

Exploring the motivations and practices of parents home educating their children with ASD

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the experiences of eight families who chose to home educate their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Each child had previously attended pre-school or primary school and their parents withdrew them due to a concern that their full range of needs were not being met.

The thesis adds to the existing research on home education which is under-researched globally and in the UK, especially in connection with children who have a special educational need and disabilities (SEN/D), specifically autism.

The fieldwork for this two-phase qualitative design took place during 2013-2015. The findings are based upon parental questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 15 parents and eight of the children, and four informal observations in four different family homes.

This thesis examined four research questions. Firstly, the characteristics of the parents and their children with ASD; secondly, parents' motivations for home educating and the processes that were involved; thirdly, how parents organised their home education, the approaches and practices applied and what resources they used; and finally, their views on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of home education are discussed. The thesis draws upon theories of child-centred education and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Findings demonstrate that multiple factors influenced parents' decision to home educate such as their child's dislike of school, and educational professionals' lack of knowledge and understanding regarding their children's needs. The eight mothers, who were the main educators, used different pedagogic approaches that were informed by their children's holistic needs. These generally involved the use of first hand experiences and kinaesthetic learning; similar features are found in the theories and practices of child-centred approaches.

The thesis concludes by discussing its contribution to knowledge about home education and autism, especially in relation to highlighting inflexible and inconsistent practices at school, and a lack of understanding about the individual needs of children with ASD by educational professionals.

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I dedicate this thesis to Nanny Daniels (Nora O'Brien) whose courage at 14 years of age provided future generations the opportunities of which she could only dream.

Declaration and word count

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices, list of references and bibliographies but including footnotes, glossary, diagrams and tables): 43,669 words.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
AAA	Ambitious About Autism
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AET	Autism Education Trust
APD	Auditory Processing Disorder
APPGA	All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism
As	Asperger syndrome
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
CAF	Common assessment framework
CYP	Children and young people
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EF	Executive function
EHCP	Education health and care plan
EHE	Elective home education
HFA	High functioning autism
HLTA	Higher level teaching assistant
IFS	Institution Focussed Study
IQS	Interview Question Schedule
LA	Local authority
MI	Multiple intelligence
LEA	Local education authority
NAS	National Autistic Society
NC	National Curriculum
NEF	New Education Fellowship
OCD	Obsessive compulsive disorder
ODD	Oppositional defiant disorder
OT	Occupational Therapist
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PHV	Portage home visitor
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCo	Special educational needs coordinator
SEN/D	Special educational needs and disabilities
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEACCH	Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children
ToM	Theory of mind
WCC	Weak central coherence
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Reflective Statement

Introduction

As a young child, for as long as I can remember, my mother volunteered with charities, all of which related to vulnerable children or adults, some of whom had a special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). Whilst I attended primary school she carried out a range of different part-time jobs within the school community such as, dinner lady, pre-school teacher and one-to-one teaching assistant (TA) with a pupil with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Only recently has it occurred to me that my mother's beliefs about valuing and respecting individual difference must have shaped my opinion and probably the career path that I took. I did not realise that my formative years had any significance until now and I argue that, given this background, the focus of the thesis demonstrates that I have essentially come 'full circle'.

This reflective statement is divided into three sections, educator and education in context, inclusion versus separation and notions of the 'expert' and the skills that I have learnt as a researcher. Although I do not have a specific section about my professional practice this is woven throughout this document as, studying on the EdD (Doctor in Education) programme has affected and informed my career path.

Educator and education in context

When I started the EdD programme I was teaching in a secondary special school for children with ASD and young people (CYP). One of my main motivations for wanting to pursue this programme of study was that I did not consider that I knew enough about autism, as I had not received any formal training. I was also concerned about the curriculum content for example, for the CYP that I taught, learning a life skill seemed a more productive use of their time than trying to recall and understand historical facts and yet, such options were only available to the least able CYP in the school. Therefore, I envisioned that a place on the EdD would provide me with the opportunity to learn more about autism and help me to understand what factors affect the theory and practice of education.

During my last year at the school a colleague and I were allocated time to write a thematic curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4; this document covered all National

Curriculum subjects and took account of different learning styles. Similarly, one of the research questions in the thesis relates to curriculum content but, in this instance it relates to a group of parents who sought to meet the needs of their children.

Simultaneously, I began to realise that, whilst it is constructive to have an opinion and share it within an educational context, colleagues, especially those with power and authority, can perceive the voice of others as threatening. Tentatively at first I started to question the basis for new ways of working or shared different information learnt on the EdD which I considered colleagues might have found helpful. Over time, I have learnt how to contain and control my views about meeting the needs of CYP with ASD so that now my voice is more balanced, purposeful and clear. These qualities are also replicated in my assignments as I now understand that having an opinion alone is insufficient as it needs to be situated within a context and be informed by a measured argument, which can then be evaluated and summarised.

The 'Foundations of Professionalism' module prompted me to reflect upon my pedagogical practice. During these sessions I learnt about the concept of performativity and this made me question the various roles which I had carried out in a school context. This knowledge provided me with new information and, in time, insight which forced me to look beyond the school structure and instead examine the strategic decisions and developments that were made at a national level which affected my daily professional life when in the role of 'teacher'.

Shortly after commencing the course I resigned from my teaching job as I wanted to be able to help CYP with ASD more but felt that I needed to create some distance between myself and a school environment. Instead, I wanted to learn more about CYP with ASDs experiences in a range of educational contexts.

The second job I took involved being strategic lead for secondary school-age CYP with ASD across a local authority (LA). Therefore, I went from being very insular, within a school context, to developing awareness and understanding about the origins of LA politics. I soon became aware of the impact which national policy makers have on the work of the specialist teachers that I line managed. I learnt about the pressure on LAs to save money without compromising standards. For the first time in my professional life, with the information I was learning on the EdD, I had a structure to

hang all of this onto so I felt that I had a reflexive scaffold which colleagues were not privy to, as I was able to make connections between the theories and perspectives I was reading about and then relate them directly to my place of work.

At this time the Autism Act (2009) was published and yet I did not select the policy option because I did not understand how much my professional life was impacted by the supremacy of policy content. Nevertheless, through sharing the Autism Act and subsequent Adult Autism Strategy (2010) with colleagues I was able to make secure links between my working practice, policy content and my studying on the EdD. Very slowly I began to see how national and local policy impacts on professional practice at both macro and micro levels.

Inclusion versus separation and notions of the 'expert'

In my LA role I had the privilege of working with specialist teachers from a range of SEN/D disciplines in one district, which provided guidance, modelling and training to staff in mainstream schools. One of my responsibilities was to make an informed judgment about where the greatest need was, based upon supporting evidence from Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) so that our services were appropriately targeted. Over time, when listening to a range of multi-professional colleagues, I realised that inclusion, (which is a thread throughout my assignments) is a term that is referred to frequently but is implemented differently in schools. Over the duration of the course both colleagues and family members have asked my opinion about inclusion, and my response has been that any decision should be based upon the individual needs and preferences of the individual CYP and which educational context would be most beneficial.

In the Institution Focussed Study (IFS) I explored teaching staffs' autism knowledge and practice in one community primary school. One of the most interesting outcomes was that even where staff had reportedly received a sufficient amount of autism specific training, in particular the Head Teacher and Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), they did not appear to apply all of this knowledge to their particular roles. Another outcome was that the Teaching Assistants (TAs) had generally received more autism training than the teachers, even though the teaching staff had overall responsibility for the progress and development of the pupils. Therefore a disparity

existed between which professionals in the school had received ASD specific training and whether access to training could be a contributing factor towards the quality and success or failure of whole school inclusion. For example, the risk could be that the children with ASD became the responsibility of the TAs who had the specialist knowledge as opposed to the entire staff team being accountable.

Through the LA work that I did I was regularly referred to as an autism 'expert', and as a result I was expected to provide advice, guidance and constructive feedback about this condition to a range of colleagues, professionals and families. However, what I have discovered, as a result of studying on the EdD was that the more I learnt about a topic, such as the history of the education system, in relation to integration, inclusion and the autism condition was that I had only just scratched the surface of this 'new' knowledge. In turn, this led me to yet more information and a decision about what the next steps might be i.e. what to read, how to make a judgement about the quality of the content and then, what my opinion was and where might it fit into the arguments made by other academics. Part of my difficulty was that I found myself enticed by new topics and tantalised by terms about which I wanted to find out more. However, I quickly realised that I had to make sense of the reading that I was doing so that I could then write assignments which discussed the question or issue posed in a balanced, objective and academic style.

Skills learnt as a researcher

My MA dissertation did not contain any empirical research so when I began reading about the different methods and methodologies all of the terminology was new so it felt as though yet another door had been opened and an avalanche of books, which contained a plethora of theories and practices had fallen in on me. As a result, I found it initially challenging to come to a decision about where to start and even now I feel very much like a novice researcher. However, the Methods of Enquiry One and Two taught sections of the EdD supported the development of my understanding in relation to educational theory and growth of skills as a researcher. One positive outcome has been that the topics which I explored on the EdD and the qualitative methods I employed reflect my personality, to some degree which I consider to be strength.

The EdD has taught me a lot about myself as I have come to realise that I am interested in people and their lived experiences. I seek to learn from participants by listening to their voices, as a result of shared dialogue through, for example the semi-structured interviews which I carried out. I chose this format because I wanted to create and apply a framework in which to locate the questions, whilst providing the opportunity in which participants could expand upon their answers or provide additional information.

This journey of discovery which led me to better understand what it means to become a qualitative researcher built upon my skills as an Art graduate: for instance, it was no longer sufficient to simply look analytically at people. When carrying out unstructured observations I needed to observe multiple participants interacting and responding to one another. I also had to become aware of myself in that context and how my presence might have impact upon what was observed, especially in the context of the family homes. Therefore, I found out that carrying out qualitative research is multifaceted because the researcher has to become aware of many actions, inactions, silences, nuances and observed relationships between the participants and myself as 'researcher'.

The other skills which I have developed include being mindful of the power differentials which came into play during the data collection process. For example, although I wrote the interview question schedules, when I stepped over the threshold of the family homes the power was with the parents as it was their domain and their rules that applied. One of the main skill sets that I have developed was that I have become more self-reliant, assertive, responsive and flexible to new and unexpected situations. My thinking has turned out to be more systematic as I have had to write for different readers (supervisor, teacher, parent, and child) and in a number of formats (email, information material and EdD assignments). Therefore, over time, I had to consciously read and re-read my work through different lenses to try and interpret the content as though I was another person reading it for the first time. For instance, when I wrote the interview question schedules initially they were written from my knowledge set but I had to become mindful of the fact that the reader might not be familiar with certain terms so I had to make appropriate revisions. For this to

happen, particularly where multiple revisions were necessary I had to become my own mentor/tutor.

R.M. Daniels.

Chapter 1: Family experience of home educating children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Introduction

This study aims to add to the research about parents who have electively chosen to home educate their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It explores their motivations and the processes involved in becoming home educators by looking at how they organise their child's education, and the pedagogical approaches, practices and resources they use. The study also considers parents' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of home educating their children, and also provides data from the children's perspective.

The sample consists of eight families (15 parents and 10 young children) who were all members of the same home education support group. This two-phased, qualitative, study was carried out in family homes using questionnaires, informal observations and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 15 parents and eight of the children. These data were analysed and then followed-up with a second phase, individual telephone interviews with 10 of the parents.

In the thesis I have chosen to use the term 'home education' as opposed to 'elective home education', as Parsons and Lewis (2010) explain the word 'elective' might be construed as being a genuine and positive choice whereas, for all eight families who participated in this study the term would be inappropriate and insensitive.

I have chosen to use the phrase 'children with ASD' as firstly, person-first language is adopted in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) and by the National Health Service (NHS, 2016). Secondly, this thesis seeks to access and explore the children's individual experiences (Connors and Stalker, 2007). Finally, the label 'ASD' is applied as this is the medical condition which is most widely used (Wing, 2011). However, Baron-Cohen (2012) explains that the term 'disorder' refers to randomness, whereas 'condition' can be described as a mode of being.

I have adopted the term 'neurodiversity' as opposed to 'neurotypical' as I agree with Silberman (2015) who argues that:

'...society should regard it as a valuable part of humanity's genetic legacy while ameliorating the aspects of autism that can be profoundly disabling without adequate forms of support' (p. 470).

The term neurodiversity describes the concept that disorders such as ASD and developmental dyscalculia ought to be considered as genuine cognitive differences with unique strengths, as opposed to regarding them as impairments (Silberman, 2015), it is also more compatible with the social model of disability which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

My professional background

I have been working in the field of education for 16 years and have spent most of my career teaching Art in secondary special schools for pupils with ASD. In my last teaching position I taught Maths and Science to all of the pupils who were educated in the specialist autism facility of a special school. I felt anxious about this because I have limited qualifications in these subjects and was concerned that the pupils might receive inadequate teaching. Given my background, I began to reflect upon whether my lack of specialist knowledge meant that my knowledge set was similar to a parent and I began to question my role as a teacher.

I am presently employed as a Senior Specialist Teacher in a LA where I provide advice and training to schools/families. This role also includes the management and supervision of eight staff, four specialist teachers and four special educational needs (SEN) practitioners.

One of the initial motivations for starting the EdD was that I did not feel knowledgeable enough about autism. As a classroom practitioner I questioned the value of some of the subjects on the school curriculum (for example History) when many of the pupils with ASD lacked independence and life skills.

My IFS (Daniels, 2012) explored teachers' and TAs' knowledge, understanding and experiences of working in one primary school with pupils with ASD. This qualitative case study involved seven participants, one Head Teacher/SENCo, three teachers and three TAs; the methods used were individual and group semi-structured

interviews and three non-participant classroom observations. The key finding was that although all of the TAs had received autism specific training the teachers had not, and this meant that greater emphasis was placed upon the support staff in meeting the needs of pupils with ASD.

After the completion of my IFS, I read an article about home education in the Times Educational Supplement magazine (Allen, 2011) and it remained with me as it was an alternative form of education that I had not previously heard of. Despite the seeming lack of publicity surrounding home education, information can be found on both the National Autistic Society (NAS) and Autism Education Trust (AET) websites. The NAS cite parental motivators such as children's sensory sensitivities and issues with the identification of their need(s) in a formal setting, whereas, the AET describes specific ASD programmes which can be based in the home.

Research questions

The thesis seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of parents and their children with ASD that are being home educated?
2. Why do parents become home educators and what are the processes involved?
3. How do parents organise home education for their children with ASD; what pedagogical approaches and practices do they employ; and what resources do they use?
4. What do parents and their children with ASD perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of home educating?

A description and examples of child-centred theory and practice are outlined in Chapter 3.

Rationale and educational context

The four main rationales for this explorative qualitative study are: firstly that home education and autism are under-researched nationally and globally; I have only found one Australian author who has employed the same research methods as my own, namely interviewing and observing home education with CYP who have intellectual

disabilities in situ. Secondly, the voice of autistic CYP and their parents need to be heard as their views have the potential to improve the existing education system, by drawing attention to the issues and specific needs of individuals with this identified need. Thirdly, the study seeks to redress the balance by sharing the voice of the participants in the hope that there is greater understanding regarding the motivations for, and practices of, parents home educating their children with ASD. Fourthly, by explaining why it is important that teachers are informed about autism via training, and the role of good practice guidance, educational institutions and their professionals are more likely to invest time in having autism specific training as they have a greater understanding of the condition and the strengths/needs of the pupils they teach and support.

Although research has been carried out on home education and disabilities (Müller, 2004) and special educational needs (SEN), both areas are under-researched (Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Reilly et al. 2002) and there is significantly less research about home education and autism (Hurlbutt, 2011; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; McDonald and Lopes, 2014). Although home education is under-researched generally (Arora, 2006) there is a perception that more parents are making this choice (Hopwood et al, 2007; Rothermel, 2002a). Nevertheless this perception is debatable as figures are dependent upon how home education is defined (Rothermel, 2002b) and a national register is not maintained in the UK (Rothermel, 2003).

For the purposes of the thesis I am defining home education as being parents educating their children outside of a formal school environment. This might also include input from others i.e. adults/CYP and pedagogical practices may take place beyond the family home. Attempts to define home education will be explored further in Chapter 2.

I consider it of great importance that both parents and their home educated children with ASD, have the opportunity to share their views as it seems their views are largely hidden (Parsons and Lewis, 2010). Likewise it has been recognised that the opinions of autistic individuals tend not to be sought in research and therefore, it is important that they have the opportunity to participate (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010). Pellicano

et al (2013) place direct responsibility upon the research community to make a change:

'Greater efforts can be made immediately by individual autism research funders to involve the autistic people and the broader autism community in the design of research, in its conduct and in the translation of its findings to issues of everyday, practical concern' (p. 5).

Home education as a form of learning is not well documented on the Gov.uk (2014b) website, and there is a general lack of awareness by parents who might be considering this educational and potentially transformative option.

It is a recognised need that teachers working in different educational contexts require autism specific training and need to deliver good practice in order to meet the needs of children with ASD (Charman et al. 2011; Wittemeyer et al. 2011). In 2012, the AET launched its three-tiered training programme and then published two key documents in an attempt to make a positive change; these related to autism standards for schools (Jones et al. 2012) and a handbook of professional competency (Wittemeyer et al. 2012). Nevertheless, as neither document is compulsory, there is little incentive for schools to become examples of good autism practice. A definition of autism is provided in Chapter 2.

Teaching children with ASD: educational challenge or opportunity?

Jennett et al. (2003) explain that the distinguishing qualities of children with ASD can make learning particularly difficult. Vanegas and Davidson (2015) maintain that it is important to research the cognitive processing of children with ASD as this is likely to impact differently in each individual, despite being in receipt of the same medical label. Jordan and Powell summarise this by stating that all of their learning is likely to include 'learning how to learn' (1990, p. 140). One of the reasons for these difficulties is that the learning profile of children with ASD tends to be uneven (Prizant et al. 2003). For example an ability with learning by rote but a weakness with remembering concepts (op cit, 2003).

Fletcher-Campbell (2003) argues that teachers should be familiar with various interventions in order to teach children with ASD. In order to be able to implement this they need to demonstrate a range of knowledge and expertise, and take a resourceful and flexible approach (DfES and DoH, 2002). Nevertheless, Harrison (1998) explains that the educational environment, as well as the teacher's pedagogical method, can make a positive change to how a pupil with ASD is included socially and how much they learn.

The American professor and autism *self*-advocate, Temple Grandin, (2010) suggests that it is more logical to concentrate on areas of a subject which a child with ASD might have strength(s) in, rather than pursue a topic which they might find particularly difficult:

'If the school will allow it, I recommend immediately putting a student who has failed Algebra into Geometry classes. If school officials tell you Algebra is the prerequisite for Geometry, tell them the Greeks invented Geometry first!' (<http://www.templegrandin.com/faq.html>).

This is likely to be problematic within a school context, particularly where a curriculum or course needs to be completed, as any omissions are likely to impact on a pupil's progress or final grade. Jordan and Powell (1990) expand upon this assertion by recommending that teachers might harness the pupil's particular interest and use this to build upon specific concepts that might be taught.

Research shows that no single intervention is more beneficial for children with ASD (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003): as Parsons et al. (2011) explain, one type of intervention is not necessarily going to create the best results for all pupils. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Jordan et al. (1998) suggest that an eclectic method might prove more beneficial when teaching pupils with ASD. However, Prizant et al. (2007) are also justified in arguing that selecting elements from different interventions can result in fragmentation and become limited in their usefulness. I have selected four examples which Connor (1999) considers best practice when teaching pupils with ASD in a school context: visual prompts, calling the child by name, short and clear

instructions, routine and structure. These are examples and recommendations that I would employ in my professional role today.

Each child with ASD has a unique learning mode (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003) and it can be valuable to ascertain each child's preferred style of learning (Datlow-Smith et al. 1995). However, Landrum and McDuffie (2010) argue there is insufficient evidence to support this claim indeed, Curry (1990) explains that academic research into this field demonstrates that:

'researchers and users alike will continue groping like the five blind men in the fable about the elephant, each with a part of the whole but none with full understanding' (p. 54).

Indeed, individuals with ASD have published books about their neurodivergent perception of the world and this has informed society's understanding regarding their experiences. This might also prove useful in understanding which approaches might benefit pupils with ASD within an educational context (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003). Similarly, Grandin (2010) explains that despite the perception that most people with ASD are visual learners, it is important to be aware that they can think in different ways.

Jordan and Powell (1999) suggest that one successful educational approach is to develop a flexible curriculum which promotes the child's interests and strengths. Nevertheless, Prizant et al. (2003) argue that priority should be given to developing children with ASD's abilities to communicate and promote their socio-emotional skills. Therefore, I argue that the content of the curriculum for children with ASD should be more varied, personally targeted and meaningful. Tutt et al. (2006) also propose that the curriculum should include the development of independence and an ability to expand upon and apply critical thought. Consequently although it is important to bear in mind that children with ASD have a medical label in common, educational professionals need to recognise that each child is an individual and as such they think and learn differently (DfES and DoH, 2002); as a result, their profile is likely to reflect their individual ability and need (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003).

In the current performance-based educational culture schools are judged against their examination results. However, given that children with ASD have fluctuating profiles which relate to their strengths and difficulties it is likely to be more problematic for them to achieve consistently and this could result in schools being reluctant to allow them admittance. Alongside this the Department for Education has revised which qualifications carry performance points (2014b): within this document it states that schools can include qualifications which are not incorporated within performance tables if they are of benefit to their pupils.

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that children with ASD are likely to benefit from a range of interventions being adopted by the educational professional given the complexity of this condition and unique profile of each individual.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. After the introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the role of formal schooling in the lives of pupils with ASD; it also briefly defines the term and its inclusion in the thesis. The second section of the literature review explores home education in England and the positive and negative aspects of this pedagogical approach particularly in relation to parents home educating their children with ASD. Chapter 3 examines the theories of child-centred education, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and family systems theory and, then relates these to the data collected for this study. In Chapter 4 the methods and methodology are discussed in respect of child and parental voice and the ethical implications of interviewing children with ASD. Chapter 5 outlines the demographic and individual characteristics of each family and; the reasons and processes involved in parents becoming home educators is explained. Chapter 6 outlines the ways in which families organise and facilitate the home education, during which a direct comparison is made between learning at home and school. In Chapter 7 the main perceived advantages and disadvantages of home education are discussed from the parents' point of view and compared with existing research. The thesis finishes with Chapter 8 by concluding and evaluating the impact of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses the evolution of the inclusion debate, the medical label of autism and how it manifests itself; then I examine the key research about autism and education from the experiences of pupils, parents and teachers. The chapter continues by focussing predominantly upon home education in England and then exploring what previous research reveals about parents' motivations for choosing this pedagogical pathway for their children with ASD. The chapter concludes by debating the positive and negative features of home education for children with ASD based upon the discussed research.

The inclusion debate

The concept of 'integration' pre-dates the Warnock Report (1978) as discussed by Mittler (1974). Booth (1992) attempts to define this term by stating that integration is a range of educational environments in which all children are able to attend, and where there is an increased growth in the participation of individuals with SEN. Armstrong (2005) argues that meeting the needs of children with SEN can be viewed from two different perspectives namely (1) is a pre-occupation for those whom prioritise the interests and welfare of others or (2) as a form of control i.e. by regulating access to provision, funding and the SEN population itself.

The American academic Lloyd M. Dunn, and English researchers/educators Len Barton and Sally Tomlinson argued that integration would benefit individuals with SEN and their teachers as it was likely to provide children with the means to become more self-reliant in adulthood (Wang, 2009), teaching professionals were less likely to be separated from their peers and restricted in their teaching abilities (op cit, 2009). The outcome of this development was to integrate pupils in the UK, and this was reflected in whole school policies that outlined how their needs were going to be met (Hornby, 1992).

One of the hoped for outcomes behind the shift towards integration was that it might support children with SEN with their transition and involvement in the wider society as young adults and beyond (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). The main difference

between integration and inclusion was the role which the individual had i.e. he or she was required to adjust to their new educational context in comparison to inclusion which emphasised that the school, its curriculum and teaching should alter (op cit, 2002); in a similar vein to the 'social model' of disability (Oliver, 2004).

The function of the Warnock Report was to analyse the educational provision in the UK for pupils who were defined as having a disability or medical condition (Gillard, 2012). Warnock (1978) discussed both the definition of SEN i.e. in relation to an individual's disability but also with regards to their strengths and other areas which may have impacted upon his or her progress educationally. As children with SEN were likely to have a range of different needs such as visual impairment or physical disability a range of educational options were made available. A number of options were outlined: (1) a curriculum which was tailored to meet their individual needs, this could have included access to specialist facilities or teaching approaches, (2) a differentiated curriculum and (3) an awareness that social and emotional factors could impact on a child's experience of school.

The Warnock Report (1978) specified that education should seek to be enjoyable and increase a child's knowledge and understanding through a moral education. The outcome of which should be that young adults were able to play active roles in their communities, contribute to society and be as independent as possible (Warnock, 1978). The report states that CYP acquire knowledge outside of school and they may 'learn things without anyone specifically teaching them' (ibid, 1978, p. 5); secondly parents, as well as teachers, might also consider themselves to be educators (ibid, 1978).

The report outlined that a range of provision should be offered in order to meet the needs of pupils with a SEN (ibid, 1978). The document explained that most pupils with SEN would need to be identified before being supported within the context of a mainstream school (ibid, 1978). The paper described that different types of provision should be developed within mainstream education. Nevertheless, the report argued that special schools should remain for particular categories of need such as pupils with severe or complex needs (op cit, 1978).

The subsequent Education Act (1981) defined a child with an SEN as having a learning difficulty which resulted in him or her requiring special education provision. This provision was described as being additional to or different from that of the child's peers who attended a local education authority (LEA) maintained school. This could however mean that the child attended a mainstream school so long as he or she had access to appropriate resources and were in receipt of an effective education.

Warnock (1978) described a range of provision to meet the diverse needs of pupils with SEN. This was referred to as a special educational needs continuum where the education of each pupil, who was given the SEN label was assessed by suitably qualified professionals so that he or she was given an appropriate educational placement (op cit, 1978). This new term SEN represented an important change as the Warnock report (1978) outlined the removal of previously applied handicap classifications, of which there were 11 (Sakellariadis et al. 2013). The Warnock report (1978) suggested that a pupil's learning needs should be recognised as a combination of each child's characteristics and those of the school they attended (op cit. 2013). For example if teaching staff had limited understanding of the pupil's particular needs it was likely that the quality of the provision might prevent the pupil from being fully included or having their complete needs met. The term 'inclusion' has been criticised by academics, professionals and parents as it has been interpreted differently, and there is a lack of agreement regarding its implementation in an educational context (House of Commons Committee, 2006; Terzi, 2010; Wang, 2009). Indeed, Warnock (2005) stated that there were two main issues regarding SEN provision namely, the type of SEN, and the notion of inclusion itself.

The effectiveness of inclusive educational practice was examined by Lindsay (2007) who reviewed the literature from eight special educational journals, published between 2001-2005. As a result of this investigation only 14 articles were discovered in which the outcomes for children with SEN were compared (ibid, 2007). Although Lindsay (2007) suggested that inclusion has helped by placing an emphasis on children's rights and the notion that inclusion can be more productive, he found that of the 14 papers (a sample of only 1.0% of the journals searched) there remained insufficient evidence to advocate for inclusive education. For example, schools that

meet the needs of all pupils in spite of each child's background, culture, strengths or needs (UNESCO, 1994).

Warnock explained that inclusion might not prove beneficial for pupils with ASD as it is doubtful that their needs would be met in a mainstream classroom (op cit, 2005). Warnock stated that there may be some exceptions, namely children with ASD whose 'needs...are more effectively met in separate institutions' (2005, p. 14). The rationale for this being that teachers would be more knowledgeable about the condition and the pupils themselves, and pupils were less likely to be bullied in a specialist environment (op cit, 2005). Further discussion regarding the educational provision and inclusion of children with ASD will be explored later on in this chapter.

Autism, theory and practice

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) was published in 2013 (APA) and I have chosen to locate the discussion about ASD in relation to this revised diagnostic tool. The term 'autistic' has been used since the mid-1940s in relation to children who displayed both deficits in their social communication and unconventional behaviours (Lyons et al. 2007). Both the definition and label ASD is a frequently contested term (O'Reilly et al. 2015; Pitner Jr. 2015); however I argue that Figure 1, below, best captures the diverse nature of this disorder.

Figure 1: A broader conceptualisation of ASD (in Mandy, 2013)

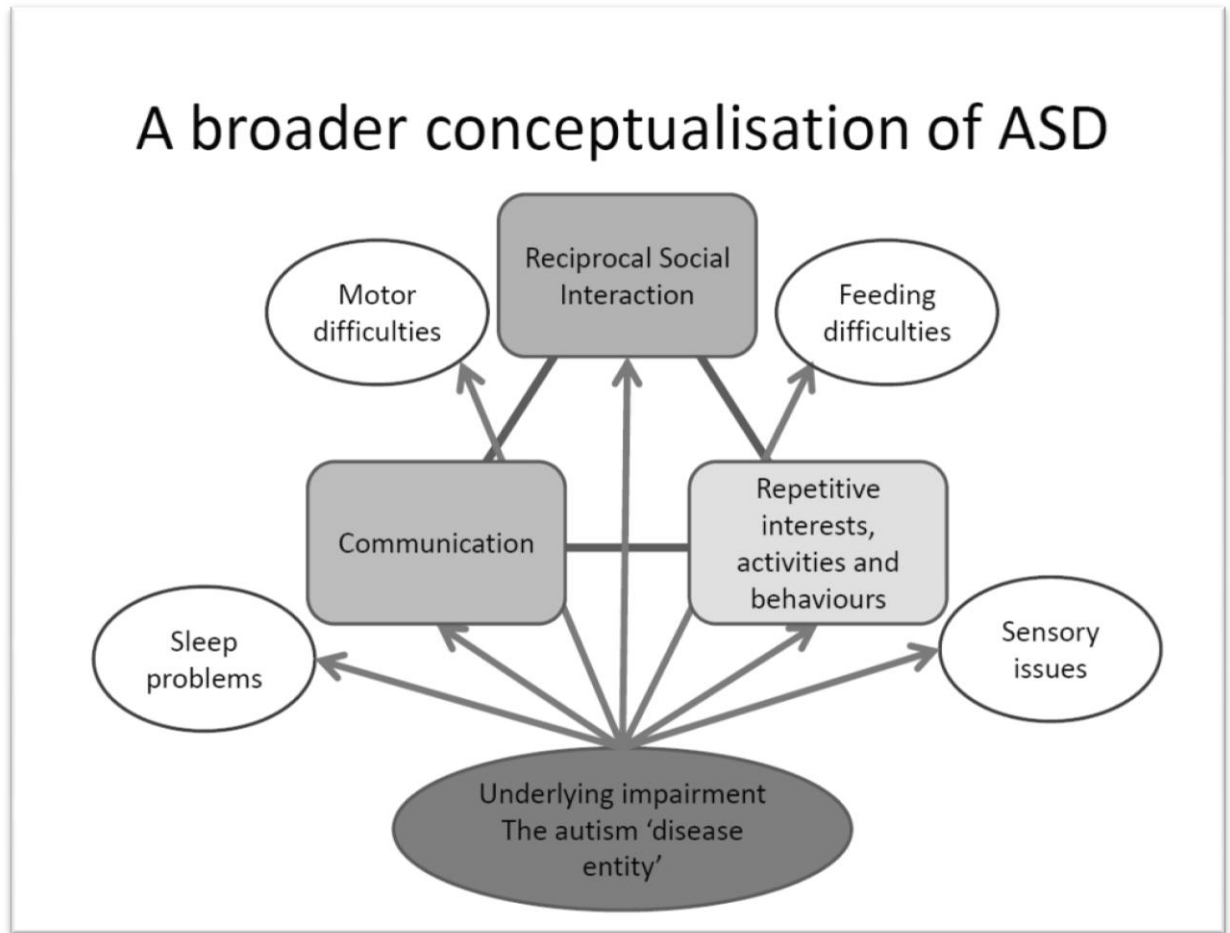


Figure 1, from Mandy (2013), clearly shows (1) the complexity of the disorder, (2) that an autistic individual can be affected to varying in each area and (3) all areas interrelate and as such impact on one another. The only aspect of Mandy's conceptualisation which sits uncomfortably is the use of the term 'disease'. Some individuals with ASD have stated that autism is integral to their identity, as Ward et al. (2000) explain:

'Being autistic is part of who I am. Sometimes I have problems, but I am satisfied with my life. I enjoy my hobbies, and I am proud of my accomplishments. I know there's a place for my special talents if I can find it' (p. 235).

The key symptoms of autism are defined as 'restrictive, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities' and 'persistent deficits in social communication and

social interaction across multiple contexts' (APA, 2013). This dyad of impairments makes reference to issues with social communication and interaction but expands upon the area of imagination as this deficit contributes towards an individual's restricted and repetitive routines.

A diagnosis of autism is often provided whilst a child is at nursery or primary school, as one of the indicators can be limited joint-attention and impaired language development (Mundy et al, 1990), both elements are necessary for positive learning outcomes. Children with ASD can appear aloof as they might play alongside others (Sugerman, 1995). They can become distressed if routines are altered and be sensitive to changes in their environment. This combination of social and communication difficulties, rigid thinking and discomfort in relation to elements of their environment, can make mainstream schooling distressing for children with ASD (Jones, 2002). The behaviours exhibited by individuals with ASD have been described as being repetitive (Blankenship et al, 2010) or challenging (Machalicek et al, 2007). Nevertheless, DSM-5 (APA, 2013) suggests that such behaviours may be connected with or driven by the individuals sensory profile. In turn this can result in ongoing challenges for parents and teachers to teach and facilitate the learning of children with ASD (MacKenzie, 2008), especially in a mainstream context.

Nevertheless some individuals with ASD do have strengths in a number of areas such as being more focussed than their peers; this allows them to concentrate on the minutiae contained within systems and/or objects and they can recall key information, particularly when talking about a favourite topic (Baron-Cohen, 2008; Bogdashina, 2010; Frith, 2003).

Inclusion and pupils with ASD

It has been identified that more pupils with ASD are being educated in mainstream schools (Emam and Farrell, 2009; Humphrey and Symes, 2010; Symes and Humphrey, 2011a) as a result of the previous Labour government's commitment to inclusion. The number of pupils whose primary SEN was ASD, that were being educated primary and secondary schools in England was 65,875 in January 2015 (DfE, 2015). Emam and Farrell (2009) maintain that this increase has been taking place since the mid 1990s. Humphrey (2008) states that it is vital that each pupil with

ASD is treated as an individual and, professionals working with them should look beyond the label.

The general practice today is that pupils with ASD may be offered three main types of schooling: attendance at their local school (with adult support); a place in a specialist provision, which is part of a mainstream school (Frederickson, Jones et al. 2010); or, dependent upon their specific needs, a full-time place in a special school. Home education is generally not referred to as being an option. Jordan (2008) argues that a specialist provision is best for an pupils with ASD as they are more likely to belong to a peer group, should receive expert input from knowledgeable teachers and they can retreat to the provision when necessary. In contrast, Parsons et al (2009) acknowledge that individuals with ASD are not a homogenous group and as such a variety of provision should continue to be made available as one intervention or method is unlikely to have positive benefits for everyone.

The need for teachers to have autism specific training has been described by a number of academics (Barnard et al. 2000; Dybvik, 2004; Jordan and Jones, 1997; McGregor and Campbell, 2001; Osler and Osler, 2002) and highlighted in my IFS (Daniels, 2012). Autism training can prove beneficial as it can increase staff confidence (Glashan et al. 2004) which may in turn result in less reliance upon support staff (Emam and Farrell, 2009). The outcome of which could be that teachers are more optimistic about inclusion (Symes and Humphrey, 2011).

Another issue for teachers is that they are expected to be able to successfully provide a prescribed and differentiated curriculum for pupils who demonstrate a range of strengths and needs, the expected outcome being that each pupil makes at least expected academic progress. This has led some teachers to question whether or not these expectations are realistic (Dybvik, 2004). Jordan (2008) develops this argument by suggesting that the national curriculum was designed for typically developing children and does not reflect the range of learners in a school. Jordan (2008) suggests there needs to be tangible improvements for the positive inclusion of pupils with ASD, emphasising the need for flexibility, appropriately trained teachers and a healthy respect for diversity and difference, both within classrooms and across the school. Humphrey and Symes (2010) explain that pupils with ASD are likely to

experience bullying whilst at school and this could take the form of 'social exclusion' as they may not be able to interact as well as their peers. Dybvik (2004) states that although one of the intended positive outcomes of inclusion was that pupils might learn and become more independent, she argues that in some instances primary-age pupils might be more inclined to help one another. This article was centred around the educational experiences which a pupil, 'Daniel' had whilst attending kindergarten.

Mainstream education today

Francis and Mills (2012) assert that, dependent upon the theoretical perspective taken, education serves different functions. Within the current neo-liberal context (Davies and Bansel, 2007; Ball, 2008a), schools would appear to be responding to the requirements of the financial market, and this issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. However, as a result of this context there has been a shift in power as the role of the local authority (LA) diminishes with central government providing more direct funding for academies and free schools (Parliament, 2015).

Simultaneous to the reform of the schooling system there has been further continued focus on teacher accountability and performance. A paper, 'The Importance Of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010' (DfE, 2010), states that it seeks to develop the status of educators; however there remains an expectation that teachers are accountable for the sustained and positive exam results of pupils (ibid, 2010). Teachers are expected to demonstrate a correlation between the monitoring of pupil progress, target setting and lesson content (DfE, 2011). Any proclamations of teacher empowerment could be viewed as fictitious as professionals appear to be perpetually controlled and directed by outside forces (Gunter, 2001).

Given this context I am concerned about the welfare and potential exclusivity of future schooling in the UK as there is likely to be increased testing at the point of school entry: with the greater breadth of educational environments certain institutions may become more selective (Francis and Mills, 2012), and this could result in further inequalities which are directly linked to academic achievement (ibid, 2012). Where then does the current education system leave the voice of parents and children with ASD who have an 'uneven skills profile' (Murray et al. 2005)?

In the LA where my research is set, and in which most home educating families in my research live, there are five special schools for pupils with ASD, three of which offer residential placements. However, these figures do not take account of specialist provisions or private schools, which may also cater for pupils with this condition. Across England there are 587 LA maintained special schools for pupils with ASD and 41 non-maintained special schools (DfE, 2014). In addition there are a further number of special, free and independent special schools that admit pupils with ASD.

In 2011 the Autism Education Trust (AET) was given a grant by the government to create a group of autism good practice standards. As a result, two reports were published one by Charman et al. (2011), and the second by Wittemeyer et al. (2011) the AET published two documents which seek to improve both autism practice (Jones et al. 2012) and staff knowledge (Wittemeyer et al. 2012).

Four out of the five conclusions outlined in Wittemeyer et al. (2011) relate to this thesis namely: teachers displayed insufficient knowledge about autism; CYP did not obtain independence; basic academic skills; and had negative social experiences at school. Likewise, Charman et al. (2011) identified six main concerns, four of which relate to this thesis e.g. teachers' inconsistent knowledge regarding adequate practice; a lack of effective ways of measuring skills such as pupil well-being; a scarcity of constructive parent-school partnerships; and a need to include the pupils' voice in research.

Attempts to define home education

Home education¹ has been defined as an alternative form of education (Reilly et al. 2002) and also to learning which is facilitated by parents (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010) and this type of instruction is generally considered to be based in the home. Nevertheless, the definition of home education is contested (Nelson, 2013; Roache, 2009) as this field of study is under-researched and there is usually no uniformity surrounding how it is delivered as it tends to be personal to each family (Mountney,

¹ In America home education is referred to as home schooling. This term is disliked in the UK as it suggests that parents practise school at home whereas parents' pedagogical approaches may differ considerably from those used in schools. This is why terms such as EHE or home education are more frequently used in the UK.

2009). Jacob (1991) does however provide a definition which seems to encapsulate the general tenet of home education:

'Home education occurs when the parent(s) choose to educate their children from a home base. The choice is the outcome of a conviction that home based education will better meet the child's needs. The parent(s) plan, implement and evaluate the child's learning programme using a variety of resources' (pp. 1-2).

Although Petrie et al. (1999) declare that home education should be full-time the government states that parents who teach their child can do so on a full or part-time basis (GOV.UKb, 2014). Despite a lack of information on the government website, home education is legal in the UK. Under Section 7 of the Education Act (1996), (which is applicable in both England and Wales) it explains that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- 1) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- 2) to any special educational needs he may have, either by attendance at school or otherwise'.

Unlike formal schooling, home education does not have the same conditions placed upon it as there are no expectations from the DfE or Ofsted regarding children's outcomes or, the completion of formal examinations (Rothermel, 2002a) therefore, home education is fairly unmonitored unless the child is already in receipt of a statement of SEN or education health and care plan (EHCP). Despite the use of the terms 'suitable' and 'efficient' Morton (2010) argues that there remains a lack of clarity surrounding definitions for these terms and, this has led to difficulties between LAs and home educators.

Key studies

In this next section I set out a number of key studies that have been influential to, and have informed, my own research. They are included because either the methods

applied, or some of the findings reported, have parallels with those used and presented in my thesis. There are four school based research studies by Emam and Farrell (2009), Humphrey and Lewis (2008a), Humphrey and Lewis (2008b), and Starr and Foy (2010), and a further five doctoral theses² by Burke (2007), Nelson (2013), Reilly (2007), Roache (2009) and Rothermel (2002a), which relate to ASD provision and/or home education. Further details about these studies (on the research aims, the sample size and methodology used) can be found in Appendix 2.

Throughout this literature review I maintain that a formal school context can be problematic for some children with ASD. This argument relates specifically to the implicit nature of ASD, and examples intersect this section of the thesis. Features of the children's educational experiences, such as the reciprocal nature of peer and teacher relationships, are debated. Connected to this are the parents' perceptions about their children's schooling and explanations are given from various research studies about the factors which contribute to parents making the decision to home educate.

² Burke and Roache are EdD theses and those by Nelson, Reilly and Rothermel are PhD theses.

Figure 2: The area of literature in which my study is located

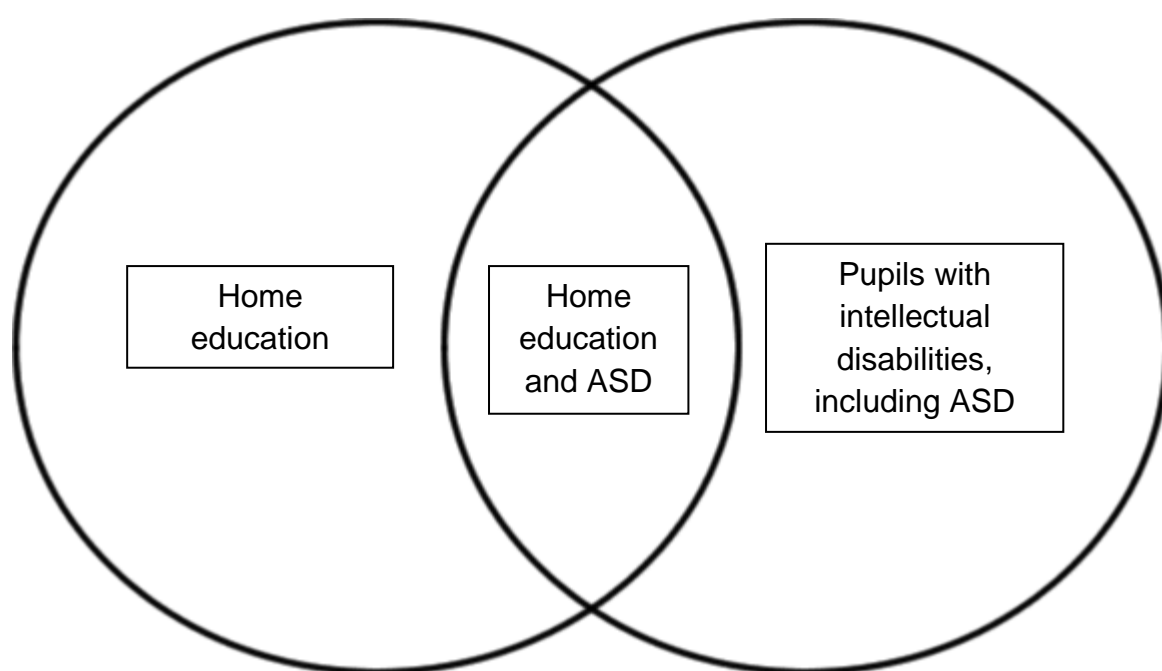


Figure 2 shows the literature that I accessed to inform this literature review. My research is set in the two main areas of home education and pupils with intellectual disabilities, specifically ASD. Although I am also interested in these pupils' experiences at school, and in their parents' perceptions of educational provision in mainstream schooling, the intersection in the middle shows where my main research questions are situated: home education and children with ASD.

The following sections are organised under the following headings: The characteristics of home educating families; parents' motivations for home educating; the processes involved in parents becoming home educators; the organisation of the home education practice; the pedagogical approaches and resources used; the advantages of home education; the disadvantages of home education; and the gaps in the research literature

The characteristics of home educating families

The three main studies that provide information on the families come from Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), Parsons and Lewis (2010) and Rothermel (2002a). This research shows that almost all main home educators are mothers of middle age. Although Rothermel's study reveals that in just over four out of 10 families at least one parent

was a qualified teacher, this seems to be the exception. Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) interviewed 10 mothers with a mean age of 42 years.

All of the mothers had children with ASD who ranged in age from 8-14 years. Similarly, in Parsons and Lewis's (2010) study, data from 27 mothers, where 48% of the children had ASD, and whose data was collected via survey responses. These home educating mothers were also of middle age as their responses stated their ages as being between 40 - 54 years. However, both studies are likely to be based on participants self-report and, it is more problematic to substantiate this as the researchers in the latter study did not conduct the research face-to-face. Unlike the first two studies, Rothermel (2002a) completed a more extensive study which included 419 families and their 1099 children from across the UK however, this research was not specifically related to children with ASD. Just over half, 581 of the children were of school-age, 52% of which had never attended school. This is an interesting fact as the number of children who did not attend school in Rothermel's thesis is greater than the total number of children in both Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) and Parson and Lewis's(2010) studies, this suggests that there are multiple considerations outside of children's experiences of school.

In Parsons and Lewis (2010) research most of the mothers had attained A-Level or equivalent qualifications and, the mothers in Rothermel's (2002a) thesis stated that they had received in-school education only. However, in both of these studies at least one parent was a qualified teacher. Therefore this indicates that even parents that work within a formal education system might have reservations about its content and structure.

Parents' motivations for home educating

Burke (2007) and Roache (2009) maintain that parents' reasons for home educating are both complicated and alter over time. The main motivations are the school's inability to understand their child's needs (Batten et al. 2006; Education Committee, 2012; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; McConnell, 2006; McDonald and Lopes, 2014; NAS, 2011; NAS and AAA, 2012; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Reilly, 2007; Reilly et al. 2002; Rothermel, 2003; Wittemeyer et al. 2011); and negative child experiences especially the anxiety, stress or unhappiness their children suffered in mainstream

schooling (Arora, 2006; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2003; Reilly, 2007).

One of the primary motivations cited was parental disappointment in relation to the school's ability to meet their child's needs (Batten et al. 2006; Parsons and Lewis, 2010).

The impact of the school environment as a source of sensory challenge has been repeatedly cited by national bodies (NAS, 2011; NAS and AAA, 2012; Education Committee, 2012). Nonetheless, parents of children with and without ASD in Parson's and Lewis's (2010) research also described dissatisfaction, negative experiences or a failure by school staff to cater for their children. This suggests that negative school encounters and frustrations are not unique to children with ASD but, due to the implicit nature of this invisible disability (Ryan and Runswick-Cole, 2008), there remains a greater need for staff to be trained about ASD so they can satisfactorily teach and support to meet children with ASD's specific needs.

Doctoral research from Roache (2009) also cites two further reasons parents gave for making this decision: by being able to control their children's learning by imparting their own specific views / philosophies and having opportunities to include related life style options (e.g. learning about Maori traditions).

A number of negative child experiences in a formal school context have also been identified as motivations for parents to home educate, in both UK (Arora, 2006; Parsons and Lewis, 2010) and two Australian studies (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Reilly, 2007).

The 65 families, many of which had children with a recognised SEN/D from Arora's (2006) study that was completed in one LA, commonly made reference to bullying and resulting school refusal as the most frequent reasons which contributed to parents becoming home educators. Although the wider study was based on LA data sources and parent survey feedback, 12 of the families participated in interviews that were carried out in the home; this included the views of 17 CYP, two of which had ASD. Most families that were interviewed made a conclusive decision to home

educate after a very troublesome episode at school during which their child was unhappy.

This suggests that teaching staff may lack an understanding about a child with ASD's executive function, i.e. difficulties with advance planning and working memory (Hill, 2004). It is unsurprising that this might result in a child with ASD feeling stressed or unhappy as he or she is likely to lose the objective of a lesson and in turn, not be able to demonstrate their potential. This is a concern as it is recognised that individuals with ASD are at increased probability of developing mental health needs than those without the disorder (Autism Speaks, 2017).

The findings in the research from Australian research show concerning similarities. Nine out of the mothers of children with ASD in Kidd and Kaczmarek's (2010) research stated that school was a source of stress and anxiety for their children. A commonly referred to instance was the 'behavioural inflexibility' (op cit. 2010) of teaching staff whereby little support was provided when the child transitioned from one activity to the next. Similar to the aforementioned UK studies, six out of the 10 mothers made reference to their children with ASD being bullied and 20% of the mothers reported their children had started to self-harm whilst at school. Likewise, conclusions from Reilly's (2007) PhD thesis feature frequent descriptions of parents' children with intellectual disabilities experiencing negative socialisation, which culminated in them feeling both rejected and stressed.

The processes involved in parents becoming home educators

The main sources on the process of home educating come from Burke (2007), Parsons and Lewis (2010), McDonald and Lopes (2014) and Reilly (2007). The literature informs us that many parents obtain information from the Internet (Burke, 2007; Parsons and Lewis, 2010), and make decisions, which result in educational changes over time (McDonald and Lopes, 2014; Reilly, 2007).

McDonald and Lopes (2014) created a theory, which they refer to as parents 'seeking of progressive fit' (p. 8). McDonald and Lopes (2014) theory comprises of an iterative four stage process, two of which relate to this thesis: firstly, parents attempt to achieve suitable education which meets the children's needs and secondly, parents

seek suitable solutions such as making the decision to home educate as a consequence of the ongoing difficulties their child was experiencing at school.

In Reilly's (2007) PhD thesis she observed that during the process of becoming home educators parents tended to follow three-stages of transition which Reilly terms, 'the theory of progressive modification'. Firstly parents tend to use readily available resources and reproduce or replicate school practices at home; secondly, parents begin to seek guidance from support networks as they realise some of their practices are proving to be unsuccessful; and thirdly, as parents' confidence increases, they request further assistance from organisations and alter their practice based upon their child's and family's needs.

The organisation of the home education practice

The key literature that investigates the organisation of family's home education practices can be found in Burke (2007), Nelson (2013), Parsons and Lewis (2010) and Rothermel (2002a). Research predominantly includes (1) practices becoming more flexible over time (Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Reilly, 2007); (2) parents and children deciding jointly on the organisation of each day (Parsons and Lewis, 2010); (3) the creation of a timetable which is consistently being implemented (Burke, 2007); (4) afternoon sessions being less structured (Rothermel, 2002a); and (4) the structure of the day / week altering over time (Nelson, 2013; Roache, 2009). It is interesting to note these more informal and less structured practices are one of the main recommendations I make in an advisory capacity to schools. For example, teaching staff should try to establish low arousal, organised, structured and predictable learning environments for pupils with ASD, and yet, that a contrary and more informal practice is often used by many home educating families.

A further example of this greater choice and freedom in the home setting can be identified in Nelson's (2013) EdD thesis whereby it is reported that parents utilise an autonomous approach, and after trialling more structured approaches, most families begin to adopt more semi-structured methods. Findings from Rothermel (2002a) also show that nearly half (45%) of parents did not use a timetable and, of those that did, only just over a quarter (26%) used a timetable for part of each day, with 28% including academic work in the morning only.

The pedagogical approaches and resources used

The main studies that discuss these themes are from Burke (2007), Hurlbutt (2011), Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), McDonald and Lopes (2014), Parsons and Lewis (2010), Reilly (2007) and Roache (2009). Research shows that some parents implement recognised therapies and interventions, such as applied behaviour analysis or speech and language therapy (Hurlbutt, 2011), and that sometimes outside tutors are employed (Rothermel, 2002a).

Some practices are more formal: for example, some parents use textbooks (Burke, 2007; Rothermel, 2002a). However, and in contrast, there are examples of learning that is more child-centred and informal such as the content of the learning being collaboratively agreed between the child and parent (Rothermel, 2002a); parents using a range of resources in and beyond the home (Roache, 2009; Rothermel, 2002a); and parents using resources and practices that reflect children's needs and interests (McDonald and Lopes, 2014; Roache, 2009; Rothermel, 2002a).

Specific examples of a more child-centred approach are discussed in Rothermel's (2002a) PhD thesis and Roache's (2009) EdD thesis. Rothermel's research states that children are placed at the centre of their learning, and she found that 54% of parents were using resources / visiting places, which related directly to their children's interests, and 27% of parents were led by, and shared in, their children's everyday activities and interests. Roache (2009) showed that the majority of families described their teaching as moving away from parent-centred to the child deciding, with parents becoming facilitators as a result of this shift.

The advantages of home education

The main research studies that highlight the positive features of home education are Ensign (2000), Gusman (2006), Hurlbutt (2011), Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), Müller (2004), Parsons and Lewis (2010), Reilly (2004), Reilly et al. (2002) and Rothermel (2002a).

There appears to be a number of common threads, which are considered to be advantages for home educating children and they mainly relate to the parents, the child or to both. The parents tend to feel more positive and empowered about home

educating (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2002a), and take a more flexible approach to their child's learning (Gusman, 2006; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Reilly et al. 2002). The child has more intensive one-to-one teaching (Ensign, 2000; Gusman, 2006; Reilly et al. 2002), and the pace and the content of the learning can be directed at the child's specific interests and abilities (Ensign, 2000; Müller, 2004). Similar conclusions were reached by Reilly et al. (2002), although her research relates to families of children with more general disabilities. It is interesting that some research about in-class support for children in school, suggest that there is less academic progress, attention and independence (Blatchford et al. 2009) from children with SEN/D in mainstream schools.

When discussing the merits of home education for children with ASD, Gusman (2006) also emphasises the reduced parent to child ratio as being one of the likely advantages as it is easier to customise the work at the child's level of ability and understanding. The outcome being that children with ASD are more likely to experience increased success and self-esteem (op cit. 2010). There may be other factors that also contribute towards these expected results such as a reduction in the amount of sensory stimuli that the child with ASD might experience in the home context, as there will be less unpredictable movement from others (such as from teachers and pupils).

Parents who participated in Hurlbutt's (2011) research outlined further benefits for their children with ASD, such as being involved in a greater range of pursuits which had a social element to them. The examples given included visits to places of interest such as the zoo or theatre and having music lessons. In contrast, Gusman (2006) examined socialising from a more strategic perspective as she emphasised the role of the parent / home educator as the person who makes the decision about when their children with ASD might be ready to experience a particular social situation.

Although the children in Rothermel's (2002a) PhD thesis did not have ASD, the theme of socialisation is also discussed. Three-quarters (73%) of parents described meeting up with other home educating families, and just under a quarter (22%) considered that their children did not miss out on socialising. However, 19% of the parents considered it important that it was they who determined their children's social experiences.

The disadvantages of home education

The primary sources of information that explore this theme come from Ensign, (2000), Hurlbutt (2010), Hurlbutt (2012), Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), Mifflin (2012), Monk (2004), Nelson (2013), Neuman and Averam (2003), Parsons and Lewis (2010) and Tomsett (2004). The main themes concern the impact on the home educating parent(s), multiple sources of stress on family relationships, various negative opinions about home education from outsiders and the lack of social opportunities for the home educated child.

The impact of home education on the parent(s) include the competing and different roles of trying to be parent and a home educator or tutor (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Mifflin, 2012); the financial strain from the loss of employment (Nelson, 2013), insufficient financial help (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Nelson, 2013;) so, for example, their children could sit examinations, share resources or community facilities (Parsons and Lewis, 2010), and, sometimes, a general lack of support from teachers and LAs or home educated support groups.

Family relationships between parents, and between parents and the other children who attend school, can also occur (Hurlbutt, 2010). Tensions can also develop in relationships between the children who attend school and the home educated child. Research from Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) shows that some mothers who wanted to join a home education support group suffered from anxiety or experienced negativity from members of this community. In contrast, parents in Parsons and Lewis' (2010) study made positive comments about home education support groups.

There are also sceptical views from other parents and from some teachers who point out that home educating parents are not trained teachers and are therefore not qualified to teach children at home.

There is also the perception that children's opportunities to socialise with their peers are limited (Hurlbutt, 2012; Nelson, 2013). This was the main concern shared by the special education teachers in Hurlbutt's (2012) study. In Nelson's (2013) PhD research families reportedly took a proactive approach to ensure their children had social encounters, such as by attending home education support groups. Yet, the

older children in Nelson's (2013) research stated that they missed some of their friends who continued to attend formal schooling. Overall, Nelson (2013) maintains that neither the CYPs' social well-being or social interactions had been negatively impacted as a result of being home educated. However, it is important to state that the participants did not have ASD and, therefore, opportunities to engage with others might not have had the same level of importance.

The gaps in the research literature

The literature reviewed is helpful to my own study as some of the themes that it explores resonate with those that will be discussed in the findings of my thesis. For example, I will examine the benefits of home education in respect to the child having a more personalised learning curriculum and the impact of the home education on family relationships and social opportunities.

Although my own study intends to add to the current literature in the area of home educating children with intellectual disabilities (specifically ASD), there are a number of gaps, which my thesis intends to fill and produce new findings. The four research questions presented are unique to this study and to my knowledge have not been investigated together as a cluster before.

This study involves learning about home education in the family homes. The advantages of this are the home is a natural and familiar environment for everyone, especially the children with ASD. The outcome of which should be that the children are more likely to feel comfortable and self-regulated, and this should result in a more realistic representation of their home education practice. By selecting the home setting as the environment in which to conduct the research I will also be considerate of the family's needs, as they will not experience additional stress by travelling to a new or unfamiliar place.

When engaging in dialogue about their home education practices, participants will have the chance to show resources or examples of the children's work as these are more likely to be easily accessible in the home. Should any of the children require a break from taking part in the study, it will be easier for them to withdraw to another room in the house and by spending time with the families this should provide a more

holistic lived experience in relation to home education as it will allow the interview data to be directly compared with the observations.

The study's main focus is on children with ASD, rather than SEN/D in general, and it aims to fill a gap as ASD and home education continue to be an under-researched phenomenon. The design of the study includes giving voice to the children with ASD and only one other study, by Nelson (2013), who interviewed CYP. Moreover, some of these were focus groups, whereas all of my interviews will be conducted individually (despite the presence of the parent on some occasions).

My research will use observations, and I hope that this will include some actual teaching and interactions between the home educating parent and their child. I will adopt an informal and reflexive approach during the observations in response to each family as the session(s) unfold. Consequently, each comprehensive narrative is likely to be unparalleled as, unlike Reilly (2007), I will interact with participants (the parents and children) and two sets of thorough field notes are contained in the main section of this thesis. The only studies that carried out research in the family homes are from Nelson (2013), Reilly (2007) and Roache (2009). However, there is less detail about the home context and location of the learning than in my study and in these studies the home setting does not appear to be written about at length in the main body of their theses, unlike in my thesis.

In the next chapter I will discuss the pedagogical approaches of child-centred education, then describe Vygotsky's (1997) and Wood and Wood's (1996) theories relating to the theory and practice of children's learning. Then I will examine the merits of family systems theory and how it can be used to examine multiple relationships within a family unit.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter discusses a number of theories, which have provided a lens to help me understand what was going on with the educational practices that I observed in the home setting, although some theories assumed a greater importance than others.

I discuss family systems theory (FST) (Morgaine, 2001); the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1997) and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1997; Wood et al. 1976); seeking progressive fit (McDonald and Lopes, 2014), the theory of progressive modification (Reilly, 2007); and theories of child-centred education (Wilson, 1969).

The two theories of family systems theory and child-centred education were added to this section as data began to be collected. When I began my fieldwork I did not know that the main pedagogical approach used by the majority of the home educators was going to be so similar to those categorised as being 'child-centred', this emerged from the data, and so I had to go back to the literature to read more about this theory. Similarly, as I started to become more aware of the effects of home educating on family relationships and behaviours I again sought out theories from the literature that could help me understand what was going on.

Appendix 1 briefly mentions the three psychological theories of autism, which provides an insight into why aspects of formal schooling can be problematic for children with ASD.

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory (FST) recognises families as being systems formed of individuals who interrelate with one another and display meaningful behaviours as each person is interdependent on each other (Morgaine, 2001). It recognises that within families each person learns skills, which allows them to function with a range of people in different environments (Garris-Christian, 2006). A main focus of FST is to examine family behaviour as this can reveal why each family member behaves as they do in certain circumstances (op cit. 2006).

Academics argue that recognising the system in a family with a child with ASD, can support the planning and implementation of the most beneficial approaches that are likely to help the child (Bristol, 1985; Morgan, 1988). As a result of the system in place, each family constructs its own set of boundaries which FST considers are on a continuum ranging from open to closed and their placement on this continuum can impact upon how open or closed the family are to external influences (Morgaine, 2001) such as external educational professionals or schools. Although a family is a system it contains multiple subsystems which can be made up of two or three members, and within these subsystems different boundaries, rules and characteristics apply (Morgaine, 2001), for example when considering areas of discipline. I was particularly interested in how relations between the parent(s) and the home educated child affected any siblings who continued to attend mainstream schooling. This suggests that the child being home educated and the home educating parent are the family members who are likely to be most affected by the decision to home educate, and it is their sub-system which is most likely to alter.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding

Vygotsky (1997) was interested in the existing theories of child development. However, he had two specific concerns about them, namely the relationship between learning and development and features of this relationship when a child reaches school age. Vygotsky maintains that everything a child learnt has some history, as learning does not begin at the point of nursery / school entry but from birth (ibid, 1997).

Vygotsky suggests that a child's development begins with the social world, before moving onto the child as an individual (Rogoff, 1991). He argues that a child is a social individual, and in order for elevated cognitive progression to occur, social interactions need to take place (Rogoff, 1991). He maintains that a child's social interactions are pivotal in promoting their development via interactions with others, i.e. where the other person is more skilled, and in turn, this should result in joint problem solving and guidance from the more practised individual (op cit, 1991) and the child can be 'scaffolded' up to a higher level. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development relates to shared thought between the child, other individuals and the value, which the child places upon understanding these relations (op cit, 1991). He also places

importance upon shared understanding and combined decision making between the child and the other.

Vygotsky (1997) suggests that there are two types of development, a child's own developmental level, which relates to his or her mental abilities and are a direct result of a completed phase, and also the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is explained as the space between a child's actual developmental level, as verified by autonomous problem solving, and the level of potential development that a child can potentially achieve when provided with either adult guidance or in partnership with more able children (ibid, 1997). Vygotsky states that the functions contained within the ZPD are those which are not fully formed, whereas a child's actual developmental level is representative of their retrospective development, a level which the child has already achieved (1997). Vygotsky argues that in order to be able to establish a child's true mental development both their actual developmental level and the ZPD need to be accounted for (ibid, 1997). One critique of this theory comes from Smit et al. (2013) who argue that ZPD is often understood differently as the descriptions of this concept vary in eight of Vygotsky's publications.

In the mid 1970s Wood et al. (1976) began using and applying Vygotsky's term 'scaffolding' specifically to the interactions between a tutor and a child (Wood and Wood, 1996). This concept sought to investigate the support offered by an adult or more competent person, such as another child when helping a child complete a task which he or she currently needed some help with (ibid, 1996).

According to Wood et al. (1976) the scaffolding process comprises of six steps for the teacher/tutor to follow:

1. Gain the child's interest in an activity.
2. Make the activity simpler.
3. Support the child to focus on the goal.
4. Highlight important elements.
5. Oversee any negative feelings e.g. frustration.
6. Demonstrate a procedure so the child can replicate this.

Scaffolding has since been further developed in pedagogy and is now used with groups or classes of children and in peer-to-peer interactions (Smit et al. 2013). Van de Pol et al. (2010) identifies three main features when using the scaffolding metaphor:

1. Contingency or receptiveness.
2. Fading - the progressive removal of the scaffolding once the child has internalised the information.
3. Transferring responsibility from the adult (or more able peer) onto the child.

However, there have been some critiques of scaffolding. For example, Stone (1998) explains that if the tutor/teacher is too rigid in their adherence of this term, the likely outcome is 'the imposition of a structure' (p. 349) onto the child and, should this occur, the nature of the interaction can become increasingly limited, thus resulting in the child being a passive receiver of the adult's instructions (Verenikina, 2008).

Further, in research carried out by Donovan and Smolkin (2002), which explored the level of scaffolding children needed in order to ascertain how much knowledge they had on the subject of 'genre', they found that sometimes this approach prevented the children from communicating the range of knowledge they had on the topic.

Thomas (1992) maintains that although scaffolding is possible in the home setting, where the adult has individualised interactions which start from where the child is, it can be more difficult to apply in the school setting where the teacher has less time to spend with the individual and this may prevent children from demonstrating their actual ability.

Theories from the literature review

In Chapter 2, two theories relating to the process of becoming a home educator were briefly discussed, which I will use when I present my findings. McDonald and Lopes (2014), describe parents of children with ASD 'seeking progressive fit' (p. 8) in relation to managing their child's education. Three out of the four named stages relates to this study:

- Parents look for, attain and generate suitable education for their children.
- Parents find solutions to alleviate ongoing issues with their child's education, such as start home educating.
- Parents define their futures and compensate for a previously biased existence, i.e. a preoccupation with their child's education provision.

Correspondingly, Reilly (2007) observed three stages, which parents appeared to experience and this was labelled as 'the theory of progressive modification'. Reilly explains that once parents have made the decision to home educate they generally progress through a number of stages until they are satisfied with their home education practice. These stages are detailed as:

- Parents use existing resources, this is described as home educators making impromptu attempts at using available resources and creating school at home experiences for their children.
- Parents access support groups systematically. This may take the form of attending home education meetings, sharing experiences and developing confidence regarding the possibility of adopting a more flexible pedagogical approach to their practice.
- Parents create a workable design, which meets their child's needs and their family's particular conditions. As their confidence increases, parents are more able to establish a flexible learning schedule, justify their newly adopted practice and incorporate their child's interests into an individually tailored curriculum.

Therefore Reilly's theory is both progressive because it develops in three stages but it also demonstrates a development in the parents practice itself. Whilst McDonald and Lopes (2014) illustrated changes prior to making the decision to home educate, Reilly (2007) described ongoing changes to families home education practices once the child was being home educated.

Theoretical underpinnings and the characteristics of child-centred education

We will see when I present the findings that theories of child-centred education began to assume greater importance as my research progressed. Child-centred education

is based upon a theory of child development (Wood, 2007), and Dewey argued that the process of learning related to a child's sociological and psychological development, and he considered the starting point was a child's psychological state (1929). Dewey believed that in order to better understand a child's psychological position, an adult should first observe them, and he considered this to be the responsibility of the educator (ibid, 1929). Wilson (1969) defined child-centred learning, which revolved around each child:

'For a child an educational situation would necessarily be 'child-centred', meaning that its subject matter...would be what was valued by the child' (p. 106).

Further, Schofield (2012) explains:

*'Child-centredness' [is where] the teacher becomes aware that he can learn *about* the child, and even learn *from* the child as well as teaching the child' (p. 78).*

Child-centred education thus focuses on the needs and interests of each child, and placed these at the heart of the learning (Entwistle, 2012). Indeed, Rousseau argued that any existing curriculum should be disregarded; instead pedagogy should be individual and needs led (Rusk, 1933). Similarly, Froebel believed that each individual's development should reveal what the child already retained (Darling, 1988).

Dewey suggested that education should originate from each child's instincts (1929) and that any knowledge gained was as a result of their engagement with others (Carr, 1988). Therefore, Dewey placed a great deal of importance upon children learning through shared activities with others (Darling, 1988); he regarded this person to person interaction to be of greater importance than learning via experiencing the physical environment, as described by Rousseau in "Emile, or, Education" (Darling, 1988).

A. S. Neill argued that children should develop at their own rate (Darling, 1988) and, in order for this to happen, learning should be led by the children themselves (Wood, 2007). Children should be active learners (Reese, 2001) and, as a consequence, it was likely that they would become curious (Darling, 1988). Froebel emphasised the need to ensure that every educational institution should provide activities which were practical and, where children might use different types of resources (Darling, 1988). Indeed, Dewey advocated learning that was both kinaesthetic and concrete (1929) and in order for higher level abstract concepts to be learnt, children first needed to experience concrete tasks (Entwistle, 2012). Many of the child-centred theorists such as Rousseau and Dewey believed that learning should happen via practical subjects such as cookery, woodwork (Carr, 1988) or textiles (Dewey, 1929). It was argued that discovery (van Harmelen, 1998), exploration (Darling, 1988) and play (Wood, 2007) also had pivotal roles in children's learning.

A number of writers have critiqued the concept of child-centred education. For example, Reese (2001) has argued that because it is difficult to define child-centred education it should therefore not be regarded as a reasoned movement. One outcome of this is that it has been interpreted in many different ways by educationalists and academics (Darling, 1988). Due in part to child-centred education's popularity and connection with 1960's culture, van Harmelen described it as being part of folklore (1998) which society is likely to have embellished over the decades.

Although child-centred education encompasses many different features some of the key characteristics that re-appear throughout the literature are outlined below:

- Emphasis on learning by doing, for example hands-on projects, expeditionary learning, and experiential learning, based on first hand experience.
- Integrated curriculum focussed on thematic units.
- Great importance on problem solving and critical thinking.
- Strong emphasis on developing observation skills.
- Group work and development of social skills.
- Understanding and action as the goals of learning as opposed to rote knowledge.

- Collaborative and cooperative learning projects.
- Highly personalised education, based on the child's own interests and accounting for each individual's personal goals.
- Less importance on textbooks in favour of varied learning resources.
- Emphasis on lifelong learning and social skills.

The theories and concepts discussed in relation to my study connect with three out of the four research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of parents and their children with ASD that are being home educated?

This is a descriptive research question so none of the theories discussed above are applied.

2. Why do parents become home educators and what are the processes involved?

The theory of progressive fit (McDonald and Lopes, 2014) and the theory of progressive modification (Reilly, 2007) are discussed in response to this research question.

3. How do parents organise home education for their children with ASD; what pedagogical approaches and practices do they employ; and what resources do they use?

I intend to use the following theories to help me understand this three-part research question: child-centred discourses, ZPD (Vygotsky, 1997), family systems theory (Garris-Christian, 2006), scaffolding (Wood and Wood, 1996) and the theory of progressive modification (Reilly, 2007).

4. What do parents and their children with ASD perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of home educating?

I will use family systems theory (Garris-Christian, 2006) and the theory of progressive modification (Reilly, 2007) and relate them to the specific family examples from the data, to help me answer this question.

The next chapter will explain and justify the methods and methodology that I used in this small scale qualitative study.

Chapter 4: Methods and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the two-phase research design of this explorative study, and describes the sample of parents and their children with ASD who participated and shared their experiences of home education. The methodology is explained and ethical issues are considered, particularly with reference to the issues of accessibility, and the ethical implications of children with SEN/D participating in research. Finally, an explanation is given about how the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Research practice

My research is interpretative and I was not seeking complete objectivity. The thesis investigates the motivations, practices and experiences of a small group of home educating families and their children with ASD from one town in the South-East of England. A flexible, multi-method design approach was implemented as I aimed to obtain an enhanced understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) about home education. Qualitative data was collected and a general constructivist stance was taken as I sought to interpret the human experiences of home education via the spoken word and the observed action (Jones, 1993). Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as I am collecting data from family homes and trying to make sense of and interpret the data based upon the meanings generated by myself and the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As the first major phase of the data was collected in the family homes, it is partly this context which affects how I carried out my research practice (Nelson et al. 1992).

Case study research

Data was collected from eight home educating families. Therefore I am calling the research a small-scale case study because I am seeking to examine the experiences and practices of families who were all members of one support group by gaining their views and interpretations about their specific situation(s) (Robson, 2002).

Simons' (2009) definition of a case study best describes what I was seeking to achieve:

‘An in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular...program or system in a “real life” context’ (p. 21).

My research included the voices of parents and their children with ASD in relation to their home education experiences. The main unit of analysis are the eight families who participated in the study. Drawing on the work of Stake (2005) I am calling this a collective case study where a joint number of cases were selected in order to investigate the phenomenon of home educating children with ASD. This case study is also instrumental as I have examined and provided insights from the perspectives of parents and their children with ASD.

Although I have collected data from eight families, which equates to 25 participants (15 parents and 10 children), the strength of case study research is its ability to create full and detailed explanations regarding the cases that are being studied (Gomm, Hammersley et al., 2000).

Through the analysis of these participants I am seeking to provide an explanation about a family’s motivations, practices and pedagogical approaches used in their home education with their children with ASD.

There are critiques of case study research. For example, the sample is not representative, and the uniqueness of each family, particularly in relation to the diagnosis, which the children have, means that I am unable to claim that any generalisations will be made. However this is the case in most qualitative studies.

One characteristic that separates case studies from other forms of qualitative enquiry is the concept of 'boundedness' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). The boundaries of the case define 'what is deemed vital and important within those boundaries...[and] usually determines what the study is about' (Stake, 1978, p. 2). However, boundaries can be applied arbitrarily and it is not always clear where they begin and end. Although the boundary in this study is placed around the family homes where the education is taking place, it can be argued that other factors remain unknown. These include the effects of the child's previous experience(s) in a formal educational

context, their experiences in other local contexts / environments, and the unknown effects from a whole series of relationships outside the home, and some of all of these will have an impact on the participants' behaviours and responses.

Another critique is there is a risk that familiarity can lead to researcher bias, which researchers need to be aware of and guard against (Flyvberg, 2006). Furthermore, Burgess-Limerick and Burgess-Limerick (1998) point out that there is an inevitable risk that both myself, as researcher, and the participants might not be able to understand one another. Nevertheless, as Gergen and Gergen (1991) explain, all lived experiences are generally based on a range of shared meanings and experiences; as such there should be elements of understanding between myself and the participants. By recognising that there may be some inconsistencies regarding the complex dialogue and activities between the lived experiences of myself and the participants (Burgess-Limerick and Burgess-Limerick, 1998) I hope to be able to document these potential happenings in the findings and discussion chapters (see Chapters 5 - 8). By having this awareness, and by making this transparent in the thesis, this should increase the validity of the case study research and for the data that arises from the study in total.

Research design

The data was collected in two phases (see Table 1). Phase -1 included the following data collection:

- Background questionnaires for parental completion.
- Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with parents.
- Flexibly applied semi-structured interviews with children.
- Informal observations of home education practice(s).

Phase -2 consisted of follow up telephone interviews with parents that grew out of the thematic analysis of the data from Phase -1. For example, the questions posed sought to explore, in greater detail, the pedagogical approaches used by parents, specifically in relation to facilitated individual approaches, and to ascertain the extent to which they considered themselves to be implementing a form of child-centred

learning, irrespective of whether they used this terminology. The idea that the parents were using child-centred approaches arose from the data generated in Phase-1, and therefore, specific child-centred pedagogy did not form part of the original research questions but was an emerging hypothesis and theme that was pursued and explored at this later stage.

A detailed summary of the two phases of research can be seen below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: A detailed summary of the design and methods

Phase and method used	Further details of methods	Purpose	Data produced
Phase -1: From December 2013 until August 2014			
1: Parent questionnaire	20 unit questionnaire for all parents (of 10 children with ASD)	To obtain background information about the parents which might have influenced their decision to home educate	15 completed questionnaires (8 from mothers, 7 from fathers)
Face-to-face parent interviews	Two interview schedules: - Schedule 1 containing 24 questions - Schedule 2 containing 39 questions	To understand parents experiences of their child's diagnosis of autism and experiences of formal schooling To enable parents to describe the pedagogical approaches they use in the context of their specific family unit	15 interviews (8 with mothers, 7 with fathers)
Face-to-face child interviews	Schedule 3 containing 26 questions	To learn about children's encounters at nursery/school and what it is like for them to be educated at home	8 interviews
Informal observations	Open, narrative format based on 23 prompted themes to observe	To observe home education with the parents and children in the home environment	4 completed observations
Phase -2: From December 2014 – January 2015 Parent telephone interviews	Schedule 4 containing 10 questions	To ascertain further detail regarding parents' teaching approaches and their role in their children's learning	10 interviews (6 with mothers, 4 with fathers)

Table 2: A summary of the design and methods over time

Phase	Method of data collection	Number of families involved	Date
1	Parental questionnaires	8	December 2013 - August 2014
1	Face-to-face parent interviews	8	December 2013 - August 2014
1	Face-to-face child interviews	7	December 2013 - August 2014
1	Informal observations	4	December 2013 - August 2014
2	Parent telephone interviews	6	December 2014 - January 2015

Recruitment of the sample

At a mutual friend's party in 2011, I had a chance encounter with 'Susan' (not her real name) and learned that she was home educating her son who had a formal diagnosis of AS. I then arranged to meet her again, this time for coffee in December 2013 whilst I was writing my thesis proposal. During this brief meeting, Susan explained that she had established a home education support group. Her initial motivation for doing this was that on previous occasions she found that the South East Home Educators group, to which she belonged, was too noisy for her son and daughter. The outcome of our meeting was that Susan would forward an email to all 56 members of her home education support group to explain that, in the near future, I would be seeking participants for a small-scale study about their experiences of home educating their children with ASD.

In August 2014 I provided an Information form for parents (see Appendix 3) about the proposed research, which Susan forwarded to the families. Opportunistic sampling was used as Susan made a judgement about whether or not she deemed the families would be willing to participate (Robson, 2002). At the time of the data collection there were 56 members in the ASD support group. By using this sampling method I was unable to predict who I was going to access or what participants might disclose

(Curtis et al. 2000). For this reason the sample is unrepresentative as all families belonged to the same home education support group and, as I have written above, generalisations cannot be made from the data collection. Given that Susan acted as gatekeeper I had limited control over who took part however, my primary focus instead was that families met two main criteria (1) the parents needed to be currently home educating and (2) their children had to have ASD or another related SEN/D. Further requirements included were that participants lived within a reasonable distance of my home and would be willing to allow me entry to their residence.

Although I was seeking to learn from the home educating families it is likely that, from the parents' perspectives, I represented the roles of professional first and researcher second. Therefore, there may have been a degree of suspicion about my motivations for studying the subject of home education and autism. Thus, it was necessary that I trusted Susan's judgment in order to gain access. In addition to Susan selecting which families might be willing to participate, she also acted as 'gatekeeper' so, this meant that she was the only person who had control over whether or not I could gain access to the group.

Once families had time to process and make an informed decision about whether to participate in the study, Susan, by way of introduction, sent a short email to both parties i.e. the family and myself. I would then send another email in which I attached additional information such as the: Information form for parents (see Appendix 3), Information form for children (see Appendix 4), Parental Consent Form (see Appendix 5), Child Consent Form (see Appendix 6), Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix 7), Parental Interview Question Schedule One (see Appendix 8), Parental Interview Question Schedule Two (see Appendix 9) and Child Interview Question Schedule (see Appendix 10). In this email I explained that if families had any further questions they should make contact by telephone or email and I would then contact the parents one week later. If they agreed to participate I then emailed them to arrange a mutually convenient date and time in which to meet them in the family home. I emailed seven families, in addition to Susan's family, and all of them agreed to participate.

The parents and children

Table 3 provides details of the number of families, parents and children, and the number of visits that I made to the home; all names of participants have been changed.

Table 3: The number of participants and the number of visits that took place

Family	Parents	Children	Number of visits
1	Susan and Ernie	Simon and Amber	3
2	Clementine and Jack	Christopher (Rupert and Louisa)	3
3	Nadine and Robert	Mike (and Anna)	3
4	Tricia and Steve	Dwayne (and Jason)	3
5	Jane and Hugh	Sophia (Tim and Tom)	2
6	Sharon and Sam	Hannah and James	2
7	Isabel and Hugo	Isaac (and Harry)	1
8	Siobhan and (Bob)	Henry	1
Total	15	10	18

The children whose names are in brackets did not have autism so did not take part in the study. The father in Family 8 chose not to participate.

Eleven of the parents were between the ages of 41-45 when the data was collected and all eight of the main home educators were mothers. Seven out of 10 children were boys and at the time of the fieldwork all children were in the primary phase of education. The age range of the children was between 5 years 6 months and 11 years, with an average age of 8 years 4 months. Nine of the children had a diagnosis of autism and one of them had been referred for a social communication assessment. Many of the children had co-occurring conditions, these included attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety or sensory sensitivities. More details about the characteristics of each family are provided in Chapter 5.

Semi-structured interviews

In this section I will define the type of interviews I chose to carry out and provide a rationale for using this method in the context of this study. Kvale (1996) describes the interviewer as a traveller journeying through and becoming part of the story. I have adopted his interpretation of the word 'interview' as Kvale (1996) separates it out into inter view, the justification being that it is a transaction i.e. the expression of views about a topic are of shared interest between each person. In this regard, I did not position myself as being superior to each participant, as they were (and still are) likely to be more knowledgeable about home education from their own personal perspective. I started from an academic standpoint as I am a student who has carried out literature searches about home education generally and in relation to SEN/D and autism; in turn this led me to want to find out more by doing a piece of empirical research about this topic.

Interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method over questionnaires as I was seeking to obtain participants' opinions and potentially emotional responses (Denscombe, 2003) about the educational provision of their children. The rationale for using them was to gather in-depth knowledge about the lived experiences of the participants with the expectation that this might improve human understanding on the topic (Kvale, 1996) of home education and autism. One of the main criticisms of the research interview is its subjectivity; however Kvale (1996) argues that this is a strength as the dialogue portrays personal views on the same subject based upon human experience(s).

The process of carrying out the interviews took place in the family homes. Most of the mothers' interviews happened during the day but the majority of their partners' interviews took place in the evening due to child care issues, i.e. bedtime routine.

The semi-structured interviews with the parents took place in a range of living spaces within the home environment based upon the participant's preference. For example, due to the open plan living area, one interview took place in the 'snug', an office

space in the garden; however, the majority of the interviews occurred either in the living or kitchen/dining room. I explained to the parents that as there were two separate interview question schedules (IQS). The purpose of the IQS 1 was to ascertain what led up to and the process involved in parents making the decision to home educate whereas, IQS 2 related to the practice, location and inter-relationships as a result of their home education. Two parental IQS were written for two reasons: firstly each IQS covered distinct and separate areas, and secondly I could not predict how much time each parent would be able to commit to each visit so two IQS would allow for two shorter and separate interviews should the need arise. I was happy to complete the interview over two sessions but as it turned out every parent wanted the interview to take place during one visit. Prior to commencing the interviews, I gave a brief overview of the themes that would be covered and how the two schedules differed in their content and emphasis.

A summary of the number of the interviews, and the time they took, can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: The number and length of time for each interview

Family	Interview: Mother Phase-1	Interview: Father Phase-1	Telephone Interviews Phase-2	Interview: Child 1 Phase-1	Interview: Child 2 Phase-1
1	105 mins	40 mins	30 mins	10 mins	10 mins
2	90 mins	80 mins	No	20 mins	N/A
3	90 mins	35 mins	30 mins	20 mins	N/A
4	70 mins	70 mins	5 mins	25 mins	N/A
5	50 mins	40 mins	10 mins	No	N/A
6	70 mins	60 mins	20 mins	10 mins	No
7	75 mins	30 mins	No	10 mins	N/A
8	40 mins	N/A	5 mins	20 mins	N/A
Total	590 mins	355 mins	100 mins	116 mins	10 mins

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews with the children is because they are used often in both psychological and educational research (Hopf, 2004). More importantly however I wanted each child to have the opportunity to share their views and experiences of school (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a). Nevertheless, Lewis (2005) contends that interviews with children can replicate the question and answer practice between teacher and pupil in a classroom context thereby affecting the adult / child relationship. Ceci and Bruck (1993) suggest verbal prompts as a more alternative approach, although I did not use this approach I did respond flexibly to each individual child for instance, answered any questions they had, explained the meaning of a word or gave an example to support their understanding of a prompt question.

The procedure for interviewing the children followed the same initial stages:

- I spoke to the parent, usually the mother, to find out whether it would be appropriate, given their child's needs.
- Dependent upon the mother's response I briefly verbally explained what an interview was to the child.
- I read through the child consent form with the child and mother present and explained any terms.
- Every child signed their name or signature to give their consent.

Each mother took time to explain the content of the consent form with their child. They then encouraged their child to either write their name or signature at the bottom of their page. The child IQS contained questions relating to: school education, location, content and organisation of home education.

The interviews with the children were more varied for a number of reasons such as the child's age, abilities and needs. In some instances, this related to the complexity of the child's multiple diagnoses, which impacted on their capability to attend or, the mother's anxiety about the child participating. One of the mothers stated that she wanted her child to have this new experience of being interviewed, while some of the

mothers were anxious that the interview produced useful data. Until the interviews happened I could not predict the context, seating arrangements or who would be present during each child's interview. Eight interviews were carried out with the children, two of them taking place with the child alone, and six with the mother present, either sitting next to the child or in the same room. In some cases I interviewed the child on a one-to-one basis at the dining table, in other instances, the mother sat next to their child, explained and differentiated the language further in order to try and support the child in answering the questions. The data obtained from the children's interviews varied and this will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Informal observations

I have only found two pieces of academic research, both by Reilly (2004; 2007), about home education and SEN/D which makes use of the same methods I have used, i.e. interviews and observations. However in the earlier study Reilly does not specify where the data was collected, although it suggests that the data was collected in the family homes.

Using more than one source of data collection can be seen to support a study's claims of validity. Although I began by creating an observation schedule, (see Appendix 11) which included a list of headings and prompts, which I used during a pilot study with Family One, I found it to be very restrictive. At times I was reading the next heading so missed part of an exchange or happening and therefore I found the schedule to be quite restrictive.

I quickly discarded the observation schedule and instead made brief general notes as a type of running narrative whilst in situ; then followed this up by writing a more detailed narrative shortly after the event. To support my writing I did return to the schedule to see whether I could use this as a prompt to prevent any potential omissions. Therefore the informal, narrative, observations evolved at every juncture, i.e. with each family, based upon the behaviours, context and events which happened.

I have chosen to use informal observations as this method is used in qualitative research where the main form of data collection is the research interview (Merrell and

Williams, 1994). Although the reason for carrying out informal observations was to gain access and observe pedagogical practice, which might not be considered to be commonplace, it was also an attempt to be able to substantiate the responses from the parents and children in relation to their experiences of home education. This is the reason why I carried out the observations before the interviews so that I had the opportunity as we talked in which to add any additional questions based upon observations from the field notes. During the observations I was seeking information relating to the nature of the learning, use of language and communication between parent and child and the type of support / level of independence visible.

It soon became clear that I needed to be adaptable in relation to the observations as each instance was different and therefore my role as observer fluctuated. However this also made it problematic to separate myself as researcher from the participants who were being researched (Mulhall, 2002). Gold (1958) defines the different roles of the researcher: 'complete participant', 'participant as observer', 'observer as participant' and 'complete observer'. I consider that my primary roles were that of 'observer as participant', whereby my function was known by the participants but that I was also a 'complete participant' at times as I was interacting with the child and/or parent so I had two roles. During the observations it was difficult to know whether or not the observed behaviours would have been different had I not been present; therefore, as Angrosino (2007) explains I do not know whether or not I affected what I have observed, i.e. whether I created an 'observer affect'. However, this seems highly likely.

One of the limitations with informal observation is my ability as a researcher to attempt to fully communicate the nuances of human behaviours and actions (Spitzer, 2003). It is highly likely that I am not able to fully grasp all that was going on so already there will be elements of the observation, which have been omitted from the text. As a result, I am attempting to describe, due to the restrictions of the word count, a pared down version of the observation in its simplest form (op cit, 2003). As Fine and Sandstrom (1988) explain 'words, of course, are not the same as meanings' (p.71) so, even the choice of language that I use is likely to be limited as I might select a written word that is different to that of another researcher who observes the

same instance and in turn this could have an impact on the validity and credibility of the research (Spitzer, 2003).

Ethical considerations

This qualitative study adheres to the BERA guidelines (2011). All the parents volunteered; I explained what the study was about and what it involved, and I made them aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Spitzer (2003) suggests that informal observations are useful for being able to obtain the perspective of children in qualitative research. Mook (1994) explains that research should seek not to claim a truth but to provide an explanation about what has been discovered. I was very wary of including children in the research. However, I felt it would be incongruous not to include their voice as they are the ones who in receipt of home education.

An information form was written for the children (see Appendix 4) which was differentiated in its content and the use of language, the consent form (see Appendix 6) was also altered in this way. Nevertheless, despite the fact that both I and the parents explained in detail and responded with answers to any questions the children there remains a difficulty with regards to fully knowing how much the children understood about the research itself (Spitzer, 2003). I did reiterate to all participants, especially the children, if they did not want to answer a question or wanted to withdraw from the study they could do so.

Analysis

I chose to use thematic analysis, which can be utilised for qualitative data purposes particularly in relation to gaining a better understanding of participants' experiences about a given phenomena (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In order to ensure structure and clarity within the process of analysis I very loosely drew upon the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), by adapting their six-step guide. As described by Braun and Clarke (2006), this step-by-step approach should result in rigorous thematic analysis:

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Generation of initial codes

3. Searching for themes
4. Review and refinement of themes
5. Defining and labelling themes
6. Writing the thesis

Clarke and Braun (2013) explain that thematic analysis is used so that the researcher is able to identify themes in their data and then examine any patterns in order to analyse its content. They describe the merits of thematic analysis by explaining that it can be used flexibly with a range of different theoretical perspectives as the researcher looks for patterns and themes in their data. However, they are not necessarily doing this through a particular theoretical lens and therefore thematic analysis can be useful as it can be a means of exploring patterns by using this particular framework.

Antaki et al. (2002) are critical of thematic research due to its flexibility and lack of guidelines, and in this regard they take the stance that this could potentially mean that the researcher can do what he or she wants. As a result of this flexibility it is the researcher's responsibility to be active in their analysis by looking for any repetitive themes that are interesting and describe these in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In particular I was aware of the need to show fidelity to the data and make the process of analysis as transparent as possible.

I chose to use a combination of inductive and deductive coding. This meant the data generation and successive analysis stemmed from two sources. The first being the deductive facet which came from my pre-conceived ideas, that were based upon the four research questions. The second facet was the inductive stage of coding which necessitated in-depth and ongoing engagement with the data that came from semi-structured interviews and observations. This resulted in the creation of an emerging image and patterns.

Listing a priori codes

I began deductively by coding a series of a priori codes (Ryan and Russell, 2003; Taylor and Gibbs, 2010), which related directly to the research questions, including some of the questions that I posed during the interviews. I uploaded all the interview

transcripts into the computer software package, NVivo; I then highlighted sections which were connected to one or more of the research or interview questions, and so created a number of codes/themes, and I am regarding these two terms as interchangeable.

Creating a priori codes

Table 5 shows the list of 10 a priori codes that I began with from the interview schedule and my research questions, a definition of how I defined them and, where appropriate, which theories outlined in Chapter 3 relate to them.

Table 5: A priori codes

Code name / Related theories	Definition
1. Parental motivations / <i>theory of progressive fit</i>	Instances which contributed to parents making the decision to home educate
2. Decision	How the final decision was made and whether there was a pivotal incident which led to this
3. Process / <i>theory of progressive fit and theory of progressive modification</i>	Procedure the parents went through to become home educators
4. Parental characteristics	How parents chose to define themselves
5. Children's characteristics	Definitions of the children's diagnoses, strengths and weaknesses
6. Organisation / <i>theory of progressive modification and child-centred education</i>	Organisation of home education within and beyond the home
7. Pedagogical approaches / <i>theory of progressive modification / child-centred education</i>	Teaching approaches used during the home education

/ ZPD / Scaffolding	
8. Resources / <i>theory of progressive modification</i> / <i>child-centred education</i>	The resources and adults, which are facilitated to support home education
9. Advantages / <i>theory of progressive modification</i>	Benefits of home education
10. Disadvantages / <i>FST</i>	Negative aspects of home education

Code numbers 1, 2 and 3 came directly from RQ2, which explicitly asks about parental motivations, the decision and what processes were involved. Code numbers 4 and 5 relate to RQ1; code numbers 6, 7 and 8 relate to the organisation pedagogical approaches and resources used in home education practice (RQ3), while code numbers 9 and 10 relate to RQ 4.

Creating a posteriori codes

The next stage of the analysis was the inductive coding. At the same time that I was reading through the interview transcripts and looking for the a priori codes a list of further a posteriori codes began to emerge, which I had not anticipated before the data collection began. These occurred in the interview transcripts and the observation field notes. They were also developed by re-evaluating and reflecting upon the already established a priori codes and themes.

Appendix 12 shows the list of 48 a posteriori codes that I developed, with an explanation of how I defined them.

In the extract below I provide a brief example of how I went about coding a few lines of text. It comes from Robert (the father in Family 3) and relates to what he considers the overarching goals of home education are for his children.

There's kind of basic life function type things that everybody needs to know so that they can have some sort of independence, not necessarily

total independence, but just to feel that they're not totally reliant on other people and then whatever comes up really, I mean I just want...whatever makes them happy. The most disappointing bit will be that it doesn't happen, it's very hard to know what the potential is but, if you can may be spot a path they might be able to go down then, how do we see how far they can go and so, to test that theory...one of them is brilliant at tennis, then we should do what we can to make them more brilliant at tennis, if they enjoy it.

AP Code 14 = Independence

AP Code 45 = Using the child's interests and talents

An example of how I coded a complete interview transcript can be seen in Appendix 13.

Creating family codes

At the next stage I re-visited the 10 a priori and 48 a posteriori codes to collapse them into eight family codes, which provided a more manageable structure for analysis.

Table 6 shows the eight family codes including their definitions

Table 6: Family Codes

Family Codes	Definition
1. Family Characteristics	The characteristics of each family member and how they describe themselves or one another
2. Motivations	What events led parents to consider home education
3. Processes	The processes which the children went through to get a medical diagnosis and the parents went through to become home educators
4. Management and organisation	How parents manage and organise their home education
5. Pedagogical approaches	The various pedagogical approaches which families use
6. Resources	The resources and technologies which parents use in their home education
7. Curriculum	The subjects and skills parents taught their children
8. Roles and relationships	The roles of each person in the family, their relationships with one another and others

The rationale for the eight family codes is explained below:

1. Family Characteristics stems from RQ1, which seeks to examine the parents and their children's characteristics.
2. Motivations derives from the first part of RQ2 and attempts to capture the number of different reasons that participants made reference to.
3. Processes directly relates to the second part of RQ2.
4. Management and organisation attempts to encapsulate the various ways that parents administer the home education and it links to the first part of RQ3, which investigates how their practices are organised.
5. Pedagogical approaches and practices is connected with the second part of RQ3.
6. Resources relates to the various means used during home education both within and outside of the family home and, it is linked to the third part of RQ3.

7. Curriculum stems from the different ways that the children spent their time whilst being home educated.

8. Roles and relationships were described by participants in a number of ways as having been affected by the making the decision to home educate and as a consequence of their ongoing commitment to home education.

Child-centred pedagogy is not a family code in its own right as it is part of general pedagogical approaches.

Table 7 shows how the 10 a priori codes (Nos. 1-10) and 48 a posteriori codes (Nos. 11-58) are connected to each of the eight family codes.

Table 7: A priori and a posteriori codes linked to the eight family codes

Family Codes	A priori Codes	A posteriori Codes
1. Family Characteristics	4, 5	27
2. Motivations	1, 9	16 / 22 / 34 / 35 / 36 / 39 / 49 / 50 / 54 / 57 / 58
3. Processes	2 , 3	
4. Management and organisation	6	23 / 24 / 25 / 28 / 29 / 31 / 33 / 37 / 40 / 48 / 56
5. Pedagogical approaches	7	12 / 13 / 14 / 15 / 17 / 30 / 38 / 43 / 44 / 45 / 55
6. Resources	8	32 / 51
7. Curriculum		41 / 42 / 46 / 47 / 52 / 53
8. Roles and relationships	10	11 / 18 / 19 / 20 / 21 / 26

In summary, five stages of analysis were carried out:

1. The creation of a priori codes from the research questions and interview questions.

2. Reading and familiarising myself with the interview and observational data, coding sections from the a priori codes, and beginning to create a posteriori codes as they began to emerge.
3. Listing the a posteriori codes.
4. Combining the a priori and a posteriori codes into one list of 58 codes.
5. Clustering the 58 codes under eight family codes.

The next four chapters, 5 to 8, will discuss the four research questions and present the findings. A range of tables and diagrams will be used to further illustrate important aspects of the data, which correspond with, or challenge, the research questions that I posed.

Chapter 5 focuses on the characteristics of the families and discusses the reasons and processes involved in parents becoming home educators.

Chapter 5: The demographic characteristics of the eight families; the reasons why parents become home educators and the processes involved

RQ1: What are the characteristics of parents and their children with ASD that are being home educated?

RQ2: Why do parents become home educators and what are the processes involved?

Introduction

The findings of the research are presented in the next three chapters (Chapters 5 to 7), which correspond to each of the four research questions and these are each presented in turn. This chapter responds to RQ1 by summarising the demographic characteristics of the eight families. The data is summarised and discussed in the form of three tables. Then, the chapter responds to RQ2.

The analysis and subsequent arrangement of the findings, as described in Chapters 5-7 relate to Simons' (2009) case study definition as the analysis involved interpreting participants lived experiences and the findings present these from the children and parents' viewpoints.

Range of special needs in each family and the process of diagnosis

The data contained in Table 8 is based upon the information that parents shared during their interviews and is not authenticated by any formal medical reports.

Table 8: How the ASD diagnosis emerged

Family	Child	How diagnosis of child emerged	ASD diagnosis	Other diagnosis
1	Simon	Susan (mother) suspected autism from 6 months	ASD	N/A
1	Amber	Parents suspected that something was wrong but wanted to find a professional who had experience of assessing and diagnosing autism in girls	ASD ³	Generalised anxiety, dyslexia, dyscalculia
2	Christopher	Clementine (mother) knew that he had a difficulty as he had problems sleeping as a baby	ASD ⁴	
3	Mike	Parents pursued diagnosis as Health professionals initially related his difficulties to issues relating to attachment	ASD	ADHD, hyperacusis
4	Dwayne	Tricia (mother) suspected ADHD from an early age due to the severity of his behaviours	ASD	ADHD, ODD
5	Sophia	Parents thought a diagnosis would equate to appropriate in-school support	ASD	
6	Hannah	Sharon (mother) knew something was not right as there were issues at school during Year 3	ASD	DCD
6	James	Withdrawn and socially isolated at play time	ASD	DCD
7	Isaac	Isabel (mother) knew that something was wrong, prior to Isaac entering Year 2	ASD	ADHD
8	Henry	Siobhan (mother) reported that he was anxious at pre-school	N/A ⁵	N/A

Two sets of siblings (one male and one female) from Families 1 and 6 had diagnoses of ASD. The data for the recurrence of autism in families seems to vary from 6% to 8% (Piven et al. 1997) and 10.9% (Constantio et al. 2010). In the study carried out by Parsons and Lewis (2010) it was discovered that the joint highest SEN descriptor was for children who had 'communication and interaction needs' and of these, two-thirds

³ Diagnosis was given during data collection.

⁴ Parents used both terms interchangeably in their separate interview responses.

⁵ Henry was being assessed at a social communication clinic during the data collection.

were defined as having ASD. Conversely, in Rothermel's (2002a) research of 475 home educating families in the UK, only 1% or 4 children were described as having ASD out of 417.

Demographic information on Parents'

Table 9: Parents' demographic characteristics

Family	Parent	Age	SEN	Highest Qualification	Ethnicity
1	Susan	41-45	N/A	Degree	White British
1	Ernie	41-45	N/A	PGCE	White British
2	Clementine	41-45	N/A	BTEC – Level 3	White British
2	Jack	46-50	N/A	Degree	White British
3	Nadine	41-45	Dyslexia	A-Levels	White British
3	Robert	41-45	N/A	Degree	White British
4	Tricia	36-40	N/A	No formal qualifications	White British
4	Steve	46-50	Dyslexia	No formal qualifications	White British
5	Jane	41-45	N/A	Degree	White British
5	Hugh	41-45	N/A	PhD	White British
6	Sharon	41-45	N/A	O-Levels	White British
6	Sam	36-40	Communication and Interaction	Degree	White British
7	Isabel	41-45	N/A	O-Levels	White British
7	Hugo	41-45	Did not answer	City and Guilds	White British
8	Siobhan	51-55	N/A	O-Levels	White British

The data in Table 9 has been collated from the parents' responses in the background questionnaires. Out of the 15 parents who participated in the study, two-thirds (10) were in the age range of 41-45 years. This is similar to the parental demographics in Parsons and Lewis (2010) study where they found that most parents were 40 years or over.

Only three out of the 15 parents had a SEN, and of these, two of the parents specified dyslexia. However, participants did not specify whether these needs had been formally diagnosed. Sam stated that his SEN related to communication and interaction; during the individual interviews both Sam and his partner implied that Sam had autism but this was not made explicit.

Family composite and type of accommodation

Table 10: Number of children and type of family housing

Family	Number of children	Number of school-age children	Accommodation
1	2	2	Semi-detached house
2	3	3	Semi-detached house
3	2	2	Terraced house
4	2	2	Semi-detached house
5	3	2	Semi-detached house
6	2	2	Semi-detached house
7	2	2	Semi-detached house
8	1	1	Semi-detached house

In summary, nine out of the 10 children had ASD as a primary identified need. The majority of the children in total were of school age. This finding corresponds with Parsons and Lewis (2010) who found that the majority of home educated children in their study were primary or secondary aged. Likewise Rothermel (2002a) found that 43% of the home educated children were primary aged (5-11 years) and 58% school age in total.

All of the parents classified themselves as being White, British and most of the parents were middle aged, 41-45, with the Mother being the main home educator. The average number of children in each family was two, with most families living in a semi-detached house with a garden. This could indicate that home education is more likely to be an option for middle classes given the parents' qualifications, occupations and housing situations.

The mother's qualifications varied from one mother who had no formal qualifications to two who had a degree; the most frequently cited qualification for the mothers were O-Levels (three had this qualification). Whereas, the range of qualifications for the fathers was greater, as one father had no formal qualifications and one had a PhD, the most commonly cited qualification for the fathers was a degree.

The second section of this chapter responds to RQ2 by taking each phrase in turn i.e. *why do parents become home educators* and *what are the processes involved?* This

section begins by describing the five main reasons, which led parents to home educate, and this is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Factors that influenced parents' decision to home educate

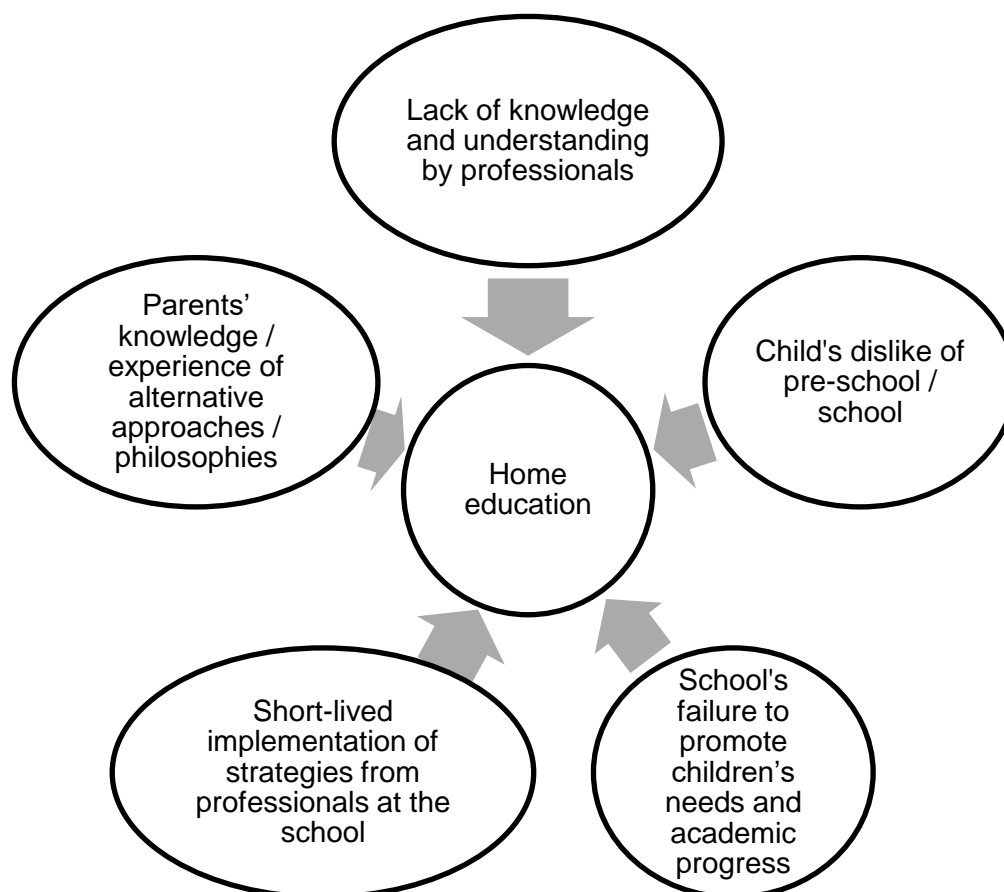


Figure 3 shows five overarching factors, which contributed towards the eight families making the decision to home educate: lack of knowledge and understanding by professionals of the children's specific needs / ASD; child's dislike of the pre-school or school by four of the children from four different families; alternative educational practices adopted by the pre-school or school that failed to promote the children's social, communication needs and academic progress; application of strategies and interventions at the school, which were either short lived or not implemented properly; and parents' knowledge and experience of alternative educational approaches or philosophies. All of the reasons relate in some way to either the parents' or their children's anxiety.

The remaining section of this chapter contains interview data from six mothers and one child, to facilitate further discussion of RQ2. The extracts are generally discussed

in conjunction with findings from the four theses, two PhD and two EdD theses (Burke, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Reilly, 2007; Roache, 2009) and two academic studies (Emam and Farrell, 2009; Starr and Foy, 2010) described in Chapter 2.

Apart from the academic research, I will also be drawing upon 'grey' literature, including articles written by parents about their experiences of electively home educating their children with ASD and / or SEN/D. These reflective papers include their personal journeys of becoming home educators and have a particular personal and authentic appeal, which is sometimes missing in academic papers.

Parental reasons for home education

Table 11: Families reasons for home education

Family	Names	Family Member	Main Motivation
1	Susan	Parent 1	Alternative educational philosophies and practices, offered by pre-school
1	Ernie	Parent 2	Home education seemed a better option
1	Amber	Child 1	Child disliked pre-school
1	Simon	Child 2	Child disliked pre-school
2	Clementine	Parent 3	Child said he did not want to attend school
2	Jack	Parent 4	Teachers blamed parent for child's difficulties
3	Nadine	Parent 5	Lack of understanding of child's needs at pre-school
3	Robert	Parent 6	Lack of personalisation from pre-school
4	Tricia	Parent 7	Lack of understanding from teachers at school
4	Steve	Parent 8	Lack of understanding from teachers at school
4	Dwayne	Child 5	Child was blamed for all wrong doings in class
5	Jane	Parent 9	Lack of understanding at school
5	Hugh	Parent 10	To reduce family stress
6	Sharon	Parent 11	Child began school refusing
6	Sam	Parent 12	Lack of personalisation at school
6	James	Child 6	Lack of understanding from school
7	Hugo	Parent 13	Lack of progress at school
7	Isabel	Parent 14	Lack of staff training at school
8	Siobhan	Parent 15	No extra resources or support available at the school

Table 11 summarises some of the main responses which participants gave in relation to the reasons for becoming home educating families. The most frequently occurring reason given is the school's or pre-school's, lack of understanding, which three parents made reference to. The reasons given also relate to McDonald and Lopes' (2014) theory of progressive fit as although all of the parents thought they had found what they had considered to be suitable education they had all begun to experience issues with their children's educational placement.

For those children who provided a response, four of the answers related to a dislike of, or an issue with attending, pre / school. Both Burke (2007) and Roache (2009) found that parents cited diverse motivations over time.

Table 12: Families main reasons for home education

Main motivation	Families who mentioned this reason
Lack of knowledge and understanding by professionals	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Child's dislike or pre-school or school	1, 2, 3, 6
School's failure to promote children's needs and academic progress	2, 4, 5, 6
Short-lived implementation of strategies from professionals	1, 3, 4
Parents' knowledge / experience of alternative approaches / philosophies	1, 8

The data in Table 12 shows the main reasons the eight families gave for home educating their children with ASD. This table relates to the overarching factors shown in Figure 1.

A lack of understanding from professionals at pre-school or school

The following three extracts, from two of the parents, will be discussed in relation to other responses which the families provided and will be related to previously cited literature, by re-examining any findings in their research which are similar to, or contrast with, the results from this study.

The first quotation comes from Jane (Family 5 talking about her daughter Sophia).

I think they [the school] didn't really see the issues, they did flag up issues in the beginning because she wasn't playing with anyone in Reception, she couldn't pay attention, she was just flitting about and whenever they got free choice. She was choosing to play on her own and then gradually she began to get tearful, sometimes in school, and put her hands over her ears...whenever we asked like is it okay if she doesn't wear socks today coz we're having huge melt downs and we can't get her in and they [the school] would say no, socks is school uniform.

In this extract Jane recalls three challenges which Sophia experienced at primary school, each will be discussed in turn; (1) playing and interacting with others, Sugerman (1995) makes reference to children with ASD demonstrating parallel play and this is likely to be due to a difficulty with understanding how to socially interact with peers (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a). Indeed, one of the main reasons parents gave for home educating in Reilly (2007) was the belief that school staff lacked understanding regarding their children's social skills; (2) sensory sensitivities, this issue was relayed by secondary-aged pupils with ASD in relation to a mainstream school context (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a; 2008b); and (3) reported rigidity from the school regarding school uniform, Jordan (2008) argues that one marker of positive inclusion is increased flexibility in schools for children with ASD.

Nadine, the mother in Family 3 explained that she and her partner had adopted Mike and Anna and, as a family they had received multi-agency involvement from the beginning of this process. Mike, Nadine's youngest child, received a diagnosis of significant sensory modulation dysfunction at an early age from a specialist occupational therapist (OT). In this second statement Nadine describes an incident in relation to a resource she had created for Mike to use at pre-school.

There was time where Mike had bitten someone. He's never been a biter and they said he was using his calm box and this boy came and took something out of it so he bit him and you're like how wrong can you

get that, so you've got a child, obviously stressed, he's got his calm box out to calm himself and another child comes down, sits next to him, which he doesn't like anyway, and takes something out of his box, what reaction do you expect?

From this extract from Nadine it could be suggested that the interaction between Mike and the unnamed child was negative and, in evidence provided by the NAS and AAA (Education Committee, 2012), some parents were motivated to home educate after their children had negative experiences at pre-school, parents also reported similar experiences at school (Burke, 2007).

Sharon, the mother in Family 6, explained that the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) process had been in place for Hannah whilst she was in Key Stage 2 (7 - 11 year-olds). She went onto describe that a lead professional, in this case a specialist teacher was involved who facilitated the multi-agency meetings and school representatives discussed ways they could support Hannah. Sharon elaborated by stating that whilst at school Hannah also received input from a speech and language therapist but as her attendance declined this stopped. Similarly, Hannah also met with a counsellor but she was reportedly unable to speak with this professional.

The next quotation below describes Sophia's experience of attending a mainstream primary school and the challenges that her mother, Jane (Family 5), considered she had in getting Sophia's needs met.

It's the whole environment, it was too much the sensory side and the social side, because they didn't see the issues with her social skills I guess. She's still quite young. [The] teacher did eventually: she observed her in the playground, that's another thing Sophia [was] finding hard, she said she seems to be off in her own little world but then they would just leave it, they didn't seem to think that they needed to help her with the things she needed support with. The teaching was good but Sophia needs a more hands on active way of learning, she doesn't like sitting down.

This extract from Jane was selected as it summarises five of the factors which seemed to be common to many of the families who participated in this study: namely, (1) sensory sensitivities, (2) school's insufficient knowledge / understanding of ASD, (3) inflexibility by school staff to improve the child's school experience(s), (4) a lack of knowledge and understanding about how to meet the child's specific needs and (5) different ways in which the children may best learn.

Reilly (2004) stated that most parents in her study felt that traditional education did not take account of their children's different interests, abilities or learning styles. Similarly, the parents in Hurlbutt (2011) considered that schools were disinclined, or not able, to implement practices which would suit their children best. This reference is relevant as Jane's description of how Sophia might best learn as Jane described organising kinaesthetic activities to promote Sophia's progress in numeracy.

The next view expressed by Tricia (Family 4) is about the behaviour management of her son, Dwayne, within a mainstream primary school.

He had to sit there for five minutes, if he tried to fight against it or get up they'd re-set it and he never managed to do five minutes, five minutes was far too long for Dwayne, so he was always out there. It was regular, always after play time, he couldn't change between play time and then back into the classroom. He found that transition really difficult so it was always the time of day when he would get stuck on the mat and be out there all afternoon. Quite often, they'd call me half one, two o'clock. "Can you come and get Dwayne?" My heart would sink and I'd know it would be the school [and I'd] have to go and get him.

The strategy that Tricia described was that Dwayne was to remain seated in one place for five minutes. From the illustration provided, it could be argued that this length of time was too long for Dwayne; as Parsons et al. (2009) explain, an intervention might benefit one pupil with ASD but not everyone. Given the teachers' behaviour management strategy, this could be an example of not understanding his conditions (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010). Indeed, 15% of children in Starr and Foy's (2012) research were suspended during their school career, and, all of their parents

considered these suspensions were a result of staff not managing their children's behaviour suitably. From these cases many parents, like Tricia, had been requested to collect their children from school unofficially (op cit, 2012). This quotation from Tricia is comparable with findings from Rothermel (2003) where one of the motivators for home educating was that parents were dissatisfied with their children's educational provision.

Teaching staffs' lack of understanding of ASD and how it affects each child could be indicative of insufficient autism specific training or, the ability to transfer such knowledge to their specific practice. This issue also relates to the research which I carried out for my IFS (see Chapter 1). The focus of the study was to examine the type of provision which staff made for children with ASD, which strategies and interventions they used, the type of autism specific training they had received and whether or not this training had made a difference to their practice.

One of the main findings from the IFS was, despite the Head Teacher/SENCo and the HLTA demonstrating an increased knowledge and understanding of autism than the other teaching staff, there appeared to be a discrepancy between their knowledge and ability to transfer this into their everyday practice. This finding correlates with Peeters and Jordan (2010) who also learned that although staff had a secure knowledge of autism they were unable to apply it.

Although the Head Teacher/SENCo stated that she provided weekly training about autism/SEN/D to her TAs, none of the teachers, who participated in the study, had received autism training whilst at the school. This second finding linked directly with Reid's (2011) study where it was reported that autistic individuals between the ages of 13 - 20 years did not consider their teachers knew enough about the condition to teach them appropriately. Similarly, in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (APPGA) (2012) report, most of the participants stated that they considered training for teachers to be inadequate.

Child's dislike of pre-school or school

This extract below, from Sharon (Family 6), seems to contradict the comment, which Tomsett (2004) made at an NUT conference, about a weak parent being unable to

guarantee their child carried out a set amount of learning if she could not ensure their child attended school.

I would drag her, me and her dad would drag her down [to school], we'd pick her up and, because it's sort of what we were told to do (laughs), and there's no other way to get her down there so then she stopped. She flatly refused to wear school uniform and shoes and the school did actually say she could wear Crocs⁶ and that alleviated it for a little while and then it moved onto something else, she wouldn't wear the uniform. So then, during the last few months, say two months, we pulled her out.

This description from Sharon draws parallels with one of the main reasons why parents chose to home educate their children, namely, and according to Nelson (2013), a dissatisfaction with both the school system and context.

Out of the 10 children who participated in this research, half (five) had significant issues with attending their pre-school (Amber and Mike) or primary school (Hannah, Christopher and Sophia). Indeed, Nadine, from Family 3, explained that her son, Mike, refused to return to pre-school.

Similarly, all six families in Reilly's (2004) study stated that, the school did not appear to benefit their children. This was also the case for nine out of the 10 mothers in Kidd and Kaczmarek's (2010) study who stated that ongoing stress and anxiety were the main factors, which informed their decision to withdraw their children from school.

The next two extracts relate to the processes involved in parents becoming home educators. Nadine explained how, in the context of Mike's reported refusal to continue attending pre-school, she began to research and attend the home education support group, which Susan had established.

Mike refused to go in at three and a half and within weeks I contacted the local home ed[ucation] groups and started then. Obviously I saw the

⁶ Crocs are a category of informal, easy to wear shoe.

ASD one and started going out to their kind of [meet ups]. They were meeting every Friday at that point at the children's farm and I started going along to them and anything else that was going on to generally find out what it was about.

As a consequence of the outcomes in Reilly's (2007) study she was able to create a theory, which is referred to as 'progressive modification', the three-stages which parents went through during one year of home education. The first two-stages relate to the main steps which the eight families went through in the research which is repeated in this thesis. These are (1) accessing resources which are readily available and (2) the use of support groupings.

The final extract in the chapter comes from Jane (Family 5) and describes the process she went through before she began to home educate Sophia.

We just sent the deregulation letter into school, we'd had a meeting with them before hand. They suggested...coz after Christmas break she was...refusing again and it was because they didn't see the issues, they just thought that we should just get on with it, I didn't think I can do it anymore because four or five days before she went back, she started to get hysterical about school. It's not like she wakes up in the morning and doesn't go, it's like it's playing on her mind the whole time...at the meeting they suggested a few other things we could do but, it's...little things, coming in 5 minutes early coz we knew it wouldn't really be enough change for her so, all we did was send the de-reg letter.

A printable version of a deregulation letter is readily available on the Education Otherwise (<http://www.educationotherwise.net/>) website, a charity which supports families who educate their children outside of school.

School's failure to promote children's social, emotional and other needs

Susan explained that she and her partner, Ernie had bought a house near the primary school, which she had attended as a child and Susan anticipated that one day her children might attend there. Nevertheless, both parents and professionals who had

been working with the family did not consider that Simon would be ready to attend primary school and proposed that his transition be delayed. Susan relayed that a multi-agency meeting was held at the prospective school in which a range of professionals provided a case in support of the family. These included: a portage home visitor (PHV)⁷, a specialist teacher, a speech and language therapist and the Head of the pre-school. Despite this, the Head Teacher and SENCo stated this would not be possible (this was later rescinded after Susan wrote a letter of complaint) and instead, the school agreed to keep a place open for Simon for the period of one year. However, Susan and Ernie apparently did not wish to take a place away from another child and so pursued home education.

The statement below comes from Susan.

I didn't think that they would be able to learn as well in the school environment to reach their full potential because...you have to really unpick it with them, they're not going to disrupt, they're not going to ask for help, they're just going to sit quietly, inward. I see it all the time...and there'd be no disruption there for them in their behaviour so...I don't think they'd get the most out of them, [it would] be easy for them to be left.

This extract suggests that Susan projected her own anxiety about what might have happened had her children attended primary school and as previously discussed, more children with ASD are educated in mainstream schools (Dybvik, 2004; Keane and Ward, 2004; Symes and Humphrey, 2011a, 2011b). Indeed, Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) describe one of the difficulties for more able children with ASD is that, as their strengths may hide their deficits, their specific needs can get overlooked.

As Parsons and Lewis (2010) explained in their research, two thirds of the (27) parents who participated in their study cited factors which pushed them to home educate, namely, negative experiences in a formal environment and parents' perception that the schools failed to adequately meet their children's needs.

⁷ A PHV works with families whose pre-school children have a developmental difficulty to promote the child's development through play or via routines.

This next extract from Christopher (child in Family 2) was specifically chosen as he describes how he felt in relation to the sound that his peers made whilst in the classroom.

It's not as noisy and as hard to concentrate and it's much better when I'm alone especially when I'm doing reading because no one's going, "yow yow", or shouting in my face.

There is sufficient evidence that many individuals with ASD have heightened sound sensitivities (Khalfa and Brureau et al. 2004) and it would appear that, given Christopher's illustration, it could be suggested that he had noise sensitivity.

This next view expressed by Jane (Family 5), is particularly interesting as it demonstrates that, although teachers ensured Sophia was a member of a Lego group, Jane considered that this was not the best intervention for Sophia.

There was a Lego group they were doing for social skills. It was quite structured, sitting round a table and they all got a role so she liked it, especially when she was the instructor [laughs] to tell other people what to do. She was, you know, great in the group but, when it comes to the unstructured social skills she can't carry it through, so we were glad she was getting it but I don't think it was exactly what she needed.

Therefore, even though Lego Therapy⁸ is a generally recognised intervention for children with ASD it might have been more helpful if it had been used as one tool, alongside other planned strategies to further develop Sophia's social skills such as attendance at a social skills group and having the time to generalise some of these learned skills into her life experiences such as in the playground or community. For example, due to an individual with ASD's weak central coherence Happé and Frith

⁸ Lego Therapy is described as being an intervention for children with ASD to both motivate and improve their social interaction skills with the expected outcome being that the children will become less rigid and aloof (Green, 2013).

(2006) explain that it is important children have opportunities in which to practise learnt skills in another context.

Short lived implementation of strategies at school

During the semi-structured interviews Sharon explained that Dwayne, the youngest child in Family 4, received diagnoses of ADHD and ODD just before his fifth birthday, subsequently, he was also given an autism diagnosis. All three diagnoses were given after his mother, Tricia, had withdrawn Dwayne from school, during his reception year. Dwayne received continued input from a paediatrician and speech and language therapist as he has a severe stutter.

Sharon elaborated by stating that at pre-school Dwayne received one-to-one support for his full 16 hours weekly attendance but this input from an adult did not transfer with him. Once Dwayne transitioned into primary school, Tricia explained that teachers implemented many positive strategies and interventions for her son. These included: weekly play therapy sessions, a behavioural chart, visual timetable and resources to relieve tension such as a stress ball. However, she reported that this input was short lived.

This section and an earlier one relating to a lack of staff understanding has described direct or indirect involvement from both in-school and external professionals where there has been a failure to appropriately understand and meet the needs of children with ASD. In Family 1, despite a range of professionals arguing that Simon should have a later start date, school staff remained inflexible and according to the mother, Susan, were unable to listen to her son's needs. For Mike in Family 3, pre-school staff did not appear to fully understand the value in the consistent implementation of the calming box, which resulted in a misunderstanding of his behaviour and a negative interaction with a peer. The information provided by Tricia in Family 4 suggests that without formal medical diagnoses teaching staff did not wish to pursue child specific interventions irrespective of the DfE's (2011) initiatives surrounding quality first teaching. Despite all of the professionals who worked with or on behalf of Hannah from Family 6, none of them considered that it might prove beneficial if they were counter-intuitive, i.e. carrying out their general professional practice differently (Powell and Jordan, 1993).

Parents' knowledge and experience of alternative educational philosophies

Susan and Ernie's eldest child Simon, and Amber, their younger daughter, both attended a Montessori pre-school. The parents withdrew Simon from the pre-school when he was 6 years, 6 months and after Amber had completed the first half of her reception year. According to Susan, staff who adopted the Montessori philosophy believed that every child develops at their own rate and should explore their environment at their own pace. Nevertheless, even though Simon had an autism diagnosis, staff were reluctant to use resources suggested by Susan such as PECs (Picture Exchange Communication System) symbols. Once a Specialist Teacher was involved in supporting Simon's transition to primary school Susan believed that staff were more ready to implement and understand the value of these resources; however, both Susan and Ernie did not think that Simon was making the academic progress he was capable of and so withdrew him. This example relates to one of the findings outlined in Reilly (2007) where parents stated that one of the main reasons for making the decision to home educate was due to a lack of their children's academic progress whilst at school.

Like Susan and Ernie, Family 8 moved house so that Henry could attend a Steiner kindergarten. He had previously started at a pre-school but Siobhan, the mother, described this as 'a disaster' and Henry was nervous and anxious. Siobhan, indicated the kindergarten was a nurturing environment in which the children did not carry out any academic learning and instead the emphasis was on them learning through play. During the interview Siobhan explained that at the end of kindergarten a staff member recommended that Henry be assessed for dyspraxia. Siobhan considered that this was the school's attempt at emphasising that Henry might have additional needs for which they could not cater. Siobhan explained that none of the children at the school had a statement of special educational needs (now referred to as EHCPs) and although there was a SENCo in place Siobhan considered their responses to be unhelpful as they were not specific enough. Nevertheless, Henry did make the transition into school but Siobhan and her husband, Bob, withdrew him in the following January and began to home educate him due to the slow pace of the academic learning.

The evidence provided by Families 1 and 8 relate to the theory of progressive fit as they had originally chosen two different alternative educational philosophies (education which they are likely to have found suitable in the first instance) in their respective pre-schools and this appeared to offer a solution to their children's difficulties; however, over time, both families came to the realisation that these selected placements were not providing the solution they had anticipated. Although the two families had selected these educational establishments on the basis of their respective discovery and freedom-based curricula, their final decisions were prompted primarily on the basis of their children's academic progress.

Three families (Families 1, 2 and 8) had gained knowledge of alternative educational approaches or philosophies when their children had attended schools outside mainstream provision. The reasons why Susan and Ernie (Family 1) decided to home educate their two children with ASD are twofold. The first relates to a realisation that alternative educational practices might not necessarily meet the needs of children with ASD and, secondly, as a result of the inflexibility which the parents experienced from the primary school which Simon was due to attend.

The processes involved in parents becoming home educators

Out of the eight families who participated in this study, three children, from two families, attended pre-school only, whereas, seven children, from six families attended primary school for various lengths of time. The eldest child, Hannah, was removed from school at the age of 10 (Year 5) and so none of the children who took part in the research had transitioned into secondary school.

Six of the families informed their LA of their decision to home educate by completing the de-registration letter. One parent informed the school their son was attending and one family did not specify their action during the data collection. The 11 parents who did inform the school had differing responses from teachers, as this extract from Tricia (Family 4) demonstrates.

When I went to collect him I walked past the Head [Teacher] and she said, "I have received your letter and said...it's a shame, after all the work we've put in but if you think you can do a better job than us,"

(laughs) and that was it, that was the only comment she made, there was no tryin...talk me out of it or we want Dwayne to stay or anything like that, it almost felt as if they were relieved actually to see the back of him.

In contrast, Isabel, the mother in Family 7 describes how the school SENCo was supportive about their decision.

I did mention it to the SENCo...you know when they were saying they were putting things into place and it wasn't happening, and I'd said to her at that point, you know I am considering home education if things aren't working and she didn't try to dissuade me at all. She was quite supportive of it; she said, "Ooh if that's what you want to do, that's fine," and she told me all that we needed to do was send in the letter.

It is interesting to note that, from the information which Isabel provides, the SENCo did not seem concerned about the fact that the family were dissatisfied with the school placement. None of the parents reported any resistance from either the school or pre-schools regarding their decision to home educate.

The eight mothers described similar processes in which they became home educators. Six of them carried out research on the Internet by looking at information on the 'Education Otherwise', LA or South East Home Educators websites. One mother, Tricia, stated that she attended a group where she met Susan and Sharon and explained that she read around the subject.

In summary, the second section of this chapter has described the reasons and processes, which resulted in eight families making the decision to home educate their children with ASD. The main reasons for parents home educating their children in the study were: the lack of understanding by the pre-school or school about the individual with ASD; the child's dislike of attending pre-school or school; the attempted, and general failure, by school staff to promote the children's needs; the short-lived implementation of strategies and interventions; and parents' knowledge and experience of alternative educational approaches or philosophies, which are generally different from conventional approaches in mainstream schools.

Chapter 6 will discuss Research Question 3 by examining how parents have organised their home education, and which pedagogical approaches and resources they use to carry out their practice. Evidence will be related generally to the theory of child-centred education, ZPD and FST which were discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6: The organisation of pedagogical approaches and resources used

RQ3: How do parents organise home education for their children with ASD; what pedagogical approaches and practices do they employ; and what resources do they use?

Introduction

This chapter discusses the three parts which form RQ3. The first part relates to the organisation of the home education, which is viewed as an evolving process. The evidence suggests that home education practice changes over time and further examples are provided (see Burke, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Reilly, 2007; and Roache, 2009). Reilly (2007) developed a theory of progressive modification as a result of the findings in her thesis and this theory will be used as a means to connect the three parts which form RQ3. Likewise, the processes which the eight families went through will be illustrated to show connections with and differences from Reilly's theory.

In response to the second element of RQ3, bespoke and individualised pedagogical practices within each family are illustrated, alongside parallels found in Burke (2007) and Roache (2009). It is important to make explicit that, although RQ3 is examined in three parts, there is considerable overlap between the nature of how the home education is organised and the pedagogical approaches used as they are both interconnected with each family's personal circumstances and the changing needs of their children with ASD. In addition to exploring the findings from the four theses, theories that were outlined in Chapter 3 will be used to further explore and make connections between parents' home education practices and the theory of child-centred education (Darling, 1988; Dewey, 1929; Wood, 2009). In addition, Vygotsky's ZPD is discussed, as it relates to the types of questioning, prompting and support offered by the main home educator, namely the mother in this study and secondly by her partner (Rogoff, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Alongside this, associations are made with the theory of scaffolding (Wood and Wood, 1996).

In the final section of this chapter the various resources and the key individuals which form the home education for the eight families are discussed. The resources are

generally informed by both the subjects which each child enjoys and the type of home education practice which best suits them and their families.

How home education is organised?

In this section eight extracts, four from home educating mothers and four from children, are used to illustrate the similarities and differences between how the home education is organised and in some instances this demonstrates sensitivity from the mothers towards the individual needs and mood states of their children. Extracts from eight of the participants were chosen on the basis of how much they talked about the organisation of the home education. Other participants were not included because they either spoke about this theme in less detail or did not mention it at all.

From the data shared by each family it can be deduced that six out of the eight families generally completed some form of literacy or numeracy activities in the morning whilst at home. These terms have been used as all 10 home educated children were primary aged and literacy and numeracy are subjects which are generally taught in a primary classroom. The findings in Roache (2009) concur with the practices of the families who participated in this study: all eight families in Roaches' thesis considered it important that their children had basic skills in both literacy and numeracy.

The quotation below from Susan (Family 1) describes what she explains as a semi-structured approach, when home educating her two children Simon and Amber.

Semi-structured really, in that we do structured work in the morning but, if it's a bad day we leave it, come back so it's very structured in activities. We have a really fixed timetable but in terms of...their horse riding or their physical stuff, their social meet ups, but the academic stuff is kind of week-by-week, day by day.

From the information provided, the majority of the other families, six in total, replicated this pattern of learning for their children. It is similar to conclusions in Roache (2009) where parents explained that they also arranged for their children's formal learning to happen in the mornings and this was followed by relaxed sessions in the afternoons.

This extract might also suggest that Susan is being informed by her children's psychological state of being (Dewey, 1929) and could be using this knowledge to inform the next task. Therefore, it could be argued that by taking this approach Susan is concentrating on her children's needs (Entwistle, 2012) which can be paralleled with child-centred pedagogy.

This quotation from Susan is similar to the information shared by the 15 parents, eight children and 41 young people who participated in Nelson's (2013) study. Where it is explained that, even where families adopted a more structured approach it remained fluid; in the same way as Susan illustrates, parents were able to respond to and meet the individual needs and interests of their children. This would generally be quite problematic to carry out in a formal school context.

It is also important to note that the research for this thesis is situated in England, as there are different parameters and laws relating to home education around the world. For example, Roache (2009) explained that, although families are not expected to adhere to a prescribed curriculum in New Zealand, they do have to submit a teaching proposal to the relevant authorities and a related timetable, which is needed in order to be in receipt of a certificate of exemption before they can commence home education. Therefore it could be proposed that home education in England is more advantageous for families of children with ASD as parents have the opportunities to respond to and tailor their home education practice and its organisation to meet their children's' needs.

The next two quotations are taken from the two children in Family 1, the first, from Simon describes how the home education is organised in the mornings.

You only work in the morning on home education; you only work all for the morning, not all day.

Likewise, Amber's short yet succinct view also echoes the sentiments in Simon's earlier extract.

Learning and then we have a bit of a play.

Views such as these are another example as to why it is important to include the opinions of individuals with ASD and those with SEN/D in research (Parsons and Lewis, 2010). In this instance it is to reinforce the parent's response and to provide a platform in which the child's voice can be shared, which is missing from other research.

This emphasis on formal learning taking place in the morning correlates with Roache (2009) who explained that all eight families commonly believed that their children were able to achieve more in a morning, in comparison with the amount of learning that might be achieved during an entire school day. This organisation has similar echoes to the curriculum in the majority of primary schools in the UK, where literacy and numeracy are generally timetabled daily (DfES, 2006). This is also confirmed by my own professional experience.

This next quotation below describes the activities which tend to take place during the working week as described by Amber, sister to Simon in Family 1.

Monday we do trampolining, on Tuesday we go to see our Grandma...on Wednesday in the evening it's Simon's swimming lesson, then on Thursday we do trampolining, horse riding, sometimes pony care course and chess club for Simon. Then on Friday we see our nanny [another grandparent] and every other Saturday, in the morning, Simon goes to football club.

I would argue that, given her age, seven years and 10 months and Amber's multiple diagnoses, autism, generalised anxiety, dyslexia and dyscalculia (as detailed by Susan in an email communication), it is quite impressive that she is able to clearly explain to an unfamiliar adult the activities which they do during the week. The different pursuits, which Amber refers to specifically relate to the children's interests and this topic will be expanded upon later on in this chapter.

Although in this next quotation, Christopher (the son from Family 2) is aware that literacy and numeracy are subjects (which he refers to as Maths and English) are carried out on a regular basis, he also states that the learning can happen at random times on various days of the week. There is no particular pattern.

I don't really do it in an order, I remember going out places just in my mere head because I remember most things I do but for learning, like Maths and English and book work...at home. I normally just do one at a time randomly, one there and one there...then I do it in a different order the next day, a different order the next day, I just do it randomly.

This quotation implies that certain subjects or activities which Christopher is expected to carry can happen flexibly and this replicates the general findings in other academic literature on home education (Gusman, 2006; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Reilly et al. 2002).

Given the extracts cited in this chapter so far, I find it curious to note that in my professional role, both as a teacher in a special school context and within a LA, a lot of time is spent considering and providing advice about how the educational environment can become more 'autism friendly'. The rationale for this being that any pupil anxieties are reduced, the classroom becomes more predictable, distractions are minimised or removed so that pupils with ASD are more able to learn. Nevertheless, other than the fact that all eight families had a table at which the children could carry out formal learning tasks, which were observed during the home visits visual signposting or formal timetabling did not appear to have the same weighting for seven out of the eight home educating families. In contrast, Schopler and Mesibov (1995) argue that a structured environment can help individuals with ASD. However, Parsons et al. (2011) state that although structured methods can help some children to learn certain skills this is only likely to happen under certain conditions. Nevertheless, the penultimate quotation below, from Sharon, the mother in Family 6, demonstrates that for her two children, Hannah and James, an outline of their day is helpful for them.

I've got a wipe board out there and I write...the night before what we're doing, so when they come down in the morning [they'll see] what they've got to do. I'll put worksheet on syllables, finish off our earth project diaries-they do diaries every day-spellings, and I get worksheets off where they can cut them out and put the spellings in order.

In Burke (2007), findings demonstrated that parents who were home educating as a result of their children's negative school experiences quite, generally at the beginning of their home education practice, to teach using a systematic routine and structure. This type of organisation is closest to what Connor (1999) argued was good practice for children with ASD, i.e. the implementation of a routine / structure.

This quotation can also be aligned with the theory of progressive modification which Reilly (2007) generated as a consequence of carrying out research with home educating families. Reilly defined Stage two (of three) as parents reproduced school at home.

The final quotation in this section is taken from Isabel, the mother in Family 7. At the time of this interview, private schools had closed for the summer holidays and Isabel explained that her eldest son had just completed the examinations for his GCSE qualifications. Rothermel (2002) found that, from the sample of 419 home educating families who had children that were 11 years or younger, many of them also worked to the academic school year.

As such, Isabel described that over time the home education had become even more flexible for her son Isaac, and had become even more so since her eldest son had been on study leave.

It's very free flowing at the moment, there isn't really a structure. It's meant to be, we get up, get ready, take the dog for a walk, but recently, he doesn't even want to take Rambo for a walk [laughs]. It depends on the week really, whether there's things going on...we just started doing sailing on a Tuesday afternoon and every other week we had the craft

club and trampolining on a Thursday and then usually there's a home education support meet on the Friday.

This 'free flowing' method is frequently referred to in the research literature. Indeed, Gusman (2006) explains that a flexible approach is considered to be an advantage for children with ASD who are being home educated as the parent is more able to be responsive to what times are best for their children to learn and what each child might need to spend more time on. Reilly (2004) explained that four out of six families in her study tended to use a more flexible method in their home education practice and this had altered and increased over time as the parental confidence increased. The above quotation is also suggestive of the second and third stages described in Reilly's theory of progressive modification as (1) the home education practice has become more flexible and, (2) the content of the learning is tailored to her son's interests. Indeed, Jordan and Powell (1999) argue that one successful approach to educating children with ASD is to develop a flexible curriculum which focuses on each child's interests and abilities. This is also reminiscent of Wilson (1996) who defined child-centred learning as being based upon what each child treasured. This point will be expanded upon further below.

The initial part of this chapter has looked at the first part of RQ3 concerning the organisation of home education. The similarities and differences between home education and formal schooling have also been explored and it seems that one of the main differences between the two contexts is that the focal point in developing a curriculum for home education has a greater focus on the personalised needs and interests of each child.

The majority of the families complete literacy and numeracy related tasks in the mornings and this generally happens at a central table, which becomes a dedicated pedagogical space. From the responses provided data is suggestive that learning is organised in response to the individual needs of the children that are being home educated.

Similarities and differences to formal schooling

Table 13: Similarities and differences to school

Similarities to school	Differences to school
School term times	Presence of family pets
National curriculum subjects	The subjects studied are more wide-ranging
Adults lead learning	No uniform
Activities take place in a dedicated learning space	Informal atmosphere
Questioning by lead educator promotes learning	Much greater use of personalised learning
A focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, which are usually taught in the morning	No formalised lesson structure
	One-to-one adult to child ratio
	Holistic interest in child
	Greater child engagement
	Greater use of semi-structured practice ⁹
	Greater flexibility of provision including when it is taught and how long for
	No formal assessment
	No formal marking of work
	Flexible timings of teaching sessions
	Parental responsibility for education
	No homework set by parents
	Involvement from multiple sources / people
	Increased child voice
	Education regularly takes place in multiple environments both in-door and out of doors
	Learning permeates all aspects of family life
	Blurred lines between subject learning and development of life skills
	Education is mainly provided by unqualified adults
	Learning is shared and there is an ongoing experience for the children and adult educators
	Learning content is more likely to be jointly negotiated between adult educator and child
	Pedagogical approaches tend to evolve and change over time
	Children as exposed to / experience / learn from, socialise with different groups of children and adults throughout the week
	Children likely to develop greater self-awareness due to the individualised curriculum content
	Formal artifices absent such as a daily assembly

⁹ This practice is explained later on in this chapter.

	There are fewer rules and they are applied less rigidly
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Table 13 outlines the similarities and differences between the eight families' home organisation and the pedagogical practices in comparison with those found in formal schooling. This table is included in this chapter as it visibly shows the overlap between the organisation of the home education and its content. The table also illustrates a blurring between explicit home education time and that of family life, particularly where there are siblings who attend school. This will be discussed below.

Roles, responsibilities and relationships

The boundaries between the different roles and responsibilities will be explored later on in this chapter in relation to both home education practice and family life. The chapter will also discuss the impact which home education can have on the parent/child relationship, especially between the mother and their child.

The quotation below from Clementine, the mother in Family 2, outlines how she supports her son Christopher, in planning his day.

Driving home from the [morning] school run we talk about what he's going to try and get done...for example that homework you have for Alison [online private tutor] or from David [private art tutor], you know, how have you got on with your reading, how many pages have we done, are you going to practise your spellings or your tables?

This extract suggests that Christopher seems to be participating in ongoing dialogue with his mother about the content of his negotiated learning. This joint negotiation between mother and son is an example of a subsystem, when examining this relationship in relation to FST, as it is a smaller relational system which is situated beneath the larger family-system. Another such example is the marital relationship (Morgan, 1988) within the family is likely to be indicative of the rules and relationship boundaries which have evolved and shifted over time.

Given the information, which Isabel and Clementine share in these two extracts, it appears that the organisation of their home education is different to the findings in Burke (2007) who discovered that 34 (90%) out of 38 families used a timetable. Whereas, for the eight families who participated in the study for this thesis, other than there being some group activities or, regular involvement from individual tutors, as described by Families 2 and 8 the only formally timetabled sessions were for events which took place outside of the home. Parents made reference to play sessions at another child's house, cookery sessions or visits to historic environments. These flexible home education practices appear to contradict with the structure and routine, which are advocated by academics in this field (e.g. Connor, 1999; Mesibov, 1997). The practices of the eight families will be discussed later in this section.

Parents in Reilly (2007) provided similar information which correlates with Clementine whereby they came to the realisation that, in addition to home educating their children with intellectual disabilities, they also had to meet their other parental responsibilities such as household chores and ensuring the needs of their other children were met, such as Clementine taking her other two children to school, a further example of FST (Morgaine, 2001). Likewise, in Kidd and Kaczmarek's (2010) research, the majority of the 10 mothers also explained that one of the complex issues with regards to being a home educator were the various roles, which they needed to carry out, as this extract from Clementine (Family 2) explains.

To hard core teach Christopher is really hard work, he responds better to people outside of the home than me because I think he instinctively wants me to be mum.

At another stage of the data collection both Jack and Clementine explained that one of the reasons why they wanted to get a statement of SEN for Christopher, and an appropriate school that catered for all of his requirements was, in part, due to the tensions in Clementine and Christopher's relationship. This might be because, as the above quotation demonstrates, Christopher sees Clementine as his mother and not as teacher. Clementine explained that she did not want the practice of home educating Christopher to jeopardise their long term relationship as mother and son, particularly as he was due to move into adolescence. Perhaps this sub-system, the

term used in FST i.e. the relationship between Clementine and Christopher is demonstrating boundary ambiguity whereby their roles and responsibilities have become muddled (Cridland et al. 2013) and this is likely to be due to their semi-autonomous practice.

Throughout the data collection process both the mothers and their partners spoke about the additional pressures and responsibilities placed upon them now they were home educators. In this next quotation Sharon (Family 6) illustrates the shift, which had taken place.

Since I now spend most of the time with the children I don't do as much housework. We've come to an agreement now, that's probably where it's changed for Sam [her partner], he had to do a bit more housework [laughs]...Whereas it was always my job to do all the housework and all the cooking...we're out a lot now and we do a lot [so] it's generally not done so much, but I think you kind of let go of things like that.

In the first part of the extract Sharon explains that most of her time is spent with her two children and although she continues to carry out household chores, the amount of time she spends doing so has diminished. By becoming a home educating family this has affected Sharon and Sam's roles, as he now completes some of the work, which Sharon has relinquished. It is likely that the decision to home educate has affected both the family system and multiple sub-systems (Morgaine, 2001) as Sharon explains how her role, and the role of her partner have altered. This extract correlates with Hurlbutt (2010) who states that all family members are affected by the decision to home educate and, as one parent Sharon in this instance became the main home educator this role has become a full-time occupation (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Mifflin, 2012).

The final extract in this section is from Siobhan (Family 8), which further demonstrates that once a mother becomes a home educator their ability to manage and maintain a household often decreases.

I have to try and be the educator and socialise plus your cleaning or cooking. I have taken on more responsibility. Bill's [her partner] great but often I've run out of something...

Although the above extract is short it can be argued that as Siobhan has taken on all aspects of Henry's learning this could be construed as a cause of stress (Neuman and Averam, 2003).

The next section will describe the pedagogical practices which the eight families use and which factors supported them in making this decision. Data in the form of observational descriptions and interview extracts are used to further elaborate upon and contrast with the dialogue shared. The final section in this chapter will examine the resources, which are used both within and beyond the home environment.

Different types of home education practice

Although the majority of the parents described their home education practice as being 'semi-structured', each person's interpretation of this term is likely to be different as it is dependent upon the family context, their children's needs, ongoing pressures and responsibilities which are related to being a parent and partner. It is therefore difficult to define any of the terms such as 'highly structured' (Hopwood et al. 2007), 'semi-structured' (Atkinson et al. 2007) and 'autonomous' (op cit, 2007), as they are likely to be experienced and delivered differently by each family.

One example of such a tension is evident in this extract from Jane, the mother in Family 5. She described her home education practice as being semi-structured and informed by Jane's knowledge of two methods, TEACCH, as discussed in Chapter 2 and ABA (applied behavioural analysis) which are known and facilitated by educators and psychologists who work in the field of autism.

I mean, we probably use elements of them, I wouldn't use any of them rigidly so, with the TEACCH things, all about structure and keeping things calm...so we sometimes use visual schedules...Social Stories, if that comes into it, maybe ABA.

In Jane's questionnaire she explained that, prior to having children, she worked as a speech and language therapist in an educational context and therefore it is unsurprising that she is familiar with both TEACCH, Carol Gray's Social Stories and ABA. As yet, another implied connection with child-centred education as the strategies and structures which Jane describes seem to be based upon Sophia's needs (Rusk, 1933).

As referred to in the literature review, Chapter 2, Hurlbutt (2011) reiterates that no single intervention or strategy is considered to be effective for every child with ASD because they will not necessarily benefit from these approaches in the same way. Prizant et al (2003) provide a convincing line of reasoning by stating that if an educator, in this instance Jane, should choose different aspects of a particular intervention or strategy, this in turn fragments and potentially skews their function and therefore it is questionable how useful this multifaceted approach may be. Nevertheless, prior to making the decision to home educate, Sophia had attended two different primary schools with little success and as a parent Jane knows her daughter best, as Harte (2009) suggests, parents are the authority about their children with ASD.

Out of all of the responses from the 15 parents the type of home education practices, which Tricia and her partner Steve (Family 4) described were closest to that of autonomous education (where the child has the freedom to determine what, how and when they learn). However, Tricia referred to her practice as being semi-autonomous. I have chosen two extracts from Tricia, which illustrate that the approaches used have changed over the three years she has been home educating her son, Dwayne.

When he first came out I think I'd made a little diary, we're gonna do English for an hour, we're gonna do some Maths for an hour, we're gonna do some Science experiments in the afternoon but, it didn't work. I think we saw that straight away it wasn't gonna work.

This second statement from Tricia suggests that it became necessary to alter this more formal home education practice so replaced it with a more semi-autonomous approach, the term which Tricia used during the face-to-face interview. This revised

practice echoes Stage three of Reilly's (2007) aforementioned theory, whereby parents relayed that their home education practice altered over time and became more focussed on each child.

So we just sort of grab on something, you know. We didn't even know that camels was gonna come up that morning but it did and he quite liked them so we just sort of jumped on it and searched up, sat there with a tablet together and pulled up a load of stuff about camels.

As Reilly (2004) explains, over time parents become more experienced and their confidence increased and this can result in the use of a more flexible approach to their home education.

Observed practice and family differences

Although each time I visited the eight families I informally observed the environment, interactions and any resources that were being shared, I also carried out four more targeted observations in the families. The rationale for implementing observations was to be able to compare participants' responses regarding their home education practice from the interview transcripts with the teaching and learning that I could see happening. Where I was able to carry out the observations first, this afforded the opportunity in which to pose additional questions during the interview, which specifically related to what had been observed. The reason why I did not complete these for all of the families was that this aspect of the data collection process was negotiated flexibly with the mothers and their children. In the other four families it was not appropriate at that particular time and this occurred for two reasons, i.e. it was the school holidays or it was judged by the mothers that the children would not have been able to cope.

This section explores the home education approaches used by Clementine, the mother in Family 2, and Tricia, the mother in Family 4. I selected these two observations because both mothers suggested that they were using semi-autonomous practices. Comparisons are made between the observations that were carried out in the home environments alongside a few individual responses during interviews.

These two extracts have been chosen as they illustrate that, even within a recognised label which seeks to describe a type of pedagogy, in this instance 'semi-autonomous practice', there remain differences between what the literature says and what I observed. It is likely that these are due to the individual needs of the children, family contexts and additional responsibilities placed upon the two mothers.

Another rationale for including these particular extracts is that, although Reilly (2007) states that she also carried out observations in the home, these descriptions do not appear in her PhD thesis or at least they do not appear to have been included in the main body of the text.

Extract from a 50 minutes observation of Family 4, Tricia and her son, Dwayne (aged 8 years) on an afternoon in May, 2014

The italicised sections are intended to: provide contextual information about the observation, describe the changing role and responses that I had in relation to Dwayne throughout the observation and offer an interpretation about what happened.

Time: 50 minutes

I arrived on a housing estate one afternoon in May and was greeted at the door of a modest semi-detached house by Tricia, Dwayne's mother and an excitable family dog named 'Hercules'. I was directed into an open plan living room, all of the soft furnishings were covered in throws to protect them from the hairs of the family pet. On entering the room I met Dwayne who was sitting in a crouched position on a sofa; he was wearing a Marvel action hero's onesie and he had bare feet.

Dwayne was very chatty and was eager to share his toys and knowledge of them. As such he reached across to the windowsill and grabbed a large plastic action figure of Spiderman. Dwayne explained that Spiderman could fire plastic webs from its arms, he then collected four webs and attached one of them to the two connectors on Spiderman's left arm. Dwayne then struck the lever on Spiderman's back, however nothing happened. Whilst this was happening I perched myself on the second sofa, which was situated diagonally opposite whilst Dwayne hastily continued to strike the lever repeatedly until the stretchy plastic web flew across the room towards the front window. As the mechanism began to perform Dwayne placed a second spider's web onto Spiderman's arm and went on to explain how the device worked.

Tricia described Family 4's home education practice as being 90% autonomous, where most of the time Dwayne apparently has the freedom to choose what, when and how he learns; and as such I would need to take an active role in the

observation. She suggested that one way in to finding out about Dwayne's learning might be for him to begin working in one of his workbooks¹⁰. I went and sat next to Dwayne who was seated at the dining table at the rear of the property.

It quickly became evident that although Dwayne has many talents one great weakness for him was the inability to focus for a fixed period of time. Therefore this observation was unique as no sooner had I sat next to Dwayne to talk about his work he proceeded to get up and search for a collection of cards to show me. He promptly told me the information contained on each card and explained that it related to a different country. During this exchange Tricia remained on the sofa, she then left to make us refreshments. Once Dwayne had spent a few minutes completing a literacy task he allowed me to have a very brief look at his work. Tricia explained that Dwayne had only started writing in January 2014, but his preference was to use online materials as he finds writing challenging. This initial section of the observation was probably the calmest because from here on in the frequency of change in Dwayne's activities and the location of them altered at quite a pace.

With encouragement from both Tricia and myself, Dwayne began working on a page, which he had chosen from his Science workbook. Tricia suggested that he colour in the animals, which he had already linked to particular statements on the page. Dwayne selected the coloured crayon he wanted to use and during the colouring he grunted and tapped the table with his leg. After three minutes he lost focus, got up and started throwing Floppy, his toy dog up and down. At 2:10pm Dwayne asked Tricia whether he could get 'Hercules' in from the garden but Tricia explained that 'no meant no' and she was not going to back down despite his requests. *Dwayne coped incredibly well with meeting, sharing and spending time with me. This also included the unspoken expectation that both Tricia and I had wanted Dwayne to carry out some learning tasks during that time and Dwayne did so for short bursts over a 30 minute period.*

By 2:28pm he could not tolerate being confined in the open living space any longer as, through the window, Dwayne could see his large trampoline, which was situated at the rear of the garden. He quickly became insistent that he show me his best and favourite position, the front flip. Tricia agreed that it was okay as he had done so well to complete and show me some of his work. I hesitantly got up from the dining table and gingerly walked around to the side door, Dwayne had already fled hurriedly into the back garden and as I opened the door 'Hercules' ran in. Dwayne kept calling as he was in a hurry to show me his front flip so by the time I reached the back garden he was already bouncing on the trampoline. Dwayne completed approximately two front rolls, and I praised him hugely, which resulted in him wanting to show me further manoeuvres. He then spotted a retractable canvas tunnel on the lawn so he ran over and picked it up. Dwayne then suggested that I move away in case it landed where I was standing; he then threw it, got inside, expanded the tunnel with his hands, and, so that he could not be seen repeated the exercise. We then returned to the house where Dwayne picked up his Spiderman and we all agreed

¹⁰ Tricia explained that if Dwayne were completing work in his workbook she would usually sit next to him or if he were able to complete the task unaided she might go and complete a chore somewhere in the house.

that it was now time to try and commence the interview.

Firstly Dwayne wore an outfit of his choosing and his feet were bare, he was also sitting on a sofa. Both Dwayne's attire and his location within the home environment would suggest that Dwayne is more comfortable and at ease than he was while at school. Despite a virtual stranger having entered his home, Dwayne seemed keen to share his favourite toy, which might suggest that he has grown in confidence as a result of being home educated. This compares with McConnell (2006), a home educating mother wrote that her son's self-belief had also increased.

From the state of flux described in the fourth paragraph of Family 4's observation, this is suggestive of how problematic it must be at times to measure Dwayne's progress and to ensure that he attends to learning activities on a daily basis. It is probable that Tricia describes their home education practice as being 90% autonomous. Although it is evident that there are some ongoing difficulties with regards to the fact that Dwayne appears to find it difficult to remain seated this would seem to be another reason why Tricia chose this approach as Dwayne does appear to benefit from physical activities such as the way that he self-regulated by tapping the table, throwing his toy dog around and then wanting to go on the trampoline.

The next extract from Tricia substantiates where the home education is generally located in the home.

At home, usually in the front room, here and that end, right up that end of the room, we're generally learning but sometimes we're here in front of the TV.

It is interesting to note that the majority of families, six out of eight, had some form of open plan living area as this appeared to support their children's flexible learning.

The second quotation uses a specific term to define her identity as a home educating parent.

I'm always a home educator.

A further example of Tricia suggesting that the role of home educator is a full-time position (Mifflin, 2012).

This next view from Tricia's partner, Steve, contrasts with her opinion as he very much classifies himself as a parent.

But I am 'is dad and I, I, I, I, I, I, could never call me teacher because I'm no' 'is teacher. Alright I teach 'im stuff that he needs to know, he's got to wotsname but, at the end of the day, me and Tricia are still 'is mum and dad no matter what.

This quotation appears to emphasize that Steve considers himself to be a parent first, and an educator second, and although he teaches Dwayne how to participate in different activities Steve appears to be suggesting that this is part of his parenting role.

The second observation is another example of semi-autonomous practice which is quite different to that demonstrated by Tricia and Dwayne. It also highlights some of the differences between formal school education and the more informal home setting.

Extract from a 55 minutes observation of Family 2, Clementine and her son, Christopher (aged 10 years) on an afternoon in February, 2014

The italicised sections are intended to: provide a contextual background to the observation by relating it to my professional experience and by offering an explanation of certain behaviours or actions.

Time: 1.45pm - 2.40pm

I arrived at the family home in squally wet weather and was welcomed by Clementine and her two children, Louisa, who was off sick from school, and Christopher who is currently being home educated.

I sat on a sofa close to the hallway and discussed the consent forms with Clementine and Christopher¹¹. It was fairly evident from Christopher's reaction, no eye contact or acknowledgment that he was reluctant to look up from his iPad and he was not keen on my presence. *Clementine explained that she had previously discussed the data collection and my visit with Christopher but due to his autism and associated anxiety she remained unconvinced about whether he would participate.*

Although the observation began with Christopher communicating by nodding or shaking his head and looking in my vicinity this changed over the course of the afternoon. I explained that their home education practice should continue as normal as I wanted to watch their usual practice.

The first activity was initiated by Clementine and she suggested that Christopher continue creating some drawings in his sketchbook, which he was happy to do. Whilst Clementine collected Christopher's portfolio from a building in the garden Christopher got a large A2 sketchbook and set of pencils and promptly set to work at

¹¹ Louisa was asked to go upstairs.

the dining table. *The only two factors which appeared to be similar to formal schooling was that the task happened at a table, in this instance the dining table, and that the first subject was directed by an adult. The majority of the following actions, interactions and practices observed would suggest that this example of home education differs greatly from that of a school.*

Christopher wore a long-sleeved T-shirt, a pair of jeans and socks. *I was aware of his socks at the start of the afternoon as I noted that in Family 1 both children were in their stockinged feet; however, as the observation continued I became even more aware of the dual function of Christopher's socks.* The downstairs living space was covered in laminate flooring and Christopher was able to carry out a number of different movements at increasingly frequent intervals as his interest in the activity waned or his need for sensory feedback grew. Initially Christopher got up from the dining chair, lent on the table or spun around the room, he then leant forwards on the dining table whilst standing and then started skidding on the floor.

Christopher tucked his feet under the rug, which lay in the centre of the living room; they remained there until he wanted to tuck his feet under himself so he could rest his iPad on his knees. *In a school environment there tends to be allocated time slots in a day or fixed times throughout the week when a child can carry out sensory activities or wear sensory related items, dependent upon whether they are over or under sensitive to sensory stimuli. It is unlikely that when Christopher does return to formal schooling in September 2014 he will have the freedom that he presently enjoys.*

Christopher drew the outline of a bunch of grapes and then put different facial expressions on each. When Clementine had made the suggestion that Christopher continue with his artwork she also made reference to the focus of his art sessions with his art tutor whom he visits regularly. At present Christopher was supposed to be using tone and shading in his drawing but at no point during the observation was there any evidence of this. Christopher carried out his drawing, spinning in circles and engaged Clementine in dialogue for 25 minutes.

Once Christopher had made the decision that he no longer wanted to do his artwork he spent the rest of the afternoon carrying out activities on his iPad, and all of these were completed whilst he was seated on an adjoining sofa. Christopher used apps called 'Squeebles'. He carried out a Maths activity for 4 minutes followed by a spelling task. Throughout these two tasks I engaged Christopher in dialogue and he happily explained one of the apps to me; he said that, "Squeebles help you learn".

At approximately 2:25pm Clementine asked Christopher whether he was going to do any reading? Christopher said, "no" and Clementine did not appear to challenge him on this other than to suggest that perhaps he could do some explicit reading later on that day.

The longer I observed the more I felt that perhaps Christopher had the upper hand in his relationship with Clementine and the content of his learning. However, one observation of course cannot provide sufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions and the evidence is tentative.

The observation ended after 55 minutes; at this point Christopher said “if I can't play Minecraft, I will watch Minecraft.” So, once he had stopped showing me his artwork he began to do just that.

Like Family 4, Family 2 also have an open plan living area downstairs. Christopher was sat on a sofa but this time was engaged in doing an activity on his iPad. Both Tricia and Clementine initiated the first task that their son carried out, for Christopher, and as he reportedly has a talent for and interest in Art Clementine suggested that Christopher begin working in his sketchbook.

Christopher wore socks and these served a dual purpose, i.e. keeping his feet warm and facilitating movement in different ways on the laminate flooring to expend some energy and potentially meet a sensory need. Once he had effectively self-regulated Christopher was able to re-focus; he did this by transitioning from moving around and spinning to sitting on the sofa and tucking his feet under a rug.

By doing the four observations I learned that the mothers appeared to be totally committed to the learning and well being of their children. Even if the children struggle on occasions, or were not receptive to an activity, the mothers are responsive to their child's individual needs so that he or she was able to re-engage with the learning at another time or by presenting the task differently.

The limitations of the observations were that by being present in the pedagogical space it was likely that I was a distraction and families might have interacted and worked differently because I was present. Likewise, the four observations were time limited and only represent a short period of the home education practices which took place.

Nevertheless, the four observations demonstrated a range of strengths and difficulties, which the children experienced on a regular basis. For example: the need to move around (in response to their sensory needs), sit or stand in order to read or process information, have ad hoc physical breaks, such as jumping on the trampoline in the garden and learn. It is this insight which the four observations provide which seem to be missing from much of the literature and by having the opportunity to be

present in the home context I was able to discover the types of pedagogy which parents used. Therefore, I argue that this research makes a significant contribution to home education generally and with children with ASD in particular.

In the next section the pedagogical practices of the home educating families will be discussed by making connections with particular theories and practices of children-centred education as outlined in Chapter 3.

Pedagogical practices in and beyond the home

A second round of interviews was carried out over the telephone with 12 out of 15 parents and this is where most of the in-depth questions were asked in relation to the pedagogical practices and their functions when home educating their children with ASD. Despite every parent responding by describing a form of personalised/individualised and essentially child-centred learning, none of the parents used the latter phrase. Parents used such words as: 'flexibility', 'personalisation', 'autonomy', 'informal', 'healing', '90% autonomous' and 'unstructured' to describe their home education practices.

This section discusses the similarities between four of the mothers' practices and child-centred education. In this first extract from Isabel (Family 7), she makes it clear that Isaac's interests are a generally starting point for his learning.

It's kind of...led by Isaac in some respects coz then something will be found that interests him and then you can take that, you can expand that to wherever it needs to go.

The extract above has links with some of the characteristics of child-centred education where Wood (2007) explains that any learning should be instigated by the children themselves. In Gusman's (2006) study she also argues one strength of home educating children with ASD is that their interests can be included in the learning.

The next quotation from Siobhan (Family 8) shows her understanding about how her child, Henry, learns best.

When we're out walking we do songs so, we do it in a different way because even sitting and writing, you know, there's that balance to create and if I force it too much, it's working with his will in short bursts.

Siobhan explained that she used singing to help Henry learn the multiplication tables and she obtained this idea stemmed from an existing resource, a CD. This method correlates with Darling (1988) who described that child-centred education included practical activities where children could use a range of resources. Siobhan's example, i.e. Henry learning his multiplication tables also relates to Dewey (1929) who argued that learning can involve the use of both concrete and kinaesthetic tasks, particularly so that children can learn abstract concepts.

This next view from Susan (Family 1) builds upon Isabel and Siobhans' earlier extracts, whereby Susan suggests that she uses multiple approaches with her two primary aged children, Simon and Amber.

I don't really class them as teaching approaches, I look at their interests...I know they need to learn certain things and I just go at their speed. So the kind of approaches we use are discussions, we look at how they feel they might learn.

Susan's view seems to resonate with child-centred learning whereby the child learns at their own pace, as advocated by A. S. Neill (Darling, 1988) and when they are ready to process new information. The extract also appears to be an example of negotiated learning between the children and Susan but also, in a similar way to the expectations which Clementine had of Christopher earlier in this chapter.

The final quotation in this section is from Clementine, Christopher's mother, who spoke passionately about why she and her husband, Jack, made the decision to home educate.

The stark difference is that you can build an education around the child. I know that schooling says that every child matters and they all have an individual learning programme but its complete rubbish [laughs] - they do

not! Coz my other children do not, they have to fit in with the class but Christopher does have an individual learning programme, completely individual to him that helps develop his gifts.

Parallels can be drawn with Parsons and Lewis (2010) who state that most of the parents in their study, although they were not specifically against formal schooling, were more anxious about how the individual needs of their children were going to be met and the type of teaching and learning approaches which were used. Similarly, Reilly et al. (2002) wrote that all six families in their research were unanimous that the individual needs of their children were met by the specific teaching approaches, which were used during their home education. Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) also argue that all 10 mothers who participated considered that they were able to provide an education for their children that best suited the ways in which they learned.

How then might two of these parent quotations, particularly the ones from Isabel and Siobhan, relate to Vygotsky's theories of ZPD, including the notion of the learners being scaffolded to a higher conceptual level by a more able, or knowledgeable, partner, in a similar way to Vygotsky's ZPD? Below I have selected the following two phrases from the texts.

'You can expand that to wherever it needs to go', and

'If I force it too much, it's working with his will in short bursts'.

Therefore, I am arguing that in both Isabel and Siobhan's extracts an element of scaffolding (Wood and Wood, 1996) is visible as both mothers are offering support to their children with the aim of promoting their ability to complete a task which Isaac and Henry have yet to complete independently. Other examples of scaffolding which parents mentioned in this chapter and during the data collection include the types of prompting which Clementine asks Christopher on the journey home and during the observation.

Out of the 15 parents who participated in this study only two of the fathers had professions which involved teaching. According to their respective background

questionnaires it stated that Ernie was a Maths teacher and Hugh a university academic and yet neither was the main home educator in their respective family. From the evidence available from the interview transcripts, questionnaire responses and observation data, it could be argued that this group of parents are skilful teachers as they are carrying out personally tailored, flexible and responsive pedagogical practices. The approaches which the mothers have adopted (e.g. taking account of each child's needs, using a variety of teaching strategies, using different kinaesthetic (Dewey, 1929) and concrete resources (Entwistle, 2012) and basing learning on the child's own interests) show that many of the home education practices resonate with approaches used in child-centred education. However, none of the mothers had received any formal training in pedagogy, one criticism of home educating parents (Ensign, 2000) and in particular, no training in pedagogies associated with child-centred approaches and practices.

Table 14 outlines the different practices which the eight families use to home educate their children. They demonstrate many similar features to child-centred theories as the children are encouraged to engage with other children and adults: learning takes places without direct involvement from an adult and the parents use different types of learning e.g. kinaesthetic and concrete.

Table 14: Examples of home education practices similar to (1-8) *and different from (9-11) child-centred education*

Family	Approaches used that contained features similar to child-centred theories	<i>Approaches that contained features that were different from child-centred theories</i>
1	Learning is personalised to meet the children's current needs Children learn at their own pace Interests of each child are pursued Kinaesthetic activities such as growing vegetables and cooking dinner, based on direct experience	
2	Education is built around the needs of the child Child has an individual learning programme which is jointly negotiated Parents promote opportunities in which child can develop their talents such as Art Child has chances to share their opinion of their home education Sensory needs are met, one example being that child is able to sit, stand or lie	
3	Social skills and self-confidence of child are prioritised Thematic learning approach is used alongside different learning approaches Child is allowed to learn in his/her own way	
4	Learning is 90% autonomous and mainly child led Child learns through concrete, outdoor and life skills related activities such as: making a bench or dressing	
5	Reduction in the number of subjects which the children dislike Parents seek to meet complete needs of child e.g. social development, sensory and behaviour management by developing strategies jointly to support the child Parents observe to see what the child responds best to	
6	Children are given freedom, regular breaks and learn at home and in natural environments Parents prioritise the children's happiness over academic attainment	

7	Parents do not generally directly teach the child and the child learns more by discovering things for them self Child leads the learning as parent reports that he/she will only learn if he/she has a reason to do so	
8	Learning is tailored to the child's personal preferences such as singing to learn multiplication tables Parent responds to a range of questions about different topics which are posed by the children	
9		<i>All children were expected to carry out daily literacy and numeracy activities</i>
10		<i>Mothers executed some control over the content of their children's learning in relation to a specific skill or area of knowledge</i>
11		<i>The majority of parents incorporated life skills into their children's learning</i>

Resources used to support families' home education practices

This section explores the different resources, technologies and key individuals that influence and form part of the home education for the eight families. The first extract from Jack, Christopher's father in Family 2, emphasises the different forms of technology which Christopher accesses as part of his learning.

He uses online resources for Maths. He has some online Maths tuition where he plays games and he's also had a programme where it's about logic, talks about logic and how to put shapes into shapes. He has some books, he does education online with a tutor, which is literacy once a week, we've got a DVD which they all watch and that's Horrible Histories.

In this quotation Jack explains that Christopher uses different resources to complete numeracy and literacy tasks. In addition, Jack described that all of the children in the family enjoyed watching DVDs, one example of Christopher having a shared experience with others (Darling, 1988).

Although all eight families explained that they did numeracy and literacy (and this example from Jack is yet another example of this) they did not necessarily cover all national curriculum subjects because some of their children were not interested in certain subjects or where the child had a particularly difficult experience and therefore the parents decided to take a different approach.

Similarly Parsons and Lewis (2010) found that the majority of the 27 parents in their study did not adhere to the national curriculum. In Rothermel (2002) the findings are slightly different as out of the 419 families who participated, it seems that the more confident parents tended not to pursue the national curriculum, whereas those parents lacking in confidence were more mindful of its content. Perhaps this next extract from Siobhan, in which she describes the approach that she is using to meet Henry's literacy needs, could be construed as the latter example from Rothermel's study. It also shows that not all the parents were confident in using new technologies and preferred to use more traditional resources.

We don't really do apps, we did have an app to do with the tracing for the letters but it's just books, your Carol Vorderman¹² worksheets. It's all pencil and paper; we're not doing online stuff...now but writing.

Siobhan had only been home educating Henry for eight months. She explained that Henry also had a literacy tutor and so it is possible that Siobhan was, to at least some degree, modelling and building upon some of the learning which had been devised by this external professional. Siobhan made reference to using books to home educate Henry. Burke (2007) found that 27 (71%) out of 38 families utilised textbooks in the study, although it is not clear about the frequency of their use. Nevertheless, for the eight families who participated in this study, although textbooks were used they were not used, parents reported that they were not used prolifically and when they were mentioned by parents, they appeared to use them much more at the beginning of their home education practice, possibly due to a lack of confidence about their ability to educate their children. Another example of Stage two of Reilly's (2007) theory of progressive modification namely that families relatively new to home education

¹² Carol Vorderman is a television personality, best known for her skill at Mathematics.

tended to use existing resources. However, this shift from the use of textbooks in Burke's (2007) to more technological resources in this study could simply be a reflection of changing times.

This quotation below from Tricia (Family 4) demonstrates that the resources which formed part of Dwayne's home education took place in a variety of locations.

Library, museums, supermarket, he has to go and get all the ingredients, he likes to pay the lady and work out how much change...he needs and stuff like that, swimming pools, lots of country parks.

This extract suggests that Tricia and Dwayne spend time away from the home as she makes reference to outside settings. From the range of people and places mentioned, this quotation suggests that Dwayne could be exposed to one-to-one experiences with Tricia but he is also likely to learn by speaking with and listening to others, and these interactions are comparable with findings in Nelson (2013). It also proposes that Dwayne is likely to have opportunities in which to socialise with a range of adults and children thereby, suggesting that home education does not have to preclude socialising (Evans, 2003).

Table 15 outlines the various resources which the eight families use. Seven out of eight families make use of a range of digital resources and all of them carry out one or more activities outside of the family home each week.

Table 15: Resources used by families in and beyond the home

Family	Resources observed in the home setting	Digital Resources	External Resources Talked about by parents
1	Objects in the house Worksheets Books	iPad DVDs Laptop	College tutors Friends / peers Shops Crowds Clubs - chess, horse riding Castles
2	Paper and pens Books	Online materials Online tutor DVDs iPad	Art tutor
3	Stickers Books Six foot ruler	iPad DVDs Computer	Friends / peers
4	Books	DVDs iPad Computer Television programmes	College tutors Friends / peers Clubs Library Museum
5	Lolly sticks Alphabet stamps Card games Books	Computer DVDs	Friends Clubs - yoga Library Museums Galleries Cafes College tutors
6	Worksheets Books	Online materials DVDs Television programmes Computer	Food shopping Walks
7	Books	Internet e.g. Ted Talks Television programmes	Home education support group
8	Books Worksheets Pencil and paper	CDs	Literacy tutor Clubs

The data discussed in this chapter demonstrates some overlap with Reilly's (2007) thesis and the three stage theory of progressive modification which she constructed from the findings in her research on how parents home educated their children who had intellectual disabilities in Western Australia over the course of one year. The first stage is based upon parents making use of resources that are readily available, the second stage is where families take a systematic approach when accessing support

networks and the third stage demonstrates that as parental confidence grows, the families are able to agree about what is important in their practice and their home education is based upon the needs of each child. I maintain that seven out of the eight families (I have excluded Family 8) who participated in the study for this thesis, also carried out all three of Reilly's stages but not necessarily in the same order. In this study, all of the mothers reported that they either communicated with other home educating parents or attended support groups to help inform their decision, prior to making the final decision to home educate.

Chapter 7 has discussed how parents organise their home education. The majority of them adopted a semi-structured approach whereby most children complete some form of literacy and numeracy activity in the mornings whilst seated around a central table and then spend most afternoons outside the home doing a range of sport, leisure and life skills pursuits which are personally tailored to each child. The information shared by the participants and as a result of the observations carried out the data would appear to correlate with Nelson (2013) who questions whether the terms which are used to define and describe home education practices are fit for purpose, given the diversity and individuality of each family. The approach that the families use tends to have evolved over time and is centred on the changing needs of their children. Therefore, the home education practices have similarities with many of the child-centred learning traditions, e.g. learning is based on first-hand experience, freedom to pursue child's interests, valuing the individual and having an awareness of their emotional state and thinking skills.

The mothers also employ elements of Vygotsky's ZPD and there is evidence of them scaffolding their children towards another conceptual level of development as they prompt or steer their children through their learning. The resources which are used are inclined to stem from the children's own interests, and are based on how best to motivate and engage each child, this correlates with child-centred pedagogy. While some take the form of applications on a tablet, the parents also use books and external resources such as supermarkets, leisure centres and libraries and key people such as college educators, tutors, sports instructors and external family members.

The final chapter in the findings and discussions section of this thesis focuses on RQ4 which considers what the eight families perceived as being the main advantages and disadvantages of home educating their children with ASD. Then I will explore whether parents align their home education practices with child-centred pedagogy.

Chapter 7: The perceived advantages and disadvantages of home education

RQ4: What do parents and their children with ASD perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of home educating?

Introduction

This chapter responds to RQ4 and discusses the perceived advantages and disadvantages of home education from the participants' view point. Qualitative interview data from the six parents and three children, and the 15 quantitative questionnaire responses, enable me to explore the differing emphases which parents adopted in their pedagogical practices as each child is at the centre of their own curriculum. This focus on meeting the changing needs of each child, in addition to developing their life skills, is positioned in stark contrast to the present standards and outcomes agenda of the contemporary education system (Ball, 2008a; GOV.UK., 2013). Finally the chapter will continue by exploring whether parents recognise that their home education practices concurred with child-centred pedagogy.

Perceived advantages of home education

Having intimate knowledge of their children to meet their learning / academic needs

The statement below from Christopher (child in Family 2) is illustrative of his lived experience whilst attending a mainstream primary school.

Even if they're more focused on work they're still...pretty much there when I need them, unlike when I was at school where I held my hand up until all the bones in my body ran out of it, until it ran out of energy and it just dropped.

I would argue that this statement is sophisticated for two reasons as Christopher recognizes that there has been a shift in his parents' focus (now that his mother, Clementine is home educating him) and he appears to be suggesting that his parents give Christopher attention than he received at school.

Being able to tailor the curriculum to their children

In this first extract from Susan (Family 1), she emphasizes the individual tailoring of the learning experiences for her two children.

I think the difference is you can really go at your child's pace, you can tailor subjects, or bits they're struggling with, you can put a spin on it and bring in an out of the box way of doing it along with a theme they like so it's very individualised; I think Ernie [Susan's partner] was doing angles with this rug on a game that he's made up called 'The Vortex'.

This quotation relates to child-centred education as Susan describes that she goes at her children's pace (Darling, 1929), tailors the work to each child (Rusk, 1933) and her partner creates a game (Wood, 2007) using concrete resources (Dewey, 1929). Although Susan does not use the phrase 'child-centred learning' she is seeing each of her children as an individual and as Entwistle (2012) explains, this is one of the key principles of child-centred education.

The game that Ernie reportedly created to teach his children concerned a particular Maths concept and we can use FST to understand that his relationship with Simon and Amber altered during this direct teaching time. Ernie is a teacher by profession; however, he is also Simon and Amber's father, and so at this time the relationship between Ernie and his children became blurred between parent and teacher. Moreover, during these sessions Susan does not take the lead, unlike in other aspects of the children's home education, and therefore, a sub-system, i.e. her relationship with Simon and Amber, and with her husband, also changed at moments like this.

In Nelson's (2013) findings she describes that home educated children spent a lot of time with their parents learning and carrying out practical tasks together. The example, which Susan provides, in relation to her partner, Ernie, who reportedly uses a familiar object i.e. a rug as the focal point for a game where the expected outcome is that the children will understand more about angles.

All eight families provided examples regarding how they had customised the learning so that it met the children's needs.

Being able to meet their children's social and emotional needs

This next extract from Jane, the mother in Family 5, builds upon both the personalisation agenda and the acknowledgement of the individual's needs, which have been discussed in the previous two quotations.

To help her just to talk through...it's sort of emotional regulation and behavioural regulation, those are big ones for Sophia again, that wasn't really targeted in school, so we can work on that at home. The big ones for Sophia, I think are sensory and emotional and social at the moment.

It is this child-centred awareness, which all eight mothers appeared to have and it was this which appeared to inform the holistic approach they applied to their home education practices, and which Reilly et al. (2002) also discovered. In their findings they explain that as home education allows parents to teach on a one-to-one and flexible basis, this allows them to meet the individual's social and academic learning needs (op cit, 2002). Similarly, Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) discovered that the most commonly mentioned benefit of home educating, was the mother's aptitude at meeting the needs of their children and I would argue that from the examples provided, evidence in this thesis replicates these two findings.

Being able to manage social situations and promote greater social integration

The quotation below from Nadine (mother from Family 3) concerning her son, Mike, aged 5-years, could be situated either under the advantages or disadvantages sections of this chapter dependent upon how the reader interprets the word 'control'.

I provide a very calm, stress free environment that he needs, that's very individual and to help him grow. He can't work in an environment where there's anyone else in the room really, school would've never worked academically for him...he's happier, everyone's happier. It kind of works because he's not pushed out into the playground for twenty minutes to navigate all those children and socialising on his own and to get it wrong,

that just doesn't happen in home ed[ucation] but, as you know, especially in the home education support group...you've always kind of got your eye on what's going on and you immediately say well, that made so and so feel sad.

Nadine's actions imply that she acknowledges Mike's difficulty with theory of mind (Attwood, 2004) as she is giving him permission to make mistakes and with her support learn from them. Reilly (2007) also found that the primary source of contact with others tended to be those who were also being home educated.

A further connection with child-centred education can be made with Dewey (1929) who views all curriculum subjects as being the social activities which each child experiences and perhaps that is what Nadine and Jane are communicating in their extracts.

Being able to promote well-being and build on existing skills

The next extract, from Robert (the father in Family 3), relates to what he considers the overarching goal of home education is for his children.

There's kind of basic life function type things that everybody needs to know so that they can have some sort of independence, not necessarily total independence, but just to feel that they're not totally reliant on other people and then whatever comes up really, I mean I just want...whatever makes them happy. The most disappointing bit will be that it doesn't happen, it's very hard to know what the potential is but, if you can may be spot a path they might be able to go down then, how do we see how far they can go and so, to test that theory...one of them is brilliant at tennis, then we should do what we can to make them more brilliant at tennis, if they enjoy it.

This extract suggests that the main goal of Mike's home education is that Robert and his partner Nadine might establish Mike's talents and then promote these over time. This example from Robert is not dissimilar to Dewey (1929) who explained that learning might prepare the individual for their future existence so they can make best

use of their capabilities. Likewise, Starr and Foy (2012) found that parents, whose children attended school, also wanted them to develop independence, happiness and the skills to communicate, help themselves and form social relationships, as well as achieve an appropriate level of education.

Perceived disadvantages of home education

The next section discusses the parents' perceived disadvantages of home education: financial implications, the prejudices experienced from others, the unending worries and feelings of responsibility and the shifting friendships, which the home educated children experience.

Financial burden of home education

Six out of the eight families made reference to the cost of home education, particularly where the mother could no longer carry out paid employment. Given that most of the parents raised this as an issue, I have selected a quotation from Simon (Family 1) who, despite his age of 9 years and 7 months, was aware of this impact.

Our parents don't get to go to work so much because we're here, that's something.

Susan (Family 1) explained in her questionnaire response that she is self-employed and as a result of becoming a home educator she now works differently. Likewise, data from the mothers' questionnaires showed that, in total, five of the mothers were not in paid employment and three worked part-time.

The financial implications of home education are referred to frequently in academic research from across the globe including the UK (Nelson, 2013; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2003), the USA (Hurlbutt, 2010) and Australia (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Reilly, 2004; Reilly et al. 2002). Indeed, in Hurlbutt's (2010) study she explains that parents who have children with ASD should be aware of the financial forfeit as one parent will not be able to work.

In the study for this thesis two of the families paid for tutors to teach particular subjects and seven out of the eight families regularly paid for an external professional to teach their children a skill, such as becoming proficient at a sport.

Prejudice from strangers

The second quotation below summarises an example of prejudice experienced by Family 2.

The amount of times we've been in shops, [and someone's said] "Oh no, he's not at school?", "No he's home educated", "Oh home educated" (laughs)... it's like and they...say "it's kind of, it's just that's, it's just an excuse coz you can't be bothered to take him to school".

This extract from Jack, Christopher's father, is reminiscent of Tomsett's (2004) comment previously mentioned in Chapters 2 and 6. Two other parents, Jane (Family 5) and Susan (Family 1) also mentioned negative comments from the public, whilst carrying out their home education practice. Susan also mentioned instances of perceived prejudice in the local library.

We've had a few incidences at libraries where they've not let us have books out because they're reserved for schools, even though we've got a home educator's card.

In Reilly's (2004) research four out of the six families considered that one way to lessen any hostility towards home educating families would be to increase society's awareness and understanding of this form of education.

A home educator's work is never done

The quotation below from Clementine (Family 2) summarises, to some degree, the level of responsibility which she felt.

It's a massive responsibility educating your child...I have to juggle running the home, making sure the kids are all sorted at school, doing a bit of work, making sure Christopher's got a home ed plan and is at his

different workshops. I get very little time to myself so I'll be the one that [it] probably impacts [on] the most.

This extract is comparable with most of the mothers, from the sample of 10, in Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), who also highlighted how they felt they were juggling their roles of mother, partner and home educator. From the evidence provided it can be argued that being a home educator is a full-time job.

Fathers, such as Ernie (Family 1) and Robert (Family 3) explained that in the evenings they either ensure that they are there for bedtime or take over looking after the children on returning from work. The above examples suggest that the family system (Morgaine, 2001) has altered during the bedtime routine as the two fathers become the primary care givers at this time. This is likely to have created a change to the father / child relationship and between the parents as both their roles and the amount of time they spend with one another has changed. Indeed, in Hurlbutt's (2010) short guidance article, she recommends that home educating parents establish regular 'date nights' in both social and academic activities to promote their own well being and prevent isolation, a risk factor also highlighted by Mifflin (2012).

The changing face(s) of friendships

The next three quotations relate to a shift in the social interactions, particularly the frequency of and engagement with peers. The first is from Jack (Family 2).

Even though he [his son, Christopher] makes friendships at home education, coz they're not there all the time he will never make, well from primary school, he'll never make those mates that you've got for life coz it's like being in the army.

As Medlin (2013) explains, one of the enabling elements of developing a child's social skills is in relation to their parents so that the child is able to socialise appropriately. As previously discussed, there is ongoing interaction with both parents and/or the sibling that is all part of being home educated. However, in the next quotation, from Christopher, he describes a loneliness not mentioned before in this thesis.

I don't really see my friends I had at school at all but friends in general I don't really, I mean we always when we erm, you always have like basic stuff in school when you get to see and play with your friends but, when I'm at home, when I get breaks its normally just me alone.

In this extract Christopher makes home education seem quite lonely, as he no longer sees school friends. Daily home education is generally not punctuated by opportunities in which to play and talk with friends, which regularly happen at school such as at play/lunch times and through group activities in class and during games. Christopher's view is likely to be compounded by the fact that he started being home educated alongside his younger brother who now attends school and perhaps this is another reason why after my period of fieldwork finished he is now reportedly attending a specialist secondary school.

In contrast to the above quotation, this final statement from Dwayne (Family 4) emphasises one of the positive outcomes in relation to making friends.

It's fun, you get to play when you get some new friends and you get to play with them all of the time when you go out.

Dwayne states that a consequence of being home educated is he has new friends that he can play with. His mother, Tricia also, stated that he now has 10 friends whereas, whilst at school Dwayne only had two. It would seem that Tricia has taken active steps to develop friendships with Dwayne with other members of Susan's home education support group and elsewhere e.g. Dwayne attended Beavers.

The five advantages examined are built around the personalisation agenda, whereby parents are able to (1) base learning on their children's needs and tailor the curriculum to match these (Entwistle, 2012; Nelson, 2013); (2) have intimate knowledge of their children to suit their learning styles (NAS, 2015) and; (3) meet their children's social, emotional and academic needs (Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010; Reilly, Chapman et al. 2002); (4) manage social situations and promote greater social integration (Gusman, 2006; Reilly, 2007); and (5) promote well-being and greater independence for their children (Dewey, 1929; Starr and Foy, 2010).

In comparison, the four main disadvantages, as described by the home educating families, are (1) the financial implications (Hurlbutt, 2010); (2) prejudice from uninformed and unsympathetic adults in the community (Reilly, 2004); (3) the unrelenting responsibility which mothers have for their home educated children (Hurlbutt, 2010; Kidd and Kaczmarek, 2010); and (4) a shift in the nature and frequency of the children's friendships (Medlin, 2013).

Do parents associate their home education practices with child-centred pedagogy?

None of the parents used the phrase 'child-centred learning' when describing their home education. However, the ways in which they described their practice and my own observations of this practice, show that all families were using this approach.

For example, when Jane, the mother in Family 5, describes her daughter's daily routine by telling me that they do:

lots of hands on stuff, learning through play...socialising, horse riding, gymnastics.

she is using some of the classic features of child-centred education, namely, using the child's own interests, play and based on first hand experiences.

The new contribution to the field of home education that this research offers is that the majority of the parents tailored both the content and method of their home education to the needs of their children. Seven out of eight families described their practice as altering over time and this was also found to be the case for Reilly (2007) where she generated the three stage theory of progressive modification.

When the parents, particularly the mothers, spoke about their home education practice(s) emphasis was placed upon the individual needs, interests and development of skills and talents for their respective children. Therefore, the children seemed to become the curriculum, with the exception of the daily focus on numeracy and literacy skills for all eight families.

Although none of the parents described themselves as applying child-centred pedagogy, many of the examples provided during the semi-structured interviews appeared to demonstrate similarities with this learning approach.

Chapter 8 returns to the research questions and shows how they have been answered, and how the findings make a contribution to the field. It then looks at how the findings are both similar and different to those studies of home educating children without ASD, and examines how the key findings relate to the theories that I have used. The chapter concludes by looking at the effect of carrying out this research on my own personal and professional development; my recommendations for future research, and a summary of other recommendations from the literature.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter I return to the four research questions and show how they have been addressed. I say how my research has built on findings from the literature and how it also makes a more unique contribution to the field of home education with children with ASD.

After considering some of the achievements and successes from the fieldwork, I discuss how the findings from my thesis are both similar and different to those studies of home educating children without ASD; what meanings can be drawn from these, and subsequently, where differences are present, what suggestions can be made about prospective research.

I then explain how the findings relate to the theories and characteristics of child-centred education (which was the main pedagogical approach used by the parents); ZPD and scaffolding (which were part of the pedagogy); the theories and concepts of FST (which were used to explore the effects of the home educating on family relationships and behaviours); and the two processes involved in becoming home educators, namely, seeking progressive fit and the theory of progressive modification.

Finally, I look at the effect of carrying out this research on my own personal and professional development; my recommendations for future research, and a summary of other recommendations from the literature.

Key findings

RQ1: What are the characteristics of parents and their children with ASD that are being home educated?

Seven out of the ten children were male, this included two sets of siblings that had an ASD diagnosis and of these six out of the ten children had co-occurring conditions. All eight mothers were the lead educators. Out of the 15 parents only two had qualifications which specifically related to teaching and both of these were fathers. Overall the seven fathers who participated in this study had higher level qualifications, the most common being an undergraduate degree. Seven out of the eight families

lived in a semi-detached house with a garden, and I contend were of a middle class disposition.

RQ2: Why do parents become home educators and what are the processes involved?

Three parents identified a lack of staff understanding about ASD and the needs of their individual children and four of the children, from four families, expressed a preference that they no longer wanted to attend pre-school or school. There was a belief that teaching staff were not implementing recommendations or strategies that had been made by a range of professionals (for example OT and specialist teacher) for a sufficient amount of time and some of them did not seem to fully understand their purpose.

The five main reasons for parents home educating were:

- Lack of knowledge and understanding by professionals.
- Child's dislike of pre-school / school.
- School's failure to promote children's needs and academic progress.
- Short-lived implementation of strategies from professionals at the school.
- Parents' knowledge / experience of alternative approaches / philosophies.

Six out of the eight families informed their LA that they were going to home educate. Once the families had made the decision to do so six out of the eight mothers carried out research on home education using the Internet.

RQ3: How do parents organise home education for their children with ASD; what pedagogical approaches and practices do they employ; and what resources do they use?

All of the parents responded flexibly to their children's needs and this affected how their home education was organised. Six out of eight families described their pedagogical practice as being semi-structured and the remaining two families reported that their general approach was semi-autonomous, although there were issues surrounding the definitions and interpretations of these terms.

Seven out of eight families' home education practices demonstrated links to, and similarities with, child-centred theories and practices, although none of the parents mentioned this or similar terms when describing their practice. Seven out of the eight families did not alter the home environment in any way to make it more autism friendly and all eight families used a central table as a learning space. Seven out of the eight families used different digital resources and six out of the eight families carried out some form of literacy or numeracy teaching in the morning.

RQ4: What do parents and their children with ASD perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of home educating?

Parents responded to the individual needs and interests of their children. All families sought to ensure that their children had time to practise and experience a range of different social experiences. The curriculum and subjects taught were informed by the children's interests and any additional needs such as sensory sensitivities, which again chimes with a more child-centred philosophy.

Six out of the eight families made reference to the financial burden of home education. Three of the families described pejorative comments, which they had experienced from members of the public when they were out with their children in the community. All families described that their commitment to their children's education was a pre-occupation and as such this created anxiety in the parents, especially the mothers, as they felt a sense of responsibility. There were also some discrepancies amongst families between the development and maintaining of peer friendships for the children who were being home educated.

All eight families demonstrated flexible pedagogical practices and mothers frequently made reference to the multiple responsibilities they had, and some of them explained that there had been a shift in the roles, which they carried out now that they were preoccupied with meeting the educational, social and emotional needs of their children.

Successes of the methods

I was relatively pleased with how the fieldwork progressed and with the methods I used. For example, I was able to access eight families who were all members of the

same home education support group. As Susan, a personal acquaintance, had established this group she acted as gate keeper and was able to broker the proposed research to parents whom she considered might be willing to participate. Therefore, gaining access to the requisite eight families who were home educating their children with ASD was relatively straightforward.

I was able to obtain questionnaire responses and complete face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 15 parents and follow-up telephone interviews with six parents. I also interviewed eight children, two independently, and six whilst seated alongside, or in the same room as, their mother. In addition I carried out four informal observations in four family homes to observe the pedagogical approaches used and compared this with the interview responses. I have only discovered one researcher, Reilly (2004; 2007), who also used observations in the home when completing a study about home education and children with intellectual disabilities, which I argue, gives my study an enhanced value. By utilising these data in the form of completed parental questionnaires, interview transcripts and observation field notes this allowed me to make direct comparisons between each family's home education practices.

Contributions to knowledge

This study makes a number of contributions to knowledge in the two fields of home education and ASD. While some of the findings build on those from studies cited in the Literature Review, in Chapter 2, others make a more unique and original contribution, and I have highlighted these in bold text.

In terms of home education:

- It outlines and confirms many of the main reasons why parents chose to home educate, namely the school's inflexibility, inconsistency and a lack of knowledge and understanding about their children's needs from professionals.
- **It reports on the lived experiences and day-to-day realities of these eight families involved, which is rare in most other studies, and how home**

education can affect family systems in terms of relationships and behaviours.

- It shows that home educators were mainly mothers who had conflicting roles, multiples pressures on their time whilst needing to be flexible.
- **It reveals that home educating mothers used many child-centred approaches but had not received any specific training about this theory / approach.**

In terms of ASD:

- It confirms that children with ASD have complex needs and they experience a range of social interactions when being home educated.
- It shows that parents can respond flexibly to their children's needs, with regard to both the curriculum content and the pedagogical approaches used.
- **It demonstrates that some of the parents took account of their children's sensory differences as they allowed them to carry out their learning in different physical positions and to have regular breaks either inside the home or outside.**
- **Seven out of the eight families did not use any visual structures to support their children and yet these are used widely in schools.**

Parents reported different types of inflexibility from school staff in response to suggestions which they had regarding specific interventions which might help their children in the educational context. For example, there was inflexibility shown from the Head Teacher and SENCo regarding Simon's start date when transitioning to Year R. It was also reported that recommended strategies and resources which educational professionals were advised to use by specialist staff were only used for a short time period.

A repeated theme was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of each child in relation to their single or multiple diagnoses and how these conditions affected them. For example, from understanding that children with ASD are likely to find unstructured times difficult so they might support to practice and opportunities to generalise so they can learn how to make friends and interact with their peer group. Parents perceived that staff demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding about ASD and the overall needs and abilities of their children.

The qualitative data collected provided valuable information about the lived experiences of the participants involved in either delivering (the parents) or in receipt (the children) of home education. The reported strengths and potential reasons why home education might be deemed advantageous was the flexibility that the mothers were able to demonstrate in the varied amount of time each child had home education for each day. The mothers' relationships with their children were different to that of teacher and pupil as the content of the learning and the resulting pedagogy was negotiated, which resembled some aspects of child-centred learning. Due to this reflexive mode of working the home educators were able to respond to the needs of their children.

An interesting outcome from this study was that all eight home educators were mothers and this had an impact on their ability to carry out paid full-time employment. However, from the information shared the mothers had multi faceted role and these could at times conflict: i.e. the mother might want their child to learn a life skill which he or she found difficult and the mother might need to 'become teacher' in order that the child responds to this request.

The mothers also made reference to stressors, as they were home educators, maintained the family home, had responsibilities as a partner, and those who worked part-time had to manage child care arrangements alongside their partners. Therefore, although the mothers sought to demonstrate a reflective approach to their home education practices constraints were placed upon them such as dropping off and collecting their other children at school and carrying out day-to-day activities, which

are part of daily life. A repeated issue which many of the mothers made reference to was a lack of quality time with their partner.

Although the majority of the mothers demonstrated and seemed to make use of child-centred approaches in their home education practice, none of them had received any specific training in relation to this theory. The interview data showed that one of the reasons why mothers valued either the face-to-face or the online support groups was that this provided them with the opportunity in which to share ideas, useful information about potential trips out, discounts or curriculum resources. The continued attention and listening which the parents displayed towards their children is another example of them demonstrating child-centred ideals. As a result, the mothers were able to attune to the changing needs of their children; nevertheless the mothers recognised that they made mistakes along the home education pathway but as new educators they felt that they were learning as well as their children. Two of the most noticeable characteristics of child-centred education that the mothers employed was that many of the learning experiences started from their child's own interests, and much of the learning was based on first-hand experience or kinaesthetic learning.

Children with ASD have a range of abilities and needs which are specific to them and therefore it is important to have a complete understanding about every aspect of their life as it can impact upon their school day. Considerations include: sleep, diet, interests, sensory sensitivities, communication level, and preferred learning style.

It could be argued that home education may be more appropriate for some children with ASD than being educated in a formal school context. The reason for stating this is that from the evidence gained for this thesis mothers were: knowledgeable about their children, seemed able to provide more time and attention than is generally possible in a classroom context and more importantly described learning which was individually tailored to their children's abilities, needs and interests. However, this research is only based upon a small sample of families who had made the decision to home educate once their children had attended pre-school or school. Realistically this form of 'other' education is unlikely to become a challenge to the mainstream because it remains unfunded, parents may not wish to take on the responsibility of teaching their children and ultimately it would make the role of teacher redundant. In

an ideal world children with ASD and their parents should have the right to choose where and how they are educated on a case by case basis but such a system would be untenable due to cost implications, changes to governments and the families themselves. Although all eight families carried out some learning in the home most days, other learning opportunities took place outside of the family home. Both the curriculum content and the types of learning experiences which the children had tended to relate to their interests, learning preferences and favourite subjects. The home educators seemed to allow for multiple learning styles and, dependent upon how their children responded to them, were able to vary both the content of the learning and the type of interactions which their children had.

I argue that one of the main strengths of home educating children with ASD was that the parents seemed to innately latch onto the fact that their children were likely to have multiple and different intelligences (Gardner, 2011) to those which might be assessed within a formal school context, and they were able to make provision for this. I suggest that some of Gardner's (1983) seven types of intelligence were made use of by parents: logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Gardner and Hatch, 1989), and since the initial conception of the seven, Gardner has added to them (Waterhouse, 2006). However, according to White (1998), one of the criticisms of this multiple intelligence (MI) theory is that Gardner selected them based upon what he considered to be important. Moreover, according to Waterhouse (2006), there is no evidence to validate MI theory, and he argues that MI theory makes assumptions about the authenticity of multiple intelligences. Furthermore, White (1998) argues that these *new* intelligences appear to correlate with existing mainstream notions of intelligence and, given this context, the categories appear to be both subjective and random. Despite these identified critiques of MI theory having an awareness, and making use of these different intelligences, appears to have formed part of the parents' evolving practice, and been a useful and positive step for both the parents and for their children's learning.

Although none of the parents carried out formal assessments they reportedly used information such as the contents of the answers they received to questions asked, or

the reading level their children were on, to inform how much their children were learning.

This study has provided an insight into the reasons why eight families from the South-East of England started to home educate their children with ASD. Despite the limited numbers, this in-depth study offers some insight into the learning and lived experiences of these families whose voices would otherwise have remained unknown and whose pedagogical journeys would have gone unnoticed.

Although all eight families decided to home educate their children with ASD it was not a decision they had anticipated making. Therefore, contrary to notions of neo-liberalist choice, the parents in this study had essentially had this choice removed.

This thesis is a small yet important piece of research in the field because formal schooling is meant to be for every child and yet the 15 parents, representing the eight families, removed their children from pre-school or school, which suggests that there was an issue with regards to the provision which their children with ASD received.

Although this study did not examine staff training, I investigated this issue in my IFS, and the findings suggest that it is important that all staff in educational environments have a secure knowledge and understanding of autism, and the various interventions and strategies, which may benefit children with ASD. This potentially new knowledge about ASD might then act as a stepping stone towards informing both classroom and whole school practices. In turn school staff could then find out specific information about each pupil and then use both sets of knowledge to inform their work with individuals with ASD.

I believe that schooling should comprise a series of enabling occurrences for each child so that he or she feels they have equal value and importance no matter what their strengths and needs. By promoting children's talents and interests, school communities might then become more positive environments for children with ASD.

Similarities between my findings and those about home education with children without ASD

I have chosen to briefly discuss the findings of home education research with children without ASD to ascertain whether the outcomes are similar to or different from those identified in my thesis. I am especially interested in exploring whether any commonalities are visible particularly in relation to children's experience(s) of learning in different contexts. If there are common themes in the data from these studies, the likely outcome could be that research in the field of home education might be considered more valuable and greater attention might be given to it if identified issues are impacting on a larger proportion of children, besides those with an identified SEN/D such as ASD.

It was established that the majority of the home educators were mothers of middle-age and, by profession, some of the parents were qualified teachers (Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2002a). This suggests that, like the 15 parents in my study, the focus of the parents' attention was about meeting their children's needs and this took precedence over, for example, earning two household incomes. Prior to making the decision to home educate some of the children had negative experiences at school and, although this did not generally relate to an identified need, the issue was sizeable enough for parents to withdraw their children from school (Burke, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Roache, 2009). Therefore, across the wider school population it is probable that a range of barriers might exist for some children which prevents parents from wanting them to remain present in school.

One of the main factors connected to parents making the decision to home educate their children without ASD was a perception that staff often failed to understand or meet the needs of their children (Burke, 2007; Nelson, 2013). Additionally, parents had reservations about the content of the school curriculum, in particular the National Curriculum (Nelson, 2013). Like many of the parents in my study, parents of children without ASD also had reservations about the subjects taught and, the omission of skills they wanted their children to acquire. This suggests that these issues might belong to a wider education agenda than can be addressed in this thesis.

Prior to making the decision to home educate, parents consulted their children about this option (Nelson, 2013), by completing background research and preparation (Roache, 2009). One of the reasons for being informed prior to making a final decision are the ramifications to family life, as home education can have implications for all family members such as the loss of a salary (Rothermel, 2002a) and a lack of funding to sustain the practice (Nelson, 2013; Parsons and Lewis, 2010).

A similar pattern of alterations to their home education practice was also recognized as parents confidence increases (Nelson, 2013) over time they start to adopt a more flexible approach to their practice (Roache, 2009; Rothermel, 2002a), the consequence being the needs of the children are at the centre of the learning (Nelson, 2013; Roache, 2009; Rothermel, 2002a). Nevertheless, parents of children without ASD also view basic skills in literacy and numeracy (Roache, 2009) as being important and such formal learning tends to take place in the morning (Roache, 2009). Despite an emphasis being placed on basic skills parents are also interested in their children developing more holistic skills such as general life related skills and personal qualities (Nelson, 2013).

In summary, the main similarities are in the demographic characteristics of the parent educators; the negative experiences of the children at school; and the process by which over time parents gain in confidence and begin to move away from the school curriculum and school-based pedagogies. However, they still regard the basics of English and maths as the most important areas of learning. This suggests that some in-school issues are experienced by the wider school population and not just those children with a recognised difference.

One of the major implications from research on children without ASD and children with ASD is that teaching staff need better training to understand children's holistic needs. There also needs to be closer communications and the formation of closer relations between school and home. A further proposal is for schools to consider developing a more flexible and personalised curriculum that is able to meet children's different needs and interests, and in doing so there are likely to be less unhappy children at school.

Differences between my findings and those about home education with children without ASD

Unsurprisingly, there are a greater variety of motivations for parents of children without ASD who chose to home educate. These range from parents home educating on the basis of religion (Burke, 2007), a desire to uphold their cultural heritage (Roache, 2009) and, more generally, so their children have the opportunity to develop the skills of reliability and self-reliance (Rothermel, 2002a). The greatest departure from my findings was that more parents in home education studies of children without ASD used traditional pedagogy, alongside textbooks and worksheets (Burke, 2007).

Thus some of the main differences identified are in the parental motivations for home educating; the pedagogy and type of resources used in some of the home education practice, and the skills, which the parents considered their children needed to develop. Skills such as self-reliance would be more problematic for children with ASD to learn and share with others due to the nature of this disorder.

To summarise, perhaps both research on home education and children with / out ASD demonstrates that education professionals need to keep children, their voice, needs and interests at the core of their pedagogy, rather than viewing children and their families as secondary to policy directives.

How the findings are related to the theories

Theories of child-centred education

The findings have shown that the mothers, who were the main educators, used child-centred pedagogy as they learned about their children's interests (Schofield, 2012) and responded to their individual needs (Rusk, 1933), rather than being led by a preordained curriculum. The child was placed at the centre of the learning experience and, where possible, the parents often used practical, first hand experience in their teaching, such as cookery, and this also included the use of outside visits

ZPD and Scaffolding

The theories of ZPD and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1997) were more implicit but although none of the mothers had any training in this it was possible to observe them support and guide their child's learning in the home setting and some parents also alluded to it during interviews. This mainly took the form of selecting appropriate resources to

expand on an area of learning and by asking a series of questions, which helped the child(ren) develop their thinking.

Family Systems Theory

As a consequence of making the decision to home educate families described changes to the relationships and behaviours within their family unit (Morgaine, 2001) and changes to the mothers' multiple family roles. The eight home educating mothers spent more time with the child/ren they were home educating and this resulted in them generally spending less time with other family members such as any school educated children and/or their partners.

Clementine explained that her son, Christopher, sometimes responded better to others, such as external tutors / instructors, than to her and her partner, Jack (Christopher's father). They were both concerned about the potential negative impact that home education might be having on the parental relationships with their son that she and Jack decided Christopher should return to school on transition to Key Stage 3.

Susan described how her partner, Ernie, a Maths teacher by profession, taught mathematical concepts to their two children. During these sessions Ernie became the main educator or, this resulted in a shift in his and Susan's relationships with their children and to each other, as she was no longer the primary home educator at these time. Three mothers, Clementine, Siobhan and Tricia, also explained there were multiple demands on their time as they were simultaneously mothers, partners and home educators. As a consequence, Siobhan and Tricia described that the amount of time spent completing household related tasks had reduced. For instance, Tricia explained that her partner, Sam, was now responsible for doing additional jobs in the home or, they were left uncompleted.

The theory of progressive fit

Each family was continually seeking solutions to meet the specialised needs of their children's education, although these did not always work out. To give one example, Families 1 and 8 originally chose educational placements, which they deemed appropriate for their children based upon their philosophical beliefs; a Montessori pre-

school (for Simon and Amber) and a Steiner School for Henry. Nevertheless, over time both sets of parents found that these educational contexts were no longer the solution, so sought an alternative. These two instances draw parallels with 'seeking progressive fit' (McDonald and Lopes, 2014) as both sets of parents had looked for and attained education which they deemed to be suitable for their children and yet, due to issues which evolved over time, they found they needed to find an alternative to meet their children's needs.

The theory of progressive modification

The final theory to be discussed is 'the theory of progressive modification' (Reilly, 2007) as some of the parents' dialogue during interviews related to the three described stages but in a different order. The order that Reilly found was parents created school at home, accessed support groups and, modified their practice to suit their child's needs and family circumstances. Therefore, Reilly's theory is both representative of the three stages which parents went through and, a development in their home education practice.

However, the order in my study was slightly different, for example:

1. Tricia described initially using a formal method in her home education practice with Dwayne as she had allocated time slots for each subject however, Tricia found that this method did not suit his needs.
2. All eight mothers were members of an ASD home education support group and had researched or been sign posted to these by attending for example the South East Home Educators.
3. Over time, all of the mothers had tailored their home education practice so that it was more flexible and tailored to meet the needs and interests of their children.

Implications for personal and professional practice

As a teacher I had minimal knowledge, information and understanding about home education policy and practice prior to carrying out this study. As a result of doing this research it has expanded my understanding of how children might learn differently in school contexts. I argue that at present many children are no longer the focus of education and their needs have become peripheral. Instead, education is often driven

by pupil progress data and a school's most recent Ofsted grading. As a classroom practitioner I often felt anxious about my practice because I did not feel able to fully meet the needs of the pupils I was trained to teach as a result of this unspoken performative agenda. In my opinion it would have been better to personalise my teaching so that each child's learning experience was more enjoyable, meaningful and related to the skills which they needed for life.

Since completing this study I consider that I am more able, in my present role of Senior Specialist Teacher, to pose questions about the needs of autistic children. By finding out about pupil experience and ensuring that both children, parents and school staff are included, these recommendations can then be shared with all parties.

Knowledge about each family is vital and I seek to make more of a difference in my work. However, I would argue that unless documents such as the AET autism standards were to become compulsory it is unlikely that Head Teachers will value (Jones et al. 2012) them as their successes are measured by pupil standards and outcomes, not about how autism friendly their schools are.

I have also learned a great deal of how to conduct a qualitative research project. I have learnt the value of implementing different methods, e.g. questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations as this provided sufficient data which could then be compared so that participants' views could be compared with evidence from the observations.

I also learnt the value of the insight which participants, both adults and children, can offer particularly when carrying out data collection with Family 1, as they provided feedback on the wording in the interview questions and which themes in the interview question schedules might need to be added, reviewed or omitted.

Over the process of the data collection, analysis and creation of the thesis my self-confidence grew slowly. At first I devised and used an observation schedule, the intention being to refer to and complete all relevant sections. Nevertheless I quickly found that by looking down I might have missed a useful action or inaction so I made the decision to adopt a different approach and instead wrote brief notes where

appropriate and then shortly after the observation had ended I wrote a summary. I was being flexible, just like the mother educators.

In addition to taking a more flexible approach to the observations I also became more reflexive towards when and how I completed the work for the thesis. This happened because engaging with each family was in essence a new context where different considerations needed to be accounted for and at times it was more beneficial to create space between myself and the work, rather than continue studying.

Recommendations for future research from this study

Residing with a family in their home for a period of time, similar to research carried out by Thomas (1992), to ascertain how home education impacts on family life might be helpful. For example, a lack of home education and general family life boundaries was alluded to by parents. Mothers generally described that education happened continually and although the majority felt they had constructed a learning day it seemed to permeate other aspects of their families' life. However, the practical difficulties of conducting such a study need to be acknowledged. By spending a substantial amount of time with one or more families it would be helpful to see the full range of experiences which the families described such as in this study, attending a college course, outings arranged with the home education support group, spending time with one another at the support group, visiting historical sites, and carrying out kinaesthetic learning activities.

For a more in-depth it could be useful to study families over a period of time, such as a key stage or the transition between primary and secondary years (such as between Year 6 and Year 7) to find out whether parents make any significant changes to their children's curriculum and the resources they use.

It is conceivable that carrying out research with members who belonged to a range of different home education support groups from various parts of the UK, to ascertain whether or not the leader of these support groups does or does not influence the home education practices which take place in these respective families.

Finally, I would also like to know how children who have been home educated at an early age cope at secondary school, with all the rules, and the social interactions. This is likely to be the case for Christopher who went on to attend a secondary special school. Also how these children cope with taking formal examinations such as GCSEs etc. In fact, how CYP might manage with life post education? Does home education at an early age make them more secure, more confident, and more able to deal with the real world as adults, particularly where social interactions and life skills are concerned? Or might the commencement of home education at the point of secondary transition have positive outcomes?

Recommendations for future research from the literature

Although the recommendations for future research from the studies described in earlier chapters differ from one another, they complement one another as they all seek to learn more about the field of home education. It is argued that a database of home educating families be established and that more information be made available by the government regarding the choice to home educate (Nelson, 2013). It is suggested that local studies be carried out (Burke, 2007) and that the level of attainment in key subjects like numeracy and literacy be examined so that comparisons can be made between the rate of progress made by children educated in school and those being home educated (Rothermel, 2002a). Finally, Roache (2009) proposes that longitudinal studies should be established so that academics and the wider community have a better understanding about the longer term outcomes for individuals who have been home educated.

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Appendix 1: Three psychological theories of autism

Theory of mind

The theory of mind (ToM) relates to an individual's ability to be able to think about the mental condition of others (Attwood, 2004). By definition it presumes that human beings possess a range of beliefs and emotions which result in a given action (Baron-Cohen, 2001). However, this deficit in ToM, i.e. understanding others mind states appears to universally apply to autistic individuals (op cit, 2001). Therefore, an autistic child who lacks ToM might feel isolated at school (Hurlbutt, 2012) due to difficulty with predicting others behaviours or, fully understand the social interactions with their peers (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a). The outcome of which could be that he or she becomes a target for bullying (Attwood, 2004).

Executive dysfunction

The term 'executive function' (EF) is used to describe such mental activities as planning, flexibility and memory (Hill, 2004). Difficulties with EF, otherwise known as executive dysfunction can often be found in autistic individuals (Corbett et al. 2009), which can impact on an individual's ability to be able to complete problem solving activities to achieve a given task (Wing, 1996). This could manifest itself within a classroom environment as an autistic child lacks the ability to organise themselves or be motivated to carry out a work task.

Weak central coherence

Weak central coherence (WCC) means that autistic individuals may be able to isolate key information but tend to ignore the bigger picture (Burnette et al. 2005); this is also referred to as being in possession of a 'detail-focussed processing style' (Happé and Frith, 2006, p. 5). This can result in a child being unable to transfer information from one context to another or process and identify others by their facial appearance(s) (op cit, 2005).

Appendix 2: Key studies information

Burke (2007) - EdD thesis

- The focus of this EdD thesis is on: (1) parents' reasons for home educating; (2) the educational experiences of home educating including the pedagogical approaches used and the children's academic achievements; (3) the relationship between home education and state education, and whether parents own schooling informed their decision to home educate; (4) home education policies in the UK and globally.
- 38 families (which included 58 children, between the ages of 5-16 years) participated in the wider study.
- LA policies and databases informed the study however, the main data collection method involved interviewing parents from 17 families.

Emam and Farrell (2009)

- Two research questions were posed:
 1. What are the tensions which teachers in mainstream schools experience when pupils with ASD are included in their class?
 2. To what extent do these tensions shape the views of teachers with regard to support arrangements for pupils with ASD?
- A multiple case study design was applied. Participants included 17 pupils with ASD from three primary and five secondary schools.
- Data was collected from semi-structured interviews with a range of teaching staff and from non-participant observations across the school.

Humphrey and Lewis (2008a)

- The aims of the study were:
 1. What barriers to learning and participation are evident for students on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools, and how can these be overcome?
 2. How do practices in mainstream schools facilitate or constrain participation of children on the autistic spectrum?
 3. What are the views and experiences of students on the autistic spectrum in relation to mainstream secondary education?

4. How do other key stakeholders (educators, parents, peers) perceive the inclusion process for students on the autistic spectrum?
- The research took place in four mainstream secondary schools with 19 pupils with ASD.
- Data took the form of pupil interviews, teaching staff interviews, in-school observations, key school documentation and pupil diaries.

Humphrey and Lewis (2008b)

- The main aims of the study were:
 1. To explore the views of pupils with ASD about mainstream education.
 2. To document the everyday experiences of such pupils in mainstream schools.
 3. To identify practices in mainstream schools that facilitate or constrain the learning and participation of students with AS.
 4. To provide a framework for the development of effective inclusive practices in this area.
- The participants were 20 pupils with AS between the ages of 11 - 17 years from across four mainstream secondary schools.
- The methods used were semi-structured interviews, pupil diaries and pupil drawings.

Nelson (2013) - PhD thesis

- The main aim of the study was to examine the views of parents and CYP about their home education experiences.
- This thesis centres around six research questions:
 1. Why is home education undertaken by families?
 2. How is home education practised?
 3. What are the experiences of parents, children and young people who have been or are currently engaged in this provision?
 4. What are the outcomes for home educated young people concerning qualifications and employment?
 5. What are the views of parents, children and young people regarding how home education is perceived in society?
 6. What changes would parents, children and young people like to see for home education moving forward?

- The sample included 15 parents and 25 CYP (between the ages of 7-15 years and 16-21 years).
- Data took the form of individual and focus group interviews, photographs, stories and records of the educational activities that took place in multiple settings such as in the home setting and during home education support group activities.

Reilly (2007) - PhD thesis

- The main aim of this study was to create a theory which relates to how parents dealt with home educating their children with intellectual disabilities over the course of one year.
- Nine families participated in this study, the children were younger than 18 years of age.
- The methods used were face-to-face / telephone interviews with parents and participant observations in the home.

Roache (2009) - EdD thesis

- Two research questions are asked:
 1. Why do some parents choose to home school their children?
 2. How do they go about the practice of home schooling these children?
- Eight home schooling families took part in this study.
- All families were interviewed, the majority of these taking place in the family home (the children who participated were between the ages of 4-13 years).

Rothermel (2002a) - PhD thesis

- This thesis explores the rationales, practices and outcomes for home educating families from across the UK. The research questions posed are:
 1. Who are the home-educating families and what do they do and why?
 2. What effect does home-education have on the children?
 3. What is the value in understanding home-education and can there be a wider application for the research?
- Questionnaire responses were obtained from 419 families and 196 assessments of children took place. The children ranged from 0-16 years, with the majority being

between the ages of 5-11 years. In addition 100 families were interviewed but this data is not included in this PhD thesis.

Starr and Foy (2010)

- This study explored the views and satisfaction levels of parents regarding the education their children with ASD. The research questions asked are:
 1. What did parents perceive to be the factors contributing to suspensions of their children from school?
 2. In what ways did they perceive fear, resentment, or prejudice from either parents or school personnel?
 3. What were the primary factors contributing to parental satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their child's education?
 4. What did parents perceive to be educational priorities for maximizing their child's education?
 5. What were parents' ultimate goals for their children with ASD?
- 144 parents of children with ASD (between 4-18 years, average age 9 years) were sampled and their opinions were gained via use of a questionnaire which took the form of open-ended questions and a scale similar to Likert.

Appendix 3: Information form for parents

What are your experiences of and feelings about home educating your son or daughter with ASD?

Title – An exploration of parents and children's experiences of home education.

I am inviting you to take part in a study which will form the thesis part of my EdD (Doctorate in Education) research. I am based at the Institute of Education, University of London. Please read the information below carefully as it outlines the purpose of the research and what it will involve for you should you choose to take part?

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to develop an understanding about the processes that are involved when parents choose to home educate their school-age child or young person with ASDs. I intend to explore parents and children's experiences of home education by eliciting their voices in a number of different ways. There has been little previous research on home education and pupils with ASD and yours and your children's views on this will be of great value, not only to the research community, but also to policy makers.

What is the framework of the research?

To gain a range of parents and children's perspectives regarding the processes involved in, and practices of, home educating, I hope to carry out individual questionnaires with parents, separate interviews with parents and, if possible their child, and mini-biographies of the children. I would also like to perform unstructured observations in the primary location where the teaching and learning takes place in the home.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You are a member of the home education support group and as such I understand that it is likely your son / daughter has a diagnosis of high functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome (As).

Why might you want to participate in this small study?

Participating will provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences of home educating your son / daughter with ASDs and to describe the processes that were involved in making your decision to home educate. It may also allow you to discuss other important information that you consider to be pertinent to the wider topic of education, ASD and SEN, this may include examples of what you consider to be good practice and helpful strategies which you have found successful.

In particular, the types of question I intend to ask include:

- What prompted you to make the decision to electively home educate your son / daughter?
- What are your experiences of home educating your son / daughter with ASDs?
- What do you consider to be the positive / negative aspects to home education?

Will my contribution be kept confidential?

Everything that you share with me will be kept confidential, your name, the locations and details of each participant (as well as any other distinguishing characteristics) will be unidentifiable and any information provided will be stored in password-protected files. I intend to use some quotes from your interview and completed questionnaire in the thesis that I have to write for my Doctorate.

Do you have to participate?

Being involved in this study is completely voluntary and you should not feel obligated in any way. If you choose to participate you will be asked to give your consent by signing a form prior to being interviewed. Nevertheless even after signing the consent form you remain free to withdraw from the research without giving reason.

Sharing the research

If you choose to take part a summary report of the entire research will be shared with the participants in a short and readable form. The thesis will be read by my university supervisors and examiners.

If you have any questions please contact me at:

If you would like to participate please contact me on the telephone number below so we can arrange an initial meeting:

If you choose to take part you will need to complete the consent form prior to the data collection. I will email or post this to you if you agree to take part.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 4: Information form for children

What are your experiences of being home educated?

Title: A study about parents and children's experiences of home education.

I am asking you to take part in some research about having education at home. Please read this information sheet carefully as it explains the study and what it will involve for you if you want to take part.

What is the point of this study?

The aim of this study is to develop a greater understanding about parents and children's experiences of home education.

What will happen in this study?

To get parents and children's views about home education I will:

- Ask parents to answer questions.
- Talk with parents.
- Talk with children.
- Possibly watch some learning in the home.

Why have you been asked to take part?

Your family is a member of the home education support group.

Why might you want to take part in this study?

Taking part will give you the chance to talk about being home educated. You may also want to talk about your experiences of school.

The questions I hope to ask include:

- What are your experiences of being home educated?
- What do you think are the good parts about being home educated?

Will what I say be kept private?

Everything that you share with me will be kept private, like your name and where you live. All of the information that is given will be kept safely on my computer.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you whether you take part. If you want to you will be asked to write your name on a piece of paper but, even after writing your name if you change your mind that is okay.

If you have any questions about taking part please contact me at:

If you want to take part you will need to write your name on the consent form before the study begins. I will email or post this to you if you want to take part.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 5: Parental Consent form

Parental Consent Form

Title of Project: An exploration of parents and children with ASDs experiences of home education.

Student Researcher: Rosanne Daniels

Position:

Address for Research:

Please tick each box if you agree with each statement.

1. I agree that I have read and understood the information sheet for this study and have had the chance to ask questions.

☐

2. I am happy to participate in this research.

☐

3. I understand that my involvement is voluntary and I can withdraw from the research at any time without explaining my reasons.

☐

4. I am aware that all names of people and places will be changed.

☐

Name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Date of data collection:

Name of student researcher:

Signature of student researcher:

Date of data collection:

Appendix 6: Child consent form

Child Consent Form

Title of Project: An exploration of parents and children with ASDs experiences of home education.

Student Researcher: Rosanne Daniels

Position:

Address for Research:

Please tick each box if you agree with each statement.

1. I have read and understood the information sheet for this study and have had the chance to ask questions.

☐

2. I am happy to take part in this study.

☐

3. I understand that I don't have to take part if I don't want to and if I change my mind that is okay.

☐

4. I understand that names of people will be changed.

☐

Name of child participant:

Signature of child participant:

Date of data collection:

Name of student researcher:

Signature of student researcher:

Date of data collection:

Appendix 7: Parent Questionnaire

1. Which age band are you in?

25-30 years ☐ 31-35 years ☐

36-40 years ☐ 41-45 years ☐

46-50 years ☐ 51-55 years ☐

55-60 years ☐

2. What is your relationship to your child that is being home educated?

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Other (please state) _____

3. What is your ethnicity?

4. What is the main language spoken?

5. Do you consider yourself to have a special educational need?

6. Which type of special educational need?

Communication and interaction ☐

Cognition and learning ☐

Physical disability ☐

Other: _____

7. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed

☐ Self-employed

☐ Unemployed

☐ Economically inactive (e.g. primary home educator, looking after family).

8. What is your profession?

9. What is your highest educational qualification?

10. Who carries out the teaching at home?

11. How old is your child?

12. What was the last school your child attended?

13. What is the main language spoken?

13. Do you consider yourself to have a special educational need?

14. Which type of special educational need?

Communication and interaction ☐

Cognition and learning ☐

Physical disability ☐

Other: _____

15. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed

☐ Self-employed

☐ Unemployed

☐ Economically inactive (e.g. primary home educator, looking after family).

16. What is your profession?

17. What is your highest educational qualification?

18. Who carries out the teaching at home?

19. How old is your child?

20. What was the last school your child attended?

21. What type of need was your child identified as having by the school?

22. How old was your child when s/he started being home educated?

23. Have you declared that you are home educating your child?

24. Is your child still known to Kent LA as being home educated?

25. How long has your child been home educated?

26. How did you find out about the home education support group?

27. How often does the home education support group meet?

28. What do you do when you meet together?

Appendix 8: Parental Interview Questions Schedule One

Parental Interview Question Schedule One

School Education – Parental Experience

1. What were your experiences of your own school, both primary and secondary?
(P – Positive, negative, mix, indifference).

Diagnosis and School Education – Child's Experience

2. Which diagnosis has your child been given?
(P – ASD, As, HFA, autism; and any co-occurring conditions e.g. OCD, ADD, and ADHD).
3. How did you feel about this?
4. When was the diagnosis given and by whom?
(P – pre-school, primary, secondary / CP and SLT, other health professional e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist, other).
5. Which tool(s) were used to assess your child's ability to read others minds/behaviours?
(P – For example was your child asked to carry out one of the following: The Sally-Ann Task / The Smarties Task).
6. What difference, if any did this label make to your child's experience of school?
(P – Increased support, greater understanding, more differentiation, greater attention, personalised working, input from a range of professionals, other).
7. What is your opinion about the quality of teaching, and the general provision that your child received whilst at school?
(P – Outstanding, good, satisfactory, poor, varied, other).

Home Education – Processes and Declaration

8. What processes were involved in becoming a home educating parent?
9. How did you find out about these processes?
(P – Word of mouth, LA, School Liaison Officer, Media, Press, Internet, charity, other).

Home Education – Beginnings

10. When was this decision made and by whom?
(P – Husband, wife, partner, joint decision).
11. How would you define the home education that you are doing for example: autonomous, personalised, individualised, structured, unstructured, and other?
12. What led you to home educate your child?
(P – Negative experience at school – bullying, difficulties with school environment, lack of understanding from SENCo/teaching-staff, other pupils, parents).
13. What are your reasons for home educating your child?

Home Education Support Group

14. How did you hear about the group?
15. What is your experience of the home education support group?
16. What do members of the home education support group offer one another?
(P – Listening ear, re-assurance, sharing resources/teaching materials).

Family Functioning

17. What impact has home education had on you as a family?
18. What effect has home education had on the roles of each person within the family?
19. How have role boundaries altered since you began home educating?
(P – Such as one parent spending potentially more time focussed on the child's needs / learning).
20. On a day-to-day basis how would you describe the emotions which may take place when home educating your child?

The Three Psychological Theories

21. What do the following psychological theories mean to you?
(P – They may have been referred to during your child's diagnosis or in materials you have read which relate to your child's areas of strength / difficulty).
22. Theory of Mind (ToM)...

(P – Individuals with ASD struggle with understanding that others think differently to them; this can affect their ability to predict/read others mood states and behaviours).

23. Central coherence...

(P – Weak central coherence – an ability to see exquisite detail but miss the whole including contextual information. For example: 'A clinician testing a bright autistic boy presented him with a toy bed, and asked the child to name the parts. The child correctly labelled the bed, mattress and quilt. The clinician then pointed to the pillow and asked, "It's a piece of ravioli".' (Happé, 1996).

24. Executive dysfunction...

(Executive dysfunction – difficulties with processing information, planning ahead, working memory and ability to control / regulate behaviours).

Appendix 9: Parental Interview Question Schedule Two

Parental Interview Question Schedule Two

Home Education – Practicalities

1. What do you see as the main differences between school education and home education?
(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).
2. What do you see as the main similarities between school education and home education?
(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).
3. What do you consider school educators could learn from home educators?
(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).
4. Which curriculum do you follow?
(P – Core subjects, life skills, social skills, other).
- 4a. Would it be possible to look at it and perhaps take a copy?
5. What opportunities are there for your child to socialise?
(P – Siblings, belongs to clubs, home education support group, religious group, other).
6. Which parts of the National Curriculum does your child get at home that they got at school?
(P – Core subjects, all subjects, thematic curriculum, autonomous).
7. What parts of the National Curriculum have you omitted from teaching your child?
(P – Humanities, PE, core subjects (Maths, English, Science), Creative Arts).
8. Do you use any particular teaching approach(es) to home educate your child?
(P – E.g. are you using / been influenced by any of the following:
 - TEACCH approach – Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Handicapped CHildren
 - ABA – Applied Behaviour Analysis
 - The Son-Rise Program
 - SCERTS Model – Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support
 - SPELL framework – Structure, Positive, Empathy, Low arousal, Links

- 8a. Could you expand on the teaching approaches that you use?
9. Why have you decided to home educate using this approach?
10. What do you think is important for your child to learn?
(P – Independence skills, communication skills, how to socialise, how to interact with others, other).
11. How did you come to a decision about what to teach your child?
(P – Discussion with partner, press/media influence, online forum/discussion, conversation with other parents, speaking with child, other).
12. How do you go about planning the teaching materials for your child?
(P – Online materials, library resources, books, recognised published materials, DVDs, create them).
13. What materials and resources does your child use to carry out their work at home?
(P – Books, online resources, online projects, DVDs).
- 13a. What forms of technology does your child use to carry out their work at home?
(P – PC, laptop, hand held tablet, DVD, TV, calculator, online resources, online projects, other).
14. Which other resources outside of the home do you make use of to teach your child?
(P – Library, museums, clubs, religion, galleries, supermarket, cafe, sports centre, swimming pool).
15. How do you go about assessing your child's work?
(P – Traditional marking – tick/cross/sticker/comment e.g. what has been learnt, next steps).
16. What progress has your child made during the last academic year?
17. How do you measure your child's progress?
18. Where does your child's learning take place in the home?
(P – Study, dining room, bedroom, garden, the entire house, anywhere, other).

19. How is your child's day / week organised?
(P – Core subjects in the morning, more creative tasks in the afternoon, there isn't a structure, it depends on the seasons, other).
20. In a typical week, how many hours of home education does your child receive?
21. Would you expect your child to carry out work beyond these set times?
(P – Reading, homework, practice a skill, other).
- 21a. Is there a structured routine?
22. Where do you get your ideas from when planning a teaching activity?
(P – Self, media, news, Internet, National Curriculum, religion(s), culture(s), other).
23. How did you come to this decision?
(P – Financial, time, interest, logistics, other).
24. What training/skills do you use in your role of home educator?
(P – Qualified teacher, university of life, worked in a school, other).
25. Which word or phrase would you use to define yourself as a home educator?
(P – Parent, Teacher, Home Educator, Facilitator, Mentor, other).
26. Could you say why you have defined yourself in this way?
27. How do you switch between the roles of parent and home educator?
28. How do you manage these two roles?
29. Do you see these roles as being distinctive or one and the same?
30. What do you feel are the advantages of home education?
(P – Autonomy, flexibility, personalisation, other).
31. What do you feel are the disadvantages of home education?
(P – Prejudice, guilt, anxiety, financial, other).
32. Would you like your child to be educated at school?
33. Have you ever had a monitoring visit?
(P – What happened? / How did you feel about it?).
- 33a. Do you expect to be visited? If so how would this make you feel?

34. What advice would you give to another parent who might be considering home educating their child with an ASD?
(P – Do lots of research, contact your local home education group, contact the LA, contact local NAS Office, and contact Kent Autistic Trust).
35. Would you like your child to take formal examinations?
(P – GCSEs, A-Levels, other).
36. How would your child cope in a structured examination environment?
37. How would you prepare your child for this type of environment?
38. Would you like your child to study at university?
39. What are your ambitions for your child in the future?

Appendix 10: Child Interview Question Schedule

Child Interview Question Schedule

School Education – *Child's Experience*

1. What was the last school you attended?
(P – Pre-school/nursery, primary, secondary, special, none, other).
2. How did you feel about going to school?
3. What did you like about school?
4. What did you dislike about school?
5. What do you miss about not going to school?
6. Would you like to go to school again?

Home Education – *Beginnings*

7. How would you explain home education to another child?
(P – Autonomous, personalised, individualised, structured, unstructured, other).
8. How did you feel when mum and dad decided to home educate you?
(P- Guilt, remorse, relief, anxiety, excitement, trepidation).
9. Why do you think your parents chose to home educate you?
(P – Negative experience at school – bullying, difficulties with school environment, lack of understanding from SENCo/teaching-staff, other pupils, parents).

Home Education Support Group

10. What do you do at the home education support group?
11. What advice would you give to another child whose mum and dad might be thinking about home educating them?
(P – Do lots of research, contact your local home education group, contact the LA, contact local NAS Office, and contact an autism charity).

Home Education – *Practicalities*

12. What do you think is different between school and home education / learning at home?

(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).

13. What do you think is similar between school education and home education / learning at home?

(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).

14. What do you think teachers could learn from parents / mums and dads who home educate their children?

(P – Are there a few, many, major, minor, most important differences).

15. What do you think is important for you to learn?

(P – Independence skills, communication skills, how to socialise, how to interact with others, other).

16. What rules are there when you are being home educated?

16a. If so, could you say what they are?

17. Do you get any special rewards when you are being home educated?

18. What happens if you are 'naughty'?

19. What is different between your mum / dad and a school teacher?

20. What opportunities are there for you to meet other children?

(P – Siblings, belongs to clubs, home education support group, religious group, other).

21. What resources do you use?

(P – Reading books, text books, board games, card games, other).

21a. What technology do you use?

(P – PC, laptop, hand held tablet, DVD, TV, calculator, online resources, online projects, other).

22. Which places do you visit / use when you are being home educated?

(P – Library, museums, clubs, religion, galleries, supermarket, cafe, sports centre, swimming pool).

23. Where do you do your learning at home?

(P – Study, dining room, bedroom, garden, the entire house, anywhere, other).

24. How is your day / week organised?

(P – Core subjects in the morning, more creative tasks in the afternoon, there isn't a structure, it depends on the seasons, other).

25. What do you think the benefits are of being home educated?

(P – Autonomy, flexibility, personalisation, other).

26. What do you think are the disadvantages of being home educated?

(P – Prejudice, guilt, anxiety, financial, other).

Appendix 11: Observation Schedule

When?

1. Time of day?
2. Time start?
3. Time finish?
4. Is the observation taking place before or after the interview(s)?

Who is there?

5. How many children are present?
6. Who is present?
7. Gender of parent and child?
8. Environment

Open plan house

9. Sketch of the room



10. Student Researcher location/actions
11. Communication
12. Roles and Responsibilities

- 13. Engagement
- 14. Curriculum
- 15. Independence skills
- 16. Topic/Subject
- 17. Tasks/activities
- 18. Monitoring of work
- 19. Success
- 20. Structure
- 21. Parental Expectations
- 22. Resources
- 23. External professional input (e.g. SLT programme etc)

Appendix 12: A posteriori codes defined

A posteriori codes	Definition
11. Control	How individuals control one another within and beyond the family
12. Parent constraining learning	Parents stifle children's learning
13. Dependence	Parents maintain children's dependence
14. Independence	Parents promote children's independence
15. Parent promoting learning	Parents initiate learning activities
16. Self-awareness	Increased self-awareness of parents and children
17. Practices	Home education practices
18. Relations	Relationships within and beyond the family
19. Friendships	Opportunities to make, meet and play with friends
20. Socialisation	Opportunities to interact with others.
21. Support	From a range of sources
22. Flexibility	Parental approach to home education
23. Boundaries	Distinction between home education and family life
24. Time	Daily pressures and how these relate to the organisation of home education
25. External pressures	Factors which may impact on home education
26. Identity	Parent – teacher, Parent – home educator, Parent – facilitator, Parent - mentor
27. Resilience	Ability to respond proactively to a range of issues
28. Responsibilities	The differing tasks which the home educating parent is responsible
29. Stresses	Events, interactions and happenings which cause the parent stress
30. Tensions	Aspects of the home education practice which cause tensions within / across the family
31. Homework	Parental opinion regarding homework
32. Technology	Technologies used as part of the home education
33. Space	Where the home education take place
34. Bullying	Experienced by parent or child whilst at pre-school or school
35. Marginalisation	The experience of being kept separate from others whilst at pre-school or school
36. Inconsistent practice	Fluctuating practice experienced by children with ASD within an educational

	context
37. Sensory	Children's sensory sensitivities
38. Progress	The amount of progress the child has made in a range of areas since being home educated
39. Pre/School refusal	Serious issues the child has with continuing to attend pre-school or school
40. Rewards	Rewards which parents give to their children as a result of good work or behaviour
41. National Curriculum	Which subjects are parents continuing to teach / share with the child
42. Subjects omitted from the National Curriculum	Subjects which parents have decided not to teach
43. Kinaesthetic pedagogical approach	Parents encourage their children to learn using concrete resources
44. Child-centred pedagogical approach	The focus of each learning activity based upon the child's current needs
45. Using the child's interests and talents	The focus of the learning being on the child's interests or areas of strength
46. Emotional/behavioural regulation	Supporting the child to better understand and control their behavioural and emotional responses
47. Life Skills	To learn a range of skills to increase the child's independence
48. Support structures	Parents use of visual and organisational resources to promote the child's understanding
49. Lack of understanding	Teachers limited understanding of the individual needs of each child
50. Diagnosis	The medical label(s) given to each child
51. Learning out the house	External resources which the child uses regularly
52. Favourite subject	The subject which the child likes most
53. Least favourite subject	The subject which the child likes least
54. Understanding child's needs	Pre-school and teacher training about the needs of children with ASD
55. Informal learning	Learning which takes place without any formality
56. Home Education Allocation	The amount of time the children are home educated daily or weekly
57. Child's experience of school	Descriptions given by children about their experiences of pre-school or school
58. Parents' perception of child's schooling experiences	Descriptions given by parents regarding their child's schooling

Appendix 13: Hugo interview transcript

Date: 17/07/14 pm – Male, 41-45 years, interview length 29 mins 50 secs D02/02

The codes used in this interview are:

2: Decision

50: Diagnosis

21: Support

1: Parent motivations

44: Child-centred pedagogical approach

32: Technology

10: Disadvantages

22: Flexibility

11: Control

18: Relations

37: Sensory

20: Socialisation

9: Advantages

17: Practices

41: National Curriculum

24: Time

26: Identity

23: Boundaries

33: Space

38: Progress

51: Learning out the house

3: Process

8: Resources

57: Child's experience of school

58: Parents' perception of child's schooling experience

45: Using the child's interests and talents

54: Understanding child's needs

7: Pedagogical approaches

1: Parent motivations

19: Friendships

Up until this point Hugo had barely said a word to me, I had managed to get him to say whether he was happy to participate but this had been after a painful period sitting with him and Isaac in silence. Throughout the interview there are issues with sound i.e. picking up his voice and latterly mine. In the end the Dictaphone is put on his arm rest but it still doesn't pick up every word and seems to miss lots of the endings of my sentences. Ultimately I think he would rather have not participated, but for some reason did take part.

Me: So what were your experiences of your own school both primary and secondary?

Hugo: Erm err (sighs) I kind of didn't mind primary education, secondary education was a bit challenging for me erm stop erm had some issues shall we say bullied a little bit I did get some (dog barks) special needs help which again I didn't get any diagnosis err...a bit more knowledge about erm...

Me: Erm and which diagnosis has your child been given?

Hugo: Erm he has Aspergers.

Me: How did you feel about this?

Hugo: Erm (sighs) I feel quite sad about it probably...gained fully from his life as it were erm.

Me: And when was the diagnosis given and by whom?

Hugo: (can't hear)

Me: And erm do you know which tools were used to assess Isaac's ability to read others minds or behaviours?

Hugo: Erm I (can't hear).

Comment [RND1]: 50: Diagnosis

Me: Oh okay erm and what difference if any did the label make to Isaac's experience of school?

Hugo: Erm (breathes out) from what I remember erm not a great deal I think the the children seem quite I don't think he felt ...make things worse for children.

Me: Did did did staff do anything differently or did he get any extra provision as a result of it?

Hugo: He did get some (can't hear) when he was at school...additional help into the classroom.

Me: Is he academically bright?

Hugo: I, I believe so erm he's not engaged in it he'll switch off, he'll sit there if you see what I mean he just plays fully understanding which he wouldn't have done when he was at... reading...improving in certain areas...

Comment [RND2]: 57: Child's experience of school
21: Support

Me: And was it teaching support, was it like a TA support in the classroom?

Hugo: Erm yes yes, classroom support, I forget though.

Me: Okay erm and what is your opinion about the quality of teaching and the general provision that Isaac received when he was at school?

Hugo: Erm I think it seemed like the school has...all the children move that around ...the next child the same thing...I think there was a...(noise of china clinking).

Comment [RND3]: 58: Parents' perception of child's schooling experience

Me: And what were the processes in becoming a home educating parent?

Hugo: I'm not here, erm.

Me: I have to erm ask everyone the same questions...

Hugo: That's absolutely fine.

Me: So even, they'll be loads probably like that so you know don't worry I just have to make sure I'm asking everyone the same thing erm so erm how did you find out about these processes? About how to become a home educating parent.

Hugo: Erm I...

Me: Erm and when was the decision made and by whom to begin home educating Isaac?

Hugo: Erm as I say it kind of led up to a particular point erm Isabel was getting quite anxious(?) erm Isaac was poorly performing...chat about I suppose in many respects... I felt our hearts had actually made...

Me: Is it okay if I just move this?

Hugo: Yeah sure.

Me: I don't think its picking up everything you're saying, is it alright if I just pop it there? Sorry.

Dictaphone now moved to Hugo's chair.

Hugo: Yeah it's fine, yeah I think in our heart of hearts she kind of made up, I felt that she'd already made that decision erm so we had we had quite a long discussion about it I said you know it's not at the moment it's not helping Isaac not having the support he needs at school, not helping you so we then decided that erm if Isabel home schooled err Isaac.

Comment [RND4]: 2: Decision
3: Process

Me: How would you define the home education you're doing?

Hugo: How would I describe it? Erm I'd say at the moment its still sort of desire led almost erm it's down to really what interests Isaac to a degree erm he's quite switched on with the screens and computers and things like that so erm educational err websites and things like that are used quite, quite a lot erm I wouldn't say err its very structured erm its kind of sort of led by Isaac in some respects coz then something will be found that interests him and then you can take that you can expand that to wherever it needs to go sort of thing which obviously you can't do in in mainstream education you are kind of led by the structure that somebody else puts in place so, that's why he's got quite in-depth knowledge about certain subjects that

he shouldn't necessarily have at his age but they're the things that interest him. We're, we're kind of in the phase as it were year or so maybe of, Isabel's trying to get it slightly more structured and lead a little bit of it erm I think in a couple of years time his attitude will change, he'll start seeing a need for other things and then education.

Comment [RND5]: 7: Pedagogical approaches
54: Understanding child's needs
44: Child-centred pedagogical approach
45: Using the child's interests and talents

Me: Are you happy to say the things that he is really interested in or the things that he's interested to spend time on?

Hugo: Erm well from as much as I know erm he's not particularly interested in writing things down it's actually physically writing them down erm...

Me: Does he like typing his work?

Hugo: Erm a little bit but not greatly erm he did write a story a few weeks, I say, it's probably a few months ago now erm but effectively Isabel wrote it, he dictated it to her erm say at some point I hoping that he sees that it's a lot easier if he starts doing that and writing those words down erm, yeah Maths doesn't really understand the need, I think he can do it...

Me: Mmm but doesn't want to sort of show it.

Hugo: Yeah so erm it's like yeah I don't know that so you just tell me what that is erm he knows a lot of stuff and equally he'll when it's almost like when he thinks you're not looking or knowing sort of thing he'll come back and he'll be able to do the sums but he just chooses, he'll go 'oh, I don't know that' erm you saw him reading earlier on he was going to write something on his on his tablet and he was trying to type some a message or fill out something he'll ask how to spell nearly every single word, he clearly knows how to spell them coz he can read them all but it's almost like he needs the confidence the security blanket of someone saying you spell it like that.

Comment [RND6]: 54: Understanding child's needs
44: Child-centred pedagogical approach
45: Using the child's interests and talents

Me: Mmm, mmm so we're now on page two so what led you to home educate Isaac?

Hugo: Erm I'd say probably just the difficulty he had at school and the environment of school as much as anything, doesn't react particularly well to noisy environments and stuff like that erm (sighs) so there would be times where he'll just well would just switch off so say unless he's being one to one tuition... didn't really sort of erm come out of himself seemed to be quite liked at school erm everyone seemed to know his name but he won't really interact back with them (laughs) erm sometimes even like if he sees some of his old school friends and they'll say oh hello Isaac and he kind of goes just like, you could just say hello and Isabel's tried it on a number of occasions

especially when they're walking the dog and they see someone out of school as they're walking the dog, trying to get him to interact even with the parents and the children as they coz kind of generally... he will do that it's getting better.

Comment [RND7]: 1: Parent motivations
10: Disadvantages
19: Friendships

Me: Would you be able to give an example of how erm the noise might have affected him or a particular instance, something like that?

Hugo: Erm (breathes out) not that I can recall at this point to be honest with you.

Me: No, no particular room err it was...

Hugo: Err it (sighs) generally if we're going to places where quite busy and there's a lot of noise almost like a sensory overload as it were...

Me: Right.

Hugo: That's where he tends to just shut down, there's too many things going on all at once.

Me: So what do you do if he...

Hugo: Well he he kind of well he kind of curls in a little bit yeah he will stop talking, he will refuse to speak, he won't do any words at all.

Comment [RND8]: 37: Sensory

Me: So it's all just too much for him physically. So what are your main reasons for home educating Isaac?

Hugo: Erm I think its erm the sort of months but it started dropping off when he stopped getting some additional support erm that he just, when I come back from work and see that he's not happy and then Isabel's not happy I wouldn't put them through it, couldn't see them both being upset everyday just because he left school and you know something's happened or he won't come out for some reason or whatever it is erm it just seemed to be sort of daily occurrence that something was going on, nothing particularly awful just something, I just need to speak to you about something talk to a teacher about something that's happened or, he refused to work in a lesson for some but...wouldn't necessarily be able to communicate that or why he doesn' want to.

Comment [RND9]: 1: Parent motivations

Me: Yeah, yeah so how did you hear about the SATHE group?

Hugo: I didn't (laughs).

Me: Okay and what is your experience of the SATHE group?

Hugo: Erm none at all...

Me: Okay.

Hugo: Erm I'm aware of them that's about as much as it is, I've never actually I believe met any of them.

Me: Okay and what do you think members of the SATHE group offer one another?

Hugo: Erm I think in some respects its erm the group itself erm because there's lots of different things that for them to do some educational some just just err just fun things erm its nice that Isaac gets the interaction with other children that he doesn't necessarily get obviously being home schooled erm unless he's going on play dates and stuff with with err friends from school erm so he's getting that social interaction erm Isabel gets some support obviously because there are people have been people in the group that have similar issues with their children erm so it gives some err information exchange sort of opportunities, that's about it really I guess.

Comment [RND10]: 19: Friendships
20: Socialisation
21: Support

Me: Thank you

Hugo: Erm don' really know.

Me: Okay as in has there...

Hugo: As I say things are a lot easier then they were when Isaac was in school...

Me: Okay.

Hugo: Erm I'm happier (little laugh) erm generally you know he came home he was happy, contented that's about it really I guess.

Comment [RND11]: 9: Advantages

Me: And what effect has home education had on the roles of each person in the family?

Hugo: Erm in what way?

Me: Erm one parent spends more time with one or other child or change or shift in responsibilities or focus.

Hugo: (Sighs) Not really I mean erm because of Isaacs age erm Isabel was at home anyway she hasn't had to quit work or anything like that erm so for me I've just carried on normal erm I try and take Harry away every now and then sort of out of the picture in some respects erm because I feel that he sometimes gets ignored to a degree...

Me: What's the age difference between the two?

Hugo: Err it's five years between them erm obviously he carried on in education erm but didn't wanna feel that Isaac gets all the attention obviously gets nearly all of Isabel's time erm so I just wanna make special erm trips with him and erm we now both play cricket together which started about a year and a half or two and so yeah we have sort of father son time in that respect erm I'd probably say I probably spend slightly more time with Harry than Isabel does, spends a lot more time with Isaac than I do.

Me: Was that happening before, was that a naturally occurring thing, but its just more magnified since?

Hugo: Err I think, I think probably I'm doing more with Harry now than I've done previously probably about than with Isaac erm I would say Isabel's probably in some respects spends less time with him but that's probably because he's now a lot older than he was 16, 17 in September wants to do his own things, he wandered back home, said hello, went and made himself some dinner, disappears.

Comment [RND12]: 18: Relations

Me: And how have role boundaries altered since you began?

Hugo: I don't think they've changed at all really.

Me: And on a day to day basis how would you describe the emotions which may take place?

Hugo:

Me: And what do the following psychological theories mean to you, erm theory of mind, executive dysfunction? We've done the first schedule, onto the so, this one is purely around the practicalities of doing home education.

Hugo: Okay.

Me: Erm so what do you see as the main differences between school education and home education?

Hugo: Erm I think the structure of it you have the opportunity of dictating what you want to do, when you want to do it there's no set structure on hours so if you were to start at eight o'clock in the morning finish at 6 o'clock at night that's entirely up to you you can't do that in... education and again you can decide what things are beneficial to your child erm to widen their understanding and their knowledge of things erm so I suppose the benefits for me is that you decide what's right for you and your child.

Comment [RND13]: 9: Advantages
11: Control
22: Flexibility

Me: And what do you see as the main similarities between?

Hugo: Erm (sighs) I think there are obviously still things you need to do, there are still things you need...erm can't quite find a way of articulating that there are things so that have to be done you have you need to be able to add up, subtract, read even though as adults you do a very limited amount of adding and subtracting on a day to day...

Comment [RND14]: 41: National Curriculum

Me: And what do you consider school educators could learn from home educators?

Hugo: Erm I kind of feel sorry for teachers in many respects the amount of children they have to deal with the time they, generally have too many children in their classrooms, they don't have enough time to get to those children... constraints are being put on them erm if mainstream education could be better pitched at a better level smaller classrooms or more teachers erm coz I think like you know 'specially for Isaac sort of the one to one interaction and that sort of thing and and being able to go through is to focus once you find something and then there's a discussion about a particular subject and it starts to go off at a tangent, another route you've got the when you're home educating you've got that facility to go in that direction whereas when you're in mainstream education you're set into that structure you go right we've gone from we're at a and we must go to b, we can't go to c first, that may be more interesting and you know ultimately where we wanna get to but you have to go to this stage next, always led by the structure and not, because there's a fluidity in home education that you don't get on you're not able to get, that facility would be great in err mainstream education again, I'm not entirely sure how that'd work but (laughs) especially with a classroom full of 30 odd children feasible.

Comment [RND15]: 9: Advantages
22: Flexibility
44: Child-centred pedagogical approach

Me: And which curriculum do you follow, number 4?

Hugo: Erm don' know, other probably of some description, don' ask me what it is.

Me: Okay and is the curriculum written down?

Hugo: Not that I'm aware of, maybe proved to be wrong on that but...

Me: And what opportunities are there for Isaac to socialise with children adults or both?

Hugo: Erm Isabel does quite a few different bits and pieces err the last two weeks they've been sailing so yeah down at Chipstead err near Sevenoaks erm so Isaac's had the interaction with err the adult err tutors I guess people sailing teachers erm so he was interaction with those erm trampolining err doing so interaction with the other children at the trampolining club and that sort of thing erm so those sorts of opportunities... and then obviously the erm the SATHE erm days out and err...

Me: So does he socialise or interact...

Hugo: Erm a lot yes.

Comment [RND16]: 20: Socialisation

Me: Okay and which parts of the National Curriculum does Isaac get at home that he also got at school?

Hugo: Erm so Isabel probably be far better to answer that erm wouldn' necessarily say all of the subjects but reading and writing and... tries to promote art to some... every now and then they try and do projects and bits and pieces but erm Isabel tends to end up doing most of them for some reason (laughs) erm so he's he's involved but not she does try to, to vary the education and subjects.

Me: And what parts of the national curriculum have you omitted from teaching, so are there any subjects you do little of or don't.

Hugo: I I would probably say there are some she does little of erm but I don' think we've discussed that there's anything that is off limits as it were.

Comment [RND17]: 41: National Curriculum
17: Practices

Me: Are there any particular teaching approaches that you make use of the ones there are the ones that are sometimes used, okay. Would there be a particular teaching approach that you...what do you think is important for Isaac?

Hugo: Erm for Isaac to actually engage in something is the only way he'll learn, he feels he needs to do it for whatever reason erm he will learn it, so it's either got to interest him in some way or got to find a reason for it or there has to be a reason for him to need to know it.

Comment [RND18]: 44: Child-centred pedagogical approach

Me: So erm is it is he more in control of his learning because of because of his...the way he sees things or?

Hugo: I would to a degree yes erm the things he's not interested in or is less interested in maybe a better way of putting it erm they're harder for Isabel to get through so whereas say it may be a half hour task, that half hour task may be an hour, may be longer so a lot of time to get through those erm they're obviously things that he finds interesting he can fly through them erm severe with things that he's interested in he will then I think personally I think he's trying to drag them out in the hopes that someone will give up...

Comment [RND19]: 11: Control
22: Flexibility
23: Boundaries
24: Time

Me: Right.

Hugo: Laughs.

Me: Such as the distraction techniques that...

Hugo: Yeah I'll just do something else and then I'll talk about something else and then maybe we'll just get off that subject and do something else.

Comment [RND20]: 9: Advantages

Me: Yeah, mmm, okay erm how did you come to a decision about?

Hugo: I'm not sure we formally sort of came to a decision on it erm Isabel did a lot of erm searching on the Internet for different educational bits and pieces so started down loading software and signed up to packages online and that sort of thing mainly because that was the sort of thing that sort of but I s'ppose from Isaac he got interested in so because it was that that was kind of the our in so that's where we start from and then most subliminably I think at the start I think a lot of stuff were were sort of computer generated kind of child like erm programmes and err computer

sessions and things so he would go through those thinking there is kind of a game outset (can't hear) erm that was sort of the spark to get him interested in it erm...

Comment [RND21]: 3: Process
8: Resources
32: Technology

Me: Planning the teaching materials, what materials and resources does Isaac?

Hugo: Erm again you're probably better off, you will be better off talking to Isabel about that but most of the stuff's on computer erm...downloaded and...

Me: Does he use a PC or does he use a tablet?

Hugo: Err it's a laptop erm and sometimes uses a tablet.

Me: And what forms of technology does erm Isaac use to do his work at home?

Hugo: Erm thinking TV, erm the laptop itself, tablet, online erm.

Comment [RND22]: 32: Technology

Me: And which other resources outside of the home do you?

Hugo: Erm these err there's some err clubs he goes to previously erm err the library erm not so much the museums as such erm but Isabel wants to take him to a show at The Barbican erm was planning on doing it this week because of being stinking hot and didn't really want to go to The Barbican and travel through London and the Underground and everything erm err sort of media art exhibition so its those sorts of things as well erm you know going up into London and to a gallery and Science Museum or something like that you know those sorts do occur.

Comment [RND23]: 51: Learning out the house

Me: Okay and how do you do about assessing Isaac's work?

Hugo: Isabel assesses it if she does at all erm yeah.

Me: What progress has...

Hugo: I couldn't answer that.

Me: Okay and how do you measure Isaac's progress?

Hugo: Personally I don't.

Comment [RND24]: 17: Practices
38: Progress

Me: And where does Isaac's learning take?

Hugo: Erm it's normally erm just out in the other room...in this area yeah.

Me: And is there anywhere else in the house that he'll go off and do some learning?

Hugo: Erm (breathes out) not necessarily unless they were doing some sort of err science experiment or something like they might use a lot of water or something and it might be in the bathroom maybe but erm perhaps the back garden or whatever but yeah erm generally it's out there.

Comment [RND25]: 33: Space

Me: Isaac's day or week...structure?

Weird noises...

Hugo: No.

Me: Are there certain activities or subjects that you would want him to do every day or once a week or?

Hugo: Erm err yeah (knocks Dictaphone on the floor)...

Me: It's alright, it's okay.

Hugo: Err yes Isabel, there are certain things that she will do during the week to make sure that done certain things so yes.

Me: So would he do things like erm writing and...

Hugo: Yeah, yeah there's certain that he will...

Comment [RND26]: 11: Control

Me: And in a typical week how many hours?

Hugo: I couldn't honestly say.

Me: And would you expect Isaac to carry out work beyond set times each day?

Hugo: Erm (sighs) I think sort of the the the throughout the day I would say it's slightly fluid erm but like when Harry will come back from school is kind of when the school day would have ended coz he's sort of finished school be unfair that Isaac would then carry on that said, there are times there's a a programme programme computer programme thing on line err I never remember what its called erm he will quite often watch that past you know school hours he quite enjoys that computer that bleeps to discuss subjects erm that would yeah so yeah outside of the normal...

Comment [RND27]: 17: Practices
32: Technology

Me: So but that's his choice to do that?

Hugo: That is, erm he may like, coz he's also on his tablet so he might ask for some tablet time and Isabel will say yeah you can go on that so and so website and watch educational things that's he's okay with that...

Me: Because he's interested in it.

Hugo: Because he's interested in it.

Me: And is there a structured routine?

Hugo: Err not overly structured I wouldn't say.

Comment [RND28]: 17: Practices

Me: Erm and where do you get your ideas from? We're on the last page now erm so how did you come to a decision about how to plan a teaching activity, were there certain things that influenced that?

Hugo: Erm (sighs) no not really I s'ppose if it's outside of the sort of the the normal things its you know what's either Isaac's interested in or what we feel he he might be interested in.

Comment [RND29]: 44: Child-centred pedagogical approach

Me: A bit of both?

Hugo: A bit of both yeah coz sometimes he'll say yeah I'm not really interested and then once he's in doing something and realises it is actually what it is which I think a lot of it is just yeah not interested in that don' wanna do that, don' actually know what it is so sometimes he'll just say I'm not interested...

Me: Something new.

Hugo: Something new yeah erm and then when he's there and doing something engaged and somethings are just, just fun things so yeah it kind of makes him think in a different way more as a person because of things...

Me: Could you give an example of one of those slightly different things he might do?

Hugo: Err a what I s'pose it was quite a while ago now erm but he was given the opportunity of going into London there was a thing at the South Bank Centre erm about dinosaurs coz he's quite interested in dinosaurs, Walking With Dinosaurs it was called erm so he got a lot of interaction at and bearing in mind it was quite noisy and there was a lot of children about and sometimes especially with strangers he's

quite good really that he's quite reserved with them he came really out of himself, lot went on the stage and was petting the dinosaurs wanna go out (talking to the dog) erm so that was quite a surprise and unfortunately I could only see it on video coz I wasn't, I was at work erm but obviously as I say Isabel took him into London so he wouldn't have got that opportunity erm if he was in mainstream education so again (starts talking to the dog)...

Comment [RND30]: 9: Advantages
45: Using the child's interests and talents

Me: So how was that a one day event or was that a few days?

Hugo: That was just a one day thing erm so he was interested in it because it's a sort of thing that he would be interested in Isabel saw it and said do you wan...fancy you know go and see some dinosaurs which he was erm again didn't think he was going to react as well as he did so yeah I mean it was very surprising in many respects.

Comment [RND31]: 9: Advantages

Me: What training or skills erm do you use in your role of home educa?

Hugo: (Sighs) I don't coz I'm not a...

Me: Which word or phrase would you use...

Hugo: I know what Isabel would describe herself as, she's a facilitator and I I kind of understand where she's coming with that coz she's not generally I would say she's not teaching probably beating something into a child not literally obviously erm she's just tryin' to facilitate his education, getting him interested in different things, giving him as much information and...

Me: And how do you switch between the roles of...distinctive or one and the same?

Hugo: Erm I don't think there's a lot of difference between being a home educator and a parent erm I think it's a parent's role to teach their children right and wrong yeah to educate them it's not just to it's not just, learning doesn't just stop as in the four walls of a school when your children come back and my eldest son, I hope he's learnt something from me, maybe not very many things but you know he can still learn from wherever he is... school day so...doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing you're an educator and a parent they're kind of the same thing.

Comment [RND32]: 26: Identity
23: Boundaries

Me: And what do you feel are the advantages of home ed?

Hugo: Erm I mean personally me family less anxious issues we had with Isaac when he was in school erm from erm...personally that's where I see it look at it as a whole for for other people erm life style choice.

Comment [RND33]: 9: Advantages

Me: And what do you feel are the disadvantages?

Hugo: Erm (sighs) I don' know financially its erm its err as a family it costs us more money than it would do if coz I'm still paying for school education which I'm fine with but all the additional learning aids sign up to and they're all things that are coming out of funds so we're we're paying that err additionally again which I'm fine with so it was in education we would a those that expense and Isabel would have the opportunity of actually doing...

Comment [RND34]: 10: Disadvantages

Me: Would you like Isaac to be?

Hugo: Erm in an ideal world yes I think I probably would...

Me: Monitoring visit...

Hugo: ...erm yes and no erm I feel we should erm but it doesn't necessarily I don', I know I wouldn' be averse if they did but I don' necessarily think they will I mean I mean its...erm, if they do they do, if they don' they don'.

Me: Erm and if they did visit how would that?

Hugo: Erm (breathes out) I'm fine with that if that's what they wanna do erm and again equally I s'ppose ambivalent (laughs) that's probably, probably the best way of saying putting it, if they do they do, if they don' they don'.

Me: What advice would you give to another parent who might be considering...?

Hugo: Erm I'd err advice them to discuss it between the parents err and the child to decide what's best for them coz it may not be to seek as much advice and guidance right for them coz its not...right...

Me: And would you like Isaac to take exams?

Hugo: Erm (breathes out) not really that bothered about it...quite tough if you put time limits on things with him the additional pressure of putting a time limit on something say its 10 minutes or whatever just doesn't really so... I don'.

Comment [RND35]: 23: Boundaries
24: Time

Me: And how would you prepare Isaac?

Hugo: Erm...

Me: And would you like Isaac to study at university?

Hugo: Err I would love him to, not sure it'd be what he wants to do certainly from the outset erm I fear he may not be able to do that, I fear he may not be able to grow, I'd

like him to but if he wanted to go and had the opportunity to go I move heaven and earth to...

Me: And what are your ambitions for Isaac in the future?

Hugo: Sound a bit contrite but erm I just want him to be happy, okay.