools'- Out of 145 pupils with a statement of SEN for autism or profound and multiple, and severe learning difficulties, only 16 were placed in mainstream schools, 99 were in special schools and 30 were placed in out-of borough special schools.

respectively. There are also three PRUs for pupils with EBD and at risk of permanent exclusion from the mainstream.⁸⁰ The alterations in special school provision, as proposed by the contracting agency, were the kernel of the new strategy to promote inclusion. They used the SEN Service Area model, which was based on the four areas of need as identified within the DfES revised Code of Practice on SEN, to reorganise the delivery of specialist provision.⁸¹ The paper identified four areas of need based on the DfES revised Code of Practice's SEN Service Areas- Learning and Cognition; Emotional, Social and Behaviour; Communication and Interaction; and, Physical and/or Sensory. In a phased approach, the proposals began with addressing the needs of children falling within the first 'area of need': Communication and Interaction. It included all pupils with speech and language delay, autism, severe and multiple, and profound learning difficulties.

The two special schools identified as making provision for pupils with autism and SLD, respectively were found, 'inadequate on account of location, building, capacity and ability to encourage greater inclusion.'⁸² The schools had already made a case to the council for their relocation due to poor accommodation.⁸³ Having lost the confidence of schools and the community, the LEA had made the task of proposing any change in provision much harder for the contracting agency. Keeping within limits of the national agenda of inclusive education and knowing well that local

⁸⁰ CEA@Islington (2000) *Education Development Plan 2000-2002* Draft 4 February. London: CEA.

⁸¹ CEA@Islington, *Special Educational Needs Framework for Action*.

⁸² London Borough of Islington (1998) *Building for the Future* March 1998. London: Islington Council.

⁸³ CEA@Islington. (2001) *Asset Management Plan 2001*. London: CEA.

circumstances did not allow for any special school closures, the contractor made a novel proposal. It proposed establishing a new special school to replace the existing two special schools and relocate it near a mainstream site.⁸⁴ This way they would be following the national policy to promote inclusion and at the same time would be able to retain the specialist expertise within the borough's special school sector.

Operating on providing dual specialisms on autism and severe learning difficulties, the new special school offered educational services for all pupils with communication and interaction difficulties. The financial viability of the plan was ensured by diverting all profits from the sale of the existing special schools sites as they were prime locations. In addition, the project also obtained the funding from bids to the DfES's *Targeted Capital Programme for SEN* and *Private Finance Initiative*. An independent investigation into the financial viability of the project was commissioned and the preliminary review report approved the proposal.⁸⁵ According to them, it fulfilled both aspects of inclusion, i.e. special school pupils gaining access to mainstream sites and mainstream schools developing their expertise with the help of special school on site.

Further proposals were drawn up on similar lines for pupils in the other three SEN Service Areas. The Physical and Sensory Area of need was under

⁸⁴ CEA@islington. (2001) *SEN Framework for Action: Consultation Paper*. 10 October. London: CEA. The proposal explains how the school would improve opportunities for inclusion of pupils in terms of curriculum, offer greater opportunities for staff development and sharing of expertise, maximise the use of purpose-built specialist facilities, with more flexible access to mainstream schools.

⁸⁵ London Borough of Islington. (2001) *Effective Learning Environments*. July 2001. Education Design Consultancy. London: Islington Council.

review and proposals of possible relocation of the special school would appear in the next phase of the reorganisation programme. The Behaviour Support Plan laid out the development of emotional, social and behavioural SEN Service Area in order to arrest the rising proportion of pupils excluded from schools.⁸⁶ Schools were supported by additional funds from centrally sponsored projects and schemes. Excellence in Cities (EiC) grants supported the learning mentors and learning support units in the borough; Pupil Retention Grant and Pupil Support Allowance within the Standards Fund enabled reintegration of pupils excluded from other schools; LEA Initiatives Fund under the Inclusion category of Standards Fund helped establish a primary outreach team to provide multi-disciplinary support to schools on behaviour management. Access to additional funds has made it easier for the LEA to meet some of the biggest challenges to inclusion.

LEA-School relations

The policy and planning documents reveal a definite move towards capturing the 'hearts and minds' of the education community - pupils, parents, school heads, staff and governors - of which parents were regarded as the most important stakeholders by the contracting agency.⁸⁷ The practical and procedural changes proposed by them were aimed to improve consultation with parents and introduce better conciliation arrangements.

⁸⁶ CEA@islington (2001) *Islington Behaviour Support Plan Full Version* January. London: CEA. The problem of over-representation of black and Afro-Caribbean pupils excluded from school was addressed in the plan document. The number of African pupils excluded from schools had been reduced with small but significant improvements in 1999/2000. A fixed target of 10 per cent reduction in the number of exclusions per year was set up.

⁸⁷ CEA@islington (2001) *School Organisation Plan 2001-2006* (Draft). Expressions of Parental Preference. London: CEA. para 44-45.

Islington has a history of parents strongly opposing closure of special schools. The contracting agency thus began the process of change by acknowledging that it was the views and experiences of parents in the borough that were key to their success. The difficult issue of closure of schools was dealt with fine strategic planning that allowed little scope of conflict. The proposal to make any changes in the existing SEN service provision involving relocation and establishment of new-build schools began with invoking the national legislative framework in the area of SEN, citing social and academic benefits for all children from a more inclusive approach through the intended change. Before embarking upon the formal consultations with the stakeholders, the agency had already ensured support from the community on their policies outlined in the *SEN Framework for Action* document. It strategically preceded the specific special schools consultation document. The relations between the schools, parents and the local education authority represented by the contractor had also benefited by the Parent Partnership Officer working as an effective liaison.

This inner London borough was of special interest in the study as it was different from other boroughs in its management and organization, while having similar social and demographic characteristics as in other inner London boroughs.

Richmond

Social and demographic characteristics

Richmond is a small outer London borough with a population of 192,200, of which only 5,520 are unemployed.⁸⁸ Although the borough has a reputation of being affluent, it has a higher proportion of older people who are ‘asset rich, cash poor’.⁸⁹ The borough has ‘leafy suburbs’ and high house prices with only 12.4 per cent of the school population belonging to ethnic minority groups. Pupils’ achievement levels are high as they begin their schooling with achievement levels above the national standards.⁹⁰ Clearly, the borough is not perceived as having serious deprivation problems and therefore, it has been denied access to funding through national initiatives on several occasions. With a relatively low Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) of £692 per head for 2001/02, the additional financial pressure for making education provision is borne by the council taxpayers i.e. 52 per cent of the education budget comes from council taxes.⁹¹ Being small in size, the authority has relied upon neighbouring boroughs to meet the range of educational needs of pupils with SEN and has developed a sound network of regional partnerships over a period of time. The legal obligations of local authority reorganisation in 1964-65 explain the need for Richmond to maintain close links with the neighbouring boroughs.

⁸⁸ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2001) *Educational Development Plan 2001-2002*. London: RUT.

⁸⁹ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *Educational Development Plan 2001-2002*. Appendix A.

⁹⁰ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2001) *Best Value Performance Plan 2001-2002: Achieving Best Value for You*. London: RUT.

⁹¹ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *Best Value Performance Plan 2001-2002*.

Four former boroughs merged to form the London Borough of Richmond in 1965.⁹² They retained their distinctive socio-economic characteristics as well as the education sites for pupils with SEN. The new borough had three day and one residential special school for ESN and ‘maladjusted’ pupils. The residential special school for ‘maladjusted’ senior girls was instantly under review of the Education Committee. It was reported as, ‘not suitable in its present condition’ and was eventually closed.⁹³ Changes in the provision in three special schools for ‘educationally sub-normal’ pupils were also envisaged because of the increase in demand for places. However, change could not be implemented until the LEA obtained the approval and funding from DES to conduct two local projects for 1965/68 under the *Building Programme*.⁹⁴ Despite the funds and political will to make improvements in the existing special school sector, the plans could not start till 1974, due to problems with finding an appropriate site to expand the existing provision.⁹⁵ For at least another decade, the number of special schools in the borough remained the same, although their intake capacity improved with time. Over a period of eleven years the number of special schools remained the same but there were three special units added to LEA’s SEN provision in the borough.⁹⁶ Since then the number of special units have increased whereas

⁹² Cloake, J. (1991) *Richmond Past: A Visual History of Richmond, Kew, Petersham and Ham*. London: Historical Publications. ‘It was the only London borough to span both sides of the Thames.’ p. 135.

⁹³ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1964) *Education Committee Report*. London: RUT.

⁹⁴ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1965) *Schools Sub-Committee Report*. London: RUT.

⁹⁵ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1974) *Special Schools: Major Building Programme 1974/75. Schools and General Purposes Sub-Committee*. London: RUT.

⁹⁶ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1986) *Annual Report 1985-86*. London: RUT.

the number of special schools have remained static.⁹⁷ These changes occurred in the backdrop of severe and ‘unreasonable’ financial constraints imposed upon the council by the central government.⁹⁸

Special schools

Currently, the LEA maintains three special schools for pupils with MLD, SLD and EBD.⁹⁹ They were converted and re-designated as day special schools to match the needs of pupils with changing times. Since most parents preferred to place their children with SEN in independent schools, the number of special schools in the borough remained same for the next three decades. The growing need of specialist provision for more complex SEN was met in eight specialist units attached to mainstream schools. There are two special units for pupils with MLD, two Observation and Assessment units for pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties, two language units for pupils with speech and language difficulties, and two independent units for pupils with EBD up until the year 2000, the changes in special school provision has been incremental in nature. With budget overspends and subsequent financial pressures, the provision was reviewed and some radical changes proposed. The aim was to reduce the number of out-of-borough placements of pupils with SEN. They were the biggest drain on SEN resources, especially on pupils with EBD who formed the highest

⁹⁷ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1989) *Annual Report 1988-89*. London: RUT. According to the report, there were three special schools and five special units in the borough.

⁹⁸ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *Annual Report 1983-84*. The year 1983/84 was dominated by financial cuts and the council had decided to budget their services from their own funds ‘in excess of government’s targets’. The council had to face a lot of opposition from the members of the council and the community.

⁹⁹ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2000) *The School Organisation Plan*. September 2000 - June 2005. London: RUT.

proportion of pupils with SEN to be placed in out-of-borough, independent special schools.¹⁰⁰

In March 2000, the LEA requested an independent study to conduct a feasibility check on the provision for pupils with EBD and make subsequent recommendations.¹⁰¹ In response to the recommendations of the study, the LEA proposed to close the only special school for pupils with EBD and open a multi-agency service.¹⁰² However, the proposals to set up special units were rejected outright by the schools during public consultations.¹⁰³ At the same time, they suggested setting up a unit attached to a special school to meet the needs of pupils likely to be placed in out-of-borough schools. In line with the suggestions of the schools and parents, the LEA proposed to close the EBD special school and have a MLD special school manage the new bridging unit for pupils with EBD.¹⁰⁴ It was the impressive record of the MLD special school in integrating pupils in mainstream that had encouraged the LEA to bring the two areas of SEN- EBD and MLD - together in suggesting closure once again. For the LEA, closure of special school for pupils with EBD represented a 'good value for money' more than a way towards inclusion. Inclusion was being promoted by establishing more units for pupils with SEN that would gradually lead them towards mainstream

¹⁰⁰ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *School Organisation Plan*.

¹⁰¹ Robson, P. I. (2000) *London Borough of Richmond upon Thames*. Appendix A. Review of Provision for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties at Key Stage 1 and 2: an independent report.

¹⁰² London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2000) *Provision for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties at Key Stage 1 and 2*. Education Committee. London: RUT.

¹⁰³ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2000) *Petitions: Oldfield House School*. Education Committee. London: RUT.

¹⁰⁴ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2001) *EBD and Resource Allocation Review: Update*. Education Committee. London: RUT.

schools. The LEA was aware that any attempts at making radical changes in SEN provision would only be too easily defeated by the community.

Another area of SEN in need of change to meet rising demands was for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment. It was also identified as one of the important strands of the LEA's SEN Strategy.¹⁰⁵ The needs of pupils with autism were met in the special schools and units designated for pupils with MLD and SLD in the borough. Setting up a new unit for pupils with autism was the only option that would obtain the approval of schools and parents in the community. Additional funds from the centrally sponsored scheme of Private Finance Initiative enabled the LEA to implement their plans and develop a number of special units.¹⁰⁶

SEN provision

From the funds held centrally, the LEA made provision for pupils with SEN. The Psychology Service along with the Special Education Advisory Team offered support and advice to schools besides making statutory assessments. The Specific Learning Difficulties team and Behaviour Support team provided direct support to pupils and teachers in mainstream schools. The Hearing Impairment team and Visual Impairment team with a set of peripatetic teachers were also an asset because most of the pupils with sensory impairments were increasingly being placed in mainstream schools. The Pupil Referral Service that maintained the PRUs was responsible for targeting funds to establish more units and reduce the risk of pupils being

¹⁰⁵ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *SEN Strategy*.

¹⁰⁶ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2001) *Primary Unit for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders*. Planning and Resources Committee. London: RUT.

excluded permanently from mainstream schools. Having delegated 87 per cent of the LSB directly to schools, the LEA was under pressure to reduce the central reserve of SEN support services. The OFSTED Inspection report stated:

...so substantial and potentially destabilising for the education budget is the growth in [SEN] spending that bringing the situation under some reasonable control is a key precursor to a more developmental approach to budget management.¹⁰⁷

However, there were no documented plans to make any alterations in the existing provisions. Budget overspends were anticipated¹⁰⁸ and they could only be controlled by balancing the SEN expenditure, 'towards early intervention rather than on issuing statements of SEN.'¹⁰⁹

Statements

The borough had only 1.7 per cent of their pupil population with a statement. Of the 650 pupils with statements, 300 were placed in mainstream schools, 75 in special units and only 153 in special schools.¹¹⁰ However, the funding for pupils with statements in special schools far exceeded the funding for those in mainstream. Pupils with statements were funded according to the

¹⁰⁷ OFSTED (2001) *Inspection of Richmond upon Thames Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission. para. 34.

¹⁰⁸ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2000) *Budget Monitoring Report*. Education Committee. London: RUT. An overall budget overspend of £649,600 was projected and in the SEN expenditure alone the figure was £580,600. SEN was the highest contributing area to the projected overspends. The problem was compounded by the fact that SEN was an area of genuine under funding. The LEA has the lowest SSA funding in the whole of outer London.

¹⁰⁹ OFSTED, *Inspection of Richmond upon Thames Local Education Authority, 2001*.

¹¹⁰ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1999) *Special Educational Needs Policy Statement*. London: RUT.

'Banding System' that determined the allocation of funds on the basis of their level of need, whereas funds for pupils with SEN was based on the number of pupils entitled to FSM. The Banding System was revised and new values for bands were established to allow greater flexibility to redirect funds to pupils having SEN without a statement. Early intervention was identified as the key to reducing expenditure on making statutory assessments in the LEA's main policy documents - Special Educational Needs Policy and Education Development Plan. The LEA's plans and strategies for SEN/Inclusion were primarily governed by local circumstances and financial requirements. They were also in line with the national agenda of inclusion. Increasing mainstreaming of pupils with statements of SEN, encouraging early intervention and developing the specialist expertise in mainstream schools were some of the key principles that shaped the inclusion policies locally. However, their ability to make effective strategies and implement them without becoming involved in lengthy, bureaucratic proceedings was still a challenge.

LEA-School relationship

One of the reasons for delay in implementing SEN plans was the discussions and consultations with schools and parents. The schools and parent community in Richmond was well regarded as articulate and well informed. It was imperative for the LEA to maintain a good relationship of trust and mutual confidence with schools and parents. However, it was not before the year 2000 that significant efforts were made in this direction. Prior to 2000, the school heads and parents had little representation on the decision-making panels of the LEA. Their contributions in policy matters were sought only through public consultations and informal individual-based contacts.

Financial restrictions due to budget overspends worsened the relationship between LEA and schools. In June 2000, SEN Consultative Group was established. It included LEA's SEN team leader, primary head teacher, secondary head teacher, PPO and community Medical Officer to make any proposals prior to the statutory assessments conducted by the LEA's SEAT/Educational Psychology Service.¹¹¹

Parent partnership

According to the PPO, parents in Richmond had lost trust in both LEA and schools:

Parents are invited to get in touch as and when [LEA] thinks it might be useful. They decide how to use the [parent partnership] service and when to terminate the contact. As far as possible [LEA] controls the parent partnership officer's involvement with their family.¹¹²

Informal contacts between the parents and PPO were the only networking arrangements functioning in the borough. Parents approached the PPO only in distress during the statementing process.¹¹³ Hardly any efforts were made by the LEA to raise the profile of the PPO. Parents' views on SEN issues were sought during occasional meetings arranged by the LEA through one parent representative at a time. The LEA re-constituted the 'SEN Forum' to form a consultative group of members that included three councillors, five parent representatives, one special school head, one mainstream school head, two governors, one voluntary organisations' representative, parent

¹¹¹ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2000) *Education Service Plan 2000-2001*. Education Committee. London: RUT.

¹¹² London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (2001b) *Project Children, Parent Partnership Worker Activities: Working with Parents*. London: RUT.

¹¹³ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *Project Children*.

partnership officer and LEA representatives.¹¹⁴ They played a significant role in providing a wider perspective on council's priorities as they discussed items on agenda and made recommendations but they did not have any decision-making powers. It did not help in generating parents' confidence in LEA decisions and activities.

Brent

Social and demographic characteristics

Brent is an outer London borough but parts of it have inner London characteristics. It is a borough of, 'enormous contrasts in its economic, environmental, ethnic and social make-up.'¹¹⁵ Having the second highest ethnically diverse population in the country, the borough has over 70 per cent of pupils in its schools from ethnic minorities - Asian, Indian, Black Caribbean, Black Africans, and Irish. In addition, there are at least 3000 pupils in the schools across the borough from refugee communities, thus raising the proportion of pupils with EAL to 87 per cent.¹¹⁶ Although 32 per cent of the primary age population is entitled to FSM, the pupil attainment levels are close to the national average. The number of pupils with SEN in primary schools are not more than 21 per cent of the entire pupil population but 3.7 per cent of them having a statement of SEN is higher than nationally projected figure. Statistical data, however, fails to show the striking contrasts

¹¹⁴ London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (1999) *Future of SEN Consultative Group*. SEN Consultative Group. London: RUT.

¹¹⁵ Brent Council (1999) *Education Development Plan- 1999-2002*. Annex 2 - The LEA Audit and Context. London: Brent Council London: Brent Council

¹¹⁶ Brent Council, *Education Development Plan- 1999-2002*. Over 121 different languages are spoken by the pupils in the borough.

within the borough that makes it quite unique. Several wards in the south of the borough are in the top 10 percent of the most socio-economically deprived wards in the country with high unemployment rate, poor health and overcrowded homes. Whereas, the north part of the borough is relatively prosperous with attractive open suburban spaces and high standards of living. The current socio-economic characteristics of the borough have their roots in its past.

In 1965, when the borough was formed by the amalgamation of two very dissimilar districts, the intense ethnic hatred and acute local divisions prevailed for a long time. The affluent Asian and white suburban community in the north and the less prosperous Afro-Caribbean Black population in the industrial south were separated only by a river.¹¹⁷ Politically, the borough has remained a hung council for most of the times reflecting the differences between Conservative-led north and Labour-dominated south. These differences are revealed in the record of the arguments between the 66 Councillors that formed the new council after local elections.¹¹⁸ During that time, the LEA inherited six residential special schools for ‘handicapped’ pupils from the county council at the time. The reorganisation process that followed was closely affected by the severe financial crisis that hit the borough in 1970, when the cuts in education were damaging the education

¹¹⁷ Snow, L. (1990) *Brent: Wembley, Willesden and Kingsbury - A Pictorial History*. Sussex: Phillimore.

¹¹⁸ Willesden Mercury, 8/7/66, ‘*Comprehensive may be delayed*’ and ‘*Tempers flare during long education debate*’. In response to government directives to the LEAs to make their schools comprehensive, Councillors in the borough began an argument with Labour councillors in favour and Tory councillors in opposition. There was no resolution to the argument because both sides were involved in a bitter and strong political campaign over the issue.

standards in schools.¹¹⁹ During the 1980s and early 90s, the threats became so severe that there was a significant loss of teachers¹²⁰ and withdrawals in specialist provision.¹²¹ Despite the political and financial turmoil during that time, there were not many changes in the special schools provision, except that they were gradually losing their residential status.

Special schools

Currently, there are five special schools, eight specialist units attached with mainstream and special schools, one PRU and sixty primary mainstream schools making educational provision for all pupils, including those with SEN. The specialist units or the 'resourced provision' are the most recent additions to the SEN provision in the borough. Among the six 'resourced provision' in mainstream schools, there were three units for pupils with speech and language difficulties, two for pupils with visual impairment, and one for pupils with hearing impairment. Of the special schools, there are two for pupils with MLD and autism, one for pupils with SLD, one for complex physical and medical needs, and one for pupils with EBD. Since the borough has an exceptionally large proportion of its pupils with autism placed in independent, out-of-borough special schools,¹²² the in-borough provision of two special schools and specialist units just for pupils with autism and MLD is inadequate.

¹¹⁹ Willesden and Brent Chronicle, 6/5/76 'Cuts Threaten Education'.

¹²⁰ Wembley Observer, 31/12/92 'Education cuts will put more teachers out of job'.

¹²¹ Willesden and Brent Chronicle, 10/01/91 'Proposals to close learning disability centre'. The Tories had proposed to close a learning disability centre, a nursery and two homes for elderly due to financial cuts. But their proposals were strongly opposed by the Liberal Democrats and Labour Councillors in the borough.

¹²² Brent Council. (2002) *School Organisation Plan - 2002-2007*. London: Brent Council.

There have been no special school closures since they were first opposed by the school and parents in 1993 and several times thereafter.¹²³ In order to save money, the council had proposed to cut the costs of surplus places in some primary schools - either by merging them with other schools or using the premises as special schools in after school hours. This relocation of special schools on primary school sites was driven by the objective to make profits by selling the special school sites. However, the local parents groups strongly criticised the LEA proposals and prevented any special school closures. In July 1992, the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee meeting recorded that according to the Director of Education, 'There was no easy way to closing schools. It was acknowledged that the local community had strong views.'¹²⁴ The changes in specialist provision since then have been mainly incremental in nature.

The first SEN policy reassessing the support services provided by the LEA was drawn up in a report to the Director in 1992.¹²⁵ Besides the five special schools, the LEA policy aimed to enhance the provision for pupils with hearing and visual impairment, in particular. The proposals to establish five new specialist units attached to mainstream schools were first made in 1995 when the number of out-of-borough placements of pupils with SEN had gone up to 144 that cost the LEA £3 million. The specialist units were

¹²³ Willesden and Brent Chronicle, 18/02/93 '*Massive protests at school cuts*' About 3000 children and parents marched in protest against the council's education cuts and called upon the MPs to reverse the cuts. They rejected the closing special schools and proposed to approach the Secretary of State with a 'special plea' for extra capital funds to save their schools.

¹²⁴ Brent Council. (1992) *Reorganisation of Special Schools. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*. 7 July. London: Brent Council.

¹²⁵ Brent Council (1992) *SEN Policy. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 22 July. London: Brent Council.

proposed as a way to bring pupils back in the borough but they could not be realised because of a 'budget shortfall'.¹²⁶ It was not until 1998-99 that the specialist units were set up in the borough finally. However, the current provision is found lacking in many other respects. A recent OFSTED Inspection report highlights the lack of specialist provision for pupils with sensory impairment, and speech and language impairment.¹²⁷ Since the pressure on finances had increased with the rising number of statements issued, the LEA's policies and strategies were primarily directed towards saving money, but still promoting inclusion.¹²⁸ One of the local priorities identified by the Director of SEN in a committee meeting was, 'developing the role of special schools and units.'¹²⁹ There were no documented plans of closing any of the special schools or units in the borough. LEA concerns were mainly about the financial implications of meeting the rising demands for statements of SEN in the borough.

Statements

There was an exponential rise in the number of pupils with statement since 1997.¹³⁰ There are now 1500 pupils with statements and they account for 3.7

¹²⁶ Brent Council (1995) *Decisions Made by the Committee. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 2 October. London: Brent Council.

¹²⁷ OFSTED (1999) *Inspection of Brent Local Education Authority*. Her Majesty's Inspector for Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission .

¹²⁸ Brent Council (1998) *SEN Review (Draft). Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 25 March. London: Brent Council.

¹²⁹ Brent Council (1999) *National and Local Priorities. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 18 April. London: Brent Council.

¹³⁰ Brent Council (2001) *Special Educational Needs Invest to Save Proposals. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Scrutiny Committee*, 24 July. London: Brent Council. The number of pupils with a statement for SEN had increased from 1,118 in 1997 to 1,469 in 2000. Table 1.

per cent of the entire pupil population.¹³¹ The LEA acknowledged that one of the reasons for rise in the number of statements was the strong financial incentive attached with a statement.¹³² A new strategy to reduce the number of statements and arrest the rising expenditure included revising the criteria for initiating statutory assessments, particularly for pupils with MLD and specific learning difficulties (whose needs could not be met with enhanced support at a stage prior to getting a statement). The LEA proposed to establish an outreach support team to work with pupils with autism to reduce their likelihood of demanding a transfer to an out-of-borough placement. Inclusion policies of the borough were largely governed by the strategies developed to control the burgeoning number of statements for SEN. Targets highlighting the projected number of statements, and costs and savings were set for the next five years. In addition, the changes in the funding arrangements for SEN and higher levels of delegation of LSB to schools were largely instrumental in shaping the support services provision for SEN.

SEN provision

There was little evidence of strategic planning in the LEA documents on making provision for pupils with SEN in the borough since 1965. The SEN provision had only declined since then due to the severe financial cuts imposed upon the LEA, dominating most of the 1980s and early 90s.¹³³ By 1991, the financial cuts in council services had grown, which meant a loss of

¹³¹ Brent Council. (1999) *Education Development Plan- 1999-2002*. Annex 4- Summary of action to improve standards of for pupils with SEN. London: Brent Council.

¹³² Brent Council (2001) *Special Educational Needs Invest to Save Proposals. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Scrutiny Committee*, 24 July. London: Brent Council. The funding for non-statemented pupil with SEN is £273, whereas average funding for a statemented pupil is £5200. para 6.2.

¹³³ Kilburn News, 30/01/87 'Education Boss lashes out'. A senior member of the council criticised the government for causing a big financial crisis.

£2.5 million in ‘frontline services’ that included education. ‘From 1990 to Spring 1996, the overall strategy of the Council towards schools was a minimalist one.’¹³⁴ The private sector was promoted and schools were actively encouraged to seek GMS. Since then, the LEA remained a high delegating authority. Only the factors determining the funding formula for delegation changed. In addition to the FSM factor, the LEA had recently introduced a ‘Needs Led’ factor to make the funding formula reflect social deprivation and hence become more sensitive to pupils’ needs.¹³⁵ The ‘Pupil Achievement’ factor was proposed to acknowledge the additional costs of supporting pupils who have low levels of achievement in school. The ‘Mobility’ factor and the ‘Refugee’ factor were also acknowledged but less supported by parents and professionals during public consultations. The impact of these changes in the delegation of funds to schools for SEN was only to redirect funds from statemented pupils to the central reserve of SEN support services so that the LEA could make better provision for non-statemented pupils with SEN.¹³⁶ While most boroughs were reducing their centrally managed SEN support services to meet high target levels of delegation of funds, Brent was building up the central reserve of support staff that it had nearly lost in the severe financial crisis five years ago.

Currently, the LEA provides an Educational Psychology Service that has always been highly regarded by the community. The service undertakes assessment, consultation and advisory service to schools, pupils, parents and

¹³⁴OFSTED, *Inspection of Brent Local Education Authority, 1999*, para 21.

¹³⁵ Brent Council (2002) *Devolved Funding Formula 2002/03. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Scrutiny Committee*, 13 February 2002. London: Brent Council.

¹³⁶ Brent Council (2000) *SEN & Inclusive Education Policy* September. London: Brent Council.

professional groups involved in statutory assessments. The service is partly supported by the Pupil Retention Grant from the DfES. The Special Needs Assessment and Pupil Services fulfill the statutory obligation of the LEA to make provision for pupils with statement in the borough.¹³⁷ The team works on making decisions regarding assessments, issuing statements, offering placements and conducting annual reviews. Since 1996, the service has been merged with the Social Services' Children's Disability Fieldwork and the costs of making provision for statemented pupils are appropriately shared.¹³⁸ The Special Educational Needs Service with a team of advisory and peripatetic teachers makes provision of support for pupils with sensory impairments, and speech and language difficulties in SEN units across the borough.

LEA-School relations

The tensions between the schools and the LEA could be traced back to 1975 when the schools first threatened to strike in case the teachers were made redundant due to financial cuts.¹³⁹ Later in the 1990s, the relationship further deteriorated, as the financial crisis grew more intense.¹⁴⁰ Parents united to conduct campaigns against the council's decisions to impose cuts in education budgets. The schools, however, remained isolated in their attacks on council's policies. They occasionally joined with the parents in opposing proposals of mergers or closures of schools to cut costs. In one such case, it

¹³⁷ Education Act 1996 requires the LEAs to make assessments and statements of children's SEN.

¹³⁸ Brent Council (2001) *SNAPS and SEN Fundamental Service Review Draft*. 9 January. London: Brent Council.

¹³⁹ Wembley Observer, 05/12/75 '*Headmaster attacks the Government*'. Teachers and parents had launched a campaign to fight cuts in the education service by the LEA.

¹⁴⁰ Willesden and Brent Chronicle, 27/09/90 '*Schools' strike ballot if teacher sackings go ahead*' and '*Union pledges to fight redundancies*'.

has been recorded that the teachers and parents were, 'opposed to any merger on any grounds and felt that there were no real educational grounds for going forward with the merger.'¹⁴¹ Although not directly linked with SEN provision, these circumstances shaped the attitude of the school and parent community towards the LEA. An independent survey was conducted in 1990 to find out how the community felt about the council services. The poll revealed high level of dissatisfaction with the council's education services.¹⁴² The result was damaging. Since then, the LEA made several attempts to restore the confidence of the community.

The relationship between the LEA and parents of pupils with SEN is reflected in the nature and number of SEN Tribunal cases in the borough. In one of the meetings, members of the committee believed that 50 per cent of the cases of dispute between parents and LEA were lost by the LEA because the, 'Tribunal was more sympathetic to parents' wishes and did nothing to help reduce costs.'¹⁴³ It was not before 1998 that parents were formally invited to become 'parent representatives' with voting rights on the LEA's Education, Arts and Libraries Committee.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Brent Council (1993) *Proposed Merger of Infant and Junior Schools. Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 6 July 1993. London: Brent Council.

¹⁴² MORI October 1990. According to the poll, 87 per cent of the respondents agreed that the council did not consult well and 59 per cent said that the council was 'out of touch' with what people felt.

¹⁴³ Brent Council (1996) *Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 29 January. London: Brent Council.

¹⁴⁴ Brent Council (1998) *Minutes of the Education, Arts and Libraries Committee*, 26 May. London: Brent Council.

Hillingdon

Social and demographic characteristics

Hillingdon is an outer city borough with affluent suburban areas and pockets of deprivation, and serving a population of 252,800.¹⁴⁵ Third largest among all the 32 London boroughs, Hillingdon has a rich heritage of historical places and has economically benefited by its location and size as one of the regional and commercial centres of the city. Only 29 per cent of the school population belongs to ethnic minority groups, although there has been an influx of refugee and traveller children in the borough more recently. Frequent changes in the political control of the council and sharing of power between two political parties did not provide conducive opportunities to bring plans of developing educational provision in the borough to fruition. Since it was a hung council, the decision-making processes of the Education Committee were hard work.

In 1965, the borough of Hillingdon was created as a result of the amalgamation of four former urban districts. The merger led to inconclusive political victories in local elections, leaving a hung council to manage the local affairs. In May 1986 elections, Hillingdon was a hung council with almost equal representation of members from two leading political parties.¹⁴⁶ After remaining in power for four years, the Conservatives formed a hung council with Labour after May 1999 elections.¹⁴⁷ Frequent changes in council leadership deprived the borough of political stability. For instance,

¹⁴⁵ OFSTED (2001) *Inspection of Hillingdon Local Education Authority*. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission. para 17.

¹⁴⁶ London Borough of Hillingdon (1986) *Annual Report*. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁴⁷ London Borough of Hillingdon (1991) *Annual Report*. London: Hillingdon Council.

in 1991 the Conservatives proposed to streamline the services by merging Education and Social Services into one unit, the Education and Community Services. The LEA could then become the sole provider of services to schools and also give them the opportunity to buy-in services such as, training, inspections and personnel.¹⁴⁸ However, when Labour took control of the council in 1993 local elections, the proposals for these changes were dropped. It was the result of political instability that despite efforts to make positive developments in service provision for education and SEN, there was no visible change in the state of educational provision.

During the 1970s and 80s, like other boroughs nationally, Hillingdon LEA suffered severe financial cuts as a part of the national drive to reduce public expenditure. The council stated that its priority was, 'to control expenditure and keep rate increases down to the minimum necessary...against a background of severe economic restraint and public expenditure reductions.'¹⁴⁹ Against the backdrop of the changes of political control and financial cuts, the council proposed to review local policies because of the fall in population figures and a corresponding decrease in school rolls.¹⁵⁰ Primary schools were closed and junior and infant schools amalgamated due to these falling rolls.¹⁵¹ As the financial cuts reached their peak in 1985/86 and 130 teachers lost their jobs,¹⁵² threats of industrial action by teaching

¹⁴⁸ London Borough of Hillingdon (1992) *Education and Community Services: Review of the Group*. Consultation Paper. Additional Information. London: Hillingdon Council

¹⁴⁹ London Borough of Hillingdon (1980) *Services - Policies and Priorities. Annual Report*. London: Hillingdon Council. p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ London Borough of Hillingdon, *Services - Policies and Priorities*. It was recorded that the population of the borough had decreased by 4,200 from 1971 to 1979.

¹⁵¹ Gazette, 03/02/83, 'Battle to save threatened schools get under way'.

¹⁵² Gazette, 11/01/85, 'School cuts may cost 150 jobs'.

staff led to widespread discontent and considerable disruption in schools.¹⁵³ Since then, recruitment and retention of teaching staff remained a problem. It was further aggravated by high costs of housing in the borough. Amid the loss of teaching staff and planned reduction in primary school places, there were plans to reduce the number of special schools in the borough. By 1986, the number of special schools had fallen to six and the number of pupils with SEN placed in-borough reduced from 640 in 1979 to 486 1986. However, it was not before 1990 that another review of SEN provision was conducted by the LEA and several other anomalies in the SEN provision found.

Statements

The LEA was criticised by the OFSTED for their inability to target resources to the priorities appropriately. The report stated that, ‘financial management and planning in the past have had weaknesses.’¹⁵⁴ In particular, there were concerns about the rising expenses as a result of the increasing demands for statements. By 1993 the number of pupil referrals for a statutory assessment had increased exponentially¹⁵⁵ and in 1995, 4.2 per cent of the pupil population had a statement.¹⁵⁶ By 1996, there were 1,297 pupils with statements in the borough but when the numbers reached a record high in 1999, a new strategy was devised to arrest the rise. ‘Spend to Save’ was an innovative strategy that enabled the LEA to redirect funds from statemented pupils to those in the early stages of the Code of Practice. The

¹⁵³ Gazette, 01/05/86, ‘*Children being sent home because there are not enough teachers to cover when others are absent according to Councillor Hudson*’.

¹⁵⁴ OFSTED, *Inspection of Hillingdon Local Education Authority, 2001*. para 47.

¹⁵⁵ London Borough of Hillingdon (1993) *Education Committee*, February. London: Hillingdon Council. The numbers had doubled since 1991 and the proportion of pupils requiring a statement had risen from 1.7 to 3.7 per cent in two years.

¹⁵⁶ Hillingdon Education Service (1996) *Serving Our Community*. London: Hillingdon Council.

idea was to encourage greater access to specialist expertise and support to pupils on Stage 3, before they are referred for a statutory assessment. Yet another LEA strategy, 'Funding without Statements' proposed to deal with the problem of rising number of statements. According to the scheme, the SEN funding was to be transferred from the LEA to the schools directly. However, during the initial phase of implementing the scheme in the year 2000, several parents disagreed with these changes. They argued that these financial alterations discouraged the LEA and schools to issue a statement and it did not give parents the assurance of a written legal document securing additional support for their child with SEN.¹⁵⁷

For most of the 1990s, the LEA was striving to reduce the number of pupils issued a statement of SEN. In 2001, 3.4 per cent of the pupil population had a statement, which was much higher than the nationally projected figures.¹⁵⁸ Although the LEA was proactive in making efforts to deal with the statementing issue, the legacy of frequent changes in political control of the council in the past led to severe implementation problems.

SEN provision

Provision for pupils with SEN, including the statutory assessments was made by EPS/SNASS services of the LEA. The Educational Psychology Services and Special Needs Assessment and Support Services were the core service providers. Besides making assessments and giving professional advice on placements, the SNASS team provided direct intervention -

¹⁵⁷ London Borough of Hillingdon (2001) *Education for All: A Strategy for Inclusion/SEN*. Draft Consultation Document. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁵⁸ London Borough of Hillingdon (2001) *Best Value Review: The Special Needs Team*. 5 November 2001. London: Hillingdon Council.

specialised teaching and support services to pupils with SEN at school. The LEA had developed a wide range of specialist services. They included Behaviour Support, Autistic Spectrum Disorder Support, Language Class and Outreach team, Sensory and Physical Impairment Support, and Specific Learning Difficulties Support. Having delegated over 87 per cent of the LSB to schools, the LEA had still managed to retain such an array of SEN support services centrally. There were no documented plans of reducing the services in the foreseeable future. Instead there were draft plans were to increase them. Given the prospects of reducing the support services provided by SNASS team in a Best Value exercise, the LEA supported the practice of retaining SEN support services centrally:¹⁵⁹

At present, the EPS/SNASS teams are able to work closely with school and health personnel to provide a first line filter system concerning the likely need for a statutory assessment. Removal of this arrangement would leave LEAs with less well-informed decision-making process.

Special schools

Currently, the borough has six special schools, of which two are for pupils with SLD, two for pupils with MLD and two for pupils with EBD. In addition, there is also a provision of nine special units attached to mainstream schools - three for pupils with physical disabilities, two for pupils with hearing impairment, one for pupils with speech and language difficulties and three for pupils with learning and specific learning difficulties. In 1970, the borough had eight special schools, one of which

¹⁵⁹ London Borough of Hillingdon (2002) *Best Value Service Review: Educational Psychology/SNASS*. London: Hillingdon Council. 'What would happen if the Council Stopped Providing All or Part of the Service?' para. 38.

was a residential special school, which was later closed down.¹⁶⁰ Altogether, they catered for the needs of 517 pupils with SEN in the borough at the time.¹⁶¹ The schooling provision for pupils with SEN was under review in 1971. Under the DES Design List of 1972-73, the LEA proposed to set up a new special day school for pupils with physical disabilities along with a pre-school diagnostic unit to replace the existing residential school only for physically disabled boys.¹⁶² There were proposals to increase the capacity of a special school for ESN pupils due to increase in demand for places. At that time, pupils with autism and associated learning difficulties were placed in either a special unit, a special school for ESN pupils, or in out-of-borough schools.¹⁶³ Ever since, making provision for pupils with autism has remained a challenge to the LEA.

The 1981 Education Act along with the 1989 Children Act triggered another review of SEN provision in the borough. The review adopted the idea of integration from the legislation and proposed placement of pupils with physical and sensory impairments and those with MLD in mainstream schools.¹⁶⁴ The LEA proposed to reorganise four of its six special schools in order to reduce the roll while retaining their specialist expertise. Schools'

¹⁶⁰ Hillingdon Education Service (1985) *Special Education Provision: General Information*. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶¹ Hillingdon Education Service (1972) *Education Study Conference for Members of the Education Committee*. 8 January. Education Committee Report. Northwood, Middlesex: Battle of Britain House. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶² Hillingdon Education Service (1971) *Education Committee*, 26 October. DES Design List 1972-73. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶³ Hillingdon Education Service (1971) *Education Committee*, 02 December. DES Circular 6/71. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶⁴ Hillingdon Education Service (1990) *Learning Together: A Review for Special Educational Needs in Hillingdon and Options for Change*. Consultation Document. London: Hillingdon Council.

and parents' response to these proposals during the public consultations revealed severe disagreements in the community with the LEA's plans to cease MLD special schools.¹⁶⁵ There was opposition against the LEA's proposal to change the SLD special school into separate primary and secondary units. Similar proposal with the EBD special schools were also rejected. The review of SEN provision resulted in minimal changes in the special school provision in favour of retaining parental choice.

A quality audit of SEN services conducted by the LEA soon after the SEN review revealed the high costs incurred by placement of pupils in out-of-borough residential special schools. They were mainly for pupils with severe physical and sensory impairment, epilepsy, asthma, and EBD. The Audit of Accounts on Provision for Pupils with SEN documented the out-of-borough placements of pupils with SEN at a record high of 0.44 per cent, which was twice the national average.¹⁶⁶ The problem was revisited in 1994 with the introduction of a new strategy of setting up 'specially resourced provisions' (SRPs) or units for pupils likely to get an out-of-borough placement. In the initial phase, eleven SRPs were designed to include pupils with sensory impairment and language delay, and pupils with spLD to be fully integrated in mainstream subsequently. The strategy was widely supported in the borough except for some mainstream schools. The head teachers of these schools revealed that they did not have adequate resources and staff to meet the needs of pupils with profound learning difficulties in their SRP units. It

¹⁶⁵ Hillingdon Education Service (1991) *Learning Together: Outcomes and Summary of the Consultation Process*. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶⁶ Hillingdon Education Service (1993) *Provisions for Pupils with SEN*. Audit of Accounts. London: Hillingdon Council. The cost of out-of-borough placement of a pupil with SEN was £10,000 per annum, even more than a special school placement.

was not until 2001 that the proposals to reconsider the role of special units were acknowledged. The problem of budget overspend on out-of-borough placements was still present and was made more critical by exceptionally high transportation costs.

In June 2001, SEN/Inclusion Strategy was proposed by the LEA to address the seemingly intractable problem of out-of-borough placements and accompanied heavy costs on SEN budgets.¹⁶⁷ The 'Excellence Cluster' strategy was aimed to identify regions within the borough and group the schools in a region in clusters. According to the LEA, the cluster of schools were better equipped to keep account of movement of pupils across the borough boundary and establish working relationships with schools in neighbouring boroughs. The size of the borough was too large to take account of every such detail in planning and providing for SEN. It was proposed that the clusters would receive a pool of SEN budget instead of individual schools getting their SEN budgets separately. This proposal was based on the assumption that geographical grouping of schools in an area share similar needs but if that was not the case, the LEA was open to the proposal of grouping schools in clusters based on the category of special needs. However, there were serious concerns expressed by the schools during public consultations of 'the excellence cluster' proposal.¹⁶⁸ The resourcing and training issues were identified as weak areas in implementing the 'cluster group mechanism'.

¹⁶⁷ London Borough of Hillingdon (2001) *Education For All: Strategy for Inclusion/SEN*. Education Committee, June. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁶⁸ London Borough of Hillingdon (2001) *Implementation Strategy for Inclusion/ SEN Cluster Arrangements*. Education Committee, November. London: Hillingdon Council.

LEA-School relationship

Since there were frequent changes in financial allocations for SEN, the relationship between the LEA and schools went through several changes. Hillingdon was one of the boroughs that did not use the FSM as an indicator of allocating SEN funds to the schools for their non-statemented pupils with SEN. The LEA did not believe in using any social deprivation factor in their funding formula because it was inconsistent with the Council's anti-poverty strategy. Instead, the LEA developed an SEN inventory in 1992 and delegated funds to schools depending on the level of support required by pupils placed in pre-determined five categories of SEN. The Inventory Moderation Group that was later established in 1993 reduced the variation in practices among the schools in making pupil referrals for SEN funds. For pupils with a statement, the funding mechanism of the LEA went through several changes. Instead of using 'statemented pupil values' to determine the funds required to provide additional support, the formula funding was now based on 'age-weighted pupil unit values'. It helped reduce cash values of the statement, but the relationship between the LEA and schools deteriorated. Since the LEA funded the pupils in early stages of Code of Practice quite generously, the conflict was resolved. In the feedback exercise with the schools on government's proposals in *Fair Funding*, the LEA pointed out that the new financial system would not affect the existing framework because a large number of schools in the borough were on a grant maintained status. It meant that they were already used to managing their own budgets and change would not bring any significant transfer of resources from the LEA to the schools.

In 1995, an independent study on ‘the role and effectiveness of the LEA’ involving 12 boroughs including Hillingdon explored the nature of relationship between the LEA, schools and parents.¹⁶⁹ Primary school respondents in particular, were critical of the quality of LEA support and insufficient funding. Special schools were, however, appreciative of the support provided by the LEA, especially for the active support for pupils with SLD. Among the few positive comments, one of them was from a special school head. According to her, the LEA was, ‘a lean organisation that can respond quickly to issues that need attention.’¹⁷⁰ Parents were, by far, the most critical of the respondents. In yet another feedback exercise conducted in 1998, it was revealed that the schools had gained confidence in LEA services. It was the result of mediation and conciliation services of the LEA to promote parent partnerships.¹⁷¹

Enfield

Social and demographic characteristics

Enfield is a fast growing outer London borough in the north of the city. With a population of 274,502,¹⁷² the borough is home to a very diverse community, including people from the Caribbean, Indian, African, Turkish and Greek-Cypriot origins. The continually rising school population was indicative of the constant influx of refugees into the borough. Over 50 per

¹⁶⁹ Roehampton Institute (1997) *Joint Research Project on SEN: Project on the Role and Effectiveness of the LEA*. London: Hillingdon Council.

¹⁷⁰ Roehampton Institute, *Joint Research Project on SEN*.

¹⁷¹ London Borough of Hillingdon, *Education for All*.

¹⁷² London Borough of Enfield (2002) *Promoting quality education and learning for all. Education Development Plan 2002/2007*. London: Enfield Council.

cent of pupils belong to the ethnic minorities, 27 per cent have English as an additional language and 23 per cent are eligible for FSM and the numbers are still rising.¹⁷³ A large number of refugee children, over 2,000 escalate the problem of overcrowding and lack of placement in the schools. Since they form a very high percentage of transient pupil population in the borough, they draw attention to the need to improve falling standards, attendance levels and pupil retention in schools.¹⁷⁴ Sixty-six primary along with six special schools have fallen short of accommodating the rising pupil numbers but plans for expansion continue.

The school population in Enfield reflects a 'picture of contrasts' between the affluent west and deprived east. Prior to 1965, the borough was a part of a large county with its own education School Board. Three districts of the county that later formed the borough of Enfield were very different from one another. While one was an affluent district located in the west, the other had industrialised, working class community in the east. The third district was predominantly middle class with pockets of working class population. Two of the three districts making the new borough of Enfield remained traditionally hostile since 1881, when they were separated. These districts not only had different socio-economic characteristics but also had different political inclinations. Since their amalgamation into one borough in 1965, all three districts retained their distinctiveness - politically and demographically. With local political parties winning Council elections with small majorities, elected members of the council have frustrated the process

¹⁷³ School population has risen at a higher rate than the national average by about 15 per cent since 1995.

¹⁷⁴ London Borough of Enfield (2002) *Future Enfield*. Enfield Council's Plan 2000/02. G: Docs/PPPT/BVPP01/Fullplan/Contents. 19/02/02.

of arriving at a consensus over policy decisions.¹⁷⁵ The local political developments in the borough during the late 1960s were of much significance inasmuch as they united the parents against the council attempting to change the face of education provision.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, the Black Paper (published by one of the leading economists in the country Ralph Harris) recorded the fragile state of ruling political party in the council over education matters.¹⁷⁷ The result of political interference in the education matters was that the, ‘primary schools [were] on the verge of crisis,’ because they were facing the prospect of making teachers redundant to ‘absorb budget cuts’.¹⁷⁸

Special schools

Being part of a large county, the borough had traditionally shared its schooling provision for children with SEN with other districts of the county, which were now a part of neighbouring boroughs. The special schools inherited by the borough of Enfield from the parent county included one residential and three day schools for ESN children, one day special school for ‘delicate’ and ‘physically-handicapped’ children. Schools for children

¹⁷⁵ Dalling, G. (1999) *Enfield Past*. London: Historical Pub Ltd.

¹⁷⁶ Responding to the central government directives in Crossland’s Circular 10/65 to make all schools comprehensive, the newly elected council members re-organised schooling system, which caused discontent in the community. The protest marches organised by the disgruntled parents in March 1966 are well recorded. The Joint Parents Action Committee had managed to bring together parents of 400 pupils against the council decisions to make the schools comprehensive. The public humiliation of the elected council members was aggravated by the publication of Black Paper by Ralph Harris.

¹⁷⁷ Harris, R. (1969) ‘The larger lessons from Enfield’, in Cox, C. B. and Dyson, A. E., *Black Paper Two*, London: The Critical Quarterly Society.

¹⁷⁸ Enfield Gazette, 24/01/91, ‘*Primary schools on the verge of crisis*’. Governors of six primary schools had written to the education chief officer to increase funds in order to address the problems of overcrowding. They pointed out that it was having an adverse impact on education standards.

with sensory impairments like, visual and hearing difficulties, were part of the neighbouring boroughs since 1965.¹⁷⁹ Provision for children with learning difficulties, who were then called 'educationally sub-normal', was particularly strong in the borough as it was one of the first to open a special school for ESN as early as 1939. The LEA also pioneered in establishing a 'Selection Unit' for the 'mentally ill' or autistic children to assess their educational needs. It was the only LEA to make educational provision for children with physical disabilities in mainstream schools in the early 1970s.¹⁸⁰ Later, in yet another national survey conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in 1986/87, it was reported that the provision for pupils with physical disabilities in most boroughs was made in units attached with mainstream schools, whereas in Enfield they were 'fully integrated' into mainstream classes and accessed the, 'full range of National Curriculum.'¹⁸¹

Sharing specialist provision amongst the former districts of a single county, the neighbouring boroughs were more dependent on Enfield's special school provision causing additional strain on the resources. There were fewer pupils placed in other boroughs than those coming in and the trend still

¹⁷⁹ Enfield Association for Education (1966-76) 'Special Children'. A series of pamphlets published by the Enfield Association for Education was based on the studies conducted to find out the provision for children with mental handicaps, deaf and partially hearing, visual handicap, and physically handicapped and delicate over a period of ten years. The report declared that pupils with visual and hearing impairment were placed in special schools in neighbouring boroughs as there were no special school provision within the borough. A total of 18 pupils with visual impairment, 25 with hearing impairment and 12 'delicate' children were placed out-of-borough between 1971-73.

¹⁸⁰ Enfield Association for Education (1966-76) *Special Children: Physically Handicapped and Delicate Children*. According to the report, a survey conducted by Department for Education and Science in 1972, there were 150 children with physical disabilities attending mainstream schools in Enfield.

¹⁸¹ DES Report No. 408 (1989) cited in *Minutes of the Schools Sub-Committee Meeting*, 22 Jan.

continues.¹⁸² The number of special schools increased over the years and there were no attempts to reduce or close special school provision in the borough. Currently, the LEA maintains two special schools for pupils with MLD, one for pupils with SLD, which may be regarded as a legacy of the special schools for the 'educationally sub-normal' of yesteryears. There is also a special school for pupils with communication difficulties, another for pupils with EBD, and a further one for 'delicate' pupils, which also accommodates children with mild to moderate physical disabilities. There are still no special schools for pupils with visual and hearing impairment as they continue to get placed in out-of-borough special schools on a contract basis. Although more pupils with SEN have been placed in mainstream schools the need for special schools has not been challenged. Most recently, the consultation on a draft revised policy for SEN and Best Value reviews revealed that, 'there was unanimous support for special schools to have key roles in supporting inclusive practice'¹⁸³ and thus, maintained the need for not making any radical changes within the special school sector. There has been little radical change in the way provision is made for pupils with SEN in the last 20 years. However, some incremental changes, in terms of increasing the capacity of intake of special and mainstream schools to accommodate the growing numbers, was undertaken. The growth in the

¹⁸² Enfield Gazette, 19/09/96, '*Schools take more pupils from outside borough of Enfield*'. It was reported by a local newspaper that in 1996, 577 children had come from other boroughs to Enfield schools while 10 children from their own borough were without a school placement. See also Enfield Gazette, 03/07/97, '*Parents Worry About Places*'. In another article, the Enfield Parent Governors Association stated that 300 children in the borough were without a school placement. About 600 children were placed in Enfield schools from other boroughs, whereas only 250 children from Enfield went to other boroughs, thus, creating an imbalance and crisis of placement.

¹⁸³ London Borough of Enfield (2002) *Revised LEA Policy for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion*. Municipal Year 2001/2002 Report No. 274 p. 3

number of pupils in schools across the borough was recorded as ‘increasingly volatile in nature’; thus making placement as one of the most critical problems faced by the LEA mainly during the 1990s.

Inclusion policies were targeted to reduce exclusion, as stated in one of the draft policy documents. It called for rethinking the admission policies in conjunction with the housing policies to allow for strategic planning of school places in overcrowded areas. As the number of admission related appeals made by parents against the LEA rose from 1,248 in 1997/98 to almost double, i.e. 2,471 in 1999/2000, ‘Education, Skills and Learning Scrutiny Panel’ was set up to address the crisis. The high demand for school placement was envisaged as the single biggest challenge to promoting inclusion.

SEN/Inclusion strategy

The OFSTED report released after the inspection of the LEA in 2000 was quick to point out the ‘unwieldy’ provision for children with SEN and the lack of ‘a fully articulated vision’ in the SEN policy. The report also stated that, ‘the strategy does not set out in sufficient detail how access and entitlement will be facilitated in mainstream schools, how resources are to be deployed, the future role of special schools in Enfield and how partnerships with parents are to be developed.’¹⁸⁴ However, in response to OFSTED’s criticisms of the educational provision for children with SEN in the borough, the LEA proposed to re-designate three of their special schools,

¹⁸⁴ OFSTED (2000) *Inspection of Enfield Local Education Authority*. Office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission. para. 89.

as 'complex needs centres'. The LEA also proposed to make some of their mainstream schools as resource bases for children with complex needs. These additionally resourced mainstream schools, spread geographically across the borough, were intended to be the first concrete step towards promoting inclusion. It is important to note that the SEN and Disability Act, 2001 proclaiming the right to equal educational opportunity was influential in drafting LEA's inclusion policy.¹⁸⁵

Statements

Currently, 26 per cent of all pupils in the borough have SEN and the numbers are higher than the national average. About 2.6 per cent of the pupil population have statements of SEN, of which a majority of them (58 per cent) are placed in mainstream schools. There are targets set to increase the proportion of pupils with statements in mainstream schools and reduce the number of statements issued - from 200 in 2002/03 to 195 in 2003/04 and 190 in 2004/05.¹⁸⁶ These targets are set up in response to central government initiatives and statutory requirements for the LEA to promote inclusion. The local contexts, in which these targets are set, focus on addressing the more urgent problems of placement shortages and poor pupil achievement levels in the borough.¹⁸⁷ The LEA also set up a new Education Standards Forum in May 2001 to develop strategies and raise standards in education in primary schools. Thus, the inclusion agenda of the LEA is accompanied with another agenda requiring urgent attention to raise standards of pupil achievement.

¹⁸⁵ London Borough of Enfield (2002) *Strategy for Inclusion of Pupils with SEN in Enfield*. London: Enfield Council

¹⁸⁶ London Borough of Enfield, *Future Enfield*.

¹⁸⁷ Enfield Gazette, 11/05/01, 'Primary Schools ranked 95th in LT'. Primary schools in the borough were ranked 95th in the league tables out of 150 schools, which was much below the halfway mark.

SEN provision

The tradition of strong reliance of schools on additional support from the LEA for SEN provision continues. The schools did not have the opportunity to develop their own expertise because of lack of financial capacity to make adequate provision for SEN within the school and always relied on LEA's support services. Primarily, because during the late 1980s and early 90s, the primary mainstream schools in the borough struggled to retain their teaching and ancillary staff in the wake of severe financial constraints. The support services for children with SEN in mainstream schools were the worst affected during the crisis.¹⁸⁸ For instance, in 1993 the Council declared that they would cut £15 m from the overall budget and Education would lose at least £6.4 m. Schools reported that it would mean, 'a loss of 445 teaching jobs and end of special needs teaching altogether.'¹⁸⁹ The struggle between the LEA and schools continued until 1997, when the LEA received an amount of £500,000 for school building projects and then in 2002, a total of £15m on its Basic Need application from the central government, which eased some pressure.

The SEN support services held centrally by the LEA had grown over a period of time. A staff of 265 personnel providing in-school support for pupils with statements included advisory teachers and learning support assistants. The EPS, In-School Support Services, Behaviour Support Service, SEN Services, School Improvement Services, Pre School Support Service, and Educational Welfare Service were among the wide range of centrally funded services for schools. Although the LEA had delegated a

¹⁸⁸ Post, 01/12/88, '*Schools in crisis*'.

¹⁸⁹ Enfield Gazette, 04/02/93, '*Cuts bite deep*'.

relatively higher proportion of the LSB to schools, it remained still below the national target. The LEA was compelled by local circumstances and needs to retain a larger sum centrally in order to maintain the reserve of SEN support staff. The authority had not adopted an advisory role in providing SEN support to the schools, as was the case in other boroughs delegating funds to schools. Managing SEN support staff centrally and also making adequate provision for rising number of pupils with statements, as was the case nationally, the LEA adopted a unique approach:

What is now proven to work best in the interests of pupils with SEN are interactive, multi-sensory, whole class and group approaches to teaching and learning... In many cases these interactive approaches are showing far faster rates of progress by individuals and groups in a year or two than they have from many years of individualised education delivered through Individual Education Plans.¹⁹⁰

The LEA devised a strategy of working in groups, rather than one-to-one, of pupils with SEN to ease the financial pressure of delegating more funds to the schools and reducing central reserve of SEN support staff.

Parent partnership

Traditionally, parents in the borough were known to play a dominant role in facilitating certain changes in the education policies of the LEA. However, there is no evidence of any organised parent group activity to challenge the decisions made by LEA on SEN related issues. The prime concern of parents was to obtain a school placement. Rise in population from cross-border migration and inadequate building sites to accommodate them have

¹⁹⁰ London Borough of Enfield, *Strategy for Inclusion of Pupils with SEN in Enfield*. p. 5.

‘frustrated’ the parents. The LEA proposed to open new special schools to appease parents, even though it conflicted with the idea of inclusion.

Each authority is characterised by its unique socio-economic, demographic, historical and political features that makes it distinct and different from another. Just as their local circumstances vary, so too are their responses to the national policies, showing a range of provisions and practices that they have developed over a decade. The reorganisation of SEN support services and local funding systems to match higher levels of financial delegation to schools, realignment of funds to support early intervention instead of statements, redefinition of the role of special schools and LEA-school relations in a changing policy environment and the redevelopment of parent partnerships are among those aspects that reflect local variations and producing an ecology of styles. The following chapters, based on empirical data, show just how varied the institutional responses are and the ways in which they impact on their perceptions, provisions and practices in providing for children with SEN.

Addendum to Chapter 4

The profiles of case study authorities in Chapter 4 were presented on the assumption that issues identified from these should relate to the body of theoretical knowledge as well as to the empirical determinants of data collection. In view of the density of material and the complexity of the task, it was thought it important to include some further explanatory remarks. The matrix and the commentary below presents an analytical framework for an understanding of the key issues that confront local authorities involved in the implementation of inclusion policies.

Each of the topics or categories that have been covered is of substantive rather than marginal classificatory interest. These categories provide a meaningful schema, enhancing the comparability of data across the eight case study authorities. They also amount to a descriptive schemata, serving as indicators for the process of theory verification. The concluding chapter gives attention to both these uses, spelling out, at some length, the associated issues of ambiguity, conflict and consensus that could potentially arise at implementation stage.

As the empirical chapters will show, the range of chosen variables are investigated in all the eight case study authorities. These variables have sometimes been taken as dependent variables and on other occasions as independent. Throughout, the emphasis is accordingly either on the influence that other factors have exerted on, for example, statementing, or on the influence that statementing itself brings to bear on other forms of behaviour and attitudes. An example of the former is the impact of financial delegation of local school budgets on schools' capacity to fund statements. An example of the latter is the way in which the statementing

Figure 4.1 Thematic mapping of the case study LEAs

| LEAs | <i>Inclusion policies</i> | <i>Financing statements</i> | <i>Special school closures</i> | <i>Reorganising SEN support</i> | <i>Parent partnership</i> |
|----------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Newham | Equal educational opportunities | Stamenting costs controlled | All closed despite some opposition | Drastic steps to reorganisation | Strong parent partnerships |
| Lewisham | Combating racial discrimination | Stamenting costs rising incrementally | Proposed but not closed | Gradual reorganisation | Promoting parent partnerships |
| Islington | Mainstreaming pupils with SEN | Stamenting costs rising steadily | Proposed but only relocated | Some reorganisation after careful planning | Planning strategically to promote parent partnerships |
| Tower Hamlets | Mainstreaming pupils with statements | Stamenting costs already very high and under review | Closed after extensive consultation | No reorganisation despite planning | Planning and promoting parent partnerships |
| Richmond | Mainstreaming pupils with SEN and reduce out-of-borough placements | Stamenting costs high from out-of-borough placements | Proposed but not closed | No reorganisation undertaken | No planning to promote parent partnerships |
| Hillingdon | Reduce exclusions and out-of-borough placements | Stamenting costs high from financial mismanagement | Proposed but only relocated | No planning for reorganisation | No planning but attempts to promote parent partnerships |
| Enfield | Reduce exclusions and out-of-borough placements | Stamenting costs high from more special school placements | Proposed but only redesignated | Recent steps to reorganisation | No attempts to promote parent partnerships |
| Brent | Reduce exclusions | Stamenting costs risen uncontrollably | Not proposed at all | Reversing the process of reorganisation | Lack of parent partnership |

process itself leads an authority to define its approach to inclusion. Likewise, the perceptions of schools and parents on special school closures can shape the debate surrounding inclusion; at the same time, the issue of schools closure may be treated as an independent variable, influencing an authority's approach to implementing inclusion policies. The strength of the relationship between parent groups and the LEAs as shown in the matrix is another important determinant of successful implementation, as is the LEA's' ability to reorganise its SEN support structures. Throughout, the empirical chapters demonstrate the extent to which LEAs vary in their ability to address the implementation of SEN policies in varying contexts and under different conditions.

Typologies

In view of the varied response to each of the issues defined above, it is worth setting out a typology that clarifies the main characteristics exhibited by these constructs. The case study authorities are placed in a matrix along with the five key determinants highlighting their responses and establishing their position as 'leaders', 'thrusters', 'followers' and 'minimalists'. At one end of the spectrum is Newham, an LEA that has consistently taken the lead, with Brent at the minimalist end. LEAs like Lewisham and Islington are thrusters, responding proactively to the national agenda, whilst Tower Hamlets, Richmond and Hillingdon follow the leaders and thrusters in implementing national policies locally.

The classification of LEAs into this four-fold typology can be best illustrated by the progress made by authorities on the five dimensions specified above. Take, for example, the *reorganisation of SEN provision*. Some authorities embarked on the process of reducing and 'streamlining'

their support staff in the face of a declining resource base, while others maintained *status quo*. Newham leads the way in drastically reducing support staff, while Brent actually reverses the process by building up their SEN provision. Lewisham and Islington thrust their way into policy change by reorganising their support services in accordance with national expectations. Tower Hamlets, Richmond and Hillingdon, on the other hand, initiate the process of change following the example set by Newham. In accordance with their minimalist stance, Enfield maintains *status quo*.

Financing statements shows the extent of financial control that each case study LEA has achieved on issues relating to the rising number of statements. Leaders show a remarkable control on the proportion of pupils obtaining statements, with Newham having just 0.3 per cent of its pupil population statemented. The cases of Lewisham and Islington show the difficulties they face in arresting the increasing statementing costs. The followers have spiralling statementing costs, with Tower Hamlets and Hillingdon having 4.2 and 3.4 per cent of pupils statemented respectively. The minimalists, at the other extreme, show no attempt to address the issue.

On *defining inclusion*, Newham took the lead a decade before the other authorities, both in terms of introducing the policy and in the breadth of its interpretation. The provision of equal educational opportunities and preventing racial discrimination of pupils guided the inclusion policies here and in Lewisham even before they were adopted nationally. In Brent and Enfield, inclusion policies were more narrowly conceived. They were introduced to deal with the immediate problems of exclusion and shortage of places in mainstream schools.

Likewise, on *special school closures*, the matrix brings out the proactive nature of the second category of thrusters, following the lead of such LEAs as Newham. The leading authorities embarked on a radical programme of closing special schools, with the thrusters proceeding with redesignation and relocation of such schools. Among the followers, proposals for closure were put forward but not proceeded with in the face of community opposition. No such proposals were made in the minimalist authorities. A similar picture is to be found in respect of *parent partnerships*, where the leaders clearly exhibit strong relationships with their parent groups, while at the other end of the spectrum such networks were virtually absent.

The following empirical chapters exhibit the variations across authorities on these key dimensions, while the concluding chapter uses the descriptors to provide a framework for integrating the theoretical body of knowledge with the data collected in the field.

5 Responding to the new agenda: LEAs and Schools

New Labour was committed to raising ‘standards of every school’ and increasing ‘the proportion of national income spent on education’.¹ The Education Act 1996 placed a duty on the LEAs to move towards inclusion as they prepared to raise standards in schools and made school improvement as a key aspect of their ‘new role’.

The government thus redefined the role of LEAs in making provision for pupils with SEN, prescribing their specific planning and support functions with respect to the schools. LEAs were expected to secure and deliver SEN related services of high quality to the schools in a competitive environment, using alternate service providers from the private and voluntary sectors. At the same time, the principles of Best Value required the authorities to publish annual plans, review their functions and introduce rigorous programmes of audit and inspection.² The government’s vision of public services for the next ten years, as described in the 1999 White Paper *Modernising Government*, was one in which local authorities would become better service providers.³ This could only be achieved by substantial increases in efficiency and effectiveness, as the financial autonomy of local authorities had been severely curtailed by proposals set out in the

¹ Labour Party (1997) *New Labour because Britain Deserves Better*, Labour Party Manifesto. London: Labour Party. p. 7-9.

² Department for Environment, Transport and Regions (1999) *Implementing Best Value-A Consultation Paper on Draft Guidance*. London: HMSO. p 11.

³ Department for Environment, Transport and Regions (1999) *Modernising Government*. White Paper. London: HMSO.

Modernising Finance White Paper.⁴ The LEAs, in particular, were expected to support, empower and challenge their schools to become more inclusive and plan strategically to reduce the rising costs of issuing and maintaining statements of SEN.

This chapter draws upon the responses of LEAs and schools to government expectations of the new policy agendas promoting inclusion and raising standards in education. Interviews and questionnaire surveys eliciting the information on several different aspects of change in LEA and school provision for children with SEN form the basis of the findings. Issues dealing with the implications of government initiatives on LEA plans for inclusion, new funding arrangements and the subsequent process of reorganisation of SEN support services in the case study boroughs are analysed, together with their impact on LEA-school relations and effective implementation of the policy goals. The discussion focuses specifically on the impact of financial alterations on making statutory assessments for pupils with SEN. The underlying tensions in meeting the national expectations of reducing dependence on statements for additional SEN support while safeguarding schools' and parents' demands are also explored.

Special education: new expectations, a new response?

The government's specific aims for children with SEN had been set out in the 1997 Green Paper *Excellence for all: Meeting Special Educational*

⁴ Department for Environment, Transport and Regions (1999) *Modernising Finance*. White Paper. London: HMSO.

Needs and the subsequent Programme of Action. These documents acknowledged a change in the profile of special needs among the pupil population. They were attributable to various reasons, including advances in the medical sciences that had enabled more infants with complex medical conditions to survive longer, thus creating the need to make arrangements for their educational provision, and the increased influx of refugees that had in some areas compelled the LEAs to accommodate children surviving from traumatic and poor socio-economic conditions in their mainstream schools. LEAs were to offer more ‘preventive’ support to schools and pupils with SEN to reduce reliance on statutory assessments and develop more inclusive practices. Responding to central government’s concerns over increasing costs of pupils with SEN statements, the LEAs were also expected to arrest the rise in the number of statements issued.

The commitment to offer an inclusive educational experience to pupils with SEN was not confined to the existing special school sector. In order to make mainstream schools more inclusive, the LEAs were required to make certain changes. New funding arrangements, changes in the roles and responsibilities of LEAs and schools in making provision for pupils with SEN, and adopting new agendas on promoting inclusive education practices were some of the national expectations the LEAs and schools were to meet. They were also expected to fulfil the demands of local priorities and needs. Translating national policies into practice, together with meeting locally driven demands posed a challenge to LEAs and schools. To what extent, then, did local priorities dominate the decisions and measures adopted by the LEAs in making provision for pupils with SEN and promoting inclusive

practices? Or did the national policy agendas and expectations become more demanding?

LEAs' plans for inclusion

The LEA survey revealed considerable differences in the authorities' perception on inclusion. Table 1 shows that the Green Paper of 1997 was cited as the 'most influential' government initiative by almost three quarters of the responding LEAs, with as many as 85 per cent of Unitaries reporting this to be the case.

Table 1 Impact of government initiatives on LEA's policies on inclusion, by authority type

| <i>'Most influential' initiative</i> | County % | Metropolitan % | London % | Unitary % | All % |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|-----------|-------|
| SEN Green Paper 1997 | 68 | 67 | 73 | 85 | 74 |
| SEN Code of Practice | 19 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| LEA OFSTED Inspections | 10 | 23 | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Best Value Reviews | 3 | - | 8 | - | 2 |
| (base) | (31) | (30) | (26) | (41) | (128) |

Initiatives, such as those prompted by Best Value regime, also had some impact, although it is still early days to come to any conclusive judgements about the extent of its influence. Nevertheless, the process of developing education plans, devising targets and strategies for consultation with schools, and attempts to modernise decision-making structures were well underway.

Table 2 puts these influences in perspective by showing that local factors – consultations with schools and communities - were rated more important than guidance provided in DfES documents. OFSTED inspections were cited as most influential by only one in ten of the responding LEAs, while Best Value appears to have had a secondary impact. However, a caveat must be entered here: it is reasonable to suppose that these local discussions and consultations were themselves prompted by the initial government requirements.

Table 2 Factors influencing LEAs' plans for inclusion

| <i>Factors that had the most influence on the LEA's inclusion-related plans</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---|----------|
| Guidance from the DfES documents | 26 |
| Discussions in LEA's senior management meetings | 18 |
| Exploring issues in specialist forums and teams | 20 |
| Consultations with schools and community | 36 |
| (base) | (126) |

There are considerable differences between authority types, with London boroughs standing out as the least likely to acknowledge DfES guidance and the most likely to cite the exploration of issues in local forums as a significant influence. As Table 3 shows, there are also marked differences within authorities in the extent to which these factors bear upon authorities' plans for inclusion. In London boroughs and Counties, consultation with schools and community groups appear much more important than, for example, guidance received from central government documents.

Table 3 Factors influencing LEAs' plans for inclusion, by authority type

| <i>Factors that had the most influence on the LEA's inclusion-related plans</i> | County % | Metropolitan % | London % | Unitary % | All % |
|---|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|
| Guidance from the DfES documents | 29 | 36 | 7 | 30 | 26 |
| Discussions in LEA's senior management meetings | 10 | 21 | 26 | 15 | 18 |
| Exploring issues in specialist forums and teams | 16 | 11 | 26 | 25 | 20 |
| Consultations with schools and community | 45 | 32 | 41 | 30 | 37 |
| (base) | (31) | (28) | (27) | (40) | (126) |

New Funding System

New funding arrangements proposed in *Fair Funding*⁵ set out the requirement to allocate greater proportion of funds, including the SEN-related funds, directly to schools. The new system was expected to introduce a fairer and more equitable way of funding all schools, while reducing LEAs' control over school budgets. The government set national targets for the LEAs to delegate 85 per cent of LSB directly to schools by 2001-02 and 90 per cent by 2002-03.⁶ Table 4 shows the extent of financial delegation to schools reported by the LEAs surveyed for this study: the requirement to delegate is such that few authorities fall below the minimum percentage.

⁵ Department for Education and Employment (1998) *Fair Funding: improving delegation to schools*. Consultation Paper. London: DfEE.

⁶ DfEE, *Fair Funding*.

Table 4 **Extent of financial delegation to schools**

| | % |
|-------------------|-------|
| Above 85 per cent | 86 |
| About 85 per cent | 2 |
| Below 85 per cent | 12 |
| (base) | (124) |

The overall government funding for SEN provision had risen incrementally since New Labour took office in 1997 but critics argued that the top tier funding system⁷ was flawed, as it did not target the resources to need.⁸ The new financial delegation targets also affected the local funding systems and schools' ability in making SEN provision at the second tier.

A close relation between funding formula and implementation of policies has been identified.⁹ It is argued that a decentralised system of funding facilitated by delegation of funds directly to schools promoted greater inclusion. However, other studies have shown no 'consistent relationship' between the level of funds delegated to schools and the performance of LEAs in making SEN provision.¹⁰ Nevertheless, government policies on inclusion were still based on the premise that an increase in delegation of funds to schools would enhance schools' capacity and motivate them to

⁷ Top tier funding system refers to funds allocated from DETR and DfEE to the LEAs. Funds distributed by the DfEE were targeted to government initiatives and sponsored projects, whereas the DETR funds covered the entire revenue expenditure for school-based education. The distribution of funds was based on SSA that calculated the number of children in schools while the AEN represented social disadvantage and ethnicity.

⁸ West, A. and Pennell, H. with West, R. (2000) 'New Labour and School-based Education in England: changing the system of funding?' *British Educational Research Journal*, 26 (4), 523-36.

⁹ Beek, C. (2002) 'The distribution of resources to support inclusive learning', *Support for Learning*, 17 (1): 9-14.

¹⁰ Audit Commission/ OFSTED (2001) *Local education authority support for schools in inner London*. London: HMI.

make better SEN provision for pupils. The LEAs would be able to provide better advisory support to schools with fewer direct responsibilities of making SEN provision.

A substantial body of research conducted in the late 1990s focused on the impact of increased delegation on the LEAs' SEN provision and support services. The findings revealed that increased delegation of SEN funds to schools had eroded the centrally based specialist expertise of the LEAs.¹¹ The new changes left schools feeling isolated and inadequately supported by their LEA. Another study conducted by National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in 1993 also suggested a gradual decline in the central reserve of LEAs' SEN support services as a result of increased delegation.¹² However, three years on another NFER study revealed contrasting evidence showing that despite the pressure to delegate, LEAs continued to retain a range of SEN-related services centrally and support the schools.¹³ Such, then, was the nature of conflicting evidence on this issue of delegation.

The survey of schools carried out for this study explored the impact of financial delegation on schools. The respondents, including school heads, teachers and SENCOs were asked to describe their experiences of the effects of increased financial delegation. Table 5 shows that only 12 per cent of them related the delegation of funds with improvement in SEN support provision in schools. For most of them it had given greater flexibility in

¹¹ Lee and Henkhuzens, *Integration in Progress*.

¹² Fletcher-Campbell, F. with Hall, C. (1993) *LEA Support for Special Educational Needs*. Slough: NFER.

¹³ Fletcher-Campbell, F. (1996) *The Resourcing of Special Educational Needs*. Slough: NFER.

making decisions, albeit with a corresponding increase in administrative workload.

Table 5 Effects of increased financial delegation on schools

| | % |
|---|-------|
| Additional flexibility | 30 |
| Improved SEN support provision | 12 |
| Administrative work load | 37 |
| Increased staff awareness of financial implications | 21 |
| (base) | (219) |

Table 6 below takes this issue further by investigating the extent of concern among respondents. Eight out of ten responding schools were ‘very concerned’ about the inadequacy of funds for pupils with SEN, while increased delegation did little to enhance schools’ ability to strengthen provision for pupils with SEN and promote inclusive practices.

Table 6 Extent of concern about aspects of school funding

| | Very concerned % | A little concerned % | Not at all concerned % | (base) |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------|
| Inadequate funding for pupils with SEN | 81 | 18 | 1 | (229) |
| Inadequate funding for pupils with statements | 66 | 30 | 4 | (223) |
| Excessive control by the LEA | 25 | 44 | 31 | (217) |
| Reducing LEA responsibilities | 27 | 53 | 20 | (206) |
| The ‘funding system’ operated by the LEA | 47 | 45 | 8 | (219) |

Visits to case study authorities revealed similar patterns, confirming the fears expressed by LEA officers as reported in the survey findings. Some feared that enhancing financial power of schools would adversely affect the provision for certain groups of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. As one Head of SEN Unit in an inner London LEA expressed his concerns:

Increasing delegation of funds is certainly a threat because the schools now have more choice about avoiding difficult pupils and instruments of making a school take their fair share of disruptive pupils are limited, so I think that's quite a big problem. In general, I think it is more worrying about children with learning and behavioural difficulties. We wouldn't worry about pupils with sensory or physical difficulties. For children with moderate learning difficulty and those who are behaviourally challenging, we have a problem maintaining provision in mainstream schools.

The delegation of funds was aimed to develop the expertise of schools and generate a greater sense of responsibility among the school staff towards pupils with SEN. The LEAs were expected to modify their role and become advisors and monitors of the services now provided by the schools. Having reduced their centrally retained budgets for SEN, the LEAs were expected to 'streamline' their SEN support services, whilst the schools developed their own expertise in specialist provision.

Whatever the extent of delegation, central funding by LEA remains crucial to the development of SEN support services. Table 7 records the various sources of funding for the SEN services provided to schools, service by service, as reported by the LEAs. These include central funding, funding on a project basis (for example, through the Standards Fund, PFI/PPP or the

Schools Access Initiative), or through contracting out and buyback arrangements - shown as 'sold' services.

Table 7 Funding of SEN Support Services

| <i>SEN Support services</i> | Centrally funded % | Sold element % | Funded on project % | Not applicable % | (base) |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| General learning difficulties support teams | 48 | 38 | 3 | 11 | (117) |
| Behaviour support | 65 | 25 | 7 | 3 | (127) |
| Services for deaf/hearing impaired | 87 | 10 | 1 | 2 | (129) |
| Services for visually impaired | 88 | 8 | 2 | 2 | (129) |
| Services for physically impaired/disabled | 74 | 8 | 5 | 13 | (115) |
| Specialist teachers for dyslexia/specific learning difficulties | 61 | 5 | 5 | 9 | (117) |
| Specialist teachers for autism/autistic spectrum disorder | 75 | 10 | 6 | 9 | (119) |
| Services for speech/language difficulties | 67 | 9 | 17 | 7 | (123) |
| Pre-school SEN support teams/portage services | 91 | 2 | 6 | 1 | (125) |
| Education psychology service | 92 | 6 | 2 | - | (127) |
| Special school/unit outreach support | 63 | 16 | 9 | 12 | (116) |

Crucially, the table also demonstrates the extent to which some services such as the Education Psychology Service or those services for the hearing and visually impaired pupils are retained centrally, while the more generic support services for children with behavioural and learning difficulties are more likely to be contracted out. The implications of this are clear, with the

centrally retained services most affected in terms of a reduction in the numbers of support staff employed to make the provision effective. As one staff interviewed observed ‘ no EBD service is available from Christmas and there is a reduction in our allocated time with educational psychologist...this has affected our ability to carry out early assessments, identify problems and request for statements in time to meet the needs of children.’

The implications of reorganising SEN support services

The reorganisation of LEA support services for SEN was part of the wider agenda driving changes in the local government structures and functions. The changes were centrally imposed to encourage greater participation of local authorities and improving SEN service provision across the country. The LEAs were required to shift the balance of financing pupils with SEN from pupils with statements to those without statements. This was aimed to reduce the increasing reliance of schools and parents on statements for accessing additional specialist support and funds. It would also prevent pupils to reach higher stages of need by providing early intervention. To what extent did the previous policy frameworks and new financial capacities enabled LEAs to reorganise and change?

The process of reorganisation involved uniting the SEN support services into a single unit or fewer teams. Table 8 shows the proportion of LEAs in England that had already adopted the changes and how many were still in the process of doing so. A high majority of the LEAs had either adopted or

were considering adopting certain changes within their SEN service provision.

Table 8 Restructuring SEN support services

| | In place % | Considering % | Not considering % | (base) |
|--|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| Unification of SEN support services into a single team | 58 | 18 | 24 | (93) |
| Use of alternative services providers for SEN services | 58 | 17 | 25 | (90) |

The figures reflecting the process of reorganisation was much higher in the cases study boroughs than seen nationally. In the schools' survey carried out for this study majority of respondents reported that their LEA had restructured the services. The most frequently reported change was the reduction in the number of visits to school by an educational psychologist. Some reported that the EPS had become more consultative than interventionist. Disbanding of Learning Difficulties teams and cutback in the Behaviour Support teams were also reported by majority of the respondents as part of the LEA's reorganisation process.

Variations in SEN support

Traditionally, LEAs maintained an EPS and SEN Assessment Team along with specialist support staff for pupils with a range of SEN, such as spLD, MLD, EBD, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, autism, and language and communication difficulties. The services operated under separate heads, which constituted a team of specialist staff and advisory teachers. The nature of support to schools ranged from general advice on

policy and practice to direct intervention with individual pupils in schools. Besides the LEA's SEN Support Services, some of the specialist units and special schools offered support to mainstream schools, although the provision was patchy and mostly inadequate.

Evidence from surveys and interviews suggested that the change in the role of LEAs, that followed the SEN reorganisation process, not only affected the LEA-school relationship but also reduced LEAs' own resource capacities. It was barely enough to fulfil their statutory duty of ensuring adequate educational provision for pupils with statements.

Among the eight case study authorities, four had unified and streamlined their structure of SEN service provision, though the extent of change varied considerably across the boroughs. The emphasis was primarily on developing multi-professional teams to provide a more holistic support to pupils with SEN. Under single leadership, the LEAs included core SEN services and some additional support services from their remaining SEN-related funds. The core services were the SEN Assessment Team and EPS that covered their statutory duty to assess, issue, provide and monitor the statements. These centrally retained additional support services varied considerably from one LEA to another. Three other LEAs had no plans to make any alterations in their existing service provision for SEN, while one authority had reversed the process of reorganisation by increasing their centrally maintained specialist staff for SEN provision.

As the LEAs increasingly delegated their SEN-related funds to schools and reorganised their support services, considerable reduction in centrally

retained specialist staff followed, together with developing a more advisory and monitoring role. The schools' response to this change was mixed. Although they welcomed the additional funds and the responsibility, they lamented the loss of LEA as an over-arching authority providing direct intervention and support. The schools had grown accustomed to the idea of LEAs being entirely responsible for making provision for children with SEN for several years.

In Lewisham, for instance, the LEA had severely cut down on EPS and reduced specialist support staff for pupils with EBD. Although the borough still maintained a team of peripatetic teachers for pupils with sensory impairments and specific learning difficulties, the schools became increasingly dissatisfied with the LEA because the delegated budgets had not yet been utilised by schools to recruit and retain their own specialist staff. Moreover, with the onset of a new advisory role for LEAs, its role as providers was deliberately diminished and the schools felt unsupported to take greater responsibility of pupils with SEN. The respondents from Lewisham schools regarded the new advisory role of the LEA as a mere 'cosmetic change'. A mainstream school head explained the way the new system worked as the LEA undertook reorganisation of their SEN services and assumed an advisory role:

We have a Learning Support Team from the LEA. For once a child is on a statement, they will come in and particularly look at how the child is doing with all the support, the dyslexia stuff, for instance. But it is mainly advice that is very difficult for teachers to take on. I feel for them because more and more they get different advices and recommendations, it is very hard to put it all into practice. And equally, Speech and Language Support from Lewisham would come

in and give advice. In fact all the other services you called in would come and give advice. Even the EBD team, they will come in for about six sessions for a period over a year and give mainly ideas for you to use in class rather than somebody coming in and actually helping. Now, is that really promoting inclusion?

The new advisory and monitoring role of the LEA was, however, less criticised by the schools in cases where the LEA had managed to centrally retain sufficient funds and human resources to provide SEN support. In Tower Hamlets, for instance, the schools accepted the LEA as advisors and ‘quality control’ monitors as they were fairly satisfied with the LEA services. The level of delegation of funds to schools was one of the lowest at 79 per cent. However, as the pressure to meet nationally set targets of delegation increased, the LEA made desperate attempts to reduce services that generated inefficient corporate financial systems and poor control of SEN costs leading to large deficits. The result was the onset of another crisis namely, a high increase in the number of statements and accompanying costs.

Among all the case study LEAs that had undertaken some form of reorganisation of their services, Newham was the only LEA that continued to provide direct support to pupils with SEN in schools despite having cut down their central reserve of support staff from 385 to 25. The LEA met the national target of delegating 85 per cent of LSB to schools in 2000 and fulfilled only the statutory requirements by maintaining SEN Assessment Team, EPS and Monitoring and Standards Service. The services were essentially maintained for pupils with complex low incidence needs, who were more likely to be placed in special schools. For most pupils with

learning difficulties, EBD and sensory impairments, who were likely to be in mainstream schools, the LEA expected the schools to recruit and retain their own specialist staff with the delegated budgets. The schools welcomed the prospect of building up their own expertise and were willing to take to the responsibility of all pupils with SEN. However, some schools still faced difficulties in recruiting specialist staff due to severe shortages. A SENCO from one of the schools in Newham said:

Yes, there are resources but the authority gives us money and they think that is enough. We will go for a year without a support teacher and they say, 'you have the money'. This support teacher was long term sick and we cannot advertise for somebody else, it is against the law. We have tried supply teachers but with the range of special needs we have in the school, there is no way we can manage. But the thing that has really alarmed me is that find it very patronising for the authority to say that you have the resources so there is no problem... They have given the resources but if there are no human resources there, what do we do? I know where all the resources are, they are in the bank balance somewhere but there are simply no persons.

Irrespective of the level of delegation of funds to schools, the schools in most outer London boroughs were struggling to cope with the finances available to them. The Audit Commission's study similarly found that the outer London boroughs were at a relative disadvantage compared with inner London boroughs, which benefited from additional funding on the basis of high levels of social deprivation,¹⁴

¹⁴ Audit Commission/ OFSTED, *Local education authority support for schools in inner-London*. The report suggests that the average SEN funding for the inner-London LEA is particularly high at £234 per pupil, compared with £157 per pupil nationally. They are characterised by high levels of social deprivation and have been well funded by national standards.

A borough's size was one of the important determinants of the amount of SEN provision made available to schools, with one respondent commenting that a small borough lacked the 'economies of scale' to employ adequate staff to meet the needs of all the schools. She went on to argue that they managed better without the direct support of LEA through more co-ordinated planning and strategic leadership, with the head herself making inclusion a priority. In this instance, governors were also found to be contributing towards prioritising and making SEN provision in school work effectively without depending on their LEA.

Such views were more pronounced in schools having high proportion of pupils with low incidence needs or complex SEN. One of the school staff interviewed explained the reasons behind these perceptions: where pupils were more likely to get a statement, they helped in reducing the pressure on school's SEN budgets by gaining additional funds from the LEA.

Another way in which schools reduced their dependence on LEAs was to use the monies that flowed from statements. This phenomenon was particularly discernable in some boroughs such as Richmond, Brent, Hillingdon and Enfield. A school head in Brent had reportedly, 'overcome the shortage of support staff' by recruiting their own support staff from the statement money. In her own words:

After the delegation of funds, there has not been much change. We are using the same statemented money to employ the support staff. I don't think...it depends where you draw the line on special needs, how you organise it. ... We appoint the teaching assistants. When I know that a child has just been given a statement, I look for the most appropriate

provision for that child. So, it maybe that teaching support is actually what that child really needs. We have got two or three teachers who are part-time and would do all kinds of work. So as far as possible I try and keep within house because that makes communication much easier. I know the characters involved, so I know how they work with children, the attitude, motivation and everything. So if it is purely academic one-to-one support, whether the child is withdrawn or within the class or whatever, then they would go with them. It may be a combination of academic support and teaching assistant support or it maybe more beneficial that the child focuses totally within the class context with an adult to support for a number of hours spread over time.

The case study LEAs were at different stages in reorganising their SEN support services. Despite pressures to delegate funds and reduce SEN support services, Enfield LEA, for example, had not initiated any restructuring of its services. The schools continued to rely on the authority for SEN support. The LEA continued to recruit and retain its support staff at a time when other boroughs were moving in the opposite direction. The consequent problem, however, was that the support staff increased exponentially and the LEA failed to meet national targets of financial delegation. These trends were reversed by the recommendations of the OFSTED inspection, but well resented by the schools. A SENCO described the existing SEN provision in the borough and responded to the LEA proposals to delegate funds to schools and reduce their specialist staff:

At the LEA we have an Advisory Team but it is a very small number of people who work all over the borough. There is some peripatetic support staff in the LEA, especially for behaviour and we do have sometimes children who receive one-to-one from them. But we haven't got anybody at the moment on that. We also get support staff from their specific learning difficulty team, for dyslexia. Even for that there is a small team of peripatetic teachers. So they do come in once

or twice a term maximum. I know it is not the best kind of support we get but to be absolutely honest I personally prefer the borough carrying on with the way they provide funding at the moment because the money has to be allocated from somewhere. There must be some kind of resourcing place. If the money is going to be allocated then I don't think how the LEA is going to organise it without doing it the way they do

Likewise, Brent LEA was also setting new trends by reversing the process of reorganisation. Its SEN support services and staff in Brent were continuing to grow in number to compensate for their sharp decline in the past due to budget cuts. The new 'Investor Save Programme' was developed to increase the central reserve of specialist support staff. The Head of SEN explained the principle behind setting this reverse trend. Since the schools were unable to build their expertise and recruit support staff from the funds delegated to them, they had to be supported by the LEA. Due to severe lack of human resources in the borough, the LEA was obliged to recruit and maintain support staff for the schools centrally. The respondent explained:

There are a lot of schools that are having a lot more difficulty, as they do not have specialist support. There is a very good example of a school where they took a child with severe learning difficulties and in the first year, they worked very hard to find. The school never lost the spirit of being inclusive but they put an increasing number of demands upon them, which were hard for them to approach and for us as a LEA were hard to approach. The school was responsible for the provision for the child and they were not getting any specialist support. The authority was thinking about the extra resources that the school was given and why were they not making use of them. So I think the LEA has to be there for the schools with all the financial resources and specialist support.

Unlike Enfield, this authority continued to recruit and retain their specialist support staff.

Islington had been one of the first few LEAs in England to delegate a high percentage of LSB to schools in the wake of the LMS scheme of 1988. As a result, meeting the more recently set national targets of delegation did affect the LEA's finances adversely. However, it was reported that a series of poor strategic decisions and inefficient management of funds were responsible for the failure on the part of LEA to function effectively. The education services were handed over to a private contractor from the LEA control. Their SEN support services were managed and funded from other sources such as, EMAG, SF, EAZ and EiC funds. Despite the financial crisis at the LEA level, the services for pupils with SEN were more than adequate. They had specialist staff for pupils with spLD, educational psychologists, teaching assistants, learning mentors for pupils with EBD, speech and language therapists and advisory teachers for pupils with hearing and visual impairments. Despite difficult circumstances and financial pressures, the LEA managed to retain a team of specialist staff and get a 'Charter Mark' for supporting the schools.

Overall, then, the delegation of funds to schools had enormous impact upon the nature and level of provision for pupils with SEN. Local factors such as the incidence of need, availability of specialist staff, availability of funds from additional sources, and past policy decisions on providing either interactive or advisory support to the schools dictated the nature and extent of reorganisation of SEN support services undertaken by the LEAs.

LEA School relations

Under the newly defined LEA-school regime, interactions between head teachers and LEA officials tend to be more limited than hitherto experienced.

Table 8 presents the range of support services that schools obtained from LEAs, as reported by the schools themselves. Services such as the Education Psychology Service, Behaviour Support and Services for Speech and Language Difficulties continue to be obtained from LEAs, while those such as catering for pupils with learning difficulties and autism were being obtained from other sources.

Table 9 **Provision of SEN support services to schools**

| <i>SEN Support services as reported by Schools</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---|----------|
| General learning difficulties support teams | 62 |
| Behaviour support | 84 |
| Services for deaf/hearing impaired | 76 |
| Services for visually impaired | 66 |
| Services for physically impaired/disabled | 58 |
| Specialist teachers for dyslexia/specific learning difficulties | 57 |
| Specialist teachers for autism/autistic spectrum disorder | 47 |
| Services for speech/language difficulties | 84 |
| Pre-school SEN support teams/portage services | 60 |
| Education psychology service | 100 |
| Special school/unit outreach support | 47 |
| (base) | (245) |

Clearly, the relations between schools and LEAs extend beyond simply catering and providing for services. Table 10 presents findings from the

schools survey undertaken for this study and shows the range of issues on which schools interact with LEA officials.

Table 10 LEA-School relations on planning and networking

| <i>Types of LEA support to schools</i> | % |
|---|-------|
| Assistance in bidding for grants | 27 |
| Advice on planning | 44 |
| Help in networking and brokering partnerships | 29 |
| (base) | (181) |

As tables 10 and 11 show, the LEAs were more likely to give advice on planning and conducting consultations with schools, a finding that was confirmed by in-depth discussions with the officials in the case study authorities. On the other hand, schools reported that LEAs were less engaged in activities such as brokering partnerships or advising on development plans.

Table 11 LEA-School interaction on aspects of consultation

| <i>Nature of interactions between schools and LEA officials</i> | % |
|---|-------|
| Consultations in response to school changes | 43 |
| Making Development Plans | 31 |
| Budget related consultations | 36 |
| (base) | (229) |

Schools were also asked to identify the partners with whom they maintained the strongest relationship. Forty two per cent of the schools still regarded their links with LEA as 'strong', despite the reported reduction in LEA SEN support to schools. Half the schools surveyed reported that they maintained strong partnerships with parents.

Table 12 Schools' perceptions of their strongest partnership link

| <i>Schools' partnership links with...</i> | % |
|---|-------|
| LEA | 42 |
| Parents | 50 |
| Local parent support groups | 2 |
| Voluntary organisations | 2 |
| Others | 4 |
| (base) | (232) |

A large number of school staff interviewed in the case study boroughs claimed that the new role of LEA as an advisory and monitoring body, as envisaged by the government's code of practice on LEA/school relations, sits uncomfortably within the inclusive education agenda. The schools needed more active support of the authority to promote inclusion and especially to make adequate provision for pupils with SEN. But with reorganization of the LEAs SEN support services, schools could not obtain the same kind and level of intervention from their authority. Many schools reported difficulties in adapting to their new role as providers of SEN services, a role that had hitherto been the monopoly of the LEA.

The loss of LEA role as providers of services was clearly apparent in the case of Lewisham, where due to reorganisation only few advisors and monitoring officers were retained by the authority. For long, the SEN support services provided by Lewisham LEA was reportedly short of staff, low on funds and lacked effective long term planning. Whilst the schools expressed their disillusionment with the LEA, the LEA in turn suspected serious faults in the way schools spent the allocated funds for SEN provision. The LEA respondent explained that they were no longer required to provide direct intervention and support to pupils in schools and that they

were only required to offer advice. The authority also set up an 'Education Finance Team' to monitor the spending mechanisms of the schools, which further deteriorated their relationship with the schools.

In contrast, Newham presents a case of strengthening the LEA-school relations. The process of reorganisation and delegation of funds began a decade earlier in Newham as compared with the other boroughs. The LEA described its relations with the schools as 'fairly strong'. Schools received about 85 per cent of the LSB and were able to provide specialist support from their own budgets. However, they continued to rely upon the LEA for advice and training opportunities. As a result, the schools developed a sense of accountability to the LEA, while the LEA exercised 'quality control measures' on the schools to improve provision for pupils with SEN. The schools in turn expected the LEA to fulfil its statutory duty of making statutory assessments within the stipulated time frame.

Overall, then, achieving a balance in LEA-school relationship with regard to making provision for pupils with SEN and promoting inclusive practices was relatively difficult. As has been seen, there were several factors that contributed to a decline in the relationship, which reportedly led to inadequate educational provision and poor standards of achievement.

Amongst the various factors, financial constraint was one of the major factors impeding the LEA and schools partnership. Brent is a case in example. With a history of severe budget cuts affecting education, the LEA had the least number of SEN support staff relative to other case study authorities. The schools in this authority were expected to make their own

SEN provision and rely more on the special schools' outreach services instead of relying on the LEA. School heads and teachers reported that they were unable to meet the growing demands on SEN provision, with the exception of those pupils who were statemented. When the head teachers were asked to explain how they coped in the face of financial deficits, one mainstream school head teacher quipped, '...by simply not providing the amount of support a child would get in a special school.' Another head teacher said, 'we don't have funds but we are doing as much as we can to meet their individual needs. So therefore, we commit some of the school's general budget to making provision for students with special educational needs.' A teacher in another cash-strapped mainstream school blamed government policies on inclusion and changes in LEA roles and responsibilities as responsible for the breakdown of LEA-school relations:

In my opinion, I think things are more inclusive that is why we have so many difficult children in the class. And even if there are children who need additional support from outside, it's harder and harder to get that. My own opinion as a class teacher is that since they made the last changes, it has gone increasingly difficult. It was working. Children who needed additional support were getting it. Its only when they changed it all, its just made it much more difficult to get support for them. My own opinion is that this is why most of the teachers are leaving teaching because it is not possible to cope with the kind of need you are being asked to address in the classroom.

Delegation of SEN funds to schools was aimed to develop schools as units of expertise and become more responsible for meeting the needs of their pupils, especially those with SEN. However, changes envisaged by the national and local policies and subsequent financial alterations failed to address the concerns of schools on yet another factor, manpower shortages,

that posed a potential barrier. Despite having the funds at their disposal, the schools were facing problems in recruiting specialists and support staff for pupils with SEN.

The shortage of support staff reached crisis proportions in the three inner London boroughs. The outer London boroughs were in a relatively better position. For instance, in Hillingdon, the schools became increasingly reliant upon the funds attached with statements to recruit and retain their support staff. Despite reducing their reliance on LEA for SEN support, the schools were able to adapt better to the changing role of LEAs and maintain a good relationship. Another school head in Richmond confirmed this view:

If a school has high proportion of pupils with low incidence SEN, they are more likely to get a statement and with each statement come the funds to the school.

He added that it increased the school's financial capacity to recruit support staff and necessary equipments that would benefit other pupils with SEN as well. It eased the workload on teachers, as there were more adults in the classroom, who were recruited and trained by the school. Reliance on LEA's support services reduced, as the school requests for support from LEA were reduced to only in few complicated cases requiring highly specialised support. As a result, the LEA-school relationship was less strained in Richmond compared with other London boroughs. A teacher from another mainstream school in Richmond remarked:

These services [provided by the LEA] are wonderful actually. We haven't used the Behaviour Services of LEA before but I have heard

that they are very good. They are always very helpful and they liaise with us and with parents. We work very well as a team.

The LEA-school relations were not as smooth in cases where the LEAs were actively achieving their targets to reduce the number of statements. The schools in Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Islington, Brent, Enfield and Newham were hard hit. A SENCO in Brent described the process of getting a statement as ‘it was like going through a minefield’. Without the financial support of a statement, the schools struggled to make provision for their pupils with SEN from within their delegated budgets. A school head in Lewisham described the process of statutory assessments as ‘opaque’ because it did not involve the schools or parents in making decisions. All decisions were made by a panel of LEA officials and the schools’ involvement was limited. The SENCOs were asked to send in IEP reports to the LEA supporting their case for requesting a statement. As one SENCO described:

We do make a report as officially as we can so that they do not reduce that level of support he is getting. But actually I am surprised how he got that level of support, so you don’t know how they come to that decision. But most of the times we send it back after the draft that it isn’t enough what we want for the child. And if we can make a good case in terms of the child, like we did for this child in Year 3. Our intention was that he goes to a moderate learning school and Lewisham really didn’t want to do that. But after many phone calls, he actually had to go. But I really do think that was the right place for him.

However, in the case of Hillingdon, the LEA had a policy on inviting school heads and SENCOs to participate in the decision-making panels for making statutory assessments. A school head or a SENCO from each school in the

borough got an opportunity to represent the schools' perspective. The rest of the LEAs varied immensely in their approach towards inviting school representatives in these decision-making meetings. The level of openness LEA had towards the schools in making decisions regarding a statement directly reflected upon the nature of relationship they shared with the schools. The LEAs made decisions with an overall, broader perspective of benefiting all schools within the borough, whereas the schools held the interests of their pupils as paramount. The LEAs continued to redirect resources from pupils with low incidence needs requiring high level of support to those with mild or moderate SEN. It was a constant battle for the school to get the LEA to agree for issuing a statement in majority of the cases.

In sum, the inclusion agenda and local responses to change put substantial strain on the relationship between the LEAs and schools. Issues relating to financial delegation, the reorganization of SEN, demands for statutory assessments, staff shortages and resource constraints all exacerbated the problems for both schools and LEAs in planning for effective SEN provision.

Financing statements

Concern about the rising cost of making SEN provision centred on the way in which statementing operated as a cost driver, prompting the need for a new financial regime. Official sources revealed that the percentage of pupils

with statements had increased from 2.9 in 1997 to 3.1 per cent in 2001.¹⁵ More recent data revealed that in England and Wales one child in thirty had SEN that required a statement and the figures were growing.¹⁶ A corresponding rise in LEA spending on SEN by 11 per cent between 1999/2000 and 2000/01 signalled an impending financial crisis for the government and local authorities. The LEAs were spending almost £3.6 billion, which amounted to 15 per cent of the LSB on SEN provision.¹⁷ ‘SEN is a frequent area of LEA spending,’ stated the Audit Commission in a policy paper published in 2002.¹⁸ Since a significant proportion of SEN funds were focused on meeting the needs of pupils with statements,¹⁹ attempts were made by the government to determine the pattern of demand. However, due to lack of uniform profile in identifying pupils having SEN requiring a statement, there existed wide variation in the incidence of statements across the LEAs. The likelihood of obtaining a statement was also influenced by several factors, such as the child’s family circumstances, school’s initiative in identifying the need, and the LEA’s ability to actively respond to the need.²⁰ It was, therefore, not surprising to find that the LEAs ranged enormously in their response to requests for statutory assessments.

¹⁵ Department for Education and Employment (2001) *National Statistics: First Release*, 16 May. Source: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics/DB/SFR/>.

¹⁶ Audit Commission (2002) *Special Educational Needs: A Mainstream Issue*. London: Audit Commission. In 2001, 22 per cent of pupils in England and 21 per cent in Wales were identified as having SEN and over 3 per cent had a statement.

¹⁷ Audit Commission (2002) *Policy Focus - Statutory assessment and statements of SEN: in need of review?* London: Audit Commission.

¹⁸ Audit Commission, *Policy Focus*. para. 20.

¹⁹ Audit Commission, *Special Educational Needs*. The report states that 68 per cent of SEN spending is focused on 3 per cent of statemented pupils and 32 per cent on 19 per cent non-statemented pupils. p. 31.

²⁰ Audit Commission, *Policy Focus*.

The number of pupils with SEN being issued a statement ranged from 0.71 to 5.0 per cent of the entire pupil population in LEAs across England.²¹

Despite variations in the level of statements among the LEAs, the increase in LEA spending on pupils with statements was consistently higher than the increase in spending on pupils with SEN without a statement.²² These trends continued despite the 1997 Green Paper and subsequent policy documents advising the LEAs to shift the balance of support and finances from statemented pupils to non-statemented ones. The Green Paper envisaged that this could be achieved by redirecting the funds from the LEAs to the schools to encourage early intervention and identification and thus, reduce the number of requests for statutory assessments. Three years on, an Audit Commission report stated that the, 'LEAs [were still] struggling to achieve strategic coherence and budgetary control against a statutory framework that accords uncontested priority to individual needs - uniquely within the whole of public provision.'²³

²¹ Dyson, A., Millward, A., Crowther, D., Elliot, J. and Hall, I. (2002) *Decision-Making and Provision within the Framework of the SEN Code of Practice*. Special Needs Research Centre, University of Newcastle, Research Report 248. London: DfES.

²² Audit Commission (2002) *Statutory Assessment and Statements of SEN: In Need of Review?* London: Audit Commission. Audit Commission analysis of CIPFA education estimates, 1999-2001. The average net increase in each LEA's spending on children with statements was £1.04 million compared with £0.11 million on children with SEN without a statement.

²³ Audit Commission/ OFSTED (2001) *Local Education Authority: Support for School Improvement*. London: The Stationery Office. In the case of London LEAs, SEN expenditure for pupils with statements was still rising rapidly despite the delegation of funds to schools so as to reduce the incentive for schools to request for statutory assessments. An OFSTED inspection of one of the LEAs revealed that 'a rapid and unchecked growth' in statements reflected the desire of schools to access more resources from the LEA. p. 4.

Statements and local funding systems

The statutory framework, as laid out in the 1996 and 2001 Acts along with the Code of Practice, placed a number of duties on LEAs to make provision for pupils with a statement. It was expected that the delegation of funds to schools would reduce the requests for statements and engender a greater sense of responsibility among the school staff towards the pupils with SEN. The previous section showed how schools were expected to develop their expertise and recruit support staff while the LEAs cut back their SEN support provision. The findings from eight case study LEAs and schools also demonstrated significant concerns about how well the statutory assessments and statements were managed and funded. The LEAs visited were unsure about their role and involvement in monitoring schools' performance on SEN. Despite government guidance,²⁴ they were concerned about their capacity to perform their role effectively, due to reduced financial powers.

In the absence of effective monitoring systems in LEAs, the provision for pupils with statements was frequently subject to delays and shortfalls in provision in all case study authorities. The provision for pupils with statements was not uniform across the boroughs and several factors contributed, including the inequitable distribution of SEN resources.

The funding formula used by the LEAs to allocate SEN funds to the schools emerged as highly influential in the way they addressed the issues related with the statementing process. The LEAs' funding for SEN was based on three criteria: use of proxy indicators, an audit system and prior attainment

²⁴ Department for Education and Employment (1999) *The Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations*. London: DfEE.

of pupils on entry to a particular phase of education. Among the three approaches, the one based on attainment was least popular with the LEAs visited, although it was increasingly becoming attractive for several LEAs nationally.²⁵ The provision of additional funding for pupils with SEN based on proxy indicator used the most commonly used criteria of entitlement to FSM as an indicator of deprivation. The proxy indicators for SEN allocations also included entitlement to FSM, pupil mobility, unplanned admissions and school rolls. This approach was based on the assumption that there was a direct correlation between socio-economic deprivation and measures of pupil's need.²⁶ It was regarded as a good indicator until it was criticised for not having any regard for individual pupils' level or type of need.²⁷ The audit system, on the other hand, was based on the relative assessed needs of individual children using a 'resource band' with fixed cash benefits, which were based on data from SEN audit. Resources were based on the cash value of each band for individual child or the whole school. So the LEA had the option of identifying band values on individual or whole school basis, usually at the school based stages of the Code of Practice.

The LEAs were expected to allocate funds from their individual schools budget to the governing bodies of maintained schools using a formula, which strictly accorded with uniform financial regulations made by the Secretary of State. In all five outer London LEAs, they used the audit system to allocate funds to individual schools, albeit with some variations. In

²⁵ Audit Commission/ OFSTED (2002) *LEA Strategy for the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. London: HMI. para. 32.

²⁶ Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions (1998) *Prescott delivers good deal for local government*, Press Release, 2 Dec, <http://213.38.88.195/coi/coipress.nsf>.

²⁷ Department for Education and Skills (2001) *The Distribution of Resources to Support Inclusion*, Guidance paper. London: DfES.

two authorities, they used a composite roll data for the academic year that showed age weightings using class size, contact ratio, non-teaching staff, supplies and services, overheads and delegated budgets. Pupil-led funding was made on the basis of FSM, mobility and test scores, whereas place-led funding was based on the number of attached units to mainstream schools. Due to the overly bureaucratic nature of the audit system, there were delays in delivering funds to schools. It also left the LEAs weary of the entire exercise. The method, however, allowed LEAs to monitor the expenditure closely because it was strictly associated with the stages of assessment, as defined by the Code of Practice. Since the funds were attached to individual pupils, there was greater transparency and capacity for monitoring the expenditure.

However, with the audit system it was relatively difficult to redirect the funds from statemented to non-statemented pupils with SEN because they had to first allocate the resources to individual pupils before handing it over to the schools. It left the schools dissatisfied with the resource provision, as the system was too rigid to allow any discretion. The school heads in Enfield expressed their discontent with the audit system. According to them, the funds were strictly attached to the pupils with statements only, whereas non-statemented pupils with SEN got very limited resources.

The schools in Tower Hamlets found the system of proxy indicators used by the LEA to allocate resources more compatible with the ongoing policy changes. In some LEAs, however, the funding formula was not as simple. In Brent, for instance, the LEA had a unique system of delegating resources to schools. While keeping the base funding consistent using proxy indicators

for pupils with statements, they followed an audit system for pupils having SEN without a statement. This system, although involving more bureaucracy and paperwork, enabled the LEA to divert their additional SEN resources from statemented pupils to non-statemented pupils in the schools. The schools, however, found it difficult to meet the needs of all pupils with SEN within the allocated SEN funds. The additional funds that accompanied a statement were still quite attractive. A school SENCO in Brent argued:

I think a statement is absolutely crucial. If we didn't have a statement to get that support, something else would have to happen. The children who have a statement of special needs, we really wouldn't manage without the person who comes with it. There is a danger that a child isn't going to be included if there is no statement support. In this school, it is really essential, especially for the two older ones. We are trying to make them as independent as possible. They would not be accessing the curriculum the way they can without that person around.

Having acknowledged the critical importance of getting a statement, the schools continued to make requests for more statutory assessments despite the pressures to reduce the proportion of pupils getting a statement. Even the LEAs made little effort to make schools less reliant on statement for additional funds and support. Except in case of Newham, where the LEA had made strategic changes in funding SEN provision to influence their criteria for issuing statements. Having delegated over 90 per cent of their LSB to the schools, the LEA provided more funds to schools on the basis of 'exceptional needs procedures' in order to completely diminish schools' resource dependency on statements. The Head of SEN explained the principle behind the new strategy:

Pre-April 2000, the only way schools could get extra funding was through a statement and that pressure on the budget was getting higher and higher and higher. We were statementing pupils who really shouldn't be statemented at all. At the same time the central services providing services to them were becoming too big and unmanageable. And it was creating a certain dependency factor to a certain extent and it was not a flexible way of meeting the needs of pupils. So we went through the process of consultation around delegation starting November 1999 and basically we were delegating a higher percentage of funds to schools by April 2000. So schools were funded according to the number of pupils who were statemented up to April 2000 and any statement that was finalised between April 2000 and June 2000 was funded at a flat rate; and any statement that was issued after June 2000, they didn't get any money at all because the schools already had that money. And that has been the situation since. So the rate of statement dropped dramatically from 200 in 1997 to 41 in 2000.

Explaining the nature of changes to funding, he went on to argue

....our funding mechanism means that no pupil has to get a statement to get money. Schools have got funding for early intervention. One of the things that the LEA wanted to do was to promote early intervention and we have got an exceptional resource process, which also has a moderation process for schools. We allocate some funds to schools through that. So basically our funding mechanism means that you don't need a statement. But that is not to say we don't do statements any more. There is a perception among some people that we have stopped doing statements altogether.

The likelihood of getting a statement and receiving extra provision in school, therefore, entirely depended upon the local funding policy. The result was inequitable distribution of SEN resources across the boroughs, which led to greater dissatisfaction among schools and parents. Identifying and assessing the needs of a child differed in schools from one area to another, depending upon the way funds were allocated to schools in that area. For instance, higher level of financial resources enabled the schools to fulfil the needs of a

child without a statement, whereas, in schools under financial constraints and lack of resources led the schools to request for a statement. Reducing the number of statements and promoting inclusive practices in the changing financial climate was a challenge facing most LEAs.

Are statements promoting inclusion?

Evidence suggests that the schools in at least six of the case study LEAs were increasingly relying on the funds accompanying a statement to recruit and retain their support staff. The statement money was ‘an absolute essential’, according to four-fifths of the school respondents, as it not only ensured additional support to the statemented pupil but also allowed the school head to use the additional resources with greater financial discretion and ‘build in-house SEN expertise’ for other pupils with SEN as well.

It emerged that besides the financial benefits, a statement offered the school and parents a greater sense of security because it was a legally binding document and it ensured the child that he/she had additional support on paper. In the given circumstances, it was a challenge to reduce reliance on statements and depend on the goodwill of schools to make provision for pupils with severe and complex SEN. Recognising the importance of this partnership, a school SENCO in Hillingdon said:

[A statement] is important at two levels. First it is important because they help you to feel that you can hang on to it. You have worked so hard to get somebody to realise that and to have it down on paper, I do believe that it is a big thing. If a child eventually gets a statement, ‘Oh thank goodness, somebody understands.’ We get proper assessment and proper support one-to-one and all. But I am not sure how valuable the paperwork refers to. You have got your objectives...there is an

issue in this borough about the embarrassing annual review when you just sit there and they say 'I am sorry but the new statement hasn't come through'. And I had six cases in the last one. All year has gone by and it is not ready. People also try and lift things from the objectives in other statements and often they are very general, not specific and we as a school make sure that we make them ourselves unless they are very specific needs. That's where the outside agencies like speech therapy come in and truly assess and write down all what the child needs. I think the system is good for money, not enough, good for giving something for teachers to hang on to. It is like being diagnosed of the issues the child has.

The schools in the case study boroughs consistently experienced increasing difficulties in getting a statement from the LEA, unless the child had very severe and complex SEN. Although there were several cases where the LEAs had refused a request for a statement, the criteria for refusal was found constantly shifting. For instance, in Brent, two mainstream school heads stated that pupils with speech and language difficulties were no longer getting a statement and only those with very complex medical conditions or severe autism were likely to get a statement. Whereas, in Lewisham, a school head confirmed that a pupil with dyslexia had better chances of getting a statement than a pupil with EBD. Another school head in Islington was of the view that it was much easier to get a statement for a pupil with EBD than for a child with learning difficulties. These conflicting and random patterns of the likelihood of obtaining a statement had reasonable explanations based upon local policies and priorities. In the case of Islington, for instance, the LEA was struggling with the rising number of pupils with EBD being placed in out-of-borough schools due to lack of provision in the borough. In order to arrest the increasing costs of out-of-borough placements, the LEA had a short-term policy to redirect existing central

reserve of SEN funds towards providing support to schools for pupils with EBD. Similarly, in case of Lewisham, the Head of SEN prioritised funds to build in-house expertise for pupils with dyslexia in order to meet the rising number of cases in the borough. The new dyslexia unit was especially built to meet the needs of these pupils.

However, despite finding some compelling reasons for such differing patterns associated with the statementing process, some cases still eluded a reasonable explanation for refusal. As in the case of Enfield, where getting a statement was all about case presentation, a school SENCO observed:

I have applied for a statement several times and I have been refused several times. I am talking of 3 or 4 times and they have said the fourth time. I find that really hard but actually I know what they do. It is very hard to collect the evidence and to get the right evidence and to highlight exactly the right bits. So it is a learning curve. Every time it comes back, you think 'Oh, I'll remember that next time and I won't do that'. I have been in this job for 11 years and I haven't had any training myself. I have just learned from what was thrown back at me. Somebody with a child who really desperately needs a statement and if I do not have the right words, jargon in the paperwork to support what I am saying, I think it might be difficult to get one. And I am not the sort of person who would be asking for a statement for children who don't need it. So it is very frustrating.

Meeting the national expectations of reducing the number of statements and encouraging early intervention with pupils with SEN led the LEAs to rethink their funding systems. Research evidence clearly suggests that the case study LEAs were struggling to arrest the rising number of statements. There were an increasing number of demands from parents and schools despite the introduction of new funding arrangements nationally and locally. The case

study LEAs found it difficult to resolve the tension between the conflicting priorities of meeting the needs of pupils with SEN within the given resource limitations and promoting inclusion by reducing reliance on statements. Issuing statements meant directing resources to meet the needs of few pupils with high levels of SEN, whereas the principle of inclusion supported the idea of meeting the needs of all pupils in a mainstream setting within the given resources. The two strands of the agenda were at odds with one another, as the LEAs and schools struggled to develop inclusive education strategies and practices and redirect funds in order to meet the needs of more children with SEN.

Responding to the national agenda of inclusion, the LEAs and schools show significant variations in practices. Based on the data from surveys and interviews, this chapter highlighted the factors that shaped local policies and educational priorities of LEAs and schools in promoting inclusive education practices. Whilst acknowledging the influence of government initiatives, such as the 1997 Green Paper and other guidance documents, the LEAs and schools responded more to local demands and needs in adopting inclusion into policy and practice. In the process, they not only made efforts to meet the challenges of policy changes in their roles and responsibilities, but also tried to resolve the conflicts and tensions for developing better working relationships. Although the LEAs and schools directly responded to local demands, their responses were largely influenced by the nationally driven policy changes. Changes in the financial climate for SEN provision engendered a series of organisational changes in LEA services, which had an impact upon the LEA-school relations. Financial alterations also raised the

issue of the need for statements in an inclusive environment, which put a further strain on LEA-school relations.

Having considered the educational priorities of LEAs, their plans for inclusion, the extent of delegation to schools, and schools' own perceptions and attitudes, the next chapter will examine the nature of inclusion itself, its varied interpretation and effects upon the statutory agencies approaches to the debates surrounding special schools and mainstreaming.

As has been seen, much of the debate on inclusion is focused on an abstract level, with few clear implications for policy and practice at the local level. As suggested by Mittler,¹ the main argument driving the inclusion movement focuses on the human rights issue. It is argued that every child has a basic right to attend their mainstream school and be fully included in its academic and social processes. Clark et al.² acknowledge that definitions of inclusion based on human rights are subsumed within the *Salamanca Statement*,³ which found expression in government's inclusion agenda as laid out in the 1997 Green Paper. Sebba and Ainscow were among several critics who point out that the principle of inclusion is being pursued at an ideological level without giving much attention to the curricular implications on schooling practices.⁴

Rouse and Florian are among the few scholars whose institutional or 'school effectiveness' paradigm has linked inclusion to school practice and the development of effective schools, and stressed the need for changing schools structures.⁵ On this perspective, inclusion is understood as a process of increasing the participation of pupils with SEN in the mainstream, whereas

¹ Mittler, *Working Towards Inclusion*.

² Clark, C., Dyson, A., Millward, A. J. and Skidmore, D. (1997) *New Directions in Special Needs: Innovations in Mainstream Schools*. London: Cassell.

³ UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement*. According to the statement, mainstream schools with inclusive practices are '...the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.'

⁴ Sebba and Ainscow, 'International developments in inclusive schooling'.

⁵ Rouse and Florian, 'Effective Inclusive Schools'.

in Ainscow's analysis it would imply 'reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula and communities of neighbourhood centres of learning'.⁶

Defining inclusion from these different perspectives suggests a multi-dimensional approach that LEAs and schools can take to understand and interpret the term in a policy context. This chapter examines LEAs approaches to inclusion, illuminating its varying interpretations in different contexts by different players. Contextual interpretation of the term implies a lack of clarity and consistency that inevitably influences statutory agencies' approaches to special schools and issues of mainstreaming. The chapter considers the divergent approaches to special schools in respective boroughs and examines the likely impact of such closures, together with identifying factors that promote or impede inclusion in schools. It concludes by examining parents and voluntary organisations' own views on inclusion.

Interpreting inclusion

The survey of LEAs explored the meaning of the term 'inclusion' and how it was interpreted in the context of their policies. LEAs were asked to choose which of a series of policy goals – equal opportunities in learning, increasing participation of learners, mainstreaming children with SEN or reducing exclusion - best described their own approach to inclusion. Just over half of the responding authorities described their approach as one which provided a right to equal opportunities in learning, while a third reported their understanding of inclusion in terms of the increasing participation of

⁶ Ainscow, 'Exploring links between special needs and school improvement'.

learners. As Table 13 shows, only 22 per cent of authorities interpreted inclusion in terms of mainstreaming, while scarcely any (2 per cent) viewed it simply as reducing exclusion.

Table 13 LEA's inclusion policy on education

| <i>Policies that best describe LEA's approach to inclusion</i> | <i>%</i> |
|--|----------|
| Right to equal opportunities in learning | 48 |
| Increasing participation of learners | 28 |
| Mainstreaming children with SEN | 22 |
| Reducing exclusion | 2 |
| (base) | (129) |

There are considerable differences between types of authorities. Seven in ten unitaries interpreted inclusion as providing right to equal opportunities in learning, while London boroughs placed a much greater emphasis on mainstreaming children with SEN. Figures in Table 14 not only indicate the differences in interpreting inclusion but also reveal the factors that shape LEAs' approaches to inclusion. For example, the preferred approach to defining inclusion as 'right to equal opportunities in learning' might be conditioned by international developments and debates, while an approach that describes inclusion in terms of 'increasing mainstreaming' may be influenced by the school effectiveness discourse also reflected nationally. Few LEAs chose to define inclusion as an attempt to 'reducing exclusion'.

Table 14 LEA's inclusion policy in different authorities

| <i>Policies that best describe LEA's approach to inclusion</i> | County % | Metropolitan % | London % | Unitary % | All % |
|--|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|
| Right to equal opportunities in learning | 42 | 50 | 19 | 70 | 48 |
| Increasing participation of learners | 42 | 30 | 26 | 17 | 28 |
| Mainstreaming children with SEN | 13 | 17 | 56 | 10 | 22 |
| Reducing exclusion | 3 | 3 | - | 2 | 2 |
| (base) | (31) | (30) | (27) | (41) | (129) |

The concept of inclusion was further explored during interviews with LEA officials, school heads and teachers in the case study authorities. Respondents were asked to express their understanding of the concept of inclusion, fleshing out the four-fold characterization of policy sought in the questionnaire. One of the respondents in Tower Hamlets suggested that although the term inclusion was 'very tricky' and it could lead to several interpretations, they adopted the idea of mainstreaming pupils with SEN as a way to interpret inclusion in policy and practice. In the words of the Assistant Director SEN:

Tower Hamlets agreed upon a policy on inclusion back in 1999, which was consulted extensively with the schools and community and approved by the council. That policy makes it very clear that the council believes that children with special educational needs have a right to get education in a local mainstream school, if possible ... The belief that more children with statements of SEN would be educated in mainstream schools is quite significant.

In the case of Newham, for instance, the council had set out their inclusion policy in 1998. It stated:

The ultimate goal of Newham council's inclusive education policy is to make it possible for every child whatever special educational needs they may have, to attend their neighbourhood school, to have full access to the national curriculum, to be able to participate in every aspect of mainstream life and achieve their full potential.⁷

The Head of SEN in Newham argued that inclusion policies have to be interpreted in clear and consistent terms so that the LEA can target support locally where it is most needed. Respondents in the case study LEAs suggested that local priorities and limitations had greater influence on inclusion policies than national and international developments. For instance, in Islington the LEA inclusion policy enlisted out-of-borough placements, exclusion of pupils with EBD and declining rolls in special schools as some of the local challenges in promoting the inclusion. The local priorities and needs differed in each borough, but their approaches to defining and interpreting inclusion remained highly contextual and localised. In case of Enfield, the strategic aim the policy statement on inclusion was to ensure that all children have the opportunity to attend a mainstream school.

Providing a clear and unambiguous definition of the term was not easy. In six out of eight case study LEAs, the respondents were too vague about the idea of inclusion as a policy. Local needs and demands dominated the issue. In Lewisham, for instance, the Assistant Director SEN said that the LEA had

⁷ London Borough of Newham, *Inclusive Education Strategy 2001-2004*.

no specific definition of inclusion but has set out a list of priorities in their SEN policy document, namely improving local provision to reduce exclusions, placing half of the pupils with statements in mainstream schools and adapting primary schools to improve physical accessibility. Similarly, in Brent the LEA's SEN policy document does not address the issue in any specific terms. It stated, 'We see inclusive education as a continuing process which involves increasing educational opportunities and achievement for all children irrespective of their particular needs, circumstances and disabilities.'⁸ In this authority the policy on inclusion was flexible and left open to accommodate a range of interpretations.

So how far were the broad aspirations to promote inclusion reflected at the local level? The survey of LEAs conducted for this study found the raising of standards to predominate over other aims, in particular, the promotion of inclusion, with around two-thirds of the LEAs citing standards as their most important priority.

Table 15 Educational priorities of LEA

| <i>Most important priority for LEA</i> | % |
|--|-------|
| Make strategies to raise standards | 65 |
| Promote inclusion in schools | 27 |
| Support under-achieving schools | 5 |
| Manage partnerships | 3 |
| (base) | (130) |

However, there are considerable differences between different types of authorities, with raising standards being accorded highest priority in the

⁸ London Borough of Brent, *SEN & Inclusive Education Policy 2000*.

Unitaries (81 per cent ranking this first) and the lowest support in the Metropolitan boroughs (47 per cent). Promoting inclusion enjoyed greater support in the counties than in any other authority type. Why should this be so cannot be explained.

Table 16 Educational priorities of LEA, by authority type

| <i>Most important priority for LEA</i> | County % | Metropolitan % | London % | Unitary % | All % |
|--|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|
| Make strategies to raise standards | 56 | 47 | 74 | 81 | 65 |
| Promote inclusion in Schools | 41 | 37 | 22 | 12 | 27 |
| Support under-achieving schools | - | 13 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Manage partnerships | 3 | 3 | - | 5 | 3 |
| (base) | (32) | (30) | (27) | (41) | (130) |

What the findings do, however, show is the impact of national initiatives on policy changes at the LEA level, and how in planning for inclusion the authorities addressed local priorities and needs. On the other hand, at the school level, these priorities and needs became even more pronounced, while the definitions became less ambiguous. So how did schools differ from the LEA in defining the term inclusion?

Responses from the school survey and in-depth interviews revealed that the schools' policies and practices on promoting inclusive education were based upon their day to day experiences in meeting the needs of individual pupils. Herein lies the difference. While the school's understanding of the term is driven largely by its own interaction with staff, parents and pupils,

operationalising the term at the wider institutional level required an LEA to accommodate a broader range of views, at times conflicting, emanating from schools, parent groups, voluntary organizations and other agencies engaged in this debate.

The survey of schools undertaken in this study explored the factors that promote or impede inclusion practices at school level. As Table below shows, the majority of respondents considered adequate funds, staff training facilities and other forms of specialist support to be very important, while the closure of special schools as a strategy for promoting inclusion was considered so by only a small minority of respondents. Sixty per cent of respondents viewed the role of voluntary agencies as important.

Table 17 Factors operating to promote inclusion in schools

| | Very Important % | Important % | Not at all Important % | (base) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------|
| Adequate funds | 90 | 10 | - | (230) |
| Staff training | 90 | 10 | - | (235) |
| Specialist support | 70 | 30 | - | (233) |
| Accessible buildings | 60 | 39 | 1 | (233) |
| The 'right' attitudes | 82 | 17 | 1 | (227) |
| Closing special schools | 12 | 25 | 63 | (200) |
| Parental involvement | 81 | 18 | 1 | (232) |
| Voluntary organization support | 14 | 61 | 25 | (213) |

Schools were also asked to identify the principal barriers to inclusion. The data generated by these two questions complemented and confirmed the importance of adequate funds in realising policy goals at the local level.

Table 18 below also shows staff training to be an important factor, with 26 per cent reporting that inadequate training opportunities could impede inclusion in schools.

Table 18 Factors operating as barriers to inclusion in schools

| | % |
|--|-------|
| Difficulty in curriculum differentiation | 57 |
| Not enough funds | 81 |
| Inadequate training opportunities | 72 |
| Lack of motivation | 21 |
| Physical barriers | 45 |
| (base) | (228) |

In-depth interviews with school staff confirmed these findings. They showed such factors as the availability of funds and facilities for training opportunities, parental choice and raising standards, and level of workload to be important drivers in the implementation of inclusion policy. In the borough of Enfield, for example, schools were faced with shortage of places due to growing pupil population and, this together with an increase in the number of refugees entering the borough, had important implications for funding and specialist support. Here, the problem for schools was one of trying to work within these constraints in their attempts to mainstream pupils with SEN. In order to make implementation work, it was important for schools to achieve clarity and consistency in their policies and planning. In other authorities, inequitable distribution of SEN funds between pupils with high and low incidence of need was reported as a potential barrier to attaining inclusion.

Another factor impacting upon the schools ability to promote inclusion pertained to training opportunities available to staff, which was one of the prime concerns of most mainstream school heads interviewed for this study. As a head teacher in a inner London borough commented:

We do not have many opportunities for our staff to attend training sessions or seminars to equip them with the skills that will help them in meeting those children's needs. Some children with SEN who get support from outside happen to be the only ones in the school to be getting it. It is not that we meet the needs of some children and not of the other. There is a child here and he gets physiotherapy. The therapist comes from outside for this child and he is the only one getting that additional support. He feels really isolated. Now do you call that inclusion? We have one child with Down's syndrome who goes and looks for another child with the same condition in the other class and they both stick together. Now is that inclusion?

The issue of parental choice was raised as a significant factor affecting inclusion policies and practices:

Parents are very active in pushing for their rights and they get their children included but what happens in classrooms. They lack the support necessary without which they are left feeling isolated and alienated....Are these children really benefiting from inclusion? If the curriculum is not meeting their needs then who suffers. It is the child ultimately. It is all very good to talk about their rights. Rights of parents are all very good but what about the rights of the staff. What about the rights of other children on my time? Is it difficult to understand what do you mean by inclusion.

School heads in Tower Hamlets explained how inclusion worked against the interest of pupils if it was interpreted as a mainstreaming issue. One of them described a case where mainstreaming of pupils with high incidence of need had left them feeling more isolated than in a special school:

I am very much behind [the LEA]. I do feel that the people I work for at the LEA, they are really committed to it. But then we have problem with pupils with Down's syndrome. It is all very nice to include them in mainstream schools but how do you differentiate the curriculum.

The fourth factor affecting schools' practices on inclusion was adhering to the national objectives to raise standards. The difficulties in achieving a balance between addressing local needs and priorities and meeting the national objectives were particularly apparent in inner London boroughs of Islington and Lewisham. Expressing her concerns one of the mainstream school heads recounted:

I think there may be a problem with inclusion and raising achievement but actually there have been instances of high achievement levels in promoting inclusion. But I do wonder if it might become an issue. I don't know the answer. But I do believe that if facilities are going to be made available for children then they have to be spread out more.

Another head teacher echoed similar concerns, affirming that inclusion could not really be achieved in an education system geared to promote competition among schools. The pressure to perform well at the league tables and raise standards of achievement among pupils with SEN thwarted the progress towards inclusion. The respondent argued that pupils with SEN, even though successfully included in mainstream schools, couldn't achieve high academic standards:

... there are some other issues that I think why inclusion is doomed in a way is because of the league tables. If you make your systems competitive and if you judge schools by league table position, then schools are not going to take children with learning difficulties.

Schools have got imperatives. They have SATs. They have league tables. We had a similar discussion with our local MP and he said that some of the issues around inclusion would be solved if they do away with league tables but that is not going to happen. I think schools have to be achieving standards but in the way they have made it so important factor and some children are never going to be academically able. It is the children with disabilities that need to be nurtured and promoted and I think league tables are a big 'if' in the time frame of inclusion.

The growing amount of workload and pressures on performance and achievement imposed by the central as well as local governments was yet another inhibiting factor experienced by schools. As a SENCO observed:

All that [defining inclusion] would do is just convince teachers that it is a hopeless task. I think it is just putting more and more teachers overwhelmed by paperwork. They were overwhelmed by being put under the pressure to raise SAT standards. I have slogged my guts out with these children this year to try and raise their standard. They have got the results and I am facing the slack because frankly they are not very good. What can I do? I can but try. I have worked and my colleagues with these children. We have slogged and slogged and slogged. What can we do, these children live in deprived areas, they've all sorts of problems going against them. They need a lot of individual support, they need nurturing.

The head teacher in the same school shared similar concerns, together with further identifying the issue of growing number of pupil exclusions that posed a challenge to promoting inclusive practices in the school. Preventing exclusion of pupils, especially those with EBD, impeded the rights of other pupils to access education:

As far as I am concerned nothing much different has occurred. The issue comes when you have a child to permanently exclude and then

you have to try and take him to another mainstream school. So I think that is something that needs to be looked at. And since I have been here, we have only excluded one child about two years ago. He was in Year 4 and mum was not agreeing so his behaviour...I have never seen a child like him in my whole life. He was horrendous and he was excluded. He is in Year 6 now; he went to another school and they have permanently excluded him, so now he has gone to another school. But there won't be many more where he can go. Now that child should have gone to a special behaviour unit, he is a bright kid but if you have a child like that in your class, you are not doing other children justice. The other children are suffering. Why should they? They come and they are trying to work. So if you ask 'is inclusion working?' My answer is 'I don't know' because as far as I know nothing much has changed.

Some pupils, such as those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are more likely to be excluded than others, as revealed by a recent study of the Audit Commission that showed pupils with EBD more likely to be permanently excluded from schools.⁹ In principle, however, inclusion was identified - by most respondents interviewed in this study - as a vehicle for reducing rising cases of exclusions of pupils with SEN from school.

In Hillingdon, the exclusion of pupils with EBD reached crisis proportions. The schools shared the LEA's concerns on combating exclusion while the statistical data on permanent exclusions was used by the LEA to set targets for schools to providing outreach support, short-term placements and pupil referrals units for pupils likely to be permanently excluded. The issues concerning schools in each of the case study boroughs were different and unique - they ranged from inadequate staff training and shortages in human resources to high rate of exclusions of pupils with certain specific SEN- but

⁹ Audit Commission, *Special Educational Needs*. para. 70.

they all had clear policy goals based on local needs and priorities. As a result, the concept of inclusion accordingly assumed new connotations depending on local circumstances and its challenges.

Clearly, then, the data from interviews showed the complexity inherent in the concept of inclusion leaving it open to several interpretations. It was not only in direct conflict with government policies, such as enhancing parental choice and raising standards of achievement, but also contradicted with certain local priorities. The extent of conflict and tension between national and local policy goals on inclusion, however, depended to a large extent upon the LEAs' success in working in partnership with schools and parents over its plans and strategies. Consensus over issues, such as placement of pupils with SEN in a mainstream or a special school was the most challenging to achieve in pursuing the inclusion agenda.

Closing special schools

Recent data suggested a drop in the number of pupils with SEN attending special schools in the last two decades, currently at 1.3 per cent of the entire pupil population.¹⁰ However, according to the Audit Commission report, a significant proportion continued to be educated in special schools, especially those with higher levels of need.¹¹ These trends suggested that the government's policy on endorsing parents' right to express a preference for a

¹⁰ Times Educational Supplement, 15/12/00, '*Special needs demands swells*'.

¹¹ Audit Commission, *Special Educational Needs*. The report suggests that 34 per cent of the pupils with statements of SEN in England and 22 per cent in Wales are still educated in special schools.

place in a mainstream or a special school shifted the focus of the inclusion agenda from improving practices in schools to making choices on pupil placement, thus fuelling the mainstream versus special schools debate and raising questions about the future role of special schools.

LEAs' views on special schools

As part of the general reorganisation programme of LEA structures and services, special schools were being re-designated, prefabricated, moved to a cluster model, turned to attached units or just closed down completely. A DfEE study conducted in 1999 found that well resourced special schools were considered a barrier to inclusion by the LEAs as they provided the 'safest option' to parents with children having SEN.¹² The idea of closing special schools was based on the premise that over time fewer pupils would need to attend these schools because the necessary skills, knowledge and resources for pupils with SEN would be available in mainstream schools. With a nationwide increase in the number of pupils identified with complex needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder and dyslexia, it was believed that special schools in their existing capacity would lack in provision to accommodate their needs as well as growing numbers. Change in provision was therefore encouraged in so far as it met the needs of the pupils with SEN and promoted inclusion. The study also revealed that most authorities regarded closing special schools as a step forward towards inclusion. It could also be regarded as a measure of consensus achieved between LEA, schools and community over the inclusion policy.

¹² Ainscow M., Farrell P., Tweddle D. and Malki G. (1999) The role of LEAs in developing inclusive policies and practices, *British Journal of Special Education*, 26 (3) 136-40.

The LEA and school surveys conducted for this study did not elicit such level of detail, but explored the key issues and reasons for the closure of special schools. The LEA survey asked authorities to identify the factors that influenced the closure of special schools. Nearly two-thirds of the responding LEAs cited ‘strategic restructuring of special provision’ as the main reason for closing their special schools. The closures were a controversial issue, as subsequent interviews with officials show. The majority of LEAs had taken a policy stance on ‘strategic restructuring’ of their special schools to maintain a general level of consensus among schools, parents and other stakeholders on the issue.

Table 19 Factors influencing closure of special schools

| | % |
|---|------|
| Reduced number of pupils on roll | 13 |
| Increased mainstreaming of pupils with SEN | 23 |
| Strategic restructuring of specialist provision | 64 |
| (base) | (61) |

In six of the eight case study boroughs, there were no special school closures proposed by the LEA. They were retained with some changes in their specialist provision. Parental opposition was the most common reason cited by the respondents for deciding against any special school closures. Making radical changes in school provision for pupils with SEN was a highly sensitive issue with the community, and education officers anticipated parental antagonism to closing special schools. They also declared that since the government had not taken an unequivocal stance, it was left to

LEAs' discretion to resolve the issue. The LEAs, therefore, dealt with the issue of bringing any change in special school sector with great caution. A senior LEA officer in Lewisham explained:

The national policy says that we should be moving towards greater levels of inclusion in a fairly determined way but when it is in the interests of pupils with special needs themselves and the other pupils in the school. And I think Lewisham is very much in line with the national policy. We are neither deliberately fighting against it nor rushing ahead of it. So I would say our line is to look to greater inclusion when it is practically achievable but not to attach overwhelming priority to inclusion to the extent that it distorts other education priorities.

However, despite opposition, some boroughs were steadfast in their commitment to special school closures. Newham was a forerunner among local authorities generally in initiating radical policy changes. The LEA had unilaterally decided to close all special schools in the borough and thus, make their mainstream schools more inclusive by completely eliminating the choice of segregation. According to the LEA officer, government policies that encouraged parental preference in their child's placement had generated more complications for the LEAs, primarily because parents had easier recourse to litigation if dissatisfied with their LEA decisions on placement or provision. The respondent remarked:

I think certain aspects of national policies have inhibited local policies. The Code of Practice was a retrograde step. I think it all goes back to lack of trust and that is what we have to deal with. What I say to school heads is that if they are evidencing progress on a regular basis, then I think they would not really want specificity. The SEN Tribunals don't help. I think education has become litigious. They take up the time of the officers when it could be spent doing

something else. It all becomes a battleground and you wonder why did that happen. I don't see government policy going in the right direction.

Such incongruous national policies were also attacked by the Assistant Director SEN in Tower Hamlets:

It is hard to cope with the way the central Government follows a dual agenda. On the one hand it proposes inclusion policies and on the other, supports segregation. Look at the way the revised Code of Practice talks about the parents having more rights to choose between a mainstream and a special school.

However, the authority in this case did not support the closure of all special schools in the borough. They conducted consultations and discussions with schools and parent community for two consecutive years before deciding on the closure of two special schools for pupils with physical disabilities and moderate learning difficulties respectively. They were closed only after having arrived at a consensus with other schools and parents. The LEA officials also believed that any effort to close their special school for pupils with EBD would only increase permanent exclusions. This was a pragmatic approach to the issue of special school closures, as one of the senior officers in the LEA explained:

I think if you are a parent and your child has always known special education, the thought of changing to mainstream will probably be very scary. And the policy that LEA has taken has not been to close schools and move children to mainstream quite dramatically. Now this LEA has always taken the line that inclusion is a process, not an end in itself and that we have got to convince parents that what we are going to provide in mainstream is as good as anything they would get in special schools because if we can't then we should not be doing it. I

think if we were wholesale closing schools and forcibly removing children to mainstream that would cause all sorts of problems. But that is not what we are doing...when we closed our MLD school; we closed because there wasn't any role for it anymore. There were a few children at the end that had to be replaced but we managed to do that without any upset or grief. Basically it wasn't a viable institution any longer. When another special school was closed recently, there had been some protests but we are talking about a very small number of parents and I think all those children have been adequately replaced. The LEA has to look at the available resources and the quality of education it can provide. On the whole, parents have been very enthusiastic; most parents prefer the idea of their child going to a local school.

Thus, variations were apparent among the authorities visited in the way they perceived closures and the extent to which they actually implemented their policies. In the case of Richmond, the LEA feared strong parental opposition to any school closures because of inadequate alternative arrangements. As a result, they avoided confrontation by opening new specialist units attached with mainstream schools to replace special schools for pupils with EBD.

In order to avoid conflict with schools and parents, the LEA in Brent declared openly that it had no plans to close any of its special schools, a member of the council confirming that he had 'no hidden agenda' of closing special schools as he did not want to invite 'parental grouse'. Since the borough had a high incidence of pupils with complex and severe disabilities requiring specialist provision, he argued that it was deemed essential to retain and develop their special schools. The interview with the LEA official confirmed their plans to redesignate some of their special schools to match the changing profile of children with SEN. He declared:

We haven't made any proposals yet to close down our special schools because our philosophy is that there should be a continuum of provision. As a borough, we have some of the high incidences in London of specialist provision. And we have a very high influx of pupils with complex and severe disabilities. So within the borough what we recognise is that because we have such a high number of children with complex and severe disabilities, if we just close down our special schools there would be no way that we could meet the needs of those children. We obviously need to respect parental preference. There are a good number of our pupils whose parents find that they are unable to meet the needs of their children without a high level of support. The sort of support you get from special schools meets their needs better. The mainstream schools are transporting their children out to these schools. So I think we are trying to be real and we are trying to work inclusion in a way that meets the needs of our community, not just to go by an ideology.

The respondents in Hillingdon LEA shared the views expressed by the LEA officer in Brent on the issue of special school closures. However, in this authority officials engaged in 'cosmetic' changes to the specialist provision in the borough with a view to reflect a move towards inclusion. They re-designated their special schools and called them 'specialist settings' to project their new role as centres of excellence for a cluster of mainstream schools. The SEN Head described the changes as:

I think the role of special schools is changing and being far more flexible. We see special schools being attached to clusters of mainstream schools. The clusters of mainstream schools would work together with a degree of co-operation from special to mainstream and mainstream to special. Not any administrative, diplomatic procedure, its just that when a school feels that a child needs an extra bit of support, he has it. So it would not be a special school, but a specialist setting and I think that's the change. I would like to see a special school with 500 children on roll and actually that school might have

20 children incorporated into that school who might be incorporated in another mainstream school.

In some authorities, clearly, consultations with parents and public was an important driver of LEAs' attitudes to special schools. Overall, however, LEAs were cautious in their plans for closure of such schools because of the volatile nature of the issue.

Schools' views on special schools

The schools survey explored the likely effects of closing special schools. Seventy eight per cent of the schools reported that it would lead to loss of specialist expertise and nearly two-thirds of the respondents agreed that it would be opposed by parents and resisted by special schools staff. (Table 20)

Table 20 **Likely effects of the closure of special schools**

| <i>Closure of special schools would...</i> | Agree/ strongly agree % | Neither agree nor disagree % | Disagree/ strongly disagree % | (base) |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Make mainstream schools inclusive | 44 | 21 | 35 | (219) |
| Lead to loss of specialist expertise | 78 | 13 | 9 | (228) |
| Be opposed by parents | 69 | 25 | 6 | (226) |
| Be resisted by staff in special schools | 80 | 18 | 2 | (223) |
| Promote government policies on inclusion | 52 | 20 | 28 | (217) |

In-depth interviews with a number of teachers confirmed some of these findings. The loss of specialist skills in the borough was cited as one of the

most important consequence of closure of special schools. Special schools were a reserve of invaluable expertise and information, as a mainstream schoolteacher in Lewisham commented:

Our special schools are our base of expertise and closing them would be a big mistake. We will lose all our expertise in the borough. I think we will always need special schools. Pupils with severe special educational needs need huge amount of specialist support. Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems also need specialist support. I don't believe in shutting people out but it is only practical to provide them an environment that is best to meet their specific needs. We have tried part integration into mainstream but that didn't work. It was too disturbing for the children. They did not like the change. And I think the staff in special schools would strongly oppose if the LEA proposed it because they know what they are doing there. I think it is all about cutting costs.

Reiterating the importance and role of special schools in the community, another school head added:

I think that there is a lot of expertise in the [special] schools that we can benefit from. We benefit from them because they do outreach as well. And I think children really need that sort of smaller classes and individualised programmes and one-to-one and not the pressure of working for a curriculum. We had a child who went to the small school for children with EBD, she could not be contained, she had behavioural difficulties. Since then we haven't had anyone like that. I think there will always be a need for them. And they are very good for getting back into mainstream. I think it will be a shame to close them as a cost cutting exercise because our children are going to need them.

There was a minority of schools who favoured the closure of special schools as a mechanism to promote inclusion. When asked to comment on this issue, one mainstream schoolteacher in Newham replied:

I think closing schools is the way to inclusion. I think they have got to have all the infrastructure placed in the mainstream school first and I think some children at the forefront of inclusion could suffer. If they are put into mainstream setting with no specially trained staff...because we have not had any special teacher training for our teachers. So it is quite feasible that a child goes from year to year but the teacher who was near to his problem each time, so there was no accumulated knowledge. So we do try and talk to our teacher who takes over from the last year about every child. But if you are a new child going through the school with a particular problem then every teacher is new to that. It is sad for those children.

Similarly, as with Newham, the school heads in the borough of Islington listed a set of criteria, which they believed were essential to making inclusive practices in mainstream schools a success. Among others, staff training and additional funds for mainstream schools emerged as a significant pre-requisite. Having fulfilled the desired criteria, mainstream schools did not object to special school closures. One of the school heads, thus said:

Personally I think [closing special schools] is really good. There was a plan for a physically handicapped school moving to this site next to ours. I think for the special school and for this school, it will be really good because our pupils and their pupils will have activities together. There will be a swimming pool out there and we will be able to teach our children swimming. And also from the point of special school, there will be a lot of professionals. They will be able to advice class teachers within the mainstream schools and we will be able to share expertise. We were linked to the inclusion project. We bid for money basically for staff training and all. So we are getting money from outside although I am not sure if we are getting any money for this new development next door. I think it will be a one off thing like, to develop lifts or something for those children to access.

School heads and teachers in the remaining six case study boroughs preferred their LEAs' to adopt less drastic approaches to bring about changes in the special school sector, opposing full closures as it involved loss of expertise. They welcomed change if it was limited to re-designation or relocation of special schools. A comment below from a mainstream school head in Hillingdon reflected the sentiments of most other schools visited:

It [relocation of a special school close to a cluster of mainstream schools] is looking very good. I have been to a talk at a meeting for heads, which are held to explain developments by Pupil Services. There they were talking about the changes. I think it could be very exciting. They are looking at making the building much more appropriate. It could be expensive but then it will bring children in them a lot. You could send your children to just look and learn something. You could access expertise from them. The schools are going to be linked to mainstream schools. So if it goes, it sounds OK, very exciting.

Most LEAs and schools were united in their views on this issue of special school closures. The government policies were such that the national statistical targets led the LEAs to take a neutral stance on the issue and avoid controversy because even at the local level the parent community was divided on the issue of special school closures. The schools, however, expressed their views either in favour or against these closures depending upon the availability of resources, specialist support and training.

Placing the problems of mainstreaming and promoting inclusion in a wider policy perspective, the same head teacher from Hillingdon added:

I don't think our LEA would be different to any other. We are living in an environment, which is fully governed by statistics. Somebody in central Government will have a set of statistics and we will be pushed towards that. And the LEA will have less and less to say about how we go about it. So I think a lot of the times it is out of the hands of individual LEAs.

In principle, a vast majority of the responding school teachers recognised the need for a clear and consistent strategy on promoting inclusion at the local level. In practice, however, they found LEA policies on inclusion piecemeal, lacking in direction, highly rhetorical and under funded. A teacher in Lewisham justified their shortcomings remarking that the 'whole issue of inclusion is in its infancy and it will take years to bring about any change nationally'.

Mainstream versus special schools

The survey of schools explored respondents views on the benefits of special and mainstream schools. Table 21 below shows the comparative benefits of the two types of schools for children with a range of special needs. While mainstream schools were regarded as beneficial for children with learning, speech and language difficulties, special schools were particularly advantageous for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. These findings were consistent with previous studies conducted in this area.¹³ More recent official data gathered by the Audit Commission further confirmed it.¹⁴

¹³ Lindsay, G. (1997) 'Are we ready for inclusion?' in Lindsay, G. and Thompson, D. (eds.) *Values into Practice in Special Education*. London: Fulton.

¹⁴ Audit Commission, *Special Educational Needs*. para. 43.

Table 21 Schools' views on the benefits of special and mainstream education for specific difficulties

| | Education in mainstream schools % | Education in Special Schools % | (base) |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| Learning difficulties | 92 | 8 | (161) |
| Emotional and behavioural difficulties | 40 | 60 | (164) |
| Speech and language difficulties | 86 | 14 | (162) |
| Physical or sensory difficulties | 67 | 33 | (150) |

However, other research carried out in this field exploring the relative advantages and disadvantages of these two types of provision proved inconclusive.¹⁵ An international review of the literature on integration also failed to establish the advantages of one form of education over another.¹⁶ Although this remains a potentially under-researched area,¹⁷ it has been suggested by several academics that with well-resourced inclusive placements and better classroom environments, pupils can be academically benefited in mainstream settings.¹⁸

In-depth interviews with teachers carried out for this study confirmed the findings of the survey presented in Table 21. They too based their

¹⁵ Jenkinson, J. (1997) *Mainstream or Special? Educating Students with Disabilities*. London: Routledge. See also Farrell, P. (1997) 'The integration of children with severe learning difficulties: a review of recent literature' *Journal of Applied Research in Learning Disabilities*, 10, 1-14. The author argued that pupils with SEN benefit socially from inclusion but the impact of inclusion on their academic skills remains questionable.

¹⁶ Hegarty, S. (1993) 'Reviewing the literature on integration', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 8, 3, 194-200.

¹⁷ Farrell, P. (2000) 'The impact of research on developments in inclusive education', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4 (2), 153-162.

¹⁸ Baker, E. T., Wang, M. C. and Walberg, H. J. (1995) 'The effects of inclusion on learning', *Educational Leadership*, 52, 33-35. See also Lipsky, D. and Gartner, A. (1996) 'Inclusion, school restructuring and the making of American Society', *Harvard Educational Review*, 66, 762-796.

arguments in favour of mainstream school for pupils with learning difficulties and physical and sensory difficulties, and special schools for pupils with EBD. However, they cautiously argued that it was almost impossible to generalise the choice of school placement for pupils with different SEN and that, 'it would depend on the severity and degree of support needed for the child.' The comment below from one of the teachers reflects the inherent dilemma of mainstream vs. special school argument:

In principle, I would say mainstream. In practice, it depends on the level of need of pupil and resources in mainstream school. Sometimes a specialist unit within a mainstream school with opportunities for interactions is most beneficial. We agree that some children's needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting unless you have special classes or units attached but then, is that really inclusive education within a mainstream school?

There were other factors too that were identified by teachers as being important in the debate about the relative advantages of the two types of school systems. Such factors included curriculum differentiation, teaching methods and attainment of better standards. On a different point, the human rights discourse that has traditionally been pursued by the special school proponents¹⁹ was carefully avoided by the mainstream school teachers and SENCOs. Typically, one SENCO commented:

A child gets education according to his parent's wishes; it is an individual's right to access a curriculum and school. And it may not be necessarily a mainstream school. I mean that a special school may be better for a child. I personally believe in total inclusion but I don't

¹⁹ Thomas, G. (1997) 'Inclusive schools for an inclusive society', *British Journal of Special Education*, 24 (3), 103-107.

believe that every child should be in mainstream school. Some children cannot cope and I am saying that from experience, they cannot cope. It is sometimes quite cruel to put them in such an environment. We have to think about the education of the child and the extra care required and whether the school can manage to give it. It is almost like the denial of the child's problems. We also have to remember that we are not providing the best environment for the rest of the children.

Despite the distinct advantages offered by mainstream and special schools, a significant blurring of boundaries between the two sectors was becoming evident as authorities were increasingly moving towards streamlining their specialist provision. For example, the 'resourced provision' in mainstream schools in Newham involved specialist staff and equipment to support inclusion of pupils with complex and severe needs. Such an arrangement was an attempt to replace the special schools that had traditionally made specialist provision for those pupils. Newham had closed most of its special schools, while in other boroughs the debate on mainstream vs. special schools was still alive. After the closure of special schools, Newham was required to plan strategically to increase the accessibility of all pupils in terms of physical premises as well as the curriculum. It meant that inclusion now covered every aspect of school life, as it did in the definitions offered by the school heads and teachers.

With increasing pressures on the LEAs to develop inclusive strategies and practices, the policy focus gradually shifted from choice of school placements to building capacity of mainstream school settings with clear implications for training and support service developments. The comment below, from the school head of a tough inner city school with 50 per cent of

the pupils having SEN, further elaborated on the perils of including pupils with certain SEN, particularly those with EBD, into mainstream.

The other thing about inclusion is that people tend to talk about wheelchair, hearing impaired, this or that but a well-behaved bright child with a disability is no problem. But there are huge implications for children with behavioural problems. It could be because of circumstances at home, parenting that has created EBD or they actually have attention deficit disorder, one that we have to be very careful about. Those children are the ones we pay a very high price for including. High in staff terms, high also because it becomes very difficult to cope. I think it is hard to cope because that is when they push us to the limit and that is where we need extra resources. That is what we need, put more resources. It is exhausting, staff can be demoralised and if you are also dealing with parents, then you are dealing with very difficult parents all the time. And they take most of your time. Nerve-wise and stress-wise that is very daunting. It is hard on other children. I have no proof that it holds other children back but it must have some effect. Certainly then you have to remove that child to a unit because then the child can cope in that highly structured environment and other children have to have some respite. It is better for the child as well because he always feels he is being picked upon and always feels that life is unjust.

Comparing the LEAs and schools in their approaches to defining and interpreting inclusion, the survey and interview data suggests that the LEA definitions ranged from the philosophical to sociological and the schools defined inclusion more from the institutional perspective. Unlike the LEAs, the schools refrained from approaching the idea of inclusion from human rights perspective not only because they acknowledged the inherent contradictions of doing so but also recognised the need to make changes into the school structures and organisation. Their institutional perspective offered greater scope for consensus among the practitioners across the borough

boundaries. This was one the main reasons why LEAs varied in their understanding of inclusion and the schools across the boroughs held more consistent views.

Consulting parents and voluntary sector

A joint report by Audit Commission and OFSTED on *LEA Strategy for Inclusion* published in 2002 stated:

[In] order to formulate a strategy, an LEA must explain what, in local context, inclusion *means* and what it *implies* for the organisation of provision and the allocation of funding... An inclusion strategy should, therefore, be a definition of a repertoire of interventions aligned to an audit of need, and framed in the light of a statement of principle.²⁰ (emphasis in original)

In order to define inclusion and formulate a strategy, the LEAs encountered a host of competing factors that had to be addressed including balancing the needs of individuals and the priorities of institutions; the needs of pupils in mainstream setting with those requiring specialist intervention; and inclusion of pupils with SEN as against raising standards. Other priorities that needed to be balanced included promoting mainstreaming versus respecting parental choice for special schools, and addressing the views of parents and voluntary sector within the framework set by educational institutions.

²⁰ Audit Commission, *LEA Strategy for the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. para. 21-23.

Parents' views on inclusion

Interviews with parents and parent groups as well as voluntary organisations representing parents of children with SEN revealed a new set of priorities that added another dimension to the definition of inclusion. While the parents established the significance of individual rights of all children to good education, the voluntary sector based their arguments on the disability rights discourse. Both points of view stressed that since each child was different and unique in his or her ability to gain from the education provision, inclusion could mean different things to different individuals depending on their needs. Parents of children with SEN made their decisions on educational provision based on the individual needs of their child, which set them apart from every other parent. A parent of a child with complex speech and language difficulties remarked:

Parents do not have a single unified voice. Some feel that integration disadvantaged their children. They all have different ideas, more so because children are so different in their needs and it is hard to find a single provision for everybody with which all would agree.

In the case study boroughs, parents' perception and understanding of the term 'inclusion' depended upon their experiences, for example, in making a choice of placement for their child or requesting for a statutory assessment. They were caught between the LEAs trying to promote mainstream schools for pupils with SEN and the schools struggling to promote inclusive practices without adequate resources or specialist support. A parent of a child with severe learning difficulties related her experience and her disillusionment with inclusion policies and practices adopted by the school:

It does boil down to an individual teacher really. If the SENCO is not well trained and does not understand the needs of the child, like the one who wanted to send Ted back home early, then we would rather prefer a special school where his needs are understood and met. Our experience in mainstream school has been that they do not think what they can do themselves to help the child but rather look for help outside, like a speech therapist. Good practice is very patchy across the borough. We chose a special school for the psychological benefit of the child. I personally would have wished mainstream if it was better in terms of attitude and skills as well as facilities. Our experiences in mainstream are not perfect and primary schooling is the time to make them perfect if they want to really make parents choose mainstream schools. We found out that other mainstream schools were also no better so we had not much choice and parents with a bad experience in a mainstream school would obviously prefer a special school. I can't think of many parents speaking positively of their experience in mainstream.

Although individual experiences and circumstantial evidence of the practices at school level shaped parents' views on inclusion as a policy, it was the level of local provision that determined parents' preference for a special or mainstream placement. The LEA policies and practices thus, governed individual experiences of parents and shaped their perceptions and views on what was meant by inclusion.

Voluntary organisations' views on inclusion

Among the voluntary organisations, there emerged two different viewpoints that shaped their understanding and interpretation of the term inclusion. Some organisations supported government's stance on promoting mainstream schools for the education of children with SEN, while others opposed any attempts to close special schools for the fear of losing specialist expertise. Arguments in favour or against integrated or segregated settings

ensued and were fuelled with disability rights and social justice discourse. A representative of one of the radical mutual-aid voluntary organisation, who was also a disability rights activist, said:

The voluntary organisations have done a lot of work in the last fifteen years and tried to put over another viewpoint, another way of looking at the problem, to look at it from a rights perspective. And to approach it as an issue of social justice rather than as an issue of where a particular child's needs are best met, which is a common argument. That has helped us because there was the beginning of the unravelling of understanding that what goes on inside these special schools is not really special at all. And they called it justification for the loss of what they had lost in the past. There was a mixed reaction. People like me felt that we were denying our children by wanting to be in ordinary schools where nobody was trained and they had never come to the disabled people and asked what their views were, what they felt about integration and mainstreaming and if that was a way forward. It never occurred to them that we have an opinion on it. And that of course is a part of the crisis that for so many years we had segregation.

On further probing, it emerged that perceptions were shaped by the specific needs of children they represented and the nature of services they provided. The organisations were either direct service providers, self-help groups or those concerned with research, advocacy or leisure.²¹ Those that were involved in a combination of self-help and advocacy work representing a single disability group, supported the government's agenda on making mainstream schools more inclusive. They regarded it as a progressive step for their organisation to gain from wider social recognition for their services. The annual review document of one such organisation read:

²¹ Handy, C. (1990) *Understanding Voluntary Organisations*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

We are already reaping the benefits from inclusion, but we have a long way to go to put inclusion into practice. As we plan for the next five years, we want to ensure that society recognises the rights of people with a learning disability and acts to involve them.²²

On a more benevolent note, a respondent from the same organisation said:

Education is much more than obtaining academic or vocational qualifications. It is also about giving children a sense of achievement, boosting their self-image and self-confidence. This means every child should have the opportunity to take part in all activities at a mainstream school in their communities. Unfortunately, such rights are often denied to disabled children, especially if they are educated away from their community, have no transport. We welcome the government's basic commitment to 'inclusion' where disabled children are not made to fit into a system designed for their needs, but where the system includes everyone.

With the onset of the inclusion agenda, the question of choice between a special and mainstream school for children with SEN became the topic of popular debate among voluntary organisations. The organisations, which were mainly also service providers, argued that the idea of inclusion must not deny them the right to have choice and freedom in deciding about the appropriate form of education for each individual, which may not always be a mainstream school. A respondent stated:

Inclusive education is a precondition for building an inclusive society. Where mainstream education is as yet unable to meet individual needs, we support children and their families who find that their best option is to seek education in a specialist setting. We are working with disabled young people, their parents and carers, professionals and volunteers, to achieve inclusive education of real quality.

²² MENCAP (2000) *Making Inclusion a reality: 1999/ 2000 review*. London: MENCAP.

Hence, 'inclusion by choice' was the idea adopted by the organisations, which solely relied upon their services, such as running residential units, employment and health services to raise funds. Since these services were hard to secure and difficult to retain, the organisations pursued their own agenda of providing a whole range of services and opportunities that may or may not be in compliance with the national policy of inclusion. Their approaches were aimed at choosing the 'most suitable' education provision for individuals of the disability group they represented. In the case of an organisation representing children and adults with cerebral palsy, the representatives were more concerned with the residential units provision than inclusion of children into mainstream schools. For this organisation, the priority was to ensure equal opportunities in an inclusive education environment. Whereas, other organisations – such as those that represented children with speech and communication difficulties – found it difficult to meet individual needs and demands consistent with the principle of inclusion. These organisations represented parents throughout the litigation process to fight against LEA or school decisions on issues such as inappropriate school placement, denial or delays in making statutory assessments and permanent exclusions from school.

Individual and institutional battles against discrimination shaped the views of parents and voluntary organisations on what they meant by the term 'inclusion' and how it affected the lives of children with SEN. The responses from parents and voluntary organisations' representatives revealed that the idea of inclusion was challenged from several different perspectives before it could be accepted as a policy at national as well as local level.

Thus, there were considerable differences among parents and voluntary organizations, schools and LEAs in the interpretation of the concept of inclusion. Parents and parent groups made choices and decisions based on their individual experiences, while schools' practices were shaped by institutional requirements. National guidance, on the other hand, is instrumental in shaping LEA policies on inclusion. The implications of these conflicting views are later addressed in the final chapter that brings together the empirical evidence and the theoretical perspectives on implementation.

In the foreword to the White Paper *Excellence in Schools*, the Secretary of State for Education declared that, ‘partnership for change means commitment from everyone: from the family and the wider community; from those working in the education service; and from those who support it...everyone has a part to play...’¹ To ensure that the ideas were not a mere rhetoric, the government formalised them into a guidance document for the practitioners, the Code of Practice on SEN suggesting that:

Parents hold key information and have a critical role to play in their child’s education. There are strong reasons for working in partnership with all parents... All parents of children with special educational needs should feel they are treated as partners, able and empowered to play an active and valued role in their child’s education;...²

Hence, central to the idea of partnership was the role of parents and the voluntary sector representing their interests. While the voluntary organisations find it difficult establish links with the local authorities, the parents and parent support groups have much closer networks with the LEAs and their schools. Parent Partnership Schemes, later known as the Parent Partnership Services provided the main link between parents, LEAs and other support groups.

Based on in-depth interviews, the first section of this chapter explores the

¹ DfEE, *Excellence in Schools*. p. 11.

² Department for Education and Employment (2000) *SEN Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs & SEN Thresholds: Good Practice Guidance on Identification and Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. London: DfEE. para. 2.1.

role of parents and their contributions locally to developing the idea of partnership with the LEAs and their schools, while in the second section, the idea of partnership is extended to voluntary organisations. Their role and participation in shaping policy outcomes while contributing nationally in bringing issues to the agenda is thus analysed.

Working together at the local level

Developing partnerships with parents is not new and this idea gained currency, especially since the release of the Warnock report.³ However, it has been argued that despite sincere efforts, the power differential between parents and professionals has been too great to allow such partnerships to develop effectively.⁴

Prior to the introduction of parent partnership services, the Parent Partnership Scheme was regarded as a concrete expression of the relationship between LEAs and parents.⁵ Research published in the late 1990s on the impact of the scheme on parent partnerships, revealed that the scheme encouraged parents to participate actively in their child's education and develop links with the professionals.⁶ More recently studies into the role of parent partnership services showed how these

³ DES, *Special Educational Needs*. p. 151.

⁴ Martin, J. (2000) 'Parents' Organisations' in Daniels, H. (ed.) *Special Education Reformed- Beyond Rhetoric?* London and New York: Falmer Press. p. 231.

⁵ The Department for Education and Skills provided funding to the LEAs to set up Parent Partnership Schemes under GEST in 1994-95. The funding was withdrawn and the scheme discontinued until in 1997-98, New Labour continued the funding under Standards Fund and reinstated the scheme as 'parent partnership services'. In 1999-2000, the PPS were given a financial boost by the government of £6 million from the Standards Fund.

⁶ Wolfendale, S. and Cook, G. (1997) *Evaluation of Special Educational Needs Parent Partnership Schemes*. DfEE Research Report RR34. London: DfEE.

services enabled parents to maintain relationships with the schools and LEA professionals.⁷ Acknowledging the success of such services the PPS were made a statutory duty of LEAs, although the extent to which they are able to engage parents and professionals to become equal partners is still not clear.

Parent Partnership Services

The parent partnership services in the case study boroughs were set up by the LEAs with or without the involvement of local parent support groups or voluntary organisations. The PPS were entirely run by the LEA in at least four boroughs. In the other four, a parent group or voluntary organisation run PPS were funded by the LEA and given administrative support. Several factors affected the ability of PPSs in promoting parent partnerships as reported by parent, school and LEA respondents in the interviews conducted for this study.

First, the full financial and administrative control of an LEA over the parent partnership services, as in LEA-run PPS, acted as a deterrent in winning parents' confidence and trust in the professionals. Such was the case in Lewisham, where the Parent Partnership Officer (PPO) was based in the council office and line managed by an LEA officer. The officer along with the other staff conducted 'individual casework' with parents.⁸ They provided conciliation and mediation services to those who were either dissatisfied with the LEA's decisions on issuing statements or

⁷ Vernon, J. (1999) *Parent Partnership and Special Educational Needs: Perspectives on Developing Good Practice*. National Children's Bureau, DfEE. Research Report RR162. London: DfEE.

⁸ Wolfendale and Cook, *Evaluation of special educational needs parent partnership schemes*. The authors defined 'individual casework' as direct contact with individual parents/ carers/families, providing information, advice and support. Over fifty per cent of the PPOs described it as their most frequent activity. p. 29.

disillusioned by schools' inadequacy to provide specialist support to their child. The local parent support groups in the borough made little positive contribution in shaping local policies and promoting partnerships. They were aggressive and vocal in representing parents' disapproval of LEA decisions on issues such as statementing and closing special schools. The LEA-run PPS was thus, at a disadvantage in gaining parents' trust, confidence and co-operation.

The LEA-run PPS in Enfield too, struggled to gain the co-operation and trust of over 800 local parent and voluntary groups. One of the parent group representatives explained that the LEA's commitment to promote partnership agenda was not matched with adequate funds for the voluntary sector. As a result, parents and parent groups were unequal partners in the network of agencies involved in making decisions related to SEN policies and provisions. In the words of one of the local parent support group representatives:

I don't think they even understand what is meant by partnership. Their view on partnership is appalling. It's a joke, a travesty for them. And it is only a last priority. I think partnership agenda of the government is only an aspiration. It is not happening anywhere, not just here. In nearly all the boroughs in the London region, partnership is a problem. In fact it is a global problem. The funds should stop going to the statutory sector and should be diverted to the voluntary sector for partnerships. They are trying to build their own administrative sector and putting money into their ailing services, instead they should redirect money if they want real partnership.

However, the PPS run by LEA-contracted parent support groups and voluntary organisations in two other authorities visited showed different results. In Newham, the LEA contracted and fully financed a locally

based parent support group to run the parent partnership services. The PPO, recruited by the LEA, was based in the local office of the parents group to liase between the LEA and parents and the officer provided impartial advice and support to parents. The services provided by the PPO were well received and trusted by the parents. It was the involvement of the parents support group in providing PPS encouraged the parents to participate in LEA's decision-making exercises. The PPO said:

We work really hard to get parents more involved, visit schools and make their own decisions. Even though we are funded by the LEA, we are an independent group and we are here for parents. They trust us and come to us whenever there is a problem. Only when the LEA wants us to inform parents about anything new, we are expected to do so without question. But otherwise, we do not have much interference from the LEA.

In Tower Hamlets too, the LEA contracted their parent partnership services to a local parent support group and fully funded the post of PPO and other staff. According to a representative from the parent group, 'LEA's commitment to support parents and strengthen their rights made us accept the proposal of running PPS and moreover, the group needs the additional funds that come from the LEA.' A respondent from the parent group, who also worked as the SEN Development Worker under the PPS, described how the LEA-contracted PPS operated through a voluntary or parent organisation. She said:

The organisation is securely funded by the LEA & grants. We are also the 'named person' working with parents, about 500 children between 5 and 16 years, who have special educational needs. We have a team of 8 Advisors, 2 bilingual staff- one for mainstream school for the Bangladeshis and one for the special school for all. The manager of the team is the SEN Development Worker. Their

main job is to assist parents through the statementing procedure. It's a difficult procedure for parents. As soon as the letter is sent to parents by the LEA, one letter reaches us. We follow up the letter by visiting the parents because they would not know what has to be done next. We discuss the process with them, explain them and offer them advice. We also work closely with the Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Children Development Team. The development workers go to schools to facilitate the inclusion of children with statements in the beginning.

She also went on to explain why their services were more trusted and helped in promoting parent partnerships:

We 'mediate' between schools and parents, mainly because the parents have a lot of trust in us and so does the school. We have a close enough relationship with the school as well. Sometimes we do have problems because our prime concern is for the parents but they understand our point of view and realise that we will be there to assist them through the whole process of inclusion. We don't work against schools. The schools are ours, we are funded by the LEA and so are they. Parents are unaware and do not know the system well, so they rely on the advisors almost entirely but advisors cannot go against the LEA's funding strategy and suggest any high cost provision to the parents.

The situation was slightly different in the boroughs of Islington and Richmond, where the LEA partly funded the voluntary organisation to run the PPS. The PPO either worked from home or from an independent base and was funded by the LEA, while the rest of the staff were supported by the voluntary organisation. Although such an arrangement gave some autonomy to the voluntary organisation, it did not relieve them of financial pressures.

In Richmond there were serious financial problems that crippled the services provided by PPO, which led to the decline in LEA-parent

relationship, as reflected in the following quote from parent group representative:

We rarely get a chance to meet the LEA officials but when we do we find it very difficult to deal with them. They promise a lot of things when we meet them but none of the things they promise come to fruition. There was a big issue raised on the pre-school provision for children with hearing impairment...but nothing happened. I think that the Education Department should put in as much money into the voluntary sector as they put into their statutory services. The voluntary organisations providing pre-school provision are starved for funds. We raised this issue in the meetings, they said, 'oh yes' but then nothing happened. We want to be equal partners but where is the opportunity? Even if we knock on their [LEA's] doors to sell our services, I doubt if they will be willing. You see if they buy services from us, it reflects badly on them because they have always been the sole providers. I think schools can help bring that change if they decide to buy services from us. We have done a lot of running around but what we need is funds from the government to sustain us through this trying period if they really want to see partnership.

Despite allocating additional funds from the Standards Fund, the government failed to ensure that the local parent groups got their share of delegated resources from the authority, as a result of which, financial problems impeded any efforts made by PPS to work effectively.

Transient pupil population, incompatible past policies on SEN and threats to litigation were some of the contextual factors influencing the parent partnership agenda. For example, Brent LEA had traditionally been slow in developing its partnership links with parents. In addition, past policy decisions on issuing statements had antagonized the parent community to the extent that they were now considered a threat to the authority and thus, excluded from the decision-making forums. A senior LEA official summarised the reasons for not consulting:

We have had no interaction with the parents. My suspicion is that they will be more than unhappy about it. Because unfortunately, and I understand why, parents are quite concerned only about their own child. They won't be concerned so much about the statement issue; they would be concerned only about the extra resources. They don't want a statement because it tells them more about their child and his needs but in their view it is important because it is the only recourse to getting the needs met. In the past, in a class when there were more children without statements, there was a need to tie budgets to the child with special needs. The statements were used as a protection. Unfortunately, that doesn't enable us to support the needs of a whole range of children. To give you an idea, we have something an excess of, i.e. 30 per cent of children with special needs on an average. So that's a lot of children.

Likewise, Hillingdon had a large number of local parent support groups and an active parent community but little efforts were made to encourage partnership between parents and professionals. According to the Head of SEN at the LEA, the relationship between the LEA and parents had deteriorated as a result of frequent recourse to litigation by parents. The 'culture' of appeals and tribunals had permeated the system to an extent that parents considered as adversaries instead of partners. He added that the LEA had drafted a policy on Inclusion/SEN that devoted an entire section on 'parent partnership' thus, indicating the authority's commitment to PPS. The policy was based on developing new strategies to recruit more staff and allocate additional funds to set up better mediation and conciliation services under PPS. Targets were also set for the PPO to reduce the number of appeals and tribunal cases against the LEA. The policies placed an emphasis on negotiating settlements with parents and thus, enhancing the role of PPO.

The role of PPS in statementing and special schools

Differences of opinion between LEAs and parents over the issues of statementing and role of special schools accounted for another significant factor influencing parent partnerships. Other studies showed the statementing process, for instance, to be a locally contentious issue.⁹ In authorities visited, the rising number of demands for statutory assessments from parents posed a serious cause of concern for the LEAs. One of the LEA officials interviewed explained how disagreements over the issue of statementing often led to litigation. Hillingdon was one such case in point:

...the parents here are adept at exploiting the system to get more for their child. We are financially constrained to decline certain requests for statutory assessments because we have already given a higher proportion of schools' budget directly to them. We do not have enough [funds] to support every request for a statement. This is one of the reasons why we have so many appeals. If we had at least one parent who could act as a liaison and make them understand how our policy on statements works, we would not have so many parents going to the tribunals. So we are moving towards that now. Our parent partnership services are trying to focus on this particular problem and address it.

In Enfield too, the drive to reduce the number of statements by denying parents' requests had left schisms in the LEA-parents relationship. From a parent's perspective, the request for a statement was genuine in most cases. However, if the schools failed to meet the needs of a child and the LEA turned down requests for statutory assessments, it would lead to disagreements and conflicts. A parent, who was also a member of a local parents support group in Enfield explained:

⁹ Department for Education and Employment (2000) *Special Educational Needs Tribunal Annual Report 1999-2000*. London: DfEE. Of 2,463 appeals nationwide, 80 per cent were against LEA's refusal to assess, issue or make changes in a statement.

I don't quite understand why it is difficult to understand what is obvious. Why would anyone want a statement if they didn't need one? People push for a statement of their child because they think it is important. My child did not have a statement when she started school, I didn't mind because her needs were being met. Its only when the [school] started objectioning, I then asked for her statement to be issued, so she got it. If I just went to the school and asked them these were the needs of my child and they met them, I wouldn't ask for a statement. I can't imagine a parent wanting their child to have a statement if their child doesn't need a statement. Schools are not meeting children's needs across the board. They are not setting up channels of communication, with parents and community in general. We feel like alienated from the system. It is only because we are together in this group that we feel more confident about taking our demands further high up. We are a long way from becoming partners with them.

In Hillingdon and Enfield, where the parent partnership services were run by the LEA, one of the PPOs commented:

We are a disadvantage in responding to the demands of dissatisfied parents because we do not share similar views on so many issues, like the need for a statement. As a result, there are conflicts between the parent groups and the LEA. I do not see how they [LEA and parents] are going to become partners... unless the local groups of parents come together and share the same views with the LEA. My job is to do just that. To bring them together, which is quite a challenge in itself because parents think I am not one of them.

Local parent groups that were not involved in running the PPS considered themselves as rivals of the LEA. One of the parent group representative in Hillingdon said that they often challenged LEA's decisions on statements. Their group comprised highly articulate parents, well versed with the legal framework of education, and were seen as a threat to the authority officials. A respondent from this local parents group expressed

concerns over the LEA's ignorance of the SEN-related legislation and its impact on parent partnership:

I am a solicitor and I am interested in education law. It is a very complex and fast growing area. It's a mixture of primary legislation, secondary legislation, Code of Practice and then, custom and practice developed by local education authorities. It's a bit of a maze, to put it mildly. LEAs have a hard time analysing, interpreting and implementing the education law and they often get it wrong. They don't like to be told that, let alone admit it. I had some problems in the past with LEA because they were getting the law wrong, prejudicing children with special needs, not just children with autism, children with statements actually. There are all-different legal systems if you have a statement, like for transport and admissions. And they have got the law badly wrong. They don't like people like me telling them, and they prefer not to believe them.

Reflecting on the idea of partnership in context, the respondent added:

I think partnership agenda of the government is only an aspiration. It is not happening anywhere, not just here. In nearly all the boroughs in the London region, partnership is a problem. In fact it is a global problem. How do they expect partnerships to happen if they... The funds should stop going to the statutory sector and diverted to the voluntary sector for partnerships. They are trying to build their own administrative sector and putting money into their ailing services, instead they should redirect money if they want real partnership.

Parental involvement in their child's education and SEN provision was extended to their decisions on the choice of school placement and the role of special schools in the community. The PPS contracted by the LEA to the voluntary sector faced less parental pressure against LEA decisions on special school closures. Since the mediation and conciliation services of the PPSs run by voluntary organisations were well established, parent

opposition to LEA decisions was largely controlled. In Newham, a respondent from the voluntary organisation running the PPS for the LEA described how they promoted the interest of the LEA whilst providing independent advice and support to parents on sensitive issues:

Our organisation deliberately does not have a policy on inclusion. Our policy is to look for the best thing for the child. Several people say, 'What's your policy on inclusion?' We don't say that inclusion is the best thing for every single child. In an ideal world where there are all the resources in the world in a mainstream school, then a lot of parents will say to you that if I have got a choice to put my child in a school with 30 or 27 other children, one teacher, a helper for my child for 10 hours a week, and the choice is that or special school with 1 to 4 ratio, a specialist teacher, a lot of people still would prefer a special school. We go along with that, that is their decision. We try to offer information rather than advice, partly because if you give advice, they take it and it all goes wrong, then they complain. So we give them information only and we always say that you go and look at both mainstream and special schools. I personally think that one of the best plans is a special unit attached to a school, so you have got all the inclusion things going on during lunch, playtime, assembly, whatever they can do together but they have their special units and special teacher. So I think for a lot them that might be the best thing but we don't tell them. They decide themselves.

Clearly, disagreements were more pronounced in LEAs that did not involve voluntary organisations or parent support groups in running their PPS. This was further illustrated in the case of Brent, where the parents disagreed with the LEA decision to close one of their special schools. They wanted the authority to retain all the special schools in the borough, especially those for pupils with severe SEN. In the absence of a parent partnership officer acting as a mediator, the parent groups strongly opposed the closure. One of the group representative claimed that they were on, 'the opposite side of the divide between the statutory and

voluntary sectors.’ He then, went on to elucidate some of the reasons that had led to such a divide in the borough:

There was a big controversy that they are closing some of those schools. Popular belief is that they are closing because it is on a very valuable piece of land and their excuse is that rolls are dropping and they have got to close one of three but the other two are not as good schools as this one. They made their decision, we went to Appeal and we went to our members. I think they are claiming that the school rolls are going down generally around Brent. I am not sure whether that is true. I don’t have figures to prove otherwise. Whereas, ideally if you have got lower numbers of children you should keep the same number of classes, keep the same number of schools. The classes would get better education. They can then keep the class number close to 25 or 28 instead of closing down the schools. It is most unfortunate for special needs children.

Parental opposition against the LEA decision to close a special school was largely controlled in the borough of Islington, where a local parents support group partly funded by the LEA ran the PPS. According to the PPO, parents were told that the money earned by closing and selling the sites of special schools would be used to relocate those schools as mainstream units and retain LEA’s SEN support services for additional support. The LEA’s PPS and the local group together tried to diffuse tensions among parents over special school closures and give scope to promote parent partnership on the issue.

Schools and parent groups

Several research studies explored the factors influencing parent-school partnership. The factors ranged from ineffective implementation of the

Code of Practice¹⁰ to lack of financial resources resulting in tension between schools and parents.¹¹ This study explored the nature of parent-school relationships and the extent of co-operation and conflict between them.

According to a parent in Brent, schools in the borough were, 'the last to sign up to the principle of inclusion.' As a mother of a child with cerebral palsy, she chose a special school placement and expressed her lack of confidence in mainstream schools because they had increasingly become 'autonomous units'. Relaying the views of other parents, she argued that in general there was resentment over schools gaining greater autonomy in budget and decision-making, as this was not being reflected in reality.

We feel that more autonomy for schools is not in our interest. In a centralised education service, at least they would look after the children. But now in the background of performance tests and league tables, the temptation is to push them on one side and concentrate on SAT results. But the situation does not change because there are a lot of parents who want schools to be more autonomous and that is because they themselves are quite active around in individual schools. It gives them more power to have their say and they can exert their importance, whereas in a centralised system, the local or individual autonomy would be lost.

Promoting parent and school was central to the role of PPS. The PPOs in the case study boroughs worked closely with the schools and encouraged them to involve parents in policy decisions. A large number of schools in Newham regularly invited parents to help staff in schools. In one of the

¹⁰ Bowers, T. and Wilkinson, D. (1998) The SEN code of practice: is it user-friendly? *British Journal of Special Education*, 25 (3) 119-125.

¹¹ Hirst, J. (1997) 'Special case', *Community Care* 1182, July, 24-30. The research revealed how some authorities tended to overspend their SEN budgets leading to severe shortages and providing plenty of scope for tension between schools and parents over the limited funds.

schools visited, the SENCO offered sessions in good parenting skills, which according to head teacher not only enhanced parental involvement but also encouraged professionals' confidence in parents as partners. As for the parents, one of the local parent support group in the borough offered training programmes to school staff. Having successfully completed the training sessions, the school SENCO reflected, 'it compelled me to stand back and reflect on my role in school management and appreciate the contribution of parents in my work.' She acknowledged that such training opportunities helped to develop parent-professional dialogue.

Parents in Lewisham had different views, 'the schools operate as independent units and sometimes have a slight patronising attitude towards parents.' The schools' senior management was regarded as a dominant force in influencing local policies and practices as they actively participated in the development of local policies. Schools and parents condemned the authority's proposals to close two special schools within four months and opposed LEA's intentions to promote mainstreaming of pupils with complex SEN without making any financial commitments. The tensions underlying the LEA-school relations affected the schools' ability to establish partnership links with parents.

The interactions between schools and parents extended to home-school agreements and home-school diaries as they maintained a regular line of communication. The schools organised parent evenings for all parents and specific day visits for the very concerned ones and those for parents of children with SEN. The work of PPO and the partnerships between schools and parents enabled the latter to influence LEA policies and practices.

In contrast, parent-school dialogue in the borough of Islington failed to generate the same enthusiasm. In one of the schools visited, parents were seen as 'forever demanding' and threatening the school with litigation to secure additional provision for a child with SEN.

In Hillingdon however, parents and parent support groups became indispensable in establishing parent-school partnerships. They set up training programmes for the staff and governors for a group of schools to acquaint them with the specific needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. According to school governors training programmes were encouraging and parents felt reassured of the schools' ability to understand the needs of pupils. This is a way demonstrated the ability to develop partnerships without the need for LEA intervention. As respondent from the parent support group said:

We do have links with schools but there are so many of them. One of the things we try to do is that since every school has to have a SEN Governor, we are trying to get [our] person in that role. We don't know how successful we've been because not everyone wants to be in touch. That's the sort of thing we would do to try and influence the schools because they are quite difficult things to influence... they are busy institutions. How do you influence them? I, for example, do Saturday type and train for them from time to time, when a whole cluster of schools gets together to talk about how to make inclusion really happen. So I would put work at the biggish clusters of schools, trying to influence so many schools is quite a challenge. We can't afford mailing them. Its difficult to influence them, there are many ways of doing it.

This point is further illustrated in the case of Islington, where the voluntary-based PPS failed to generate the same commitment from schools and parents to establish a dialogue between them. Although the school heads in the borough were briefed by the LEA on its PPS

partnership agenda, the parent support groups or voluntary organisations were not invited. One parent commented:

... we are on the opposite sides of the divide. There are one or two personalities there [in the school] that we don't get along with but there are one or two whom we trust. They put our leaflet in the information pack when they give to the parents. So in a way they refer people to us. We are here to hand out the information. But that is all that we do for the LEA. The rest of our services are for the parents, we meet them, comfort them and advice them from our own experiences. If we think they need to threaten the LEA with litigation, we support them to make appeals because we know that the LEA would anyway agree to parents' demands before the case goes to the Tribunal but if we think that there is no way parents can win the case, we advise them to approach the schools directly and make the best of what is provided.

A striking example was Tower Hamlets, where the close association between the LEA and schools gave confidence to parents in need. The school heads in the borough made an effort to reorient their staff towards the idea of partnership and be more 'open to the outside agencies'. The voluntary organisation running PPS gained from the financial security and sound LEA-school relations in its pursuit of promoting parent partnership. One of its members noted:

The [voluntary] organisation is securely funded by the LEA & grants. We are also the 'Named Person' working with parents, about 500 children between 5 and 16 years, who have special educational needs. We also work closely with the Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Children Development Team. The Development workers go to schools to facilitate the inclusion of children with statements in the beginning. We 'mediate' between schools and parents, mainly because the parents have a lot of trust in us and so does the school. We have a close enough relationship with the school as well. Sometimes we do have problems because our prime concern is for the parents but they understand our point of view and realise that we will be there to assist them through the

whole process of inclusion. We don't work against schools. The schools are ours, we are funded by the LEA and so are they. Parents are unaware and do not know the system well, so they rely on the advisors almost entirely but advisors cannot go against the LEA's funding strategy and suggest any high cost provision to the parents.

The parent-school partnership in different PPS settings was thus influenced by local factors and shaped by LEA policies in the case study boroughs. Visits to authorities and schools highlighted the implications of PPS's organisational arrangements and the voluntary sector's ability in realising the principle of parent partnership.

While the contribution and potential of PPSs at the local level determined the role of parents as partners, at the national level the commitment of voluntary organisations to promote partnership between parents, LEAs and schools became pivotal in translating government policies into practice.

Contributing nationally to the SEN agenda

The publication of *Compact* in 1998 was intended to create a novel approach to partnership between the government and the voluntary sector in the pursuit of 'inclusiveness'.¹² Reaffirming government's commitment to involve voluntary organisations in the development of policy and practice for children with SEN, the Code of Practice stated:

¹² Home Office (1998) *Compact: getting it right together. Compact on relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty. Cm 4100.

Voluntary agencies and groups have an important role to play in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs. They provide services and in some cases offer their own provision. It is essential that schools and local authorities seek to work actively in partnership with voluntary sector to better meet pupils' needs.¹³

Recognising the potential of voluntary organisations in building parent partnerships, their involvement in consultative activities, training and information exchanges was encouraged so as to shape local policies and practices for effective implementation. There are three main variants of these organisations ranging from national charities and self-help organisations to local parent groups.

Most national charities in the country have a large membership across the country and for a long time have essentially provided residential care and employment services to their clients. Education has been a relatively new area of interest, and they now provide specialist training to teachers and more recently have established model schools for children with complex and severe SEN. The mutual-aid self-help organisations were mainly set up by the disabled activists with a view to providing training to professionals and school staff. These organisations were known for their radical and highly contentious views on inclusion and have worked closely with local parent groups in raising awareness of the rights of children to mainstream education. The local groups, on the other hand, were set up by parents of children with SEN.

The nature of the client groups served by these organisations have been largely responsible for shaping their agenda, which in turn affected their responses to government policies. For instance, a parent-led voluntary

¹³ DfEE, *SEN Code of Practice*. para. 10.9.

group prioritised issues determining the future role of special schools in an inclusive education environment, whereas concerns about issues such as statementing and SEN funding remained the special interest of the disability-specific organisations.

The fragmented and varied nature of these organisations implied the lack of a critical mass and an absence of unity in responding to government legislation. The setting up of a Special Education Consortium in 1993 – as an over-arching body to represent the range of voluntary organisations and parent groups – was intended to provide just such a unified voice. But to what extent was the Consortium able to represent the diverse views as expressed by parents and voluntary organisations?

The Consortium

With a membership of 250 national and local voluntary organisations, Local Government Association and teaching unions, the Consortium was regarded as a useful partner with which the government could consult.¹⁴

The importance of belonging to the Consortium was recognised by many of the organisations visited. One of the respondents reported that some organisations within the Consortium were more domineering and vocal than the others. For example, large charities enjoy specialist expertise and information denied to smaller groups, which enabled them to take the lead on important issues and chair Consortium meetings and discussions. A respondent from one such national charitable organisation for the hearing impaired explained:

¹⁴ Gordon, M. (2000) 'Parliamentary Page', *British Journal of Special Education*, 27 (2), 101-102. p-101.

Most [government] departments need to have highly specialised information in order to feed their thinking and yes, they did listen to us [national charitable organisation]. We have a very good reputation. We are also a part of the Special Education Consortium, which is an umbrella group. It encompasses many voluntary and other organisations and agencies that work with children who have disabilities. We feed into the Consortium. They have made a response to the [Education] Bill and we've made a response to the Bill but the response we make is highly specialised with a focus on deaf issues and deaf children. When we were actually working as a part of the Consortium, we were feeding into a much wider group. In fact, one of our Directors is the Chairperson of the Consortium so there is a big crossover, but we also make our individual responses. I have to say that our views have been consistent, whether that has to do with shared understanding or not. Occasionally we have put forward an amendment that has not been taken up by the Consortium, or we have led to discussion and in the end we have changed our amendment due to discussion. It's so much a consultative process that goes on and largely there are no chasms between us, mainly because the issues are shared.

Such an organisation, however, represented the views of a single group of parents of children with hearing impairment and not the entire parent community. Recognising this gap, the leading members of the Consortium formed a Steering Group in order to balance the views held by the member organisation and parent groups. Those groups or organisations that held radically different views were denied membership of the steering group. For example, the mutual-aid organisations that strongly opposed the presence of special schools were not represented in SEC meetings of the Steering Group. However, when they tried to lobby the government independently, the results were discouraging as one representative of such an organisation recalled:

We lobbied for disability rights on the first meeting of the new Disability Rights Commission and got them to agree with us. Initially the government resisted because the body that they had

actually just breathed life into immediately bit their hand and said, 'No, you are too backward on this.' So I think they were lagging quite far behind from where they actually should be. Obviously we do not get all the amendments through after the consultations and realistically one wouldn't expect to. Government has its vision; we have ours. Our job is to keep raising the issues and pushing, pushing, pushing as hard as we can, in the interest of children. We don't always get our amendments through, however what has been interesting is the process. With hindsight, by raising the amendments and getting them discussed in the House of Lords, we may not get on the face of the Bill but what we get in the answers [from a minister] are always so useful and very relevant.

Organisations enjoyed several benefits from being members of the consortium. They were not only now able to influence national policies, but also gained credibility with parents. A representative from the Consortium remarked:

Consortium appoints several levels and these things always do. There is a Steering Group and I am on that Steering Group and our Parliamentary Officer is on that. So we are one of the few organisations who have got 2 representatives there. That is very handy. If anything happens, either one of us is always there. On the Policy Group, we can send as many people as we want and we try to always make sure that there are more than 2 people there. It's not really the number but I think we are trying to be a helpful partner in the Consortium. If anything needs doing, we would try to do it. If there were anything that needs to be done, we would say that we are quite a large organisation, we can help with that. Some of the small organisations don't have a Press Officer, so we might say that our Press Officer can help with that. You are influential more because you can help things happen. In a way the Consortium itself likes to have mixture of small and large organisations. For example, if we are going to see the minister, we'll probably always try and have one of the big five disability organisations there but also one of the small ones because they are more in touch with parents actually than we are. So we try and balance that. But we make sure that we have consulted well on all the issues and we are united in our views.

Another steering group member belonging to a local parent support group corroborated this account. According to him, the process of consultation at the SEC forum was, 'always to build consensus and not just that, but to build a consensus through discussions and more discussions that match government intentions, of course as long as we keep the interests of children uppermost.'

The Consortium represented the views of their Steering Group members in meetings with the government officials. Since the Group was dominated by large national charities and some local parent groups, the contribution of the mutual-aid organisations to decision-making was marginalised. However, in individual capacities the role of voluntary organisations and parent groups in influencing government policies on inclusion/SEN and promoting parent partnerships varied depending upon the needs and demands of the parents they represented.

Bringing issues to the agenda

The respondents from all participating voluntary organisations unanimously agreed that government was the lead player in setting the agenda for the policy. In the words of one of the respondents, 'Ministers have their own particular agenda. Some Ministers are very interested in standards, some others in Early Years. Yet others are interested solely in colleges and further education. That depends quite a lot on the interest area of the Minister.' He explained how a single policy issue, like defining the role of special schools, became more important than other issues in policy debates and discussions because of the high interest level of a senior government officer:

The Secretary of State for Education is visually impaired so he has a huge passion and interest in special needs, which is very useful for us. What he said two years ago was, ‘...in the next 10 years from now, special needs will look different in this country. It will be a better deal for parents and a better deal for pupils.’ And it would not be an incremental change; it would be a radical change.

Once the issue gains prominence as a result of ministerial preferences, it was easy for voluntary organisations to exert their influence and promote their agenda. However, the ability of voluntary organisations in influencing national policies cannot be undermined as one DfES official observed:

They do influence policies on inclusion. Some voluntary organisations are very powerful bodies and they lobby their MPs. They command respect because they have experienced and knowledgeable people working in the organisation. I would say they are a powerful lobby and they do influence at government level what happens. And of course, personnel from voluntary organisations sit on our working group.

For voluntary organisations it was important to sustain links with the government departments, especially if there was an Education bill going through the Parliament. Although they ensured that their views on government policy proposals were given due attention during consultations, their responses only reflected a small section of parents having specific demands related to their child’s needs. A national charitable and disability specific organisation was less likely to offer a higher level of representation of parents’ views on government policy proposals, such as the ones in the SEN and Disability Discrimination Bill. Whereas, local parent support groups and some mutual-aid organisations represented a relatively wider range of parental views and opinions.

A leading national charity was highly concerned to ensure their place in the 'policy circle'. A respondent from the organisation said:

What you are trying to do in a meeting sometimes... we don't have a meeting every week with the Minister so it's a good opportunity when you get it, you try to use I suppose, rather than have a general discussion. We try to use something that is current for them and try and help them with some solutions rather than be a thorn in their side all the time. May be they are thinking about introducing a new guide for special educational needs or something like that. It would be nice to say that we could help them with a part of that or they could, if they like, take a look at the draft of that, or we've got some examples of good practice that they may like to include. We can discuss about really pressing points. If, for example, in the drafting of the Bill or the Code of practice, we think that there is something really important, we will push that. We will push it in meetings, write to them or phone them. We would make their lives as miserable as it can be really. But on the whole what we are trying to do is that we want to help them with the solution. They are not there to make things worse; they are there to make things better as we do. We've got more common ground than we have differences actually.

Similarly, for national disability-specific organisations, it was a priority to establish and maintain close links with the government officials and Members of Parliament.

There are two new things happening this year. One, the SEN and Disability Bill going through Parliament and we have made responses all the way along the amendments and so on with that Bill. [Second,] we work very closely with their Parliamentary team and Members of the Parliament, members of the Lords so that we can actually influence some change in the Bill to tweak it a little more so that it is better than what it was. We very much welcome this legislation.

Despite the influence exerted by these organisations, there were several disadvantages inherent to each of them. Although the national

organisations had large membership of parents across the country, they only represented a specific disability group. This meant that the parents of children with a particular SEN held opposing views to the parents of children having other disabilities. Their opinions on SEN policy issues, such as the dynamics of statementing, making alterations in SEN funding and closing special schools thus, differed markedly. As a result, the competition and struggle to gain access to government's decision-making meetings to influence policies was very acute among the organisations representing different set of parents. In order to gain wider representation, one representative of such an organisation argued:

If there is some big issue coming up, like the Bill, for example, we have to do a lot of work going around the country, talking to people about what they think is going to be in the Bill, what are the issues they are concerned about. The sort of things people say are, 'we don't want to lose our statements, we want the statements to be specific, we want to have a choice of schools'. In a particular area, for a particular child mainstream might be the right option but in the same area for another child it might not be. So for us it is an opportunity to take all that to those policy discussions.

Although the mutual-aid organisations held radically different views from the other voluntary organisations on SEN policy issues, their approach to gaining access to policy circle and influence government decisions on national policy issues were not very different from other voluntary organisations. However, they ensured that they represented majority of the parent community and not just a group(s) of parents having children with specific disability. A respondent from one such organisation affirmed that it was their large membership of parents across the country and 'an influential ideology on inclusion' that won them an opportunity to make their contribution in government policy discussions. He added:

The only time when there was grants money available was when the Green Paper came out in 1997 and they wanted meetings with voluntary organisations throughout the country. They gave us the money to pay for our members to get together so that consultations could take place. And I think once or twice they gave us money for things like that. But generally speaking they won't give us money or invite us. The big charities, which are not run by disabled people, have traditionally got their voices heard. Very recently, the disabled people have started [making noise]. The reconstitution of the SEN Implementation Group had a disabled representative but now they don't have any disabled person. So I don't think they have consciously made an attempt to get disabled people. We feel very involved in the movement, as we have made a lot of contribution.

The local parent groups found it difficult to gain access to government policy circles outside the consortium, but they enjoyed much closer working links with the LEAs, schools and parents. They, however, lacked the finances and expertise to widen their coverage and increase their membership of parents to become more representative, and thus, remained localised, failing to contribute to policy making nationally. On the other hand national charities and disability organisations had relatively little experience of closely interacting with the parents.

The national charities had the financial and administrative advantages of conducting research and presenting evidence to the members of the inner policy circles. One such organisation undertook a nationwide project of collating examples of good practice from the LEAs promoting special schools as centres of excellence. The information collected was used to write guidelines for professionals and practitioners and presented to the government's advisory group to assist in drafting a new Bill on SEN and Disability. In contrast, the human rights agenda adopted by the mutual-aid organisations to promote inclusive education prevented them from

contributing to national policy making processes, despite having conducted similar large-scale research studies to influence policy decision. Their ideas on securing rights of individuals and, ‘uprooting any form of segregation [in the form of special schools] of the disabled in the society’ were regarded as ‘militant’ because they created more friction than stability in their relations with the government officials.

Differences in views and opinions among voluntary organisations set them apart distinctly as they made attempts to lobby the government and influence policy issues concerning the lives of children with SEN and their parents. These differences became more stark when they were analysed in the context of SEN policy issues, namely special school closures, choice of mainstream and special schools for children with SEN and the need for issuing statements of SEN.

Debates about special schools and statementing

The respondents from the participating voluntary organisations were asked to express their views on the role of special schools. A respondent from a national charitable organisation revealed that they supported the role of special schools in the education of children with SEN. He affirmed that special schools had a significant role to play because they, ‘housed highly specialised experts in the field and [believed that] closing special schools would be a big loss of the specialist sector.’ It was argued that there would always be a group of pupils who would need a specialist educational setting with all the expertise and resources to meet their specific needs. Since these organisations ran independent special schools for children with severe and complex SEN, they found government’s stance on retaining special schools as ‘centres of excellence’ reassuring. The respondent added:

The role of special schools has been confirmed by this government while previous governments never quite said whether they wanted special schools. In the sense, they have given more strength to the special sector. The conditions are very clear, the central government says status quo is not an option. These schools must change; they must be more outward looking, more confident, must share their expertise and they mustn't become isolated islands.

The SEN policy issues, especially on redefining the role of special schools generated more controversy than consensus of views among the voluntary organisations. A national organisation's representative, who was also the convenor of the consortium meetings explained:

With regard to the closure of special schools, we are committed to working towards inclusion but we recognise that there is a diversity of views. However, some of our member organisations and some disabled people, particularly in the deaf world, see special schools not as segregation but a part of their cultural heritage. So we think that before there is any closure there has to be a proper infrastructure of funding and support to ensure that children get adequate education. Long term, we would hope that all children would be in mainstream schools. In the shorter term, special schools would obviously continue. What we are interested in is seeing the role of special schools develop and change, so that they become specialist resource centres because it is very clear that disabled children and children with SEN in mainstream must have access to specialist support. We have a policy view to support inclusion but we don't take an absolute view about the time all special schools would close. We are not going to entertain any views that suggest complete closure of all special schools. Inclusion is not about closing special schools.

Comparatively, the mutual-aid organisations, vigorously campaigning for the rights of children with disabilities, were highly critical of the role of special schools in an inclusive environment. A respondent from one such organisation objected to the government policy on parental choice that

gave parents the option of choosing a special school instead of a mainstream for their child with SEN. He said:

The government is sitting on the bench and that is part of the problem. They still see a continuing role of special schools whereas we don't and our sister organisation has been campaigning for that.... We do work with local authority officers but not much, some discussions here and there. We are only really just coming into it; we have been doing their training some of which has been useful. The LEAs haven't signed up to the changes and the ideological shift that underlies developing inclusion. It is LEA whole school process of change that involves restructuring in its entirety. And they are not really up for that. And even though they trade in with lots and lots of LEA offices, at the end of the day they say that its really interesting and they get on with their day-to-day business.

One of the mutual aid organisations with a membership of more than 15,000 parents from all over the country initiated a dialogue with the government on the future of the future role of special schools arguing that the policy was very much the prerogative of the professionals. One respondent held the view that, 'although the existing legal framework since 1981 had given parents a choice of a mainstream or a special school, the law itself was still on the side of the professionals and they still had the power to segregate children.' Another shared similar concerns adding that, 'it was only fair to dismantle hundreds of years of old system of segregation to begin with the idea of disability equality'.

These organisations were ethically opposed to the presence of special schools to an extent that other voluntary organisations, parents or parent groups that supported the idea of retaining special schools were regarded as a threat to the inclusion agenda, as one commented:

We feel very involved in the [disability] movement, as we have made a lot of contribution. It's quite clear that disability movement is ours and when large charities begin to steal our clothes, they don't really understand the ideology. You have these organisations, all running special schools while at the same time, pretending to 'move towards inclusion'. Actually it limits what they can actually do.

There was little scope of arriving at a consensus between the voluntary organisations that held such conflicting views on the role of special schools. Although the respondents in mutual aid organisations were sceptical about the ability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with moderate and severe SEN, they still did not support the presence of special schools. The debate on special versus mainstream schools for pupils with SEN affected the ability of the voluntary organisations to take a single and focussed stance on inclusion.

Views held by the voluntary organisations were divided not only on the issue of the role of special schools but also on the need for statements for pupils with SEN and alterations in SEN funding. While the national charities endorsed the additional support of a statement for parents and their children with SEN, the mutual-aid organisations regarded statements as a way of encouraging inequality of educational opportunity among children with different SEN and was therefore contrary to the principle of inclusion.

As the government proposed to shift SEN funds from statemented pupils to a larger percentage of children without a statement, it raised the concerns and anxieties of parents of children with severe and complex needs and of the voluntary organisations representing those parents. The proposals were to reduce the number of statements to enable virement of

funds so as to encourage flexibility. A respondent from a mutual-aid organisation supported this proposal on the grounds that it would bring greater flexibility in funding children with SEN and reduce reliance on statements as one respondent observed:

Very few [policy issues] actually change and one of the issues is to actually change the statementing process. That's what the government is doing; it is trying to make the funding process more flexible. There were some pressure groups, who tried to stop the government from becoming more flexible. I think they were wrong because they only deal with the sharp end of a percentage of parents wanting statements for their children. Whereas we see the whole range of parents whose children are included in mainstream. We realise that you cannot get inclusion by actually reinforcing statements, which is more integration not inclusion. There is a very subtle difference between the two.

The national charitable organisations, running their own special schools and supporting children with statements of SEN from their own budgets, opposed the government policy on statementing. One such organisation had taken the responsibility of educating children with severe SEN whose needs could not be met by the LEA-maintained schools. The organisation's aims and priorities were driven by the needs of a large but unrepresentative group of children with SEN. For instance, a national charitable organisation for the visually impaired addressed the concerns of parents having children with visual impairment only. In addition, they dealt with only those parents that had difficulty gaining appropriate educational provision for their children and were unhappy with the local provision or government policies. A respondent from one such organisation said that:

The [parents] who contact us are the ones that have difficulty with the statement, the local authority doesn't think their child needs the

kind of provision their parents think the child needs or they have got a complaint about an LEA, or they gone all the way through Tribunal and still haven't got what they want. So they quite often come to us at that point. We are seeing a very unrepresentative group of parents.

Thus, the national organisations were at one end of the spectrum representing the views and opinions of a single most dissatisfied group of parents on the issue of statementing. Supporting their views on retaining the legal protection of statements for children with severe SEN, they expressed concerns about the financial impact of the government policy proposals on reducing statements. Flexible funding systems were required to transfer funds from statemented to non-statemented pupils to reduce parents' reliance on statements.

On the other end of the spectrum were the mutual-aid voluntary organisations that held radical views and believed that inclusion would not be a success in a society that protected the interests of few children with a statement over the rest majority. When a respondent from one of the mutual-aid organisations was asked to express the organisation's view on bringing greater flexibility in funding children with SEN and reducing reliance on statements for securing additional funds and services, he said:

Very few [policy issues] actually change and one of the issues is to actually change the statementing process. That's what the government is doing; it is trying to make the funding process more flexible. It has been a reaction to pressure groups, who tried to stop the government from becoming more flexible. I think they were wrong because they only deal with the sharp end of a percentage of parents wanting statements for their children. Whereas we see the whole range of parents whose children are included in mainstream. We realise that you cannot get inclusion by actually reinforcing statements, which is more integration not inclusion. There is a very subtle difference between the two.

Thus, lack of consensus over the principal policy issues on statementing and special schools within the voluntary sector and their diverse approaches to bringing the issues to the national agenda led to a high degree fragmentation in representation of parents' views.

In exploring the government agenda of parent partnership that runs parallel to the inclusion agenda, this chapter focused on parents as stakeholders. It showed the extent to which parents and voluntary organisations work in partnership to influence national policy agendas, both individually and collectively. It remains for the next chapter to take stock of the material presented thus far and to consider the extent to which different theoretical perspectives on implementation helps us understand policies and practices as they work at the local level.

The introductory chapter of this thesis set the developments in inclusive education in their historical and international context. Since the early 1990s, the concept of inclusion was promoted by a series of UN initiatives that were complemented by the national priorities formulated by successive UK governments. More recently, the election of New Labour highlighted the commitment to tackling SEN through a strategy of inclusion. The Green Paper *Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs* prefigured inclusive education and Disability Rights Act and a new Code of Practice that provide the framework for the developments examined in this thesis.

The second chapter charted the early developments in SEN policies in greater detail. The early post-war commitment to egalitarianism was succeeded by the Warnock Committee's 1978 report, which introduced the term special educational needs, and so transformed the approach to providing education for children with physical and mental disabilities. Subsequent legislative developments aimed to promote collaboration and joint working between the key players in educational provision.

Having defined the political and legislative framework for developments in SEN, the chapter which followed set out a conceptual analysis of the factors bearing upon the ways in which such policy goals become translated – or not – into action at the LEA and school level. Approaches to the study of

implementation were reviewed in order to identify the scope for an understanding of the case study and survey data that form the empirical heart of the thesis.

LEAs vary widely in their responses to national policy initiatives and in the provision they make for children with SEN. The historical circumstances, local traditions and social and demographic characteristics which shape these responses were reviewed for the eight London boroughs in which field work was conducted. That analysis set the parameters for understanding the context in which these local policies take shape as well as the quality of the relationships between LEAs and schools, parents and the national government.

The next stage was to present data on the responses of LEAs and schools to the new policy agenda. Funding arrangements, planning, the reorganisation of support services, school-LEA relations, and the processes of statutory assessment and statementing were among the issues illuminated by bringing together with national survey data and local interviews. That discussion is then carried forward in a treatment of the reception of the concept of inclusion and the ways in which it is understood in different localities. This differential grasp of inclusion as a concept and a desired goal were shown to be crucial to LEAs approaches to mainstreaming and, more specifically the closure of special schools. Perceptions of the barriers to inclusion are revealed as a crucial factor.

Parents are expected to play a central role as partners in the development and implementation of SEN policies. Formal parent partnership services were

considered together with the role that parent groups play in statementing. These groups are brought together in a national consortium to support the development of government policies and to bring issues to the agenda at that level. Having taken stock of the material presented so far, this final chapter now brings the theoretical contribution of implementation theory to bear upon what happens at the local level.

The characteristics of policy

According to implementation theory, it should be possible to predict the chances of successful implementation from the characteristics of its policy and its initial formation processes. This often encourages academics and scholars engaged in such studies to advise policy makers on the contents and shape of a policy to ensure its successful implementation.¹ For example, they have strongly argued for clear and flexible policy goals,² concrete and specific standards for assessing performance,³ having sufficient resources⁴ and a valid theory of cause and effect,⁵ for attaining success in policy implementation. However, two policy characteristics that provide more comprehensive and coherent basis for understanding implementation have emerged more recently, namely policy conflict and policy ambiguity.⁶ It has been argued that ambiguous policy goals limit the scope to generate conflict

¹ Hogwood and Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World*. See also Van Meter and Van Horn, 'The policy implementation process'.

² Van Meter and Van Horn, 'The policy implementation process'.

³ Hogwood and Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World*.

⁴ Elmore, 'Backward mapping: Implementation research and policy decisions'.

⁵ Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation*.

⁶ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature.'

among the participating actors thus leading to greater success in implementing the policy, albeit with broad variations in outcomes.⁷

Concepts of ‘conflict’ and ‘ambiguity’ are central to the analysis of policy characteristics and thus to understanding how inclusion policies are interpreted. This section will examine the ambiguities in the principles, values and practices of inclusion in order to illuminate the way conflicts arise at the implementation stage. Secondly, the concepts of consensus and compliance are used to examine inter-governmental relations and responses of implementing agents. This analysis also draws upon the contributions of Goggin *et al.* and Stoker, as they provide top-down and bottom-up perspectives on the analysis of policy transfer processes and behaviour of individual actors engaged in actual implementation. Kickert *et al.*’s concept of ‘cooperation’ is used to extend the discussion of implementation theory to the consumers of policy namely, the parents and voluntary organisations representing children with SEN.

The policy network approach developed by ‘third generation’ of implementation theorists is then used to understand the interaction processes between different groups of actors participating in the policy process and influencing outcomes. The network approach also contributes to an overall understanding of the complex interactions between policy makers, implementing actors and consumers of policy in shaping implementation. What follows is an exploration of the concept of inclusion as it is interpreted in government policy, by LEAs, at the school level and by parents and voluntary organizations.

⁷ Matland, ‘Synthesizing Implementation Literature.’ p. 165.

Understanding inclusion

Inclusion in education has been summarized in the following terms:

[It] involves the processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools. Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students on their locality. Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.⁸

Most policy discussion is more ambiguous than this, and a plethora of different understandings of inclusion co-exist. For example, in *Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme of action*, the Department for Education and Employment refers to 'inclusion' as 'the keystone of policy' and then describes it as a way of, 'providing as far as possible for children's special educational needs within mainstream schools.'⁹ Further, it is envisaged that special schools continue to, 'play a vital role as part of an inclusive local education system.'¹⁰ The term does not then denote a fixed state or a set of criteria that measure success or failure in responding to the needs of pupils with SEN. It refers to a broad interpretation of processes and

⁸ Booth *et al.*, *Index for Inclusion*. p. 12.

⁹ Department for Education and Employment, *Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme of action*. p. 8.

¹⁰ Department for Education and Employment, *Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme of action*. p. 23.

procedures that bring changes in the educational and social lives of children and communities. Among the dominant interpretations of the notion and practice of inclusion, increasing the participation of learners, encouraging mainstreaming and reducing exclusion of pupils with SEN remain paramount.

Other interpretations include supporting the rights of disabled children to attend their local school, while the disability movement connects the agenda of increasing participation to practices combating discrimination.¹¹ In this way, the idea of inclusion is extended to encompass wider issues of inequality and struggles for social justice with the disability movement reconstructing the multiple levels of interpreting and defining the term. OFSTED endorsed the term 'inclusion' as a process of 'cultural reconstruction' in a recent guidance document for inspectors and schools.¹² This 'cultural reconstruction' refers to bringing changes in all areas of social, personal and educational life of all children.¹³ Cultural reconstruction is not restricted to mainstreaming pupils having SEN or closing special schools but includes reducing barriers to participation and learning for all marginalised groups in society.¹⁴

¹¹ Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Final Report of the Disability Rights Task Force*, London: DfEE Publications Centre.

¹² Office for Standards in Education (2000) *Educational Inclusion: Guidance for Inspectors and Schools*. London: OFSTED.

¹³ Slee, R. (1999) 'Special Education and Human Rights in Australia: how do we know about disablement, and what does it mean for educators?' in Armstrong, F. and Barton, L. (eds.) *Disability, Human Rights and Education: Cross-cultural Perspectives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 127. See also Potts, P. (2003) *Inclusion in the City: Selection, Schooling and Community*. London: Routledge Falmer.

¹⁴ Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (eds.) (1998) *From Them To Us: An International Study of Inclusion in Education*. London: Routledge.

The terms 'integration' and 'mainstreaming' have been used since the 1980s to describe effective educational provision solely in terms of the setting or placement of children and not the quality of the provision made for them. Such arguments raise the issues of the effectiveness of integrated placements,¹⁵ and they generate complex policy dilemmas for governments with well-established segregated provision for pupils with SEN. The dilemma of mainstream versus special education systems is further complicated by a human rights discourse that argues equivocally in favour of both specialist and inclusive education systems.

The 1994 Salamanca Statement on principles, policies and practices in Special Needs Education endorsed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the national policies.¹⁶ Article 28 of the Convention asserts the basic right of every child to education and requires that this should be provided on the basis of equality of opportunity.¹⁷ While the appropriateness of segregated provision for pupils with SEN is challenged from the human rights perspective by the disability activists,¹⁸ it is strongly supported by others. Proponents of special schools argue that mainstream schools do not offer equal educational opportunities for all pupils because some pupils have specific needs that can only be met in a specialist environment. Hence, the implications of defining the term in a policy context are full of complexities and contradictions.

¹⁵ Jupp, K. (1992) *Everyone Belongs*. London: Souvenir Press.

¹⁶ UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement*.

¹⁷ United Nations (1993) *Convention on Children's Rights*. New York: United Nations.

¹⁸ UNESCO (1995) *Review of the Present Position in Special Education*. Paris: UNESCO. See also Pijl, S. J. and Meijer, C. J. W. (1991) 'Does integration count for much? An analysis of the practices of integration in eight countries', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 3 (2): 63-73.

Government policy documents highlight the dilemma, which originates from defining inclusion from a value-based, philosophical perspective and finding a definitional equilibrium based on real institutional practices. The official definitions are couched in ambiguous terms to absorb several different versions that form part of processes and procedures for implementing actors to follow. This is reflected in the views and opinions of representatives from LEAs, schools, parents and voluntary organisations on what is to be understood from inclusion as it is used in government documents. It is important to note that the presence or absence of conflict in the interpretation of inclusion policy at institutional and individual levels does not only indicate the extent of ambiguous language used in formulating policies at national level, but also has implications for implementation success at local level.

Defining inclusion

The government policies on inclusion offer several distinct interpretations, most of which find an expression in definitions provided by LEAs, schools and parent representatives. While the government policies adhere to the principles of equality of opportunity in providing for the education of children with SEN, the LEAs show a clear preference for mainstreaming and increasing participation in translating the inclusion agenda for the same. Despite the variations in interpretations at the LEA level, there is no evidence of any serious policy conflict in any of the eight case study LEAs. However, disagreements arising from what Matland terms 'incompatibility

of objectives'¹⁹ over the definitions of inclusion have emerged. The LEA definitions stem from the school effectiveness discourse that seeks to raise standards of achievement of pupils by stressing the need to change school structures and cultures. Since the two separate government agendas on promoting inclusion by increasing participation and raising standards of achievement do not complement each other, the LEAs struggled to find compatibility between the two in their definitions. Very few LEAs chose to define inclusion as a way of reducing exclusion of pupils with SEN, but their strategies and action plans were entirely based on the objective to reduce cases of exclusion and out of borough placements.

Based on local priorities, past experiences and future planning requirements, the LEA definitions of inclusion ranged from encouraging mainstream schools for pupils with SEN as a placement issue to reducing exclusions. More specifically, reducing the proportion of pupils with statements, exclusion of pupils with SEN from mainstream, cutting expenses from out-of-borough placements were among the prime local issues that shape LEA interpretations. Clearly, the government policy on inclusion offered enough scope of variation to the LEAs to interpret and reformulate local policies so that they could meet local demands and prioritise local issues. As a result the LEAs attempted to interpret and reformulate national policy on inclusion in broad, ambiguous and non-conflictual terms to not only address diverse local conditions but also to build consensus with schools pursuing different policy agendas.

¹⁹ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature'. p. 156.

At the school level, definitions of inclusion lost their ambiguity. In contrast with the LEAs, the schools interpreted inclusion in fairly clear and consistent terms. Inclusion was understood from an institutional perspective of the implementing actors (or schools staff). Such interpretations are based on the specific requirements of an institution and are more likely to lead to conflict. It was not surprising that their understanding and interpretation of the term inclusion lead to conflict, which in turn affected the ease of access to the implementation process.²⁰ The institutional perspective involved issues, such as adequate staff training, advice on curriculum differentiation, improvement of physical access, provision for additional resources, specialist support and reduction in exclusions of pupils with EBD from mainstream schools.

In defining inclusion whilst keeping institutional interests in mind, the schools made a consistent claim to securing every child's right to access the curriculum and an entitlement to obtain education according to his/her parent's wishes. They supported the principle of inclusion as long as it did not threaten the existence of specialist provision for those children whose needs cannot be adequately met in a mainstream placement. Since the national policies affirming parental choice over the placement of a child with SEN in a mainstream or a special school were in apparent contradiction with the principle of inclusion, they posed a potential challenge to the schools to comply with the LEA that encouraged mainstream provision for pupils with SEN.

²⁰ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature'. p. 157.

The government maintains an equivocal stance on the role of special schools, the LEAs provide little clarity in interpreting the policy as they allow the special schools to either remain or close depending upon local circumstances and need. However, at the school level, views on the role of special schools in an inclusive education environment are more conclusive. The schools' staff opposed any drastic changes in the specialist provision and valued the contribution of special schools. Any policy statement undermining the views of schools on the issue was therefore likely to lead to a conflict between the LEA and schools. This had the effect of delaying any efforts in policy implementation.

To summarise, then, schools' understanding of inclusion, as expressed in their definitions and interpretations of the term, constructed a clear agenda for formulating school policies with a wide range of issues seeking immediate attention simultaneously and providing more ground for policy conflict to emerge.

Unlike LEAs and schools, the parents and voluntary organisations representing children with SEN interpreted inclusion from an individual perspective. The idea of inclusion, being highly philosophical in nature, was difficult to disagree with in principle. However, in practice it led to tensions and conflicts at an individual level. Parents' views were based on the premise that every child is an individual with highly specific needs and educational requirements. Inclusion was either referred to as a way of protecting the rights of every child to equal educational opportunities in a specialist environment, or as a way of ensuring greater participation of learner in a mainstream setting. Since the current education policy context

allowed for such variations in interpretations to prevail, the intensity of policy conflict increased with every individual case adding a new perspective to the idea of inclusion. Parents argued in favour or against specialist provision for their child with SEN depending on the availability of local specialist provision and the degree of SEN in a child.

The views of voluntary organisations on inclusion added yet another perspective to the policy process. They were shaped by their organisational disposition and/or parent group representation. Although the conflicts and contradictions within the individual perceptions of the parent community on placement issues were moderated by those organisations which adopted disability rights discourse to promote segregated provision, they were in conflict with other organisations that strongly opposed segregation. The two opposing views on the role of special schools, for instance, left the organisations divided in providing feedback to policymakers. Representing the views of the voluntary sector in government policymaking, the Consortium moderated the different views of parent groups and voluntary organizations so as to make an impact on policy decisions at the national level. However, this was done at the cost of avoiding conflict and, in so doing, presented the views of the Consortium on inclusion in ambiguous terms.

Overall, national policies did not generate much conflict as they allowed greater flexibility in interpretations and hence, wide variations in local practice. LEAs inclusion policies stated more definite agendas and issues relating to the principle of inclusion, which sometimes led to conflict. Moreover, the perceptions of school staff and parents added to the

complexities of implementing policies in a conflictual environment. However, at the national level the feedback loop of the policy cycle completed by voluntary organisations representing parents' views failed to highlight the policy conflicts at the local level and instead helped to generate ambiguity in national policies.

Matland argues that clearer policy goals are more likely to lead to conflict, especially if the, 'clearly defined goals are incompatible'.²¹ According to him, low policy ambiguity and high policy conflict situations lead to 'political implementation', which meant that implementation outcomes could be decided by the use of power and coercion or by using 'remunerative mechanisms'. This study found conflict to be limited as the policy goals were made less explicit at the national level by the use of ambiguous language, which could be interpreted in diverse ways by implementing agencies and actors. However, at the local level, national policies on inclusion were reformulated by the LEAs with greater clarity of goals and means. Evidence from this research suggested that the case study LEAs' policies on inclusion/SEN were developed to provide strategic direction in planning and monitoring the provision for pupils with SEN in schools, albeit with varying degree of clarity and consistency. If the inclusion policies and strategies of an LEA were clear with focused action plans that schools could implement, the scope of dissension over policy goals formulated by LEAs was higher. Whereas if they lacked clarity of purpose and direction of strategy, the schools struggled to interpret LEA policies on inclusion. LEA policies defined in clear and consistent terms had fewer chances of schools staff and parents responding without any

disagreements with the LEA. This was why school heads, teachers and SENCOs in some boroughs were more active in their response to policy expectations than others.

The multi-agency context

Implementation theorists now widely agree that policy processes are an interplay between various actors and not centrally governed by government.²² Goggin *et al.* emphasise the top down perspective in identifying the effects of acceptance and rejection of messages between layers of government in the communications model (CM),²³ while Stoker's 'exchange approach' offers a bottom-up corollary that seeks to, 'encourage co-operative responses to conflicts of interest.'²⁴ Thus, contemporary implementation research has a multi-layer focus upon the, 'vertical links in the chain from policy formation to the street level.'²⁵ Such an approach has its roots in Pressman and Wildavsky's policy analysis in a 'multi-agency framework'.²⁶

The 'multi-agency framework' raises questions about the impact of government initiatives on LEA and school policies and practices - Is there any evidence of co-operation and compliance between the levels of

²¹ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature'. p. 163.

²² Rhodes, R. A. W. (1996) 'The new governance: Governing without government', *Political Studies*, 44 (4): 652-67.

²³ Goggin *et al.* (1990) *Implementation Theory and Practice*.

²⁴ Stoker, *Reluctant Partners*. p. 50.

²⁵ Hill and Hupe, *Implementing Public Policy*. p. 126.

²⁶ Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation*.

administration? Does conflict encourage competition of interests that leads to implementation problems?

The policy transfer process

The transfer or sharing of information between the government and the LEA level is limited to policy and guidance documents advising the authority officials with few direct interactions. Whereas, in case of LEAs and schools, the quality of inter-organisational relationships and mutual dependencies assume greater significance. The relationship between LEAs and their schools is the key to understanding the policy transfer processes at that level, which in turn determines the success or failure in implementation.

The policy transfer processes at the LEA and school level are influenced by the way messages carrying policy information get accepted or rejected by the implementing agents. LEAs' financial delegation targets, their SEN provision for schools after reorganisation of services, redirecting funds from statemented to non-statemented pupils with SEN and the new role of LEAs as monitoring and advisory agents were some of the prime policy issues that dominated the LEA-school interactions.

Evidence suggested that the imposition of new and uniform financial delegation targets for differently funded local authorities and subsequent reorganisation of SEN support services lead to programme or policy mutations. The case study LEAs met the nationally set targets of financial delegations within the stipulated time frame, but their provision for SEN support services to schools declined. The schools appreciated the targeting of resources to majority of pupils with SEN instead of the few statemented

ones. However, they were reluctant to take their entire responsibility delegated upon them as a result of these financial alterations. Increased workload for the teaching staff and inadequate support from the LEA in budgeting and management planning prevented some schools to incorporate policy changes as expected by the LEA. The reorganisation of SEN support services in a changing financial climate across the case study authorities explains the wide range of support provision available for pupils with SEN. For instance, in some authorities, the core SEN services like the Educational Psychology Service suffered severe losses in terms of staff and time, while in others, LEAs recruited more specialist staff to provide direct intervention and support to pupils with SEN in schools. The local financial contexts within which the LEAs functioned acted as a defining force in determining the extent of SEN support available and the relationship between LEAs and their schools.

The LEA-school relations were also influenced by pressures on the LEAs to reduce the statementing costs and make necessary alterations in the local funding systems. This had clear implications for the schools to make fewer pupil referrals for statutory assessments. The reduction in the proportion of pupils with statements was one of the main policy intentions of government's Green Paper on inclusion, but it did not have any national targets associated with it. This allowed the LEAs to set their own targets and develop strategies in conjunction with the schools to realise the national policy intentions.

It emerged that the local funding systems for allocating SEN funds to schools differed immensely across the boroughs. Such variations

complicated the way funds were redirected from pupils with statements to those without a statement. The schools in the case study boroughs translated the local strategic plans and goals set by the LEA to meet their own institutional needs and priorities. The LEA-school relations were highly effective only in cases of schools that truly reflected the LEA policy goals. The data presented in chapter 5 suggests that there were only very few such schools. Variations in policies and practices accounted for the complex nature of relationship between LEAs and their schools.

Disagreements over making statutory assessments and issuing statements to pupils with SEN further added to the complexity of LEA-school relations. Issues, such as mismanagement of funds, staff shortages and inadequate support for pupils with complex and low incidence SEN contributed to the prevailing complexity of relations. The direct support and intervention provided by the LEAs to pupils with SEN in schools was well regarded by the schools, but their new role as advisors and monitoring agents left the schools feeling disillusioned. These changes in the role of LEAs and their relationship with schools shaped the policy transfer mechanism. The transfer of information about the national and local policies from one administrative level to another was smooth in those authorities that had fewer disagreements over core policy issues namely, decisions on making financial allocations, extent of SEN reorganisation and changes in statementing procedures. Clearly, the conflicts between LEAs and schools arising from mutual disagreements adversely affected the transfer of information and hence, the responses of implementing actors.

Influences on the behaviour of implementing actors

The responses of implementing actors to policy expectations assume critical relevance in implementation analysis.²⁷ Their behaviour is the key to examine policy outcomes because their decisions and responses reveal how they cope with the pressures of translating policies into practice.²⁸ Their disposition towards policy expectations is based upon their, 'cognition of the policy, the direction of their response to it and the intensity of that response.'²⁹ School staffs are the implementing actors of the national as well as local policies on Inclusion/SEN. The LEA officials too become implementing agents inasmuch as they are responsible for the implementation of national policies. Policy outcomes depend upon the schools and LEAs and their disposition towards policy goals when 'contextual conditions dominate the process' and outcomes 'vary strongly from site to site'.³⁰ Using the concepts of 'conflict' and 'consensus', the cognition, direction and intensity of responses of implementing actors are examined in the light of research evidence.

The response of school heads to the LEA policies on Inclusion/SEN was entirely based upon their institutional requirements and individual demands. The financial and administrative circumstances of a school dictated the way they formulated and implemented school policies. More so after the national policies expected the schools to assume greater responsibility and discretion in making decisions about the educational provision of pupils with SEN in

²⁷ Elmore, 'Backward mapping'.

²⁸ Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street - Level Bureaucracy*.

²⁹ Van Meter and Van Horn, 'The policy implementation process'. p. 472.

³⁰ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature'. p. 165-66.

their schools. Their disposition towards the local policy initiatives was however, also determined by their relations with the authority officials.

The case of conflict between some school staffs and LEA officials originated from the issues that competed with one another for limited resources. Staff shortages, financial stringency, inadequate staff training opportunities, declining LEA intervention in SEN support, rising incidence of pupils with complex SEN entitled to statutory assessments and lack of parental involvement were some of the potential challenges that schools faced in realising local policies into practice.

Staff shortages, for instance, compelled schools to rely on their additional funds for recruitment and retention, a priority issue for school heads and governors that reduced the agenda inclusion to a secondary position. Provision for pupils with SEN without a statement was the first and most severely hit area as a result of staff shortages. A few schools developed strong partnership links with parents, but such links were not as well developed in all schools. Lack of parental involvement in early stages of SEN decision-making led to conflicts at later stages of making provision, which severely affected teachers' ability to make 'promoting inclusion' as a high priority issue. Lack of training opportunities provided by LEAs for school staff compelled schools to spend from within their general schools budgets on training. Due to high staff turnover, this proved to be a budget drain on schools. As a result, they had to rely on the LEAs for additional funds that accompanied a child with a statement. The proportion of pupils with SEN entitled to statutory assessments acted as an alternative source of SEN funding for the schools. It added to the workload of teachers and SENCOs in

preparing cases in order to request the LEA for a statement. The presence of conflict between a school and LEA over these issues was indicative of the direction of response from the implementing actors. Among the case study authorities, the schools that showed greater evidence of conflict with their LEA were more likely to reject the policy expectations imposed upon them.

The intensity of the response of implementing actors was evident in the closer examination of the respondent's individual disposition towards policy preferences. Several school heads in all eight case study authorities were led into conflict with their authority officials as they struggled to make provision with inadequate funds and specialist support. Responses to government's inclusion agenda were high in emotions, especially if the school and the LEA were at cross-purposes with one another over policy issues. As seen in the case of LEAs that believed in promoting inclusion by reducing schools' reliance on statements to meet the needs of pupils with SEN, whereas the schools promoted inclusive practices by relying on funds that accompanied statemented pupils.

Divergence in the way LEAs and schools approached the agenda of inclusion was also found in the related policy issues on enhancing parental involvement and staff training, targeting resources to priorities, changing role of LEAs in supporting schools causing concern, monitoring, challenging and intervening in making provision for pupils with SEN. Rigid and well-aligned LEA strategies on inclusion did not encourage frequent public consultations and parent involvement, limiting the intensity of responses of schools and parents to promoting inclusion. However, frequent and active involvement of schools and parents in LEA decision-making showed a

heightened intensity of response of individual schools to policy, albeit with unclear and conflicting SEN strategies. Strong leadership and management at both LEA and school level influenced individual dispositions of the implementing actors. Its absence impeded consensus and promoted disputes, thus delaying the process of implementation.

The LEAs controlled conflict among implementing actors or schools staff by limiting their direct involvement in public consultations and in senior level decision-making. Although there was no evidence of use of power and coercion to control conflict, strong leadership and effective strategic management of policy goals acted as a powerful mechanism to secure compliance. In most of the case study authorities, however, agreement over policy goals was less important than consensus on practical action. Some LEAs relied heavily upon negotiating agreements with schools through their involvement in public consultations, although senior level policy meetings in these authorities provided for only limited representation of schools. Only one case study LEA sought the widest possible consensus of school heads and staff as possible over their relatively new inclusion policy.

Some conflict among schools, albeit sporadic, was however inevitable. Disagreements pertained mainly to the LEA decisions on alterations in their special schools sector. Having recognised the key to successful implementation of policies, either on its own volition or compelled by OFSTED inspectors, the LEAs resorted to strengthening their monitoring and evaluation instruments and ensuring effective leadership by LEA. However, conflict among the implementing actors was most pronounced in two case study LEAs. These LEAs neither had strong leadership to ensure

compliance nor sufficient resources to bargain an agreement with the schools. One of them had a highly active school community that halted any progress in implementation with their constant battles. The other was affected by high parental involvement in the LEAs' as well as schools' policy decisions that only exacerbated conflicts and disagreements among individual actors.

Hence, an authority secured consensual agreements of school staffs and parents for successful implementation. Having a bureaucratic control over the responses of the implementing actors and maintaining their hierarchy over policy decisions, the LEAs not only ensured compliance but also effective implementation of the policies.

The third sector

The idea that implementation is the result of complex interaction processes between a large number of mutually dependent actors is broadly accepted by implementation theorists and researchers.³¹ It is central to the policy network approach that explores the patterns of interactions between various actors³² and focuses on achieving cooperation between the involved actors.³³

³¹ Klijn, E. H. and Koppenjan, J. F. M. (2000) 'Public management and policy networks: Foundations of a network approach to governance', *Public Management*, 2 (2): 135-58.

³² Rhodes, *Understanding Governance*.

³³ O'Toole, L. J. Jr. (1988) 'Strategies for intergovernmental management: Implementing programs in interorganisational networks', *Journal of Public Administration*, 25 (1): 43-57.

Among several groups of actors participating in policy processes, the consumers or clients of a policy are important to a policy network constitution. Individual parents, parent support groups and representatives of local and national voluntary organisations constitute a group of actors that provide a critical link between implementing agents/actors and government. The ‘pluricentric’ concept of policy networks provides a framework to understand the role of this group of actors in policy implementation. Since they bring a variety of interests and demands to influence specific provisions and practices, their relationship with other participating actors and government is characterised by the virtue of exchange of resources.³⁴ The proximity and consultative status of these actors with the government does not entirely determine their influence on policies. Individual disposition of parents, their behaviour and responses to policy intentions and the extent of cooperation (as against conflict) achieved with other actors can offer explanations for successes or failures in policy outcomes.³⁵

Parents

Parent power was enhanced when PPSs were made a statutory obligation for LEAs, but the partnership between LEAs, schools and parents remained elusive in most case study authorities. The involvement of parent groups or voluntary organizations in developing the PPS contributed to some success in achieving partnership between LEAs and parents. Whereas, the case study boroughs having LEA dominated PPS suffered from parents’ lack of trust and confidence in their authority. The reasons for parents’ loss of confidence

³⁴ Smith, *Pressure, Power and Policy*. The author argues that the relationship between groups and state is characterised by an exchange of resources, where the resources may just be in the form of providing information.

³⁵ Klijn and Koppenjan, ‘Public management and policy networks.’

in their authority and its schools were mainly contextual and local policy driven. The 'culture' of appeals as a result of an easier recourse to tribunals, transient population, rising costs of out-of-borough placements, financial stringency, dynamics of statementing and controversy over special school closures were some of the prime reasons for their lack of trust. The part or full involvement of parent groups or parent representation through voluntary organizations in performing conciliation, mediation and advocacy services of the PPS helped in building that trust and confidence. The level of co-operations and consensus between LEAs, schools and parents on controversial policy issues, particularly on statementing and special school closures, was relatively high in these case study boroughs. The LEA dominated PPS struggled to gain parents' consent during the public consultations over such policy decisions.

The disagreements between parents, schools and LEAs over issuing a statement for a child with SEN was identified as one of the major reasons for the breakdown of inter-agency relationships. While the LEAs took a sociological perspective of targeting SEN funds to a wider group of pupils by reducing reliance on statements, the schools held an institutional perspective of benefiting financially by requesting a statement. The parents, on the other hand, had an individualistic view on the reason for requesting a statement, entirely dependent upon their child's educational need. All these different perspectives rarely matched and thus resulted in conflicts or confrontations. On the issue of special school closures, disagreements between the LEAs, schools and parents were even more pronounced. Primarily, because the parent community was itself divided in their response to LEA proposals on special school alterations and closures. Yet another

reason for the breakdown of parent partnerships, especially with the schools, was the changes in delegation of SEN-related funds. Financial alterations that gave schools greater discretionary powers over making SEN policies and provision shifted the balance of power in favour of schools. It left the parents feeling vulnerable and dependent upon the goodwill of school administrators in making additional specialist provision for their child.

Developing successful partnership links between agencies or actors require an exchange of resources to establish mutual dependencies.³⁶ Parents were at a relative disadvantage with the LEAs and their schools in cases where the authority did not empower parent groups to share the responsibility of promoting partnership links through PPS. Running the PPS, the parent groups not only gained financial equilibrium with other agencies but also became more confident and trusting in their response to LEA policy decisions. Hence, at the local level, their contribution in implementing inclusion/SEN policies was positively a measure of success.

Voluntary organisations

At the national level, parent partnership was at the heart of government policies on inclusion, which reaffirmed their commitment to promote the voluntary sector in realising policy goals and objectives. The organisations, representing the voluntary sector in this research, reflected a range of parent clientele. Their access to government departments was subject to their influence on policymaking by providing a feedback of the current policy outcomes from the parents' perspective.

³⁶ Klijn and Koppenjan, 'Public management and policy networks'.

Voluntary organisations, like the national charities dominating the policy discourse were least representative of the parent community, whereas the local parent groups and mutual aid organisations with wide range of parent representation were least influential in policymaking. It was not surprising to find that they differed in their support for the policies on statementing, alterations in financial delegation, reorganisation of SEN services and the role of special schools. Parents were, therefore, led by these organisations into supporting or rejecting the local interpretations of government policies on these specific issues. The voluntary organisations expressed the views of the parents independently as well as in a consortium, which suffered from internal disagreements. The scope of conflict between the organisations in a Consortium was even more than in independent representation. However, exclusion of certain organisations from the membership of the Consortium in order to avoid conflict of views and attain quick consensus indicated how an undemocratic way to contribute into policymaking resulted in the formulation of ambiguous policies.

Conclusion: making sense of implementation

The theoretical frameworks used in this study to conduct an empirical analysis of implementation of inclusion policies are based on contributions of several theorists. The approach used here recognises testable propositions and causal assumptions based on the concepts of ‘conflict’, ‘ambiguity’, ‘consensus’ and ‘cooperation’, which are established with useable methodologies rather than generalisable facts in core implementation literature. The study carefully avoids normative debates, as it does not take a

standpoint on either top-down or bottom-up perspective, but locates the issue of policy definition in multiple levels of political-administrative system. Although ambiguous use of language in defining inclusion policies at the national level reduces the potential of policy conflicts at the LEA level by facilitating much wider variations in interpretations, divergences in definitions become less variable as policy goals of LEAs are made more explicit. However, at the school level, it is a challenge to make clear policy definitions for LEAs to make uncontroversial shared goals with schools.

Finding a definite yardstick to evaluate policy outcomes where statutory mandates are vague and local policies incorporate specific goals can be a challenge. It is even more difficult to measure success in implementation in a policy environment where a variety of interests interplay through several groups of participating actors. Matland rescues the situation as he suggests, 'the correct standard of implementation success is loyalty to the prescribed goals' in local contextual terms.³⁷ What then were those goals to which loyalty was sought?

At an international level, the UN initiatives and declarations affirmed their commitment to inclusive education and EFA. Although there was full acceptance of the inclusive philosophy among most countries,³⁸ evidence of progress in them was limited.³⁹ Notwithstanding the debates in the field of

³⁷ Matland, 'Synthesizing Implementation Literature'. p. 155.

³⁸ Fuchs, D. and Fuchs, L. S. (1996) 'Inclusive schools movement and the radicalisation of special education reform', *Exceptional Children*, 60 (4): 294-309. See also Bartlinger, E. (1997) 'Using ideology: cases of non-recognition of the politics of research and practice in special education', *Review of Educational Research*, 67 (4): 425-59.

³⁹ Farrell, P. and Ainscow, M. (eds) (2002) *Making Special Education Inclusive*. London: David Fulton.

special education becoming inclusive, attempts have been made worldwide to provide effective educational responses to certain groups of children. Some of the best practices in some countries have emerged as a result of encouragement by the lead of the *Salamanca Statement* and other international developments. Current developments on inclusion in England can then be attributed to these international developments to a certain extent. At the national level, political agendas other than inclusion have had a considerable impact upon education policies. For instance, the 1998 White Paper endeavoured to initiate reform, modernise of local authorities, strengthen leadership⁴⁰ and improve local government finance⁴¹. The DfEE Green Paper published in 2001 continued the theme of modernisation in making improvements in local government decision-making on education. The impact of these initiatives on the role and responsibilities of local authorities towards inclusive education was evident.

The policy environment generated by these international and national agendas encouraged the translation of inclusion policies into local practices. The modernisation agenda of the government helped to stimulate a culture of openness and accountability in local government, encouraging local discussions and public consultations on education policy changes. Similarly, the international agenda on promoting child rights to education generated awareness on the issues of social exclusion and barriers to participation as a corollary to inclusion.

⁴⁰ Cabinet Office. Performance and Innovative Unit (2001) *Strengthening Leadership in the Public Sector: a Research Study by the PIU*. London: Cabinet Office.

⁴¹ Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000) *Modernising Local Government Finance: a Green Paper*. London: DETR.

Nevertheless, the permissive and exhortatory regime within which SEN policy originated and evolved in England has been quite unable to promote consensus around this essentially philosophical concept of inclusion. Capable of interpretation in so many different ways, the lack of rigour in the concept enables it to accommodate divergent approaches and is susceptible to being played in aid of widely differing practices at the school and LEA level. Without a firm and explicit framework for policy, SEN provision was bound to reflect local priorities and circumstances. It remains open to any future government to define its objectives in more tangible terms to confront the conflict that would inescapably follow and devote its resources to promoting its own favoured vision of inclusion of children with special education needs.

The study draws upon primary and secondary sources, including press reports, local authority documents, committee papers and reports as well as specialist journals and official publications.

Principally, the primary source material was drawn from surveys and fieldwork. The survey phase of this work took the form of a national census of all LEAs in England and a sample survey of schools in the eight case study London authorities. The fieldwork stage comprised visits to those eight LEAs where in-depth interviews were conducted with officials, teachers, head teachers, and representatives of local voluntary organisations and of parents as service users. The same information was also sought from interviews with DfES officials and representatives of national voluntary organisations. This appendix presents a detailed account of the work undertaken, its rationale and limits.

Research Design

The Survey

A postal questionnaire was sent to all 150 LEAs, to which 87 per cent responded. The questionnaire was designed to seek information on LEA policies on inclusion or SEN; special educational needs service provision, and funding. It explored the issues on policy decision-making and implementation, dynamics of statementing, closures of special schools, reorganisation of service provision and staffing, and delegation of funds. It is reproduced in Appendix B. The school survey was aimed to elicit information that would complement and provide a context for the locally conducted interview programme. It explored such matters as school-LEA relations, alterations in support services for pupils with SEN in school, barriers to promoting inclusion, factors influencing the statementing process and impact of changes in school funding systems.

Selection of case study authorities

Eight London boroughs were chosen for case study to reflect a balance of inner and outer boroughs, different social and economic conditions and political control, as well as the incidence and prevalence of special educational needs and their contrasting educational and administrative heritage. These were: Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Richmond, Islington, Brent, Hillingdon and Enfield.

Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Islington are inner London boroughs, created as LEAs only in 1992. Formerly the Inner London Education Authority, a body with a strong egalitarian ethos and extensive provision particularly as regards specialist educational services, provided education in these areas. Newham, while an outer London borough, shares the social and economic characteristics of the poorer areas of inner London. Newham's educational history is, however, unique in that it was formed in 1965 through the amalgamation of two county boroughs with long tradition of educational provision. The remaining four boroughs – Brent, Hillingdon, Enfield and Richmond – are in outer London and were created as education authorities in 1965. While much of Brent exceptionally shares many of the characteristics of inner London authorities, the others, being more affluent areas, represent a striking contrast in terms of social conditions.

Confining the fieldwork to London was for two reasons: first, the London boroughs provided easier access in terms of proximity to the researcher's location. Given the need for repeated visits and informal contacts, accessibility and convenience were important considerations. Secondly, and more importantly, the London boroughs represented a sufficient range of incidence of special needs in education. Furthermore, variations in SEN provision are best illuminated in London with its group of 32 contiguous authorities of comparable size and status.

Selection of respondents for interview

In-depth interviews were carried out with 24 LEA officers and a total of 32 headteachers, teachers and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators; 17 national and local voluntary

organisations' representatives or parents were also interviewed. Each interview lasted for about an hour and was tape recorded for later transcription.

Rationale for the method

This mixed method approach, using a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews, was chosen for several reasons. The survey of LEAs was first undertaken to map out the broad picture of SEN provision nationally, trends in that provision and influences upon it. Having established the patterns of need and provision, it was imperative to focus on contrasting local variations. This was approached by means of selecting the eight London boroughs for case study. The factors affecting the development of SEN policy, the ways in which the overarching concept of inclusion are understood, the translation of policy into practice at the school level and the influence of parents and parent groups cannot be ascertained by survey methods alone, nor by the accumulation of formal documents in the case study authorities. More importantly, the survey method can give only limited information about policy and provision at a single point in time, and while taken as evidence of an authority's philosophy and approach, responses to essentially judgemental questions are necessarily those of the officers completing the questionnaire. It was therefore necessary to mount an extensive programme of interviews, visits, discussions and observations in each of the research sites.

This multi-method approach known as 'complementarity' or more technically as 'triangulation' has several advantages. Foremost among them is its ability to compensate for the inherent bias of any single method and thus provide for robustness and methodological rigour.

Limitations of the research

Every social research method has inherent to it specific limitations and biases. As discussed above, the choice of complementary methods was chosen to enhance the reliability and validity of the study.

However, there is an important limitation to the findings of this research, which arises from this narrow focus on London authorities. The extent to which the findings from London case studies can be generalized to other LEAs elsewhere in England and Wales, or even the similar authorities in the English metropolitan areas, may be questioned. Although both London boroughs and metropolitan districts share common characteristics, being multi-purpose authorities with a high prevalence of deprivation, the proximity of London boroughs to the national centres of debate, decisions and campaigning may render them more open and susceptible to national influences, while equally placing them in a considerably advantageous position. This unique quality of London authorities counsels caution against over-interpretation and generalisation of the findings of the thesis.

Ethical issues

No ethical issues arose from this research design and no individuals are identified in this thesis.

APPENDIX B SURVEY OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

Name of your authority

Please Tick: Shire County/ Metropolitan/ London Borough/ Unitary

SECTION A: LEA POLICIES ON INCLUSION/ SEN

1. Which of the following *best* describe your authority's inclusive education policy?

(Tick one only)

- Right to equal opportunities in learning []
- Increasing participation of learners []
- Mainstreaming children with SEN []
- Reducing exclusion []

2. Which of the following government initiatives do you think have *most* influenced Inclusion/SEN policies in your authority?

(Tick one only)

- SEN Green Paper 1997/ SEN Programme of Action []
- Draft SEN Code of Practice []
- LEA OFSTED Inspections []
- Best Value reviews []

3. What do you see as the *most* important priority for your authority in the context of current government policies?

(Tick one only)

- Make strategies to raise standards []
- Promote inclusion in schools []
- Support under-achieving schools []
- Manage partnerships []

4. Which of the following activities do you think *most* influence the education and SEN/Inclusion-related plans within your authority? (eg: Education Development Plan, Behaviour Support Plan, etc.)

(Tick one only)

- Guidance from the DfES documents []
- Discussions in LEA's senior management meetings []
- Exploring issues in specialist forums and teams []
- Consultations with schools and community []

5. In the last two years, has the number of pupils who have been issued a statement...?

- Increased []
- Decreased []
- Remained the same []

6. How many special school(s) have been closed/ restructured in the last two years?

- One []
- More than one []
- None []

[If none, go to SECTION B]

7. Which of the following factors led to the closure of special school(s)?

- Reduced number of pupils on roll []
- Increased mainstreaming of pupils with SEN []
- Financial crisis []
- Strategic restructuring of specialist provision []

SECTION B: SEN SERVICE PROVISION

8. Have there been any changes and developments over the last two years in the staffing of SEN support services in your LEA?

(Tick one only)

- | | Increase | Decrease | Other changes |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------------|
| • Learning Support | [] | [] | []..... |
| • Behaviour Support | [] | [] | []..... |
| • Support for Low Incidence Needs | [] | [] | []..... |
| • Educational Psychology | [] | [] | []..... |
| | | | Please Specify |

9. Has the LEA unified the SEN support service elements?

- YES []
- NO []

[If yes, go to no. 11]

10. Are there any plans for unification of services in the next few years?

- YES []
- NO []

11. Does the LEA use any *alternative service providers* to provide SEN services? (eg: other statutory agencies, private agencies or joint arrangements)

- YES []
- NO []

[If yes, go to no. 13]

12. Are there any plans for using *alternate service providers* in the next few years?

- YES []
- NO []

13. Which of the following approaches to evaluation are used by SEN Support Services in your LEA?

(Tick all that apply)

- Ongoing monitoring []
- Formal Feedback []
- Complaints/ Positive comments []
- Using information on pupil progress []

If more than one, which approach do you personally tend to emphasize?

14. From which of the following do you obtain a formal feedback?

- Schools []
- Parents []
- Others (please specify).....

SECTION C: FUNDING

What percentage of the Local Schools Budget is delegated to the schools by the LEA?

- Above 85%
- Below 85%
- About 85%

Which of the SEN support services in your LEA are funded on the following basis?

| | Centrally Funded | Sold Element | Funded on project basis | NA |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| General learning difficulties support teams | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Behaviour Support | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Services for deaf/ hearing impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Services for visually impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Services for physically impaired/ disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Specialist teachers for dyslexia/ specific learning difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Specialist teachers for autism/ autistic spectrum disorder | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Services for speech/ language difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pre-school SEN support teams/ Portage services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education Psychology Service | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Special school/ unit outreach support | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Centrally Funded- wholly funded by the Government

Sold Element- percentage of the overall SEN service budget which is contracted out/ or available on buyback provision
 Funded on Project basis- eg: **Standards Fund, Private Finance Initiative, and Schools Access Initiative etc.**

IN CASE YOU WISH TO DISCUSS OR CLARIFY ANY OF THE ISSUES ABOVE, FEEL FREE TO WRITE TO ME ON ssp01mn@gold.ac.uk OR
 Monika Nangia, Department of Social Policy and Politics, Goldsmiths College, New Cross, London, SE14 5LS.

THANK YOU - PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

SECTION A: SCHOOL, THE LEA AND THE COMMUNITY

1. What kind of support does your LEA provide to your school?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Assistance in bidding for grants
- Advice on planning
- Help in networking and brokering partnerships

2. For which of the following purposes do you interact with the officials of your LEA?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Consultations in response to school changes
- Making Development Plans
- Budget related consultations

3. What SEN support services does the LEA provide to your school?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- General learning difficulties support teams
- Behaviour support
- Services for deaf/hearing impaired
- Services for visually impaired
- Services for physically impaired/disabled
- Specialist teachers for dyslexia/specific learning difficulties
- Specialist teachers for autism/autistic spectrum disorder
- Services for speech/language difficulties
- Pre-school SEN support teams/Portage services
- Education Psychology Service
- Special school/unit outreach support
- Others please specify

.....
.....

4. Has the LEA introduced any developments or made any alterations in its SEN support services for schools?

No []
Yes [] please specify

.....
.....

5. How do you arrange for SEN support services other than the Educational Psychologist and SEN Assessment Team?

Provided by the LEA []
Provided by the Health Authority []
On buyback arrangement from the LEA []
Bought from voluntary organisation []
Bought from private agency []
Others [] please specify

.....
.....

6. With which of the following, do you think, you have strongest partnership links?

LEA []
Parents []
Local parent support groups []
Voluntary organisations []
Others [] please specify

.....
.....
.....

7. Are there any local groups or voluntary organisations providing support services (other than staff training facilities) for pupils with SEN?

No []
Yes [] please specify

.....
.....

SECTION B: INCLUSION AND STATEMENTING

8. How important, in your view, are the following factors in promoting inclusion in your school?

| | <i>Very Important</i> | <i>Important</i> | <i>Not at all important</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Adequate funds | [] | [] | [] |
| Staff training | [] | [] | [] |
| Specialist support | [] | [] | [] |
| Accessible school building | [] | [] | [] |
| The 'right' attitude | [] | [] | [] |
| Closing special schools | [] | [] | [] |
| Parental involvement | [] | [] | [] |
| Voluntary organisation support | [] | [] | [] |

9. What, in your view, are the barriers to promoting inclusion in mainstream school?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Difficulty in curriculum differentiation []
- Not enough funds []
- Inadequate training opportunities []
- Lack of motivation []
- Physical barrier []

10. In the last two years, has the number of pupils who have been issued a statement...?

- Remained the same []
- Increased []
- Decreased []

please give reasons for any change

.....
.....
.....

11. To what extent would you say the following pose problems during the
 statementing procedure?

| | <i>A great deal</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Not at all</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Too much paperwork | [] | [] | [] |
| Excessive demands on staff time | [] | [] | [] |
| Inadequate SENCO support | [] | [] | [] |
| Changes in the Code of Practice | [] | [] | [] |

12. In your view, which of the types of provision offers the greatest benefit to pupils
 with the following difficulties?

| | <i>Education in Mainstream schools</i> | <i>Education in Special schools</i> |
|--|--|---|
| Learning difficulties | [] | [] |
| Emotional and behavioural difficulties | [] | [] |
| Speech and language difficulties | [] | [] |
| Physical or sensory difficulties | [] | [] |

13. How far do you agree with the following statements on the impact of closures of
 special schools?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|-------------------|-------|-------------------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Move towards making mainstream schools inclusive | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] |
| Loss of specialist expertise in the borough | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] |
| Opposed by the parents and the community | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] |
| Resisted by the staff in special schools | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] |
| Promoting government policies on inclusion | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] |

SECTION C: FUNDING

14. To what extent are you concerned about the following aspects of school funding?

| | <i>Very concerned</i> | <i>A little concerned</i> | <i>Not at all concerned</i> |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Inadequate funding for pupils with SEN | [] | [] | [] |
| Inadequate funding for pupils with statements | [] | [] | [] |
| Excessive control by the LEA | [] | [] | [] |
| Constraining LEA responsibilities | [] | [] | [] |
| The 'funding system' operated by the LEA | [] | [] | [] |

15. What, in your view, have been the effects on your school of the increase in the delegated budget in the last two years?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

| | |
|---|-----|
| Additional flexibility | [] |
| Improved SEN support service provision | [] |
| Administrative workload | [] |
| Increased staff awareness of financial implications | [] |

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TROUBLE TO COMPLETE THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE PLEASE RETURN USING THE ENCLOSED STAMPED
ENVELOPE TO
MONIKA NANGIA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND POLITICS
GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE
NEW CROSS, LONDON SE14 6NW.

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