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University of Southampton

Special Needs South Asian Pupils in a Southern English
City, with Special Reference to Eleven Pupils in Two
Linked SLD Schools

by

Shaheen Pasha

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Faculty of Educational Studies
School of Education

April, 1996

To my loving parents,

and

those children who are unable to raise their voices for their rights and are suffering due to our self defined norms. These children are just like us, if we could only acknowledge that they are. I would like my research to bring some positive hopes for them.

University of Southampton

ABSTRACT

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to Eleven Pupils in Two Linked SLD Schools

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This study is an ethnographic research carried out in two linked schools for children with severe learning difficulties. It used qualitative methods of research to examine: (i) the number and distribution of South Asian children with special needs, special provision and staffing conditions in seven special schools within the city of Crownbridge; (ii) the educational environment and provision for these children in two linked special schools in the city; (iii) the problems of South Asian parents/families due to their special needs children and the extent to which the parents perceive both schools and other provision to be effective for their children and for themselves.

The study shows that many schools were poorly staffed and did not have enough support from other professionals such as physiotherapists and speech therapists. Except for limited bilingual support in some schools, none of the schools offered any special curriculum or provision to South Asian children with special needs that could fulfil their social, cultural and linguistic needs. In both specifically investigated schools, the attitude of many staff members towards the parents was, on several occasions, unhelpful and home-school relationship was unsatisfactory. The educational staff were unaware of South Asian cultural and religious aspects, whereas the parents were unaware of the educational goals for their children and were ignorant of the education system and their legal rights.

The study found that the attitude of the professionals towards the parents was not helpful. The parents and other family members were under continuous stress and were not satisfied with the provisions offered, or with the professionals of social services and health department. Many parents were reluctant to get help from them or to involve them in any case. Unfortunately, the parents thought of them as problem creators. The parents were interested in getting some training from professionals for the purposes of looking after their children in a better way at home and the teaching professionals were interested in getting some cultural oriented training for the purposes of looking after minority children in a better way at school. However, there was no such facility available. The study proposes some measures which could be considered to improve the situation.

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¹My husband was also studying for the degree of Ph.D in the Department of Computer Science, University of Southampton.

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List of Abbreviations

DES	Department of Education and Science
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
EEA	Elementary Education Act
ERA	Education Reform Act
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local management of schools
MLD	Moderate learning difficulties
PD	Physical difficulties
SLD	Severe learning difficulties
TEACCH	Treatment and Education of Autistic & related Communication handicapped Children

*

PART I

Motivation, Objectives, Literature Review

And

Methodology

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The motivation of this study was to explore the problems related to the education of South Asian children with special needs. The term "South Asian" is narrowly defined and referred to people from the Indian sub-continent who were Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Bengali speaking. Some 'South Asians' from Kenya are also included as they were of Indian background.

In an attempt to understand the nature of the problems related to the South Asian children with special needs, this study examines the educational environment and the provisions offered to the South Asian children currently enrolled in special schools, taking a detailed account of two severe learning difficulties (SLD) schools, within the city limits of Crownbridge. It also examines the extent to which the parents perceive these schools and the other provisions to be effective for their children and for themselves.

This study is primarily designed to exploit two factors which give the structure and determine the nature of the study. These factors are my current experience within special education and the personal application of my cultural perspective as a member of the South Asian community.

Special education is a field of study which interests me greatly and my role as liaison officer between school and South Asian families with SLD children has highlighted many interesting and potentially important areas of investigation. At one and the same time, my position provides the stimulus for study and the practical means by which a research group can be determined. Being bilingual and sensitive to South Asian customs and attitudes, I believe that it is this combination of professional competence and personal experience which holds the potential for a worthwhile piece of work. I am already aware that being conversant in their language and comfortable with shared assumptions enabled me to quickly form a good relationship with this client group.

Bringing into context the need for this study, it is important to mention that most of the

studies about South Asian special needs children have been carried out in the Midlands where the South Asian community is thickly populated. No such study has been carried out in the South West Division. The majority of these studies have been carried out by white researchers. Although it is not the aim to challenge the outcome of these studies, it is important to point out that for a white researcher it is not easy to understand the social, cultural and religious aspects of the South Asian community. Furthermore they can not understand the underlying problems faced by individuals of a minority group in a society in which the majority culture includes political and cultural beliefs of English superiority and condones racial discrimination, harassment and cultural ignorance. A common consensus which emerged from many recent studies is that the assessment, social and educational development of minority children is masked by their own language difficulties with white, professionals' lack of knowledge about their native language and the failure of authorities to develop special assessment procedures for minority children [Bergin 1980; Tomlinson & Tones 1983; Williams 1984; Snow 1990; Abrol 1990; Mittler 1993a; Tomlinson 1993; Hall 1995]. In parallel, the gulf of mistrust and misunderstanding appears to be growing between schools and minority parents, and the parents have lost faith in schools to make improvements [Rampton 1981; Tomlinson 1993]. The growing concern of researchers and authorities about the problems related to the education of children with special needs from minority ethnic backgrounds showed the importance of the issue.

Another noticeable factor is that in mainstream schooling South Asian community leaders and education authorities have demanded services to meet cultural and linguistic needs. But very little is heard about special schools, although many professionals in the field are expressing increasing concern. I personally feel that there is a need for such studies - carried out by South Asian researchers - which illustrate the problems of the South Asian special needs children and their families. This study is an attempt in this direction.

1.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to investigate the education of the South Asian children with special needs within the city of Crownbridge, to discover the problems of South Asian parents/families due to their special needs children and the extent to which the various services on offer have been used. In this concern, the research foci of the study were:

1. In a broader context, to explore the number and distribution of South Asian special needs children in special schools within the city of Crownbridge; staffing conditions and the nature and the extent of special provision for South Asian special needs children in these schools.
2. To investigate the problems related to the education of these children taking a detailed account of two linked SLD schools focusing on the following topics:
 - special provision for South Asian children with special needs;
 - social, cultural, and linguistic aspects and communication problems;
 - home-school relationships;
 - staffing conditions;
 - multi-professional support;
 - schools' environment and staff's working conditions.
3. To investigate the parents'/families' experiences of having a child with special needs focusing on the following topics:
 - parent's financial worries due to having a child with special needs;
 - parents'/families' attitude towards the child's special needs;
 - attitude of South Asian community towards children with special needs;
 - effects of a child with special needs on family's social life;
 - problems related to every day care of a special needs child.
4. To investigate the parents' attitude towards mother tongue teaching and bilingual staff.
5. To investigate the parents' responses to existing services, different patterns of their use and possible reasons for their response to these services.
6. To investigate the South Asian parents and white professionals relationships.
7. To investigate issues concerning South Asian parents' and white professionals' training.

Some other components of this thesis are given below:

- To investigate the effects of bilingual instruction on South Asian children's educational and behavioural achievements.

- Proposals for some possible development in services for South Asian SLD children and their parents which might be considered. These developments include suggestions to improve the existing services, and some additional form of provision which may meet researched clients' needs.

To address these research issues, seven special schools where South Asian children with special needs were enrolled were selected for inquiry within the city limits of Crownbridge. Of these seven schools, five were surveyed only once, whereas two linked SLD schools were investigated in depth. From these two linked schools, a group of eleven South Asian SLD pupils enrolled - 6 boys and 5 girls - and their families have been investigated. The members of the group studied covered almost all the main ethnic groups of the Indian sub-continent and accounted for 85% of the South Asian SLD pupils in the city of Crownbridge. Hence, these eleven cases would give a good picture of the situation in the city.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis has two parts. The first part gives the motivation, objectives, literature review and research methodology. The literature survey is given in Chapter 2 and the research methodology is discussed in Chapter 3. The second part is about the field work results and their analysis and the conclusions and recommendations.

This study covers three aspects of the issues addressed. The first, given in Chapter 4, concerns the broader context. It considers the number and distribution of South Asian children in special schools within the city of Crownbridge; the provisions for the South Asian children with special needs and staffing conditions in these schools.

The second is a detailed investigation of the educational environment, staffing conditions and the provisions for the South Asian children with special needs currently enrolled in two linked SLD schools within the city of Crownbridge. A general introduction of these two schools is given in Chapter 5 and a detailed data analysis is given in Chapter 6.

The third aspect is about the personal experiences of the parents and other family members of the SLD children studied. This mainly revolves around 11 pupils, enrolled in two linked SLD schools, and their families. Interviews, questionnaire, observations and informal meetings were the main tools used to collect the data concerned. I believe that a study which is so heavily based on personal experiences, opinions and observations must give a detailed introduction of

its main characters rather than a brief summary. Chapter 7 gives the demographic details of the 11 case studies. Chapter 8 gives a detailed analysis of the extent to which the parents perceive these schools and the other provisions to be effective for their children and for themselves. The conclusions of this study are given in Chapter 9. In this chapter we also outline the possible services for South Asian special needs children, their parents, and the educational professionals which can help to improve the situation.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Educational research can never take place in a vacuum. This chapter therefore presents the literature review carried out for this study. The chapter has two parts. Part one, Section 2.2 presents a historical perspective of special education in the UK. Part two, Section 2.3 discusses the problems of South Asian children with special needs and their parents. Conclusions arising from the literature survey are given in Section 2.4.

2.2 Part I: A Historical Perspective of Special Education in the UK

People who show any kind of physical or behavioural abnormality from the culturally determined norms often tend to be treated unequally. One of the consequences of this discrimination, which still exists, is a lack of the access to equal educational and employment opportunities normally expected by the average member of the community [Jerrold & Fox 1968; Stratford 1989; Stratford 1991]. A distinguishing feature of people with special needs is their inability to articulate their own needs, making them a 'silent minority' [Lane 1981]. Barton and Tomlinson [1981] define them among a number of groups who are competing for scarce resources that include financial, material and human support and understanding. Despite the advances made at the social, educational, and technological levels of society, ignorance, prejudice and stigmatisation, particularly of the mentally handicapped, still exist and some people are prepared to maintain this situation [Barton:& Tomlinson 1981; Hall 1995].

In order to gain a clear understanding of the problem, and changes which are taking place, a knowledge of the sociological aspects of special education and related institutions is very important. Barton and Tomlinson [1981] suggest that children with special needs and the relevant institutions must not be viewed in a vacuum, for they are part of a wider social order.

A sociological understanding should enable us to develop an understanding of the relationship between an individual and society, and help us to explain both the individual's problems, and the public issues associated with special education. Mills [1970, p. 12] states that:

“No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their interactions within a society, has completed its intellectual journey.”

The following sections, Section 3.2.1 to Section 3.2.4, review and discuss the development and the implication of the legislation to develop special education in the UK. Table 2.1 shows the legislation development with reference to special education in the UK.

Table 2.1: Legislation with reference to special education

Year	Legislation
1870	Elementary Education Act
1944	Education Act
1945	Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations
1970	Education Act for Handicapped Children
1975	Education for All Handicapped Children Act
1981	Education Act
1988	Education Reform Act
1989	Child Act
1993	Education Act

2.2.1 1870 to 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act

The development of legislation related to the education of children with special needs in the UK began in 1870. The Elementary Education Act [1870] made rudimentary provision to ensure the education of children with special needs. But it was not until the 1944 Education Act that education by special methods appropriate for mentally or physically handicapped persons, offered in special schools or elsewhere, was included within the general duties laid down for local education authorities (LEAs). The 1944 Education Act defined 11 categories of handicap: blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially deaf, delicate, diabetic, educationally subnormal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped and those with speech defects.

Under this Act children having any mental or physical special needs were assessed by a medical officer. Children not defined by the above list, (usually associated with a mental disability) fell short of this educational jurisdiction and were simply labelled as ineducable [Gulliford 1971; Barton & Tomlinson 1981; Gulliford 1989].

By the 1960s, the notion of treatment had been abandoned and the special education began to be 'provision'. The term 'special needs' came into use in the 1960s as a result of increasing dissatisfaction with the terminology used in the Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations [1945]. In 1966, the Association of Special Education devoted its annual conference towards special education, and the provision for specific handicaps. Contributors at this conference showed their deep concerns about the lack of provisions for children with special needs [Barton & Tomlinson 1981].

Development in provisions for children with special needs remained slow until the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. Pearson [1993] pointed out that until the passing of the 1970 Education Act, some 30,000 pupils with severe learning difficulties had no right or access to education. Early studies carried out in the sixties [Holt 1960; Tizard & Grad 1961; Robinson & Robinson 1965; Schonell & Watts 1965; Kellmer-Pringle & *et al.* 1966] outlined the implications for parents with young children with special needs who were living at home. These studies provided a strong basis for the 1970 Education Act.

The 1970 Education Act put the responsibility for children with special needs directly on the education authorities. It transferred these children from the Health Department to Education Department. At international level in 1971 the United Nations adopted a Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons. Paragraph one of this declaration opens with the statement, as quoted in Stratford [1991, p. 10], that "The mentally retarded person has, to the maximum degrees of feasibility, the same rights as other human beings." In 1975, the 'Education for All Handicapped Children Act' stressed the role of the parents in the education of their children. In the same year the Department of Education and Science examined the process of identifying and assessing children with severe learning difficulties and provided new forms of educational, medical and psychological advice [Stratford 1991].

The period between 1870 to 1975 can be seen as a period of preliminary developments in special education. Though these developments took some measures regarding the education of children with special needs, for many years, these children were regularly removed from ordinary schools as soon as they were identified as having special needs. If education was

provided, it would normally be in special schools that supported the idea of many early 20th century educators who felt that attempting to educate children with special needs due to their mental or physical conditions in ordinary schools was an inefficient and unproductive use of resources [Allen 1995]. Some of the main implications of this development are discussed below.

The 1970 Act put the responsibility for the education of children with special needs directly on the education authorities. However, the method of assessing the needs of a child with special needs was not clearly defined and introduced complications. Coles [1978], for example, provides an extensive review of recommendation procedures used for diagnosing learning difficulties. He mentions that the teaching and school environment, which might have contributed towards learning difficulties in the children, were not being considered in the assessment procedure. At the same time, the quality of the instruction these children received was always assumed to be adequate [Coles 1978]. Arguably the assessment of a child under these circumstances depends on the goodwill of people who are involved in the assessment procedure. Sewell [1981, p. 171] shows his deep concerns when he writes that “The professionals have an almost complete monopoly on the linguistic and symbolic power. They could act in good faith and still harm the child. They could act in defence of their own interests and neither parents nor children need ever know”.

An important aspect of 1975 Act is parents' involvement in the education of children with special needs. Research carried out before or after 1975 Act, shows that children's ability to achieve their potential is enhanced with parental involvement. It is, perhaps, particularly true in the case of special needs children where both children and parents have special needs [Karnes *et al.* 1970; Levenstein *et al.* 1973; Quick *et al.* 1974; Enzer 1975; Hayden 1976; Shearer & Shearer 1977; Bricker & Casuso 1979; Dunn 1989]. Different methods were being used in these studies of parents' involvement. For example, Mother Training Project [Karnes *et al.* 1970] was based on training the mothers of disadvantaged children in teaching techniques which they could use at home with their babies. In ‘Mother-Child Home’ [Levenstein *et al.* 1973] the mothers were trained and encouraged in verbal interaction with their children using ‘toy demonstration’ techniques. Some other examples of similar projects are ‘Early Training Project and Demonstration and Research for Early Education’ [Gray 1971]; ‘Model Preschool Centre for Handicapped Children at the University of Washington’ [Hayden 1976] and ‘Portage Project’ [Shearer & Shearer 1972].

Though the 1975 Act placed emphasis on the parents' involvement in the education of their children, there was no clear Code of Practice to achieve this goal. Also many studies emphasise the importance of multi-disciplinary cooperation and suggest the need to consider the actual needs of children with special needs, such as the Isle of Wight Survey [Rutter *et al.* 1970], a study carried out in London [Rutter *et al.* 1975], the National Child Development Study [Kellmer-Pringle *et al.* 1966], the report of a multi-disciplinary Working Party at the National Children's Bureau [Younghusband *et al.* 1970; Boswell & Wigrove 1974], and others. Findings of these research projects shifted opinion. In 1978, the Warnock Committee called for a new statutory scheme for educating children with special needs.

2.2.2 1978 Warnock Report and 1981 Education Act

The Warnock Report [DES 1978] is a major development in relation to the education of those children who experience learning difficulties. These children were named as 'children with special educational needs'. In this report, the majority (some 18% from 20%) of special educational needs were seen as being caused by 'familial' or 'social' factors and a minority (approximately 2% from 20%) were ascribed to 'medical' factors. The emphasis was upon a common education to which all pupils were entitled. However, the report suggests that this common goal could be attained for different pupils via different curricula. The Committee made recommendations for more effective provision for special needs children and urged the redefinition of the provision of special courses for all students and teachers in teacher training and the introduction of a new system for identifying and coping with children with special needs. The report also suggests the form of provision for special needs including access to the curriculum through special resources, modified curricula, social and emotional circumstances [Evans *et al.* 1989; Lewis & Vulliamy 1981; Pearson & Lindsay 1991; Gulliford & Upton 1992; Beveridge 1993; Visser 1993]. Some of the key recommendations of this report, as set out in Evans *et al.* [1989], are summarised below:

- The concept of special education needs should replace the arbitrary division of children into two populations - children with special educational needs and children without special educational needs. The existing categories of special needs children should be replaced by a single term, 'learning difficulties', which would focus attention on the educational implications of disabilities;

- It should be recognised that up to one in five children would have special needs at some time during their school career;
- Parents should be treated as partners and their views should be actively sought.
- A 'named person' should be assigned to support parents of children with special needs;
- Children with learning difficulties should, as far as possible, be educated in ordinary schools;
- Children who had been assessed as requiring education in a special school should have a record of needs and parents should have access to this;
- Attention should be given to the transition from school to adult life. Pupils' needs should be assessed at least two years before they were due to leave school;
- Teacher training, both initial and in-service, was required to improve teachers' skills in identifying and meeting special educational needs. Advisory and support services in LEAs should be enhanced to provide help for teachers with pupils with special educational needs;
- Cooperation between education, health and social services should be improved and they should have a closer cooperation in the planning and delivery of services for children and young people with special needs. Health authorities should appoint a named doctor and nurse for each special school and social services should appoint a liaison officer to link with the careers advisory services;
- Inter-professional training for those concerned with meeting special educational needs should be promoted;
- Voluntary organisations should be given a greater role in the provision of services.

The recommendations made by the Warnock Report provided the impetus for the 1981 Education Act. The 1981 Act put some of the recommendations of the Warnock Report into a legislative framework. It abolished the existing categories of children with special needs and replaced them by a single term 'special educational needs' with reference to the three key definitions, as given in Evans *et al.* [1989]:

Learning difficulties: A child who has significantly greater difficulties in learning than the majority of children of his or her age; has a disability which either prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities generally provided in schools.

Special educational provisions: For children under two years of age this means any provision but for children over the age of two this means educational provisions which are additional to or otherwise different from the educational provisions made generally for children of his or her age in a school maintained by the LEA concerned.

Special educational needs: A pupil has special educational needs if he or she has learning difficulties. For children who have complex learning difficulties, the Act lays down a procedure for their assessment, following which the LEA will decide whether to issue a statement. The procedure allows parents to access the advice upon which decisions are made, and to give their own views.

The 1981 Act makes local authorities responsible for integrating pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements¹, into ordinary schools on the basis of the following points mentioned in Evans *et al.* [1989, p. 36]:

- The parents' view must be taken into account;
- The child receives the special educational provision he or she requires;
- It is compatible with the efficient education of other children in the school
- It is an efficient use of resources.

The 1981 Act was a positive step for the betterment of special education, as it could lead to more effective educational provision for many children. For example a study carried out in 1983 which looked at what Local Education Authorities were doing for children with special educational needs in ordinary schools, followed the 1981 Education Act. In this study six LEAs were investigated. The study shows some positive effects of the 1981 Act, particularly in some LEAs where the provisions previously were very patchy and old-fashioned. The authors mention that 1981 Act certainly created an atmosphere in which LEAs protected their special needs services and were prepared to offer considerable support for the 18% of children with

¹ A statement is a written record of special educational needs of a child assessed by educational and health professionals.

special needs in ordinary primary schools [Gross & Gipps 1987]. The study, however, does not mention any improvement for the remaining 2% of children with special educational needs.

Apart from some positive developments, there were other important issues on which many researchers believe the Act had failed to recognise the nature of the problem. This is discussed below.

In the 1981 Act the terminology used for children with special educational needs was more vague than the previous categories. There are many matters which need clarification, such as defining membership of this group and how selection, screening and testing will be carried out. The issues relating to these aspects were increasingly becoming matters of concern and debate [Barton & Tomlinson 1981]. Lewis and Vulliamy [1981] argue that the definitions and interpretations associated with this term are the products of powerful groups who have the ability to impose them, such as medical professionals. They quoted two recommendations from the White paper [DHSS 1980] which had an impact on the 1981 Act:

“ The Government agrees with the widely held view that it would be wrong to require full disclosure to parents of the professional reports lying behind the record. (para 59)”

“Parents often encounter real difficulties in gaining and understanding information about their children’s special needs and the nature of possible solutions. . . . The government looks to local authorities to consider ways in which parents can gain access. (para 61)” [quoted in Barton & Tomlinson 1981, p. 15]

It is obvious from these two paras that on the one hand professionals can avoid providing full information to the parents about assessment procedure and on the other hand, they can defend themselves by arguing that parents are unable to understand the procedure. It indirectly gives power to the professionals and makes parents powerless.

Visser [1993] mentions that even after the Warnock Report the education received by children with special educational needs was not universal. Reports like [Harland *et al.* 1988; DES 1989; Montgomery 1990], indicate these children, in both special and mainstream schools, received a curriculum which lacked breadth and balance and was seldom delivered in a differentiated and relevant manner. Another project, Policy and Provisions for Special Education Needs, carried out in 1983-1986 [Evans *et al.* 1989], illustrates the following implications:

- Professionals concerned with writing advice for statements still tended to concentrate on the child's difficulties, rather than considering the child's strengths and weaknesses and his or her relationship to the environment, at home and at school. In this regard the criteria for issuing a statement are not whether a child's needs can be met within the available resources, but rather whether the child's needs fall within one of the categories specified by the LEA for which provisions is made available through the issue of a statement.
- The assessment appears to be seen as a bureaucratic process within the education department. The process of statementing varied in its efficiency and sensitivity between authorities. Lack of coordination among the professionals involved is an obvious factor.
- In some LEAs integration was not being considered as the first option for the statemented child. If parents insisted on a mainstream placement, inadequate resources provided by the LEA made it unsuccessful. In the statementing process, the right of children and parents were undermined, to an extent. Though parents had a right of appeal, it appears from research that those working in local authorities try to avoid appeals whenever possible, since this is a very time-consuming and stressful process.
- There was very little joint planning between education, health and social services for the implementation of the 1981 Act. Social workers had no clear idea of their role within the procedure, nor the type of advice which the LEA considered relevant.
- Parents felt that LEA officers had often not been frank with them about the limitations of provision, and had instead attempted to manipulate parents into accepting provision for their children which they thought was unsuitable. Parents were not unduly worried about the formality or the bureaucracy of the procedure. Parents were inhibited by their lack of knowledge and support; officers and professionals by their lack of time and resources.

In another study about the provisions and staffing conditions in special schools [Evans & Ware 1987], the authors argue that the 1981 Act has had little effect on the education of profoundly retarded and children with multiple handicaps. Rather there is a risk that the only effect will be a negative one. Gross and Gipps [1987] pointed out that the direct impact of the Act had been the increase in administration, mainly in the production of statements, and the increase of educational psychologists to cope with the demands of the Act for assessment and statementing. In parallel the lack of resources made it difficult to offer the provisions mentioned

in the 1981 Act [Evans *et al.* 1989; Allen 1995]. The finding from the research programmes mentioned above indicated the need of further development in order to improve provision for the education of special needs children.

2.2.3 Education Reform Act 1988

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) is the next development regarding the education of special needs children. The Act stresses the promotion of social, cultural, and moral values of the pupils. One of its key sections quoted in Leonard [1988, p. 3] is given below:

"It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State, of every LEA, and every governing body or head teacher of a maintained school, to exercise their functions (including, in particular, the functions conferred on them with respect to religious education, religious worship and National Curriculum) with a view to securing that the curriculum satisfies these requirements: that it should be a balanced and broadly based curriculum, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

The 1988 Act (ERA) impinged greatly upon special educational needs. Starting from a universal entitlement curriculum it went on to lay down a broad and balanced curriculum. The Act introduced for the first time a curriculum to which all pupils are entitled. This shifted the emphasis from defining special education in terms of needing a 'special or modified curriculum' towards further examination of the problems incurred by pupils in accessing the curriculum. Access here means more than the provision of special equipment, facilities or resources, or modification of the physical environment; it includes the teaching methods that the teacher uses [Visser 1993, p. 3]. The 1988 Act provides guidelines for making any necessary changes in the curriculum to meet the needs of any statemented child. (For detail see Leonard [1988, pp. 10-12].

The 1988 Act (ERA) also provides a comprehensive programme of financial delegation, local management of schools (LMS) (needs-based formula-funding and the delegation of financial and managerial responsibility to governing bodies) which goes far beyond just financial matters. The 1988 Act defines three terms: *the LEA's general budget*: the amount appropriate for meeting all expenditure of the Authority's schools for the particular financial year; *the*

aggregated school budget: the part of the schools budget which related to expenditure within the delegation scheme; *the school budget share*: the aggregated budget, which is what remains of the general schools budget when all of the excepted items have been deducted, must be divided into the schools' budget shares [Leonard 1988, p. 60]. Under the Act, the LEA has to provide the governing body of every school with an itemised statement of the school expenditure for that year. The LEA is required to allocate to all schools their share of the aggregate schools budget on the basis of a formula. According to this formula at least 75% of the aggregate budget is to be allocated on the basis of age-weighted pupil numbers and up to 25% of aggregate schools budget is to be allocated on the basis of other factors such as variations in salary, premises cost, etc [Lunt 1990].

The 1988 Act (ERA) strengthens the parents' powers in two ways: (i) Parents have greater influence over the admission of their children; (ii) Parents can influence the policies of the governing body, through their appointment of parent governors. It greatly increased their power because of the more extensive powers of the governing body under the LMS. Parents can choose their child's school. The funding received by the school depends primarily upon the number of pupils on its roll which means that the allocation of resources will be based on the choice of parents, rather than the choice of administrators [Leonard 1988; Allen 1995].

The 1988 Act (ERA) concerns the development of the cultural identity of individuals and of society as a whole. Under the Act schools have a free hand to set up their procedures for ensuring equal opportunity [Verma 1993, pp. 8-9]. Though social, cultural and moral development is seen by the 1988 Act as being essential both for each individual pupil and for society as a whole, Verma and Pumfrey [1993] are concerned that the national Curriculum denies the values of other cultures. The implication of the 1988 Act is discussed in the following paragraphs.

An immediate concern about the 1988 Act (ERA) is related to the entitlement curriculum. Though a scheme is given in the Act to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of children with special needs, the manner in which it is explained is not very clear. Devising entitlement curriculum for a child with special needs will depend on how the professionals interpret the specific needs of the child and how the statement of the child is drafted. The work of drafting individual statements and carrying out the consultation process is a complex and time consuming task [Leonard 1988]. Leonard [1988, p. 39] states that:

"For many of those in the education service who are concerned with the special needs pupil, the provisions of the 1981 Act were a major step forward, restricted only by very small additional resources made available to bring them into effect. It is difficult to see the introduction of the national curriculum, as it affects special needs pupils, in the same light, and much more likely that it will prove to be a step backwards."

Evans *et al.* [1989, p. 38] show their concerns that the Act would allow local authorities to continue to segregate pupils, as it is dependent upon the local authorities' willingness to take account of parents wishes, and to make extra resources available in mainstream schools to enable pupils to succeed.

On the issue of cultural diversity and equal opportunity, Verma and Pumfrey [1993] comment that the 1988 Act was a missed opportunity to develop a National Curriculum for schools that would have recognised cultural differences. They suggest that:

"It could have made a more positive contribution to the development of diversity within a framework of national unity than appears to be the case. Regrettably it was an opportunity that was missed. Many commentators believe that the national Curriculum denies the values of other cultures." [Verma and Pumfrey 1993, p. 6]

They further mention that:

"Initial indicators show that equal opportunity policy are unlikely to be on the primary agenda of many schools, in part because of the financial constraints. The consequences of this failure are twofold. First, and currently, it means that pupils and students of ethnic minority origins are being deprived of opportunities which their indigenous peers take as their natural rights. . . . Second, and perhaps more speculatively, it creates the circumstances in which the traditional fabric of British society is artificially preserved for a little longer at the expense of an avoidable and violent realignment in the future." [Verma and Pumfrey 1993, p. 8]

Pumfrey [1993, p. 23] comments that:

"Acknowledging the importance of the multicultural aspects of the messages embodied in a school curriculum, both the Rampton and Swan reports recommended that teachers should review the books and materials used in schools. This objective

is easily stated, but less readily accomplished by many practising teachers. The changes taking place in education as a consequence of Education Reform Act 1988 are themselves extremely time demanding, and the ongoing and inexorable demands of educating pupils must not be neglected."

The introduction of LMS in the 1988 Act (ERA) is another area which led to controversy. Though it is too early to assess how LMS will affect special schools, views on the likely impact are divided with the National Association of Headteachers in favour and National Union of Teachers expressing strong reservation [Mittler 1993b]. Many authors have shown their deep concern about LMS [Lunt 1990; Williams 1990; Allen 1995].

For example, Mittler [1993b] showed his concerns that due to LMS the right of local education authorities to plan for special needs across the whole authority and to protect the interests of the individual child will be greatly reduced or disappear altogether in the next five years. It is difficult to envisage how the interests of pupils with special educational needs will be protected and how their statutory right to a 'broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum' will be monitored [Mittler 1993b].

Lunt [1990] considered that underpinning the scheme is the government's intention to attach the resources to pupils instead of schools. Allen [1995] argues that this makes the schools a consumer (parents) driven institution where decisions regarding the allocation of resources are based on the choice of consumers, rather than the choice of administrators. This offers an open enrolment which can create many complications.

For example, Allen [1995] points out that each school is required to produce a table of the grades achieved by their pupils to produce a 'league table' of schools; ranking the schools in terms of performance of their pupils. He pointed out that there has been an immense amount of criticism of the tables, because they are 'raw' tables as they do not take into account many aspects such as the school's resources, catchment area, staff-student ratio, the previous achievements of its pupils, and so on. A school may feel that the academic performance of special needs pupils will reflect badly on its ability to produce good results. Thus, in an indirect manner, the system of open enrolment has created a real incentive for schools to decline to accept pupils with special educational needs. Furthermore, it appears that parents generally do not regard special educational provisions as a material factor in selecting a school and therefore there is little incentive to provide adequate provisions for those special needs pupils who are accepted. Allen [1995] further mentions that schools are indirectly encouraged to minimise

the expenditure on integration and prefer exclusion as exclusion provides a cheap method of dealing with pupils who demand more in terms of resources than the LEA is willing to provide. In addition some schools avoid providing information about special needs provisions and create the false impression that they do not offer provision for special needs. As a result, parents of SEN pupils tend to turn to other schools for admission. For these reasons, the 1988 Act is widely seen as putting special needs children at risk [Allen 1995].

Leonard [1988, p. 218] expresses the failure of the 1988 Act in this way:

"In the 1981 Act, imperfect though it was, the pupil with learning difficulties was more highly regarded, and the new Act pushes him back towards the bottom of the pile . . . It is perhaps not unreasonable to judge a society's priority for its education services by the manner in which the services provides for pupils who come into their schools at a disadvantage, and who therefore need special help of one kind or other. By this test, the 1988 Act fails. But maybe the fault lies, not in society itself, but in a government which has paid little regard to what that society really needs in its public education services."

The challenge of the Education Reform Act [1988] forced researchers to rethink the whole basis of parent-professional relationships and special needs education.

2.2.4 The 1989 Child Act and 1993 Education Act

The 1989 Child Act is a further development regarding special education. Further opportunities are provided by this Act, which came into force in October 1991. It mandates joint action to identify and meet the needs of all children who require additional provision by the local authority as a whole, not just the LEA. It also requires children themselves to be consulted about provision [Mittler 1993b].

The Education Act 1993, which builds on and largely replaces previous legislation, is a recent development. A Code of Practice has been issued and came into force on 1 September 1994. The Code recommended that all schools adopt a three stage model when dealing with SEN children [Central Office of Information 1994, p. 7]:

- Stage 1 - Class or subject teachers identify or register a child's need and, consulting the teacher responsible for co-ordinating SEN provision within the school, take initial action and talk to parents.

- Stage 2 - The SEN co-ordinator talks to parents and teachers and draws up an individual education plan setting out targets for the child to achieve.
- Stage 3 - If the child requires more help, the school looks for specialist assistance or advice from outside the school. Teachers and the outside specialist draw up a new individual educational plan for the pupil.

According to the 1993 Act, most children with special educational needs will go to ordinary schools, while those statemented will go to special schools. Parents have the right to express a preference in the selection of their child's school and will always be consulted before the request is made. Parents also have the right to go with their children to any interview or medical test during the assessment. The views of the child about his or her needs may be sought by the LEA. In addition, independent advice is available to parents through a named person who may come from a voluntary organisation or parents' support group or be a professional, friend or relative. Parents are given the opportunity to give their views on the statement before it is finalised [Central Office of Information 1994].

In the 1993 Act, the arrangements for the assessment of educational needs are largely unchanged but the provision for parents to appeal to the Secretary of State if the LEA decides not to make a statement are dropped in favour of a right of appeal to the Tribunal [Association of Metropolitan Authorities 1993, p. 62].

In the 1993 Act, the provisions of previous Acts are continued and, to some extent, strengthened. It also inherits many grey areas from the 1981 and 1988 Acts about which many authors showed their concerns. For example, the report of the Audit Commission/HMI [1992, quoted in Association of Metropolitan Authorities 1993, p. 51] identified a variety of deficiencies in the implementation of the 1981 Act by LEAs and their management of the special educational needs services. The report identified three main causes:

- lack of clarity both about what constitutes special educational needs and about the respective responsibilities of the school and LEA;
- lack of clear accountability by schools and LEAs for the progress made by pupils, and accountability by schools to the LEA for the resources they receive.
- lack of incentives for the LEA to implement the 1981 Act.

The interpretation of terminology used for special education is one main cause of these problems. Allen [1995] argued that the lack of clarity works directly against the parents and the child. The LEA is responsible for determining whether the child does have special educational needs which means that the parents' and the child's statutory right turn on a definition whose meaning lies within the power of the LEA to determine. Allen [1995] further argues that parents' right to express a preference for their child's school should not be translated into a choice of the school; that is, not every parent's choice can be satisfied. The main problem is that those parents whose children are likely to do well, at a minimum cost to the school, are more likely to have their preferences satisfied. In this sense, they have a competitive advantage over parents of special needs pupils in the competition for school places. So, not surprisingly, parents of special needs pupils have often turned to the law to strengthen their competitive position [Allen 1995].

Though the Act made some improvement in the parents' appeal procedure, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities [1993, p. 69] mention that much of the dissatisfaction with special educational needs provision is caused by the difficult decisions occasioned by finite LEA resources. Improved rights of parental appeal will not improve provision, although one effect may be to sharpen the quality of decision making about the allocation of available resources. Allen [1995] considers these new rights as a direct threat to SEN provision and educational provisions in general, because it threatens to consume an increasing proportion of educational resources at all levels. The amount of time and effort taken in contesting a statement can easily exceed the provision which the statement ultimately calls for [Allen 1995].

It is too early to give any final verdict about the 1993 Education Act. It takes time to ascertain whether the new provisions will improve the situation. Apparently, the intentions of providing provision as expressed in the 1993 legislation is only partly realized, particularly regarding minority children. It could be said that similar to the 1988 Act, the 1993 Act also missed the opportunity of providing any clear solution regarding the education of minority special needs children. In the next part of this chapter we will confine our discussion to the problems of ethnic minorities children with special needs.

2.3 Part II: Problems of Ethnic Minorities Special Needs Children

The term 'special needs children' used in previous sections is more vague and unclear than the old categories of 'handicap'. It will be helpful to define the term more precisely within the context of this thesis. For this purpose we can accept a widely accepted definition, given in Kirk [1970], of a special needs child. According to Kirk's description a special needs child is a child:

who deviates from the normal or average child (1) in mental characteristics, (2) in sensory abilities, (3) in neuro-muscular or physical characteristics, (4) in social or emotional behaviour, (5) in communication abilities or (6) in multiple handicaps, to such a degree that it requires modification of school practices, or special education services, in order to develop his maximum capacity. [quoted in Cave & Maddison 1978, p. 11]

This definition represents the 2% group of the Warnock Report who have been provided with a statement of special educational needs [Ramjhun 1995]. This 2% group itself is a minority group within the special needs community representing the Warnock Report's 20% special needs children. Within this 2% group there are other smaller categories of individuals who can be subdivided due to type of learning difficulty, disability, class or race. It is to this last subdivided category, known as minority special needs children, that we now turn. These children face unique problems that require unique educational solutions. Many authors [Bergin 1980; Williams 1984; Mittler 1993a; Hall 1995] realize that the ethnic minority children with special educational needs are doubly disadvantaged because of their different social, cultural and linguistic needs and because of racism. These children are truly operating at an extreme disadvantage [Chinn 1979]. Not only do they have to cope with the common problems faced by the minority children - such as racism [Figueroa 1991; Verma 1993], inadequate educational provision [Tomlinson & Tones 1983], employment inequalities [Boswell & Wigrove 1974] - but they must carry the additional burden of their special needs. Furthermore, disproportionately high numbers of minority children with special needs come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds [Tomlinson 1982]. All these factors contribute to a negative self image and low self esteem [Chinn 1979; Tomlinson 1993].

With the passage of time, the education of minority children has become a sensitive issue in the UK. Among others, the over representation of ethnic minorities in special schools and classes

for 'educationally subnormal children' and lack of provision are commonly cited problems [Tomlinson & Tones 1983]. Bergin [1980] and Mercer [1973] mention that as services for the special needs children grew, an increasingly disproportionate number of children identified as culturally and linguistically different were being categorised as special needs. Not only was there an over-placement of these children in special schools [Coard 1971], there was a corresponding under-placement of minority children in gifted programmes [Mercer 1973; Bergin 1980]. Misplacement, cultural diversity, a communication gap and many other factors constitute serious problems for South Asian special needs children and their families [Rex & Tomlinson 1979; Tomlinson & Tones 1983; Tomlinson 1993; Hall 1995]. These aspects are discussed from Section 3.3.1 to Section 3.3.7.

2.3.1 Home-School Relationship

The relationship between families and their children's schools, and its long-term consequences has been a key issue for everyone with an interest in the educational services [Bastiani 1993]. Brighouse and Tomlinson [1991] and Bastiani [1993] mention that schools in which pupils do well are characterised by good home-school relations. Welsh and Odum [1985] give a good review of the literature related to this issue. The review concludes that parents have the democratic right to be involved and to ensure that the education their child receives is consistent with their own values and goals. They are natural reinforcing agents for their child and their intervention is not only effective for school learning, but for home learning as well. Bastiani [1993], however, argues that due to the differences of parents' and teachers' attitudes and expectations this relationship means different things to different people. It can range from simple forms of co-operation between home and school to joint planning, teaching and evaluation of the curriculum.

Wilton [1975] suggests that clear and open communication between parents and teacher is an essential element for an effective home-school relationship. He, however, mentions one particular problem: that some parents are less open in expressing their perceptions and goals because they accept a submissive role in relation to the teacher. This may be particularly true of ethnic minority parents whose education is perhaps often limited and who have cultural and linguistic differences. For example, Townsend & Brittan [1972] reports that, out of two hundred and thirty multi-racial schools they studied, over half found problems in establishing personal contact with parents. Tomlinson [1993] mentions that among others the racial and

cultural differences could be one potential barrier in the involvement of minority children's parents as genuine partners in the education of their children. One particular problem which she mentions is that the educational professionals still did not regard ethnic minority parents as useful source of information and helpful in their children's education. She further suggests that the teachers, who did not have enough information and training to deal on a professional level with ethnic minority parents, have often clung to negative, stereotyping and patronising views. Rex and Tomlinson [1979], after studying schools in Handsworth Birmingham, reported that the immigrant parents' expectations of schools and the definition of their children as 'problems' by both educational policy-makers and teachers will produce a situation of misunderstanding at best, and direct conflict at worst. The Rampton committee of inquiry into the education of ethnic minority children wrote in its interim report that a 'gulf of mistrust and misunderstanding' appeared to be growing between schools and parents, and parents had lost faith in schools making improvements [Rampton 1981].

In Tower Hamlets, London, a 1985 study of Bangladeshi mothers found that the mothers had positive attitudes towards education, but schools had few strategies for home-school contact and communication. Parents' contacts with schools were on a formal level and there was little informal day-to-day parental involvement. Parents' knowledge of the education system was certainly not sufficient to enable them to exercise their rights and responsibilities. Teachers' views of themselves as professionals, with parents as clients rather than partners, were very much in evidence. Even the schools which attempted to encourage contact did not provide sufficient information about the school's and children's educational goals to parents; especially to ethnic minority parents who were in need of such information [Hutchison & Vaarlem 1985].

Another project in Hertfordshire, in which Bengali families settled in the area were interviewed, concludes that the achievement of their children could be understood in terms of the gap between the educational needs of the community and the provision they were offered. Parents were offered little basic information about schools, there were few strategies to involve parents in schooling and there was a tendency for teachers to 'blame' the community, marginalise and have low expectations of pupils [Murshid 1990]. The South Asian parents' poor knowledge of the education system, of their children's schooling and of their rights under recent legislation are pointed out by many authors [Tomlinson 1993; Munn 1993]. South Asian parents' lack of understanding of English, and illiteracy are two other cited problems which create communication problems, leading to a poor home-school relationship.

● **Communication Problems:**

The south Asian parents' lack of understanding of English is a commonly cited problem. A study carried out in Smethwick about South Asian families with special needs children, conducted by the Invalid Children Aid Association [1987] states that most of the parents interviewed came to the UK as adults or older children, and mothers especially do not have much spoken English. Another survey of South Asian families with special needs children in Sandwell, in the Midlands, conducted by the same Association, revealed that 75 percent of mothers and 50 percent of fathers spoke no English. A national survey carried out by the CRC in 1975 discovered that from the sample of 1117 South Asian 13 to 21 year old young people and 994 parents, 31% of men and as much as 66% of women did not speak English [Taylor & Hegarty 1985].

This lack of understanding of English not only creates a communication gap between professionals and South Asian parents, but inevitably affects the home-school relationship. Many studies carried out on home-school relationships in the South Asian community show that parents of South Asian children were visited the least as compared with children of the 'White' community [Rex & Tomlinson 1979; Townsend & Brittan 1972]. Goodall [1968] and Ghuman [1980] suggest the lack of English is an important factor in this regard. Goodall [1968] argues that due to a lack of fluency in English many parents fear that they may be unable to express themselves adequately and this may inhibit some Pakistani, Bengali and Indian parents from visiting schools. In another study Ghuman [1980] reported that fewer than half of the 40 Punjabi parents he interviewed had visited their children's schools, and only just over a quarter had done so once or more a year. Two teachers from the sample suggested that this was due to a number of factors, including the shyness and lack of English of Punjabi mothers.

Though some schools do provide bilingual services, interpreters are commonly used for communication with South Asian parents who do not understand English. Frequently elder siblings play this role. But it has been noticed that they do not always say what is required, especially when action does not immediately follow. So providing amateur interpreters is not the solution to the communication problem [Abrol 1990]. Snow [1990, p. 69] summarises this issue well by stating that:

"It is clear that parent-teacher contacts are unlikely to occur unless there is a native language teacher available who feels comfortable approaching the families and

with whom the family members feel they can communicate effectively."

The communication problem also caused implications for South Asian parents at the time of initial diagnosis of learning difficulty, which is a time of stress. Many parents did not understand what was being said and were unable to ask questions which could have clarified the diagnosis and prognosis. Later when the child attended a special school, parents were unable to understand the methods being used in order to continue helping the child at home, as the resource material about the national curriculum or class room activities were not available in their native languages. Marion [1980] mentions that communication with parents of culturally diverse children with special needs is likely to be difficult and unsuccessful unless there is understanding and appreciation of their cultural and family values and attitudes towards handicaps. He further emphasises that communication with culturally diverse parents could be improved by the professionals' preparedness to meet the parent's need for belonging, self-esteem, and information that is conveyed in layman's terms. The issue of professionals' lack of South Asian culture's knowledge and training issues are discussed in Section 2.3.7.

● **Proposals for Good Home-School Relationship:**

As discussed earlier clear and open communication between parents and teachers is an essential element for an effective home-school relationship. Many authors - such as Goodson and Hess [1975], Enzer [1975], Hegarty [1993], Bastiani [1993] and Munn [1993] - suggest that parents and teachers must share with each other their knowledge of the child and his or her needs, their perception of the child's development, and their goals and expectations. Hegarty [1993] argues that though the information about a child's learning difficulties will emerge at school through the child's responses to learning tasks, an effective two-way communication between home and school can offer many advantages. For example, it can promote the sense of a shared enterprise, mutual understanding and confidence which is helpful for parents as well as for teachers. The teachers can learn a great deal from parents about the pattern of difficulties which face the child and how children learn outside of school. Parents can also assist in planning the curriculum by developing a more detailed understanding of their children's strengths and weakness; what teaching approaches are likely to be effective with them, and how they are actually responding to various approaches. This may give teachers a broader understanding, and pupils more productive learning experiences in school.

Teachers may also gain parents' assistance in implementing therapy programmes, and help

them to view their children realistically and accept their limitations. They are possibly in a unique position to do this since parents relate more easily to them than to other professionals, and also because teachers are more likely to discuss the child in easy and understandable terms. Hegarty [1993] further argues that the teacher's involvement is professional, lasting for a limited period of time, based on expertise, concerned with many children and exercised within the relatively artificial world of the school. By contrast, the parent's involvement is personal, lifelong, based on common sense and emotional commitment, focused exclusively on that child and deployed in the home and community. The respective role of parents and teachers inhabit very different worlds. Both view the child from different perspectives. Unless there is a deliberate, sustained effort to bridge the two worlds, the likelihood is that the child's education will suffer [Hegarty 1993].

Lillie [1975] and Welsh and Odum [1985] suggest that home visits can provide teachers with valuable insights into the real situation of families, such as insights into how the family copes with their child's special needs and the family resources in supporting the child's schooling. Without gaining insights into these matters it is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to involve parents in their child's schooling or to monitor the effectiveness of the overall school programme. Goodson and Hess [1975, p. 3] suggest that parents' involvement in policy making tends to increase the power of the parents, assuming that "parents who feel powerful may be more likely to feel responsible for their child's development and take an active part in his education". It is also suggested that the parents should have received a good deal of information before they come into contact with the school, for example, information about: the nature of their child's difficulties; the educational implications; local facilities, in particular, the educational provision available for pupils with special needs in the area; the school's curriculum and arrangements for assessment; the schools which have particular expertise or make provision which may be appropriate for their child; the range of possibilities and the part they can play. The parents should also have access to a named individual who can provide information and advice on the available options [Goodson & Hess 1975; Lille 1975; Wolf & Troup 1980; Hegarty 1993].

2.3.2 South Asian Parents and Families' Attitude to Handicap

Attitudes to handicap among South Asian communities are often cited as a difficulty in developing any programmes in special schools for South Asian children. The parents/family

attitude towards children with special needs is quite different in South Asian communities compared with the 'white' community. Jervis [1987, p. 22] pointed out that:

"Fatalism and the lack of medical care and educational opportunities, together with the extended family network as a vehicle of care, do dictate a different attitude to handicap in the sub-continent."

Sandwell [1987] concludes that many South Asian parents do not have enough understanding about handicap which leads to non-realistic planning for future. Some parents consider it a 'spiritual' problem. Some think that their child will be cured automatically as he/she gets older. Some of them believe that God has bestowed a child with special needs on them and it is their own responsibility to care for him or her. Having a child with special needs immediately involves the family in dealing with a number of previously unforeseen problems. To whom do they turn for help? Once help is obtained, a number of professional agencies are engaged, such as medical, educational professions, welfare bodies all of whom employ modes of practice and work related terminology which may be bewildering to parents. All this is in addition to coping with their extended family/cultural attitudes to the situation. It is therefore not surprising to imagine that very few parents tackle these problems with a realistic approach.

2.3.3 Shortage of South Asian Special Needs Professionals

The non-availability of professionals who can communicate with South Asian parents and children in their own language is another issue. There are not enough professionals available who can meet the community needs [Jervis 1987]. Jervis [1987, p. 22] says that:

"Teachers, educational psychologists, and speech therapists are only rarely drawn from the Asian minority communities. This paucity is sometimes said to be due to a lack of interest in the communities themselves - teaching not being accorded a high status as a profession."

Williams [1984] argues the heart of the matter here is not a shortage of training facilities. It is rather a shortage of members of the minority population who are willing to train for a profession and then to seek employment in their own community. In a democratic society it is a challenge to provide adequate inducement to ease this situation.

2.3.4 Parents' Training

Children with special needs provide very little natural reinforcement for parents. Parents often have difficulty relating to their special needs children and their slow progress. At the same time, they need parenting and teaching skills that parents of a normal child would not be expected to have, such as: an understanding of self as an individual and as a parent; an understanding of child development and the means of maturing that development; and clear, open communication with the child and those professionals involved with his or her care [Balter 1976; McDowell 1976; Bloch 1978].

Discussing the education of special needs children, Hegarty [1993] argues that schooling is quite distinct from education. In general 'learning difficulties' are usually construed to mean difficulties in learning at school. The education of special needs children conducted in school is the responsibility of paid professionals, and relies on their expertise. Government-funded, professionally staffed caring systems can offer specialist facilities and expertise which most families cannot provide. They can also advise families on how they can help themselves. Macbeth [1993] argues that this does not mean that parents should 'leave it to the professionals' and 'not interfere'; as the rhetoric system often seems to suggest that they can replace the family. She further argues that these professionals do not and cannot replace the family. The family remains the main unit of care for the child: a source of protection, nourishment, belonging and *education*. Much education goes on outside schools and is the proper domain of parents. Any training for parents to work with their child at home can directly enhance the child's achievements [Macbeth 1993].

There is ample research evidence to demonstrate that home-learning is a powerful factor both before and after schooling [Beveridge 1993]. Bastiani [1993] assumes that home-learning should be an adjunct to schooling and that all is well if parents can understand and support what the school is attempting to do. For this purpose, the parents need to understand the relationship of programmed activities to goals that have been set, and what kind of changes to expect in their child as a result of his or her entering the programme. The professionals need to inform parents about the purposes and objectives of the proposed programme and offer necessary training to achieve these objectives [Lille 1975; Goodson & Hess 1975; Webster 1986; Halstead 1994].

Almas [1991] pointed out some particular problems; firstly, that there is ample material, both written and visual, available for the training of white families and none for the training of South Asian families. Secondly, the material used in the training of South Asian families

is very Eurocentric and is not sensitive to the needs of the families, the result being that the families are not equipped properly to meet the needs of the children from that community. She emphasises the need for such training and the availability of such printed material which could be prepared according to South Asian parents' needs. She suggests that in teaching a child with special needs and, more importantly, in teaching a parent to teach a child with special needs, any "programme" of teaching must be based upon the assets of the particular child and parent. Any step chosen for teaching towards the eventual target must depend on the actual response observed in the child and the parent. Each behavioural analysis must focus on the individual and his needs and not be based upon preconceived programmes of training.

Most South Asian special needs children live in an extended family system. Giving training to the family, particularly the mother, has many advantages. Mother and child are relaxed in their own surroundings and this situation can provide the basis for better results. At the same time other family members can also share the responsibility. Professionals can provide necessary training and information to implement any educational or therapy programme. For example, Topping [1989] reported a number of studies which show the positive effect of *Pair Reading* on special needs children, such as Welsh and Roffe [1985], O'Hara [1986a] and Topping [1986]. Particularly the Welsh and Roffe [1985] study negates the idea that pair reading is not possible for South Asian families where English is a second language. This study shows the positive result of *Pair Reading* in South Asian families.

Macbeth [1993] puts forward some suggestions that school-learning and home-learning are supplemented by transmissions to the child from the wider society both through the media (especially television) and through the local community, including the peer group. She further suggests that the education authorities would have wider responsibilities than the schools. Through enhanced use of the media, parental advisory centres (outside schools), home-learning specialists and other professionals the education authorities could mount a campaign to alert parents to their unavoidable educational impact and provide guidance about home-educating to reinforce the work of the school [Macbeth 1993].

2.3.5 Assessment

Many children of South Asian ethnic backgrounds have special needs, and there are an increasing number in UK special schools. Many authors - such as Coard [1971], Rex and Tomlinson [1979], Tomlinson and Tomes [1983], Jervis [1987] and Hall [1995] - argue that

the assessment and social and educational development of minority special needs children is shrouded by their own language difficulties with English, professionals' lack of knowledge about their native language and culture and the failure of authorities to develop special assessment procedures for South Asian children. The over-representation of ethnic minority students in classes for the mentally retarded has been attributed to the indiscriminate use of psychological tests [Hall 1995] combined with the linguistic and cultural orientation of school programmes [Bozinou-Doukas 1983]. Most schools reflect the middle-class, mono-cultural values of the majority society. Academic potential or 'IQ' is assessed in relation to these norms. The IQ test has thus traditionally legitimised the labelling of many minority students as 'retarded' or 'slow' and their consequent placement in special classes [Laosa 1977; Macdonald 1981; Hall 1995].

Coard [1971] and Hall [1995] argue that the learning difficulties did not lie with the minority children, but rather with the education system which made insufficient allowance for a different cultural background and in particular, used inappropriate testing procedures as criteria for identifying the need for placement in special schools and classes. Hall [1995, p. 7] argues that:

"It is important that the provision made for English as a Second language is not confused with special educational needs remediation. It is a sad reflection of the 1990's that some teachers still equate a lack of English language skills with 'learning problems' and low intelligence."

Jervis [1987] mentioned that the lack of cultural and linguistic understanding of the South Asian special needs children is a big problem in their assessment and social and educational development. Tomlinson [1979] argues that the needs of individual children cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider social context in which they occur. The inter-relationships between children's learning achievements and their social and personal development are complex, but it is generally accepted that pupils learn most effectively when they feel valued and secure, trust their teachers, and both understand and accept the full range of classroom demands [Pollard 1988].

Gulliford [1992] argues that the degree of learning difficulty could be influenced by school factors such as, the recognition of individual needs and the degree of personal support which is given by individual teachers; the appropriate setting, teaching methods and other related

provisions. Therefore, a learning difficulty is to be understood in terms of the interaction of individual pupil's characteristics and need. Research on bilingual learning of special needs children suggests no reason to believe that there is a relationship between bilingualism and learning difficulties. Minority children must be evaluated bilingually when appropriate, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning process. Misdiagnosing difficulty with a child's second language as a learning disability is entirely possible, especially since performance on linguistic rules constitutes a common procedure in assessing verbal skills [Bozinou-Doukas 1983; Bergin 1980]. It is suggested that the tests or sections of tests used for the assessment of learning process of the minority children do not depend on such things as vocabulary, general information, and other similarly unfair verbal questions [Oakland 1977; Chinn 1979; Bozinou-Doukas 1983; Erickson & Walker 1983; Hall 1995]

Some professionals argue that instruments for specific use in assessment in the South Asian community may not be available. As Williams [1984] points out, in the present state of the art, it is difficult enough to assess the abilities and needs of young children with communication, sensory, mental or emotional difficulties when they and their parents speak the same language as the specialists and teachers. It is much more difficult to assess children when they and their parents speak a language and share a culture of which the specialists and teachers are ignorant. This excuse is not a justification. The assessment of minority children should be based on the same conditions, and require the same care, as assessment of any child [Hall 1995]. Hall [1995] stressed that assessment of minority children requires sensitivity. When norm-referenced tests are used the scores gained must be interpreted. They must be appreciated in the light of different traditions, and different cultural experience. He further suggested that these tests should be teacher produced, set in the context of the pupil's own cultural background and, most importantly, lead directly into the curriculum.

Another problem concerns the parents involvement in the assessment process. Research shows that neither in the initial assessment nor subsequently do parents feel that they are 'equal partners' with the professionals [Sandow *et al.* 1987; Vaughan 1989; Beveridge 1993; Bergin 1980; Wolfendale 1993]. Hegarty [1993] suggests that parental involvement in the assessment process should be more active and effective. It is inevitable that tensions and frustrations will result if the parents are unhappy with the outcome, but are powerless to play any part in how these outcomes are arrived at. The challenge to teachers and other professionals concerned is to find ways of involving parents in assessment and enabling them to make a real contribution.

2.3.6 Media of Instruction

The medium of instruction is another area where South Asian children are facing problems. South Asian special needs children in special schools are taught in English. As the mother tongue of many South Asian children is not English, so it creates an impediment in educational development especially if there is also a speech or language disorder present. Jervis [1987] mentioned that many white teachers claim not only that South Asian SLD children cannot cope with bilingualism but also that sign language is the only appropriate form of communication therapy. But the introduction of sign language in a non-white home complicates the issue, since it is based on English [Jervis 1987].

It is evident that learning problems occurred when there was no match between the culture and primary language of the child and that of the school. Abrol [1990] argues that in the case of SLD pupils the teaching of English as a second language just serves to add to their handicapping conditions. In many cases simple exposure to an unfamiliar and different language together with the school culture just bewilders and stunts the pupils' articulation, further confusing their understanding. Abrol [1990, p. 9] gives a practical example:

"a Muslim child at the age of 2-3 years begins to babble with its mother at home. she is trying to encourage the child to say the word 'abba'. The child repeats 'abba', as 'aba', 'aba', 'ba', 'ba' and so on. When the child comes into the school nursery the monolingual teacher through sheer ignorance tries to develop the child's babbling sound as 'ba ba' or 'bye bye' when the word 'abba' means 'dad'."

The importance of bilingual education has been widely recognised [Wiles 1985; Houlton 1986; Hall 1995]. Research shows that bilingual children progress better educationally, socially and in second language acquisition if given a firm grounding in their mother tongue [Pacheco 1983]. Houlton [1986] argues that the use of mother tongue language can be a positive support to all round intellectual/cognitive development and a significant aid to the child's confidence and self esteem [Houlton 1986]. The Bullock Committee Report, *A Language for Life*, suggests that confidence and ability in their first language would help children to acquire the same qualities in their second language, English, and that in any case bilingual pupils should be encouraged to maintain their mother tongue throughout their schooling [DES 1975]. The theory of language acquisition also suggests that the language of instruction should be the language of the home, especially where learning itself is difficult. Working with the family of a child with special

needs in a language which is not that family's first language, is to work with one hand tied behind one's back [Williams 1984]. Collier [1987] argues that learning to read in a language one does not speak well can have long-term negative consequences for academic achievements.

Williams [1984], Tomlinson [1984] and Hall [1995] suggest that the programmes that automatically assume that the language of instruction for a special needs minority child should be English need to be reconsidered. The same principle exists in curriculum planning for the bilingual exceptional child. Some authors express concern that this may not be an easy task when years of tradition, and the professionals' educational background have been rigidly mono-cultural. It requires sensitivity, relevant training, and participation in a new perspective. This also requires that those who develop the curriculum in the field of special education for minority children should take positive initiatives [Williams 1984; Tomlinson 1984; Hall 1995].

Snow [1990] suggests that introducing mother tongue into instructional programmes for ethnic minority children will not automatically solve all educational problems. Bilingual, English as a second language (ESL), or submersion, programmes, if implemented inaccurately or with insufficient resourcing, are of limited educational value. There is a strong need to design the type of educational programmes for South Asian children and their families which fulfil their linguistic and educational needs. The use of native language in children's educational programmes should compliment the major (host) language of instruction thus enhancing their understanding and prospects of achievement. For this purpose there is a strong need to train those educational staff who could understand the needs of South Asian special needs children and work with them effectively.

2.3.7 Lack of Cultural Awareness and Teacher Training Issues

The lack of professionals' South Asian cultural knowledge is mentioned by many authors. Many teachers do not have any professional training and acquire knowledge from the media, which propagates the stereotypical view [Verma and Pumfrey 1993]. Tomlinson [1993] mentions that many ethnic minority parents still find it shocking to realise the extent of racial hostility, cultural ignorance and stereotyped beliefs exhibited by ordinary people - including some teachers. She further says that even in schools where there is more knowledge of the variety of ethnic minority communities - their different socio-economic and housing conditions and their linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds - simple stereotyping still persists, which inhibits open teacher - parent contact consultation. Most teachers in urban schools do not, in any case,

live among their pupils and those in 'white' schools still obtain much of their information about ethnic minorities from the media. Khan [1980] says that ignorance of other cultures and ways of life can lead to 'elaborate structures of myth-making'. Recent research by Brar [1991] has demonstrated that stereotypical ideas of ethnic minority families and communities continue to be held and can prevent genuine contact between homes and schools. He reported that knowledge of the 'black community' by teachers in schools in Handworth, Birmingham, is still largely based on 'common sense knowledge and racist media distortion. [quoted in Tomlinson 1993, p. 33]

Another reason for the continued willingness to stereotype ethnic minority communities could be the white professionals' commitment in education to the assimilationist view, overlaid more recently by nationalist beliefs which attempt to exclude ethnic minorities from being part of a 'British national identity' [Gilroy 1987; Tomlinson 1990]. The argument against a crude notion of assimilation have been well presented by Dench [1986]. He pointed out that, on the one hand, for the sake of achieving equality of opportunity and acceptance into the nation, the ethnic minorities are urged to give up adherence to cultures, languages, customs and values, and regard themselves as 'British'. But at the same time the attitude of the white majority remains hostile to ethnic minorities and denies the entry of ethnic minorities into the idea of the 'nation'. Assimilation is impossible in a society in which the majority culture includes political and cultural beliefs in white superiority and condones racial discrimination, harassment and cultural ignorance [Tomlinson 1993]. It is widely realized that teaching and non-teaching professionals are in need of culturally oriented training which could facilitate them with the required skills to work with bilingual special needs children.

The critical importance of bilingual special education teacher training has been emphasised by several authors [Baca & Miramontes 1985; Baca & Cervantes 1989; Fuchigami 1980; Collier 1993]. In the early years, researchers discussed the need for the bilingual special education "interface" - the use of elements from both bilingual education and special education in the training of bilingual special teachers [Baca & Cervantes 1989]. Collier [1989] pointed out that the interface approach is not sufficient; bilingual special education teacher training requires more than the borrowing of courses from each of the parent disciplines. What is needed is the carefully articulated and planned convergence of these two approaches, to result in a new unique body of knowledge. Several studies have addressed the issue of the competencies necessary for bilingual special education teachers including a desire to work with the culturally

and linguistically different exceptional child, the ability to conduct non-biased assessment and knowledge and sensitivity toward the language and the culture of these children [Baca & Miramontes 1985; McLean 1981; Salend *et al.* 1984; Cooper *et al.* 1991; Solity 1992].

Bergin [1980] argues that there has long been an unacknowledged relationship between bilingualism and special education. Both fields, special education and bilingual education, have specific characteristics of its clients and wish to deliver appropriate services to their populations. What is needed is combined professional expertise in special education and bilingual education in order to provide clinically and educationally sound services in a school setting. Special educators must of necessity understand the particular cultural and linguistic characteristics of special needs minority students; bilingual educators need to comprehend the range and variability of special needs students' characteristics within an ethnic and cultural context.

Mittler [1993a] suggests that the training of staff of multicultural schools should focus on developing characteristics like having high expectation for all pupils, regardless of family or cultural background; intellectually challenging teaching; two-way communication between teacher and pupils; the matching of tasks to pupils; a work-centred environment, the use of praise and parental involvement. Effective schools are those that value and seek to harness the child's family and cultural background and never attribute all a child's difficulties to home background or the lifestyle of the family. A staff-room comment along the lines of 'What do you expect of a child from a home like that?' would be regarded as unacceptable as any racist or sexist remarks [Mittler 1993a].

2.3.8 Curriculum Development

The main goal of teaching SLD children is to provide for them the maximum independence and the greatest degree of integration into society. This can be achieved by an appropriate curriculum.

The Department of Education and Science [DES 1980] defines the curriculum as comprising all the opportunities for learning provided by the school, including a formal programme of lessons in the timetable and other out of school activities deliberately promoted or supported by the school. The curriculum also covers the climate of relationships, attitudes, styles of behaviour and the general quality of life established in the school community as a whole. The DES [1981] made this definition clearer and demonstrated the breadth of the school curriculum by explaining its main objectives:

- to help pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally and to apply themselves to tasks, and physical skills;
- to help pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast changing world;
- to help pupils to use language and numbers effectively;
- to help pupils to understand the world in which they live, and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nation;
- to help pupils to appreciate human achievements and aspirations.

From these definitions it can be seen that the curriculum is much more than subjects, syllabi, and schemes of work; it also encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, cultural values, society norms which are conveyed intentionally or unintentionally in the process of learning such as washing, dressing, eating, inter-human relationship, etc. In other words, a curriculum encompasses pupils' personal characteristics, their cultural, social, and educational needs and an effective method of teaching. In the case of special needs children, these aspects become more important; particularly for minority children who have cultural and linguistic differences from white educational professionals. The Education Reform Act 1988 clearly specified the promotion of the moral, spiritual, cultural and physical development of the pupils at the school and society as the main goal of the education [HMSO 1988, p. 1]

It is commonly observed that in a number of areas the existing curriculum contrasts with the norms and cultural values of South Asian culture which confuses the children. For example South Asian parents encourage their children to eat with their hands and Muslim parents especially ask their children to eat with their right hands whereas in schools teachers teach pupils to eat with a knife and fork [Abrol 1990]. As Taylor and Hegarty [1985] pointed out, in South Asian culture parents teach their children not to look at their elders' or teachers' face when they are talking, whereas in some cases a teacher might feel this behaviour to be rude. It is obvious that teachers strongly need culturally orientated training which would help them to work in multicultural schools.

Mittler [1993a] suggests that schools can make a substantial impact in narrowing the gap between children from different backgrounds. But it is also suggested that the way in which schools are managed and led, and in which the curriculum is planned and delivered in

individual class rooms can have a significant effect on all children, particularly on children from the poorest section of society. The study of Smith and Tomlinson [1989] is one of several which show that some schools are particularly successful in helping children from ethnic minorities to increase their rate of progress, relative to their low initial performance at 11.

2.3.9 Utility of Provision

As Cooley [1979] mentioned in her thesis, the existence of services does not, in itself, ensure that needs have been met. For a variety of reasons, parents may be unable or unwilling to avail themselves of provision. In the South Asian community because of educational, cultural, and religious barriers, and racism many of the parents, particularly women, do not take advantage of existing facilities.

A survey [Ellahi & Hatfield 1992] carried out in High Wycombe showed that two thirds of the South Asian families did not receive any respite care. The following reasons were given. Some did not know that respite care existed or knew so little about it that they would not consider it. Some parents with daughters beyond puberty would not allow them to stay away from home due to fear of mixing with the opposite sex and not carrying out the correct rituals. Other Muslim parents were afraid that the children would be given meat which was not Halal (i.e. where the animal has been killed in the traditional way). Many parents believed that God has bestowed a special needs child on them and it was their sole responsibility to care for him or her. Still more parents were afraid that people in their community would accuse them of not fulfilling their duties, by giving the responsibility of their child to some one else [Ellahi & Hatfield 1992].

The study [Ellahi & Hatfield 1992] also shows that 61% mothers were married to their first cousin and another 20% to a close relative. None of the parents knew before the birth of their special needs child that there was a higher risk of passing on a genetic disorder if families inter-marry. Even after the birth of their special needs child only 28% said that this had been explained to them.

Another problem is that the literature about existing facilities is available in different languages, but as was discussed earlier many parents are illiterate and could not read this material. In these case an audio/visual aid would be useful, but there is no such thing in existence yet [Ellahi & Hatfield 1992].

2.4 Conclusion

The points arising from this review that most need to be underlined for the purpose of this study are as follows:

- improvement in provision for minority ethnic special needs children have been slow;
- home-school relationships are of particular concern;
- parental attitude to handicap, communication problems and a lack of professionals from minority communities are important factors;
- parents' training programmes and printed material for minority parents are much needed;
- the social, cultural and linguistic background of South Asian special needs children must be taken into account during assessment procedures, and in the designing of educational programmes.
- culturally orientated teacher education programmes are much needed;

It also seems clear that there is a shortage of research specifically on South Asian special needs children. This research seeks in a small way to help remedy this, and especially to try and look at the situation from the point of view of such children's families.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research was carried out, July 1993 to April 1996, within a city in the South West of England to investigate: (i) the number and distribution of South Asian special needs children, special provisions and staffing conditions in seven special schools within the city of Crownbridge; (ii) the educational environment and provision for these children in two linked special schools in the city; (iii) the problems of South Asian parents/families due to their special needs children and the extent to which the parents perceive both schools and other provision to be effective for their children and for themselves. Sections 3.3 and 3.3.1 discuss the nature and ethical basis of this research.

A researcher needs to adopt a suitable methodology which allows him/her to explore the issue addressed in a systematic way. As Figueroa [1980, p. 21] says:

"The methodology of the study refers both to the research design, that is, to the overall logic, the general strategy, or the basic plan of the approach, and to the methods used to obtain, process and analyse the information, including the methods of selecting the subjects or phenomena to be studied."

Two points needed special consideration in this study; how to investigate the issues and what research methods should be exploited. Regarding the first point, there were two options for investigation: first, to draw conclusions surveying the entire South Asian community, within the city limits, sending questionnaires to collect statistical information about the utility of the provisions; second, to conduct an in-depth investigation using different educational research techniques selecting a smaller group from the community. The advantage of the first method was that it would provide more general information, though lack of in-depth investigation was a serious drawback. The second option required a very great deal of field work, but its in-depth investigation would allow one to draw a more accurate interpretation of the problem. Hammersley & Atkinson [1989] argue that people's behaviour can only be

understood in context. We cannot understand the social world by studying artificial simulations of it in experiments or interviews. Therefore, 'natural' settings must be investigated. The second option was adopted as it allowed investigation of the issues in a 'natural' setting. An ethnographic approach was therefore used. Similarly, the selection of a suitable research methodology was also heavily influenced by the context of the issues, the approach taken for the investigation, the author's personal attitudes, and feasibility as will be more fully explained below. As Bell [1993, p. 6] mentions:

"The approach adopted and the methods of data collection selected will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of information required."

But Figueroa [1980, p. 21] points out some crucial points which formed the basis of this study's methodology. He says:

"The researcher should take care how his design and methods meet such basic criteria of research methodology as validity, appropriateness, control, adequacy of sample or field (including where appropriate representativeness), reliability, replicability and feasibility."

Such issues will be addressed below. Section 3.4 discusses the research methodology used in this research. Ethnography is the back bone of this project. It is a popular method in educational research [Charles 1995] and focuses on the study of social behaviour within natural settings [Mertens & McLaughlin 1995]. Section 3.4.1 discusses ethnography, its advantages and disadvantages and justifies its selection for this study. This section also discusses the line of action taken and explains the process of establishing natural settings for this study. The case study represents an ethnographic approach to a problem. It involves intensive and detailed study of one individual or a group through various means [Langenbach *et al.* 1994]. It also, provides a means of publicly reporting current research to date [Elliot 1991]. This study revolves around 11 South Asian children with special needs and their families. In a broader sense they can be said to be the case studies of this study as they were investigated intensively. Section 3.4.2 discusses case study approach and its advantages and disadvantages. This section also discusses the research respondents and some of their salient features.

To investigate the issues of concern, the fieldwork was carried out on three fronts; school, parents and children. To collect the required information from the participants, different techniques were used such as; questionnaires, interviews, home visits, formal and informal

meetings, and by making courtesy phone calls. The information acquired from these sources provided the basis of the analysis reported from Chapter 7 onwards. Section 3.5 concerns the methods used in field work. From Section 3.5.1 to Section 3.5.3, their selection is justified and the experiences learned during the field work are explained.

The research reported in this thesis encompasses different ethnic groups having different religions and languages. A study of this nature needs a deep understanding of the social, cultural and religious characteristics of the groups being studied. At the same time a knowledge of the participants' languages is also very important. The next section presents the author's background to show how the researcher's background can enrich and aid the research process.

3.2 Author's Background

The author graduated in Education, completed Masters in English Literature and has experience of teaching in both Pakistan and UK schools. In particular she is a bilingual assistant in one of the special schools which was selected for the investigation. The author's mother tongue is Punjabi and she can speak its different dialects. She has full command of Urdu, can speak Meer Puri and has a little knowledge of Bengali. Culturally and religiously the author belongs to a Punjabi Muslim family. The participants of this research were Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. An important point to mention is that although the groups studied had religious differences, they had some similarities in their social values such as family structure, dress, etc. Hammersley and Atkinson [1989] point out that to get better results from research, cultural understanding is very important. Cultural understanding can not be reached by following standardised procedures; it is a natural process [Hammersley & Atkinson 1989]. Anderson [1993, p. 26] suggests that:

"Research involving people of different countries and cultures requires special care . . . Informed consent is difficult, both because of linguistic barriers and because it is often difficult for people in other cultures to understand the nature of research and its uses."

The author's religious, cultural, and social background helped her in understanding the social, cultural and religious matters, the family structure and related problems of the group studied. Being a member of the researched community, understanding the participants' body language and their allusions was not difficult. At the same time, the author's linguistic skills

helped to overcome the communication problems. This kind of knowledge was also useful in developing a natural understanding between the author and the participants. In addition, there are often unspoken but shared experiences of coming from an ethnic minority in a majority white culture. This served further to strengthen the bonds of empathy and understanding.

It should be understood that developing a good relationship and getting the confidence of the research respondents was not an easy task. The author still remembers the early days of this research, when the respondents were non-cooperative and were reluctant to provide the required information. At that stage, their attitude was very discouraging. Considerable efforts were made to develop good relationships and to assure them the work carried out would be beneficial for the whole community. Once the relationship was developed, it was full of trust and confidence. The respondents then usually told of their personal problems in the security of confidentiality and were eager to air their problems. It could be said many of them were cooperative, however, at times keeping them on track was difficult.

As a bi-lingual assistant in one of the investigated schools, the author was a "floating" member of the staff and was to be in different classes, which had South Asian children in their number. For example, in the morning she might be in class one, after play time at eleven o'clock, in class four, and after dinner time in class nine. This provided a wide range of opportunities to observe and make comparisons about the children's every day life activities, and to see the effect of her presence on their behaviour. It should be noted that the author's job involved her working not only with South Asian children but also with other children of the class. (See Appendix E.1 for a transcribed reading session of group work.) In addition to school duties the author was involved in providing support to the local social services in handling one particular case, which is used as a case study. Working among white people and having some awareness of English literature helped the author to understand white culture which was very useful for this research.

The confidence and the co-operation of the headteacher, the class teachers of the studied children, and the professionals involved - such as nurse, speech therapist, etc. - was essential. This was gained (with some exceptions) by explaining to them the aims, benefits and their role in this study. They were also requested for their cooperation. (See Section 3.4.1 for detailed discussion.) The headteacher of the investigated schools was very cooperative and supportive in providing the necessary opportunities for this research.

3.3 Nature of Reported Research

Research, in general, is a problem-solving activity which addresses a particular problem or tests a hypothesis which may be either retained or discarded. Anderson [Anderson 1993] generalises educational research into four categories: descriptive, explanatory, generalisation and basic or theoretical. Descriptive research has two major branches; historical and contemporary. Historical research attempts to describe what was, whereas contemporary research describes what is happening. Explanatory research asks the question, what is causing this to happen, why does it happen, how does it happen. Generalisation attempts to discover whether similar things will happen in new situations. Basic or theoretical research attempts to discover which underlying principles are at work [Anderson 1993]. The reported research is an intersection of descriptive and explanatory research. On the one hand, it tries to explore what is happening with South Asian special needs children and their parents. On the other hand, it tries to explore the causes of this happening.

The research is carried out using qualitative research methods, as they allowed the collecting of the required information on the issue addressed in detail. The importance of these methods in special needs research has been recognised by many authors [Peck & Furman 1992; Mertens & McLaughlin 1995]. Concerning the importance of these methods in special education, Peck and Furman [1992] argue that these methods allow the researcher to identify the fundamental roles of ideology, organisational dynamics, and the social/political process in shaping policy and practice in special education. Also, such methods allow the checking of the professionals' interventions in special education that are responsive to the cognitive and motivational interpretation of the world held by children, parents, and professionals. At the same time, they lead to insights into the cultural values, institutional practices, and interpersonal interactions that influence special educational practice [Peck & Furman 1992]. Comparing them with quantitative methods, Mertens and McLaughlin [1995] argue that qualitative methods tend to provide more detail about the uniqueness of the students' special needs conditions than quantitative methods.

3.3.1 Ethical basis

The acceptable standards for research on human subjects has evolved and become more formalised over time [Anderson 1993; Charles 1995; Mertens & McLaughlin 1995]. This

section lays down the ethical basis of this research.

- **No Bias opinion:** The accountability of field work is very important in social research [Jonson 1984], [Bell 1993]. Social research usually concerns human behaviour which, being involved in research, could affect the researcher's observation and end-up with him/her giving a biased opinion. A South Asian upbringing gave the author many advantages in appreciating and subtly responding to the research group. It also gave an access to this group in an intimate way which may not be extended to a white researcher. Having said this however, it still remains that the research findings reflect an objective observation of that which was being seen and heard. For example, during home visits, sometimes parents became emotional and touchy when explaining their problems or explaining their child's condition which made it difficult to remain objective. The author, however, always looked on both sides of the problem as a neutral observer and sought to derive conclusions so that any risk of biased opinion could be avoided.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality was the second important element. It provided a strong base to develop the relationship and understanding between the researcher and the respondent. It is a moral duty of the researcher to protect the identity of the individuals and their private life and she assured them of their anonymity. Consequently, all names referred to in this thesis are pseudonyms.
- **Research Permission:** In social research, it is important to get the consent of the participants [Maruyama & Deno 1992]. Before starting the field work written permission was obtained from all major respondents [see Appendix A]. This was doubly beneficial. Firstly, it showed the willingness of their cooperation which boosted the researcher's confidence. Secondly, it prepared them for future field work.

3.4 Research Methods

The adopted research methodology is heavily based on ethnography. For an in-depth investigation of individual characters, the adopted approach was a case study. Detailed discussion about the various aspects of the research methods used in this research is given in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

3.4.1 Ethnography

In many respects ethnography is the most basic form of social research. Not only does it have a very long history [Wax, 1971], but it also bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in every day life [Hammersley & Atkinson 1995]. Hammersley and Atkinson [1995, p. 9] further explain:

"In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research."

Over the last few years, the importance of ethnography has been recognised in many fields such as, education, sociology, anthropology, etc. It comes to education from anthropology, where it originated. Wiersma [1991] explains ethnographic research in education as the process of providing scientific description of educational system, processes, and phenomena within their specific context. Mertens and McLaughlin [1995] define ethnography as a research method designed to describe and analyse practices and beliefs of cultures and communities.

Charles [1995] describes ethnography as a form of descriptive research. It explains behaviour holistically within a social setting of customs, values, and styles of communication. Data sources are public, objects, environments, and communication patterns inherent in the context under study. It is non-experimental and largely qualitative. It is heavily dependent on the investigator's perceptions and skill in making observation and interpretations. A major appeal of ethnographic research is that it can construct a richly detailed picture of human life, a picture that is interesting, informative, and potentially filled with implications [Charles 1995].

Hammersley and Atkinson [1995], however, mentioned that due to the subjective nature of data and results some times ethnography is found not to be suitable for social science, as it cannot provide a solid foundation for scientific analysis such as, definite rules, formulae, etc. Wilson [1984] refers to two well cited problems related to ethnography. The first is typicality, that is, if observation is being made of only one group, how do we know that such a group is typical of the many such groups in a modern, complex society? The second, as mentioned by many authors [Wilson 1984; Wiersma 1991; Charles 1995], is reliability of the observer's analysis. Wilson [1984] argues that the field notes of a researcher refer only to a small part of a day's activities and information gained which totally depends on the researcher's personal

behaviour or attitude. It also depends on him/her to select which action is important and which is not important. He further argues that the concept of reliability in science requires that another observer, using the same methods on the same group would obtain the same results, whereas, ethnography provides elastic and flexible rules or procedures which can't be written down or followed up exactly by another observer. Therefore the replication of an ethnographic study in order to check the author's findings is not easy [Wilson 1984].

Though ethnography faces the above mentioned criticism, its main strength lies in its richness of description. It allows the researcher to study the social lives of the participants in their natural state and to portray a rich picture of the issue investigated using the data obtained in an extended period of time. As far as the issues of typicality and reliability are concerned, it is obvious that every observer is unique in his/her own behaviour which certainly affects his/her choice of recording data and interpreting his/her findings. In real life for the investigation of social issues like the one investigated in this thesis, we cannot avoid relying on the researchers personal observation, nor can we avoid his/her interpretation of the events. Though it would raise the criticism of technical validity, adopting a systematic way of inquiry, comparing data obtained in different context, and reporting the chain of incidents during the research period could help in establishing the internal validity of the study.

According to the nature of the problem addressed, ethnography was an appropriate method. As a method it was being used for the detailed investigation of the selected group of individuals in their natural settings with regard as to how their behaviour depends on their social interaction within white society. To check the validity and reliability, multiple sources for gathering information - such as, interviews, questionnaire, observation - were used and eleven cases were investigated so that findings could be compared with each other. Also, the findings were compared with other similar studies carried out previously.

Though ethnography offered a natural style of investigation for this research, it was a very laborious and time-consuming method. For example, it involved getting the acceptance and confidence of the participants, keeping the author's role "normal" beside that of being a researcher, establishing a natural environment for investigation and avoiding the chances of any biased results. During the whole period of research, the primary intention was to maintain a natural environment for the field work. Except in the early days of the research, during which the author tried to get the confidence of the respondents, the goal was achieved successfully. There were many factors involved in this success such as the nature of the author's job, personal

behaviour, cultural background and linguistic skills (mentioned in Section 3.2 and 3.4.1).

During the research period the author was almost entirely taken up as a researcher and tried to observe things keenly in school, during formal, and informal meetings with research respondents. Often required information was obtained through these observations rather than formal interviews, or questionnaires.

● **Line of Action:**

The issues addressed in this thesis, mentioned in Section 1.2, were directly related to the South Asian children with special needs. These children were not those who could be interviewed or asked to fill in a questionnaire. On the contrary, due to their special needs, they were unable to explain themselves fully [Nevertheless, the conversation method for acquiring information from children, where it was possible, was used]. The issue was how to check that these children were fully satisfied with the provisions.

One source of this information was their parents who could be consulted - through questionnaires or interviews - to gain the required information as to whether provisions such as the school's atmosphere, home-school relationship, professional attitude, etc. were satisfactory. However this would illustrate the parental point of view. No doubt parents are the true advocates of their children, but children with special needs do have their own identity, their own feelings, personal likes and dislikes. These points should not be ignored by discounting them because they are with special needs. In a civilised society, they have equal rights. Thus, the opening statement of the first paragraph of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, as quoted in [Stratford, 1991, p. 10], states that:

“The mentally retarded person has, to the maximum degrees of feasibility, the same rights as other human beings”.

If acquiring information required directly from these children is so important, then the question is how to do this?

The author's job description provided a good opportunity to be actively involved with the children, and to make continuous observations about their behavioural and educational achievements. But, for deriving some concrete results, it was important to have an alternative setting, parallel to the existing one, so that a comparison could be made. For example, if the alternative setting has good effects on children's educational achievement, personal behaviour, or social interaction then it could be inferred that the existing facilities were not fulfilling

the children's requirements. To check the validity of this theory a suitable setting, having distinctive features from the existing one, was required to be established which allowed the researcher to do practical work, in a real world, with these children. For this purpose, a novel setting within the school environment was established. In this new setting, using mother tongue as a base, the effect of bilingual instruction and the author's presence on the children's behavioural improvement and academic achievements were studied. In this regard different research techniques, proposed in literature such as, concurrent translation [Lessow-Hurley 1990] and counselling-learning [Curran 1982] techniques, according to the requirement of the child were used. (See Appendix E.2 for a transcribed reading session with a South Asian SLD girl).

In concurrent translation, two languages are interchangeably used for instruction. One common criticism [Lessow-Hurley 1990] about this technique is that teachers often overestimated the amount of time spent using the children's primary language, and in fact, spend a dis-appropriate amount of time speaking English. The advantage of this approach is that it allows the increase of conceptual reinforcement; it ensures that the child has understood what is being explained. At the same time it increases the vocabulary of the child on a particular subject in both languages. The counselling-learning technique developed by Curran [1982] assumes that there are parallels between a counselling situation and an instructional situation. The role of the teacher or counsellor is to empathize with the student - who may be threatened, insecure or may experience conflict and frustration - and to provide the student with skills that eliminate frustration [Lessow-Hurley 1990]. Though both techniques have their advantages and disadvantages, they depend on the environment and implementation. Both techniques were found very effective for the researched children.

For implementing new ideas, the parents' cooperation was very important. It was also expected that the professionals would not put up any hurdles. Therefore, the nature of the work and their required cooperation was explained to the parents and professionals. Consequently, both goals were achieved successfully. Their cooperation made it possible to conduct this research effectively. (See Section 3.4.1 for relationship development).

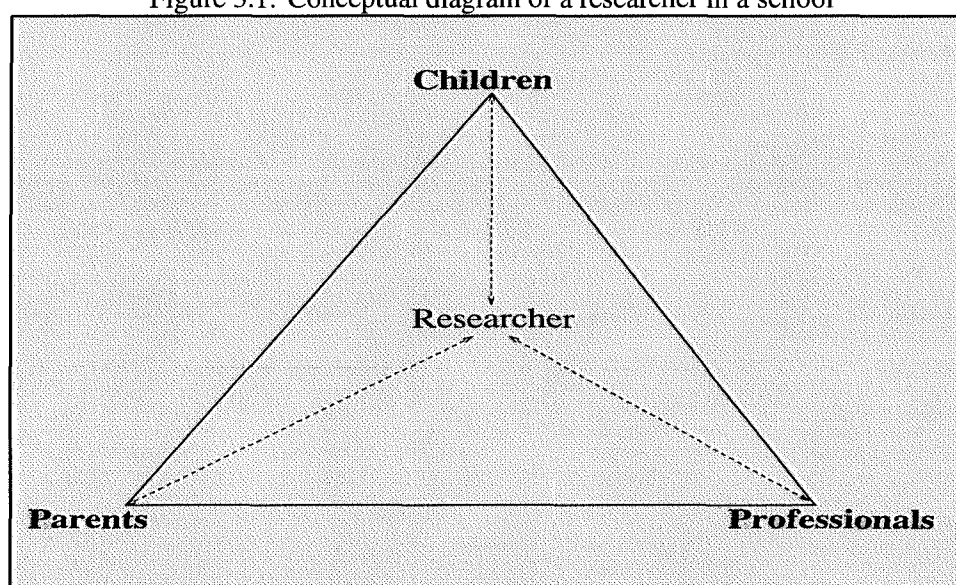
Apart from school duties, a lot of research work was done in the school setting, such as: making critical observations about the children when applying different research techniques, including bilingual instruction and behavioural motivation to see the effects on children's behaviour and their achievements; making critical observation of the staff members' attitude

towards these children; note taking, etc. Such activities were a further responsibility to the author in addition to school regular duties. After finishing school, sometimes the author remained at school to take interviews with staff members or visit a parent. Making notes, transcribing interviews, making courtesy phone calls and studying relevant literature have been the daily routines of the author over the last three years. Being a wife, mother of two children, full time employee and part time researcher, managing all this was very difficult and tiring.

● **Establishing Natural Setting:**

The influence and the role which the author developed was based on the school environment.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual diagram of a researcher in a school



The school is an organisation which is like a triangle which has children on one apex, professionals on the second and parents on the third; as shown in Figure 3.1. To implement the new ideas, within the new setting mentioned in the previous section, the nature of relationship with all three was very important. A good respondent-researcher relationship can provide a strong basis of a natural setting which is a basic requirement of any ethnographic research. It also allows one to carry out the task effectively. This section explains the process of establishing the required relationship with these three members of the triangle.

The first member of this triangle is the children. Building a good relationship with the children being studied was the easiest part of this research. The author's linguistic skills and South Asian phenotype played an important role. The children's attitude was quite different with the author, than with white staff members. For example, one child usually cried a lot.

But when the author started working with the child he quickly stopped crying. Another child, who becomes emotionally aggressive, behaved better with the author than with the white staff members. Sometimes it happened that he tried to hit the white staff member but would sit quietly with the author. It was clear that in their own way, these children were demonstrating a preference or affection for the author, which was closely related to the fact that the author was physically and culturally similar to them. In most cases, the author was able to engage them in the language of their home. (See Chapter 6 for detailed discussion.)

The second member of the triangle is the professionals. To manage the role as a researcher and colleague was at times problematic. Many difficulties were faced in building a good relationship with staff members. In the early days of this work, when other staff were not fully aware of the research, most of them were cooperative. But with the passage of time and as they became more aware, some of them became non-cooperative and quite formal. With the passage of time they stopped making remarks about South Asian pupils and their families during tea or lunch breaks, in the author's presence.

The attitude of the other members of staff toward the author as a colleague was mainly good. However, there were some exceptions. Many of these attitudes seemed fixed from the very first day of the author's job. During this whole period the author tried her best to facilitate good relations, but in some cases patently failed. At the same time, the author noticed that any suggestion or new idea she put forward to see the effect on the child's achievement was taken by some teachers as a personal affront to their competence and was always indirectly discouraged. Sometimes, it was noticed that some of these teachers behaved in a way which showed that they considered that their knowledge of handling children with severe learning difficulties was the best.

It is important to mention that involving professionals such as the teachers and social worker in the research process was a positive step, for example, explaining future plans and their role in it; discussing observations made on various aspects; asking them to make observations when the author was working with these children and so on. It gave a twofold advantage. On the one hand, it provided a basis for a good relationship and on the other hand, it allowed one to check the validity of the obtained data.

The third member of the triangle is the parents. The author was the first bilingual assistant appointed in the investigated school. Having the opportunity to meet with parents, attempts were made to build a good home-school relationship which was appreciated by parents and

school staff, for example, making occasional home visits which later became part of this work, explaining to the parents the child's progress in school and discussing different aspects to improve the child's achievements (see Chapter 6 for detailed discussion).

With the change of the author's role from a bilingual assistant to a researcher, a shift was found in parents' behaviour. They started treating the author just as a researcher and became very formal in giving answers to the questions asked. The good relationship, however, was re-established later by making informal home visits, making courtesy phone calls, and helping them to solve their domestic problems. It should be noticed that home visits were not only made just for the sake of interviews but also to strengthen the relationship with the families so that a natural environment for this research could be established. The adopted style was no doubt time consuming, lengthy and laborious but, for the development of a natural setting it was essential. Having the social and cultural knowledge of the researched group made this practice worthwhile. After gaining their confidence and developing a good relationship, the situation was quite different. They invited the author to their ceremonies, tea afternoons, dinners. The author always participated warmly. At the same time they were invited at dinners or tea afternoons at authors home which they accepted warmly. Much useful information was obtained during these informal meetings.

It was stated earlier that parents, professionals and children are the apex of the school triangle. In this triangle the author was on two positions as shown in Figure 3.1, being a bilingual assistant among the professionals and being a researcher in the centre of this triangle. Both positions offered many advantages. Firstly, being an employee, travel to school was a routine matter and no special allowances were being made. The subjects within the school were easily reached. Secondly, as an insider, the author had an intimate knowledge of the micro-politics of the school and knew how to approach individuals and how to converse with them. Access to most of them was not difficult. Thirdly, due to the nature of the job parents were familiar with the researcher which helped to gain their confidence and to build a good home-school relationship. Fourthly, children were accessible on a regular basis. Lastly, observation about children, professionals, and parents could be made on a regular basis.

3.4.2 Case Study

The major research respondents of this study were SLD children. Each SLD child is individual in his/her own way. For example, each child has an individualised educational plan and

individual family service plan designed to meet his/her needs. It was important to find a method which allowed the researcher, on the one hand, to carry out the work under the umbrella of ethnography, on the other hand, to do in-depth investigation on an individual basis.

Langenbach *et al.* [1994] describe case study as an ethnographic approach that involves intensive and detailed study of individuals. Elliot [1991] states that case studies are a way of publicly reporting recent research to date. Anderson [1993] argues that education is a process and there is a need for research methods which themselves are process-oriented, flexible and adaptable to change in circumstances and to an evolving context. For such situations, the case study method is often appropriate. It allows one to build a research environment which suits to investigate a particular aspect of the problem in-depth within a limited period of time. Nisbet and Watt [1984] argue that the case study method gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be investigated in-depth within a limited time scale, and is suitable for an individual researcher. Nisbet and Watt [1984, p. 73] further argue:

"The case study looks at a single instance, and aims to identify the unique features of interaction within the instance. Its strengths are that the results are more easily understandable by a wide readership beyond the professional research circle: they are immediately intelligible (if the report is well written) and have a three dimensional reality, like a good documentary. Also the case study provides suggestions for intelligent interpretation of other similar cases. A particular benefit is the possibility of a case study identifying a pattern of influences that is too infrequent to be discernible by the more traditional statistical analyses."

Because of the emphasis on the individual, the case study approach has played a very important role in special education research [Mertens & McLaughlin 1995]. The importance of case study approach in special education has been recognised by many authors [Koppenhaver & Yoder 1992; Ferguson 1992; Mertens & McLaughlin 1995].

Many authors, however, mentioned that to conduct a good case study a researcher should have deep understanding of the relevant literature, be a good question asker, listener and observer, be adaptable, flexible and have an enquiring and unbiased mind [Yin 1989; Nesbet & Watt 1984]. These characteristics are directly related to the researcher's personal attitudes and skills. During the study period, the author constantly sought to keep this in mind and to fulfil such requirements.

Although, the personal attitude of the researcher is important, the context also plays a vital role in any social research [Maruyama & Deno, S. 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995]. It provides a key to understanding and conducting a social research. It is not only important for a researcher but also for a reader. It should not be ignored, because each context is unique. For example a case study carried out on a seven year old child with Moderate Learning Difficulties would require different research strategies and would produce different findings compared to a case study carried out on a seven year old child with Severe Learning Difficulties.

Due to the nature of the addressed problem the case study approach was an appropriate selection for the study. Relevancy with the issue, potential for investigation, accessibility and quantity were the most considered points on selecting cases for investigation.

One point which many critics of the case study method raised, similar with ethnography, is that it lacks reliability and that another researcher might come to different conclusion in the same case [Nesbet & Watt 1984]. To meet these objections, the process of *triangulation* [Nesbet & Watt 1984] was used. The basic principle underlying the idea of triangulation, as mentioned in [Nesbet & Watt 1984; Elliot 1991], is that of collecting observation/accounts of a situation (or some aspects of it) from a variety of angles or perspectives and then comparing and contrasting them.

● **Research Respondents:**

To select the research respondents for this research, one option was to select a small number of children from the community with similar special needs and religious background. The limitation of this option was that there was very little chance to find such a group: a homogeneous South Asian group with similar special needs. Some children were available, but were studying in different schools; thus conducting research on them was difficult for the author. Furthermore, the respondents of this research were SLD children who were unable to explain themselves fully; particularly those who had mental and speech disorders. These children could only be investigated through observation. Such observations could not be made on just two or three visits. It required a full time association with them and their teachers, parents, carers, etc. Being a full time worker, it was difficult for the author to make allowances to go to other schools and to spend time with children there, and therefore this option was dropped.

The second option was to study the South Asian SLD children enrolled in the school where the author was working, irrespective of specific special needs, age limit and ethnic origin. This

option was adopted because the school had a sufficient number of South Asian SLD children for this research, and therefore was the most satisfactory and practical option to adopt. It is important to mention that the author's school has a linked school based on a separate location for 16-19 year old SLD children, but managed by the same Head and the same governing body. This study considered this school as a separate school. The author was based at the main school (*School1*), but, often visited the second school (*School2*). (Detailed introduction of both schools are given in Chapter 5). In the rest of this thesis we will consider these as two separate schools.

Due to the selection of the second option the group of research respondents encompassed the South Asian SLD children enrolled in these two schools, their parents and families, and involved teaching and non-teaching professionals. Some salient features of the main respondents, the children and their families, are given in the next section (detailed account is given in Chapter 7). It is important to mention that in addition to this respondent group, the headteachers of five other special schools, where South Asian special needs children were studying, were also interviewed.

● **Salient Features of Main Research Respondents:**

The main respondents of this study were 11 South Asian SLD children; five boys, and six girls. Eight of them were studying in *School1* and three in *School2*. These children were aged 3 to 11 and 16 to 19 years old, having different special needs and belonging to different religions and ethnic backgrounds. Financially, the parents of these children ranged from those existing on social benefits to middle/business classes (see Table 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). Some salient features of these children are given below:

- Some children had similarities in religion, for example 5 were Muslim and 3 were Sikh.
- Some children had similarities in social background, for example parents of 6 children were from working class, 2 from business class and 3 on social benefits.
- Some children had similarities in special needs, for example 4 children were suffering with microcephaly and additional special needs and 4 children were suffering with Down's syndrome and additional special needs (see Chapter 7).
- Children covered a wider age range which allowed one to investigate the problem of parents having children of different age groups.

Table 3.1: Parents' ethnic grouping

Religion	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	Total
Muslim	2	3	0	5
Hindu	-	-	1	1
Sikh	-	-	3	3
Not decided	-	-	2	2
Total	2	3	6	11

Table 3.2: Family structure

Extended	nucleus	Adopted	Fostered	Care Unit
2	6	1	1	1

Table 3.3: Family financial condition

Social benefit	Business class	Working class	Total
3	2	6	11

Table 3.4: Children's age group

Age	3 -5+	6 -10+	11 -16+	16 - 19	Total
Boys	2	3	0	1	6
Girls	0	2	0	3	5
Total	2	5	0	4	11

-
- Children covered both sexes so that some attention could be given to issues related to gender. (The South Asian Community has different religious and social values for both sexes.)
 - Though some children had some kind of similarity in their special needs, each individual child was suffering with different kinds of additional difficulties, (see Chapter 7), thus allowing the implementation of new ideas to improve their achievements and also the investigation of the problem of parents having children with different difficulties.
 - The children came from a cross-section of the full South Asian community thus allowing

the problems of the community to be explored in a wider sense.

These characteristics provided an opportunity to carry out the study with awareness of the different facets which this kind of cultural investigation includes e.g bilingualism, racism, communication, home-school relationship, assessment, parents' attitude, etc. As the children were at the same schools where the author was working, it was possible to investigate the problem of the white staff related to South Asian SLD children and their parents. At the same time, it was also possible to investigate the school's environment for special needs children, particularly for South Asian but more generally for the whole community. This study covers all of these aspects.

From this brief introduction it can be seen that on the one hand all children (cases) were similar, as they belonged to the same community and were studying in the same two linked schools. At the same time, formal interviews with different parents and professionals were conducted using two sets of standard questions - one set for parents and one set for professionals. On the other hand each case was different according to the special needs, age, religion, or family background of the child.

All case studies were carried out in a systematic manner. However, the level of investigation was different in different cases depending on the nature of the child's special needs, family circumstances and other related matters. Three cases in particular were investigated very deeply compared to the others, as they had very complex problems. (See Chapter 7 for detailed discussion.)

3.5 Fieldwork Tools

To gather the required data for this study, three main tools were used; questionnaires, interviews and observations. The detailed discussion about the utilisation of these tools is given in the following sections.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

In social research, questionnaires are commonly used for collecting information. They are cheap to administer, can be sent to a large number of subjects and, provided they are well designed, are relatively easy to analyse [Youngman 1984; Munn & Drever 1991; Youngman 1978]. The importance of piloting has been mentioned in the literature [Walker 1985; Charles

1995]. The main aim of piloting, as Youngman [1984] mentions, is to evaluate the instruction, the questions, and the response system. Piloting allows the researcher to debug the questionnaire and to estimate the response rate.

Due to the nature of the study, very limited number of questionnaires were used. These questionnaires (see Appendix B) were given to all the staff members of both specifically investigated schools and were sent to headteachers of other special schools of the city. The purpose of giving the questionnaire to teachers and assistants was to get information of their knowledge about South Asian culture and to know their experience of South Asian children and their parents. The main purposes of the headteachers' questionnaire was to ascertain the number of South Asian special needs children, their type of special needs, and the provision in their schools for these children. A pilot questionnaire was given to two teachers and three assistants. These questionnaire were the mixture of YES/No and descriptive type of questions. However, due to the nature and the structure of the headteachers' questionnaire, which was very simple and factual, the pilot was not sent off.

Initially - to collect the statistical information about the number of South Asian special needs children, their type of difficulties, and the special provision within the schools for the South Asian children - the headteachers of 109 schools within the city limits of Crownbridge were approached through a questionnaire.

The city has 109 schools in all including mainstream primary, secondary and special schools. Of these 109 schools, 87 (80%) were mainstream - some of them had special units for children having one particular type of learning difficulty - whereas 22 (20%) were special schools. The breakdown of these 22 special schools is as follow: 4 SLD special schools, 1 PD special school, 2 EBD special schools, 5 MLD special schools, 2 hearing, 4 MLD units in mainstream schools and 4 under specialist provision. The breakdown of schools is given in Table 3.5 and Table 3.6; based on the list of the schools provided by the LEA. Each school was sent the questionnaire, along with a letter explaining the research and the importance of the information that was required. This letter also assured them about confidentiality (see Appendix B.1). After allowing the selected time of three weeks for replies, a reminder was sent to the headteachers who had not replied, and subsequently this was followed up with phone calls if necessary. Letters of thanks were also sent to those who replied. In the assistants-teachers case, respondents were contacted personally.

Unfortunately the response rate to the questionnaires was not very good. The headteachers

Table 3.5: Break down of all schools by type in the city limits

Total no. of schools	Mainstream	Percentage	Special	Percentage
109	87	80%	22	20%

Table 3.6: Break down of 22 special schools by their type

SLD Schools	MLD Schools	PD School	EBD Schools	Mainstream Units	Special Provision	Total
4	5	1	2	6	4	22

responded in varying ways, from very cooperative to non-cooperative. For example one headteacher replied:

"As requested I am happy to write and advise you of the information requested regarding children from the Asian ethnic minorities in this school."

By contrast, another headteacher responded:

"The research you are undertaking sounds a most interesting and worthwhile topic. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to forward the details you asked for."

Table 3.7 and Table 3.8 shows the headteachers' response rate. Initially only 33/109 Heads responded. This rose to a response rate of 79% after more than one follow-up. However, of the 109 schools only 10% provided full information which made it difficult to compile the data about South Asian special needs children from all schools within the city limits.

In this research, questionnaires were not found to be very effective. The unclear nature of the supplied information was the main cause. Consequently, interviews were preferred.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews are a common method used in social research for gathering information on a particular issue [Bell 1993]. Interviews rely on the fact that people are able to offer accounts of their behaviour, practice and action to those who ask them question. The interview provides an opportunity for dialogue and for the interviewee to challenge or question the interviewer's questions [Walker 1985]. Elliot [1991] argues that interviewing is a good way of finding out what the situation looks like from other points of view.

Table 3.7: Headteachers' questionnaire response rate

Sent	Replied	1st Follow-up	2nd follow-up	Total	Percentage
109	33	3	50	86	79%

Table 3.8: Headteachers' questionnaire no-response rate

Sent	Fail to reply	Refuse	Total	Percentage
109	20	3	23	21%

Discussing the advantages of interviews Bell [1993, p. 91] comments:

"A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skillful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do. The way in which the response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression and hesitation) can provide information that a written response would conceal. Questionnaire responses have to be taken at face value, but the response in an interview can be developed and clarified."

Interviews can be of various types. Hitchcock and Hughes [1989] mention various kinds of interviews including structured and unstructured. The structured interviews have a completely formalised form, whereas, in unstructured interviews the shape of the interview is determined by the responses of the interviewee. Some writers have likened this type of interview to a conversation, to intimate an informal style, a friendliness, or an attempt to equalise the relationship between interviewer and interviewee [Patton 1980; Burgess 1984]. This approach is not new, in social science research it has been perceived as 'conversation with a purpose' [Simons 1981].

The advantages of interviewing are well documented [Patton 1980; Burgess 1984; Hitchcock & Hughes 1989; Bell 1993]. The main disadvantage of interview is that they are time-cost intensive [Charles 1995]. The detailed discussion of interviews carried out in this study is given below.

● Interviewing Research Respondents:

In this study, interviews formed the core of the fieldwork. Interviews were conducted in different forms, ranging from short to long, with individual or group of respondents. During the fieldwork, the headteachers of the seven special schools where South Asian special needs children were studying were interviewed. Five of them were formally interviewed once, whereas, the headteacher of both specifically investigated schools was interviewed 4 times; formally and informally. In addition, teaching and non teaching professionals of both of the deeply investigated schools, and the parents and other family members of the children, were also interviewed.

The number of interviews with teaching and non-teaching professionals are shown in Table 3.9 to 3.13. The tables show 11 formal and 25 informal interviews of the teaching staff, including Head and Deputy Head. The headteacher was interviewed twice formally and twice informally, whereas, the deputy head was interviewed formally once. Both schools had 11 teachers in total; 9 in *School1* and 2 in *School2* (one of them also acted as ‘teacher incharge’). From these 11, two teachers were interviewed twice and four teachers were interviewed once formally, and informally, two teachers were interviewed three times, two teachers twice and four teachers once. Thus six teachers were interviewed formally, whereas, eight were interviewed informally. In fact, five teachers were reluctant to give interviews but two of these were among those informally interviewed. The other three teachers did not give any kind of interview. From twelve assistants, nine were interviewed once informally, and three were not interviewed as they showed no interest in giving any formal or informal interview. Thus in total 76% of the staff were interviewed. Non-teaching professionals were formally interviewed once with the exception of the hearing specialist who was interviewed twice; once formally and once informally. A set of questions used in these interviews are given in Appendix C.2

The number of parents’ interviews are shown in Table 3.14 to 3.16. Informal visits and courtesy phone calls are not included in this table. Table 3.16 shows an average of 6 formal and informal interviews per case study. In fact, the frequency of interviews was totally based on the complexity of the case and the family’s attitude. For example in one particular case more than 25 home visits and 11 formal and informal interviews were conducted, whereas, in another case only three formal home visits were made. The important factor was the information required rather than the frequency of home visits or interviews.

Table 3.9: Formally interviewed teaching professionals of the two investigated schools

Times	Headteacher	Deputy Head	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Once	0	1	4	0	5
Twice	1	0	2	0	3
Total	1	1	6	0	8

Table 3.10: Informally interviewed teaching professionals of the two investigated schools

Times	Headteacher	Deputy Head	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Once	0	0	4	9	13
Twice	1	0	2	0	3
Thrice	0	0	2	0	2
Total	1	0	8	9	18

Table 3.11: Total interviews from teaching professionals of the two selected schools

Interview Type	Headteacher	Deputy Head	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Formal	2	1	8	0	11
In-Formal	2	0	14	9	25
Total	4	1	22	9	36

Table 3.12: Percentage of interviewed staff of both schools

Total Staff	Interviewed	Percentage
25	19	76

Table 3.13: Interviews from non-teaching professionals of the two selected schools

Speech therapist	Hearing specialist	Social worker	Nurse	Educational psychologist	Total
1	2	1	1	1	6

In Table 3.16 the noticeable point is that most interviews are with mothers. Only one South Asian father gave an interview on his own. In six cases fathers were not interviewed; two of them had died, one was living abroad, and three fathers did not wish to talk about their special

Table 3.14: Formally interviewed parents and other family members

Times	Mother	Father	Joint	Sibling	Family	Child	Total
Once	5	0	3	0	7	1	16
Twice	6	0	1	0	1	0	8
Total	11	0	4	0	8	1	24

Table 3.15: Informally interviewed parents and other family members

Times	Mother	Father	Joint	Sibling	Family	Total
Once	4	1	3	4	4	16
Twice	4	0	2	1	2	9
Total	8	1	5	5	6	25

Table 3.16: Total interviews from the parents and other family members

Type	Mother	Father	Joint	Sibling	Family	Total
Formal	17	0	5	0	9	31
Informal	12	1	7	6	8	34
Total	29	1	12	6	17	65

needs child's condition. In one case the mother was a single parent. In the other three cases, fathers were interviewed jointly with the mother or in the presence of other family members. These interviews were mostly conducted at dinners or tea afternoons, took place at both the parents' and the author's home, in a very informal environment and were no less than informal discussions. In all interviews or meetings, the respondents were encouraged to be frank in their assessments and were repeatedly assured of the confidentiality of their comments. There is therefore no reason to suspect them of having been constrained in expressing negative or critical comments.

The high number of interviews with family members is another noticeable point in

Table 3.16. Family structure in some cases, shown in Table 3.2, was one of the main reasons, particularly in two cases where the children were living in extended families. In both cases, family members were like a close net. All family members liked to sit together and always participated in conversations. Interviewing the mother or father alone was not appreciated; therefore, some mothers were interviewed at the author's home. In only five cases, siblings were interviewed separately; twice in one case and once in four cases. In other cases, either siblings were too young or they were interviewed along with other family members. A set of questions used in these interviews are given in Appendix C.1.

In this study, two types of interviews were used. The first was structured interviews. These interviews were used in the early stages of this research to acquire some factual information about parents, family and the child, and they were conducted at parents' houses, lasting more than one hour. The questions asked in these interviews were mostly factual rather than explanatory. One reason for conducting these structured interviews was the easy access to the parents. However, these interviews were not very effective as the interviewees were reluctant to give their opinion to the set questions and used very careful wording which made it difficult to derive any concrete conclusion. Also, it made the atmosphere formal, boring and uneasy, while, the structure of the interview did not allow the author to explore the issues deeply. The second type of interviews - commonly used in this study - were unstructured and were conducted in natural settings. The main motivation behind using these interviews was their flexibility which allowed the selecting of an appropriate style for the interview according to situation in hand. As Patton [1980, p. 252] suggests:

"There is no single right way of interviewing, no single correct format that is appropriate for all situations, and no single way of wording questions that will always work. The particular evaluation situation, the needs of the interviewee, and the personal style of the interviewer all come together to create a unique situation for each interview."

Before conducting each interview some precautionary steps were taken - such as topic selection, question designing, methods of analysis, interview scheduling. During these interviews it was found that, as mentioned by Munn and Drever [1991], body language, the place of interview, style of interview, wording used, surrounding environment, and the way in which the interview is started are very important. These aspects heavily influenced the responses of the interviewee.

Useful techniques in conducting good interviews given in many readings were also considered during interviewing sessions, such as questioning strategies [Patton 1980] and the process of recording interviews using tape-recording or note-taking [Wragg 1984]. Some points which were always considered during these interviews are given below:

- Specifically, what information was required. Was an interview the best method of obtaining this information? and how effective was the interview process?
- To choose proper wording for the interview. In this regard, the author usually drew a rough sketch of the interview using brain storming techniques and rehearsed the interview. Sometimes, the interview did not proceed according to author's perception. However, this practice helped a lot in conducting further conversations and keeping the interviewee on the right track. Also, during conversations, using common sense the author drew out the hidden meanings of their conversation and made relevant questions immediately, conscious not to deviate from the actual point of conversation.
- To decide about the techniques used for conducting and analysis of the interview for example deciding on using tape recorder or note taking.
- To make an appointment with the interviewee by explaining the function and the duration of the interview - which always took longer - and try to reach on time. The author also took responsibility for ending the interview [Jonson 1984].
- To allow the interviewee to explain himself/herself clearly. Also to use pauses, tag questions and exclamatory remarks during the interviews.
- To avoid general discussions and focus on specified, predetermined areas of enquiry. Nevertheless, it was a difficult task; particularly in the last year of this research where relationships with the respondents were just like that of good friends. For example, the duration of interviews with parents - in this period - were extended to two to three hours.
- To keep account of cultural, religious, and social aspects. This is expanded below with some practical examples from the field work.

The main respondents in this study were South Asian. Since the author is a member of their own community they expected her to behave within the defined limits of the community. During the home visits, special care was taken of these matters, for example observing correct

greetings (in their religious wording) to the elderly family members and talking with them for a while. The duration of these sittings sometimes lasted more than half an hour. These sittings did not provide any useful information but, in order to gain the confidence of the family the practice was very useful.

Another example is about dress. Most of the respondents' family members, especially elderly people, did not like to wear western clothes. And some of them preferred to cover the head. So before visiting them, these matters were seriously considered, for example place of visit, what the family structure was like, what their religion was, which language they spoke, etc. Such measures have been commonly reported in literature [Armour 1993; Delamont 1992].

One factor found very useful in interviews was the effective use of pauses in questions. After asking a question the maximum time was given for the respondent to speak as much as he/she wanted. The next question was not asked unless there was anything left to be said. It was noticed that in response to a question, a respondent would give a prompt answer and look at the author to confirm that either the answer was satisfactory or not. If the author gave an unsatisfactory impression and did not ask the next question, then the interviewee tried to explain it further, with some new comments. This technique was found very useful as it provided the opportunity to obtain more information about the question asked which had not been said before.

For interviewing the parents, family members, and professionals, both formal and informal methods of interviewing were used. In formal interviews a tape recorder, and a set of well prepared questions were used. If for some reason the interview was not taped, short notes about important points were made during the interview and detailed notes were made immediately afterwards. In these interviews, it was sometimes noticed that respondents became self-conscious, and used very careful wording even though the purpose of the information and assurance of their absolute confidentiality were already given. Sometimes respondents did not give clear answers to some questions intentionally, and left them open for the author to derive meanings. In this kind of research, it would not be fair for a researcher to interpret his/her observation unless he/she becomes clear about the respondents' point of view. Making statements without exploring the issues fully may cause a biased opinion. Hammersley and Scarth [1993] have outlined the problems related to the misuse of educational research and how people mis-interpret data.

To overcome these problems informal interviews were used. These interviews were

like discussions, in which the author took an issue and asked as many questions as possible considering different aspects of the issue. Sometimes, the same questions were asked with different wording to get a clearer picture of the respondent's point of view about the issue. Those aspects which had not been responded to clearly during formal interviews, were also explored through these interviews. It was a lengthy process as often more than two such meetings were held to explore one simple issue fully. However, these techniques helped to ensure the validity of the data sought through questionnaires and structured interviews.

After each interview, general notes and comments about the interview were made keeping in mind the points mentioned by Jones [1985], such as the nature of interaction; whether the interview seemed to go well; if not why not; how distracted, comfortable, nervous, confident, relaxed, wary and so on, the interviewee had been; whether the author had, or had not, managed to get behind the person's legitimating scripts; whether there were any particular parts of the data that did not quite ring true and why. In short many factors about the place, time and relationship with the interviewee were considered that seemed likely to be important to take account of when the author came back to the data for analysis. These notes were also made in order to avoid losing this additional contextual data which could affect the interpretation of the interview content.

The author usually tried to transcribe the interviews (making written notes from audio tapes) immediately afterwards if enough time was available. As a precautionary measure, a backup copy of the actual interview on separate tapes was also made. Transcribing interviews immediately was helpful in managing the data and holding on to the detail which could be forgotten easily when transcribing interviews after a long delay. Transcribing tapes took a long time. To ask somebody to transcribe the interviews was difficult for two reasons. Firstly, interviews with the South Asian parents were taken in their mother tongues and it was difficult to find anybody for the task; secondly, the expense of transcription was not affordable.

The effectiveness of interviews in this study could not be denied, but, they were very time-consuming. If the author went for a one hour interview, it took two to three hours including travelling time and time lost through any one of numerous mishaps like the respondent's late arrival, sudden crisis with children or unexpected visitors. After meetings, time was needed to consider what had been said during the interview, to go through notes, to extend and clarify points that might have been hastily noted. As a full time employee, it was difficult to carry out more than one interview in an evening. The author's experiences of interviews were not

similar to that of Armour [1993, p. 41]; she writes: "Without exception, the interviews were an enjoyable and fascinating experience for me (the researcher)". The case was quite the opposite in this study. This research was related to a community which had been accepted as having SLD children among them. The issue was so sensitive that it often occurred that during interviews both author and the parents were in tears. Conducting such interviews was not enjoyable but sad and sympathetic. But the ability to share sorrows and happiness with the families was the key to success for this field work.

● ***Some Problems with Interviewing:***

Now I mention some difficulties faced in conducting interviews. When interviewing South Asian fathers, making appointments was the most difficult task. Some of the reasons are briefly mentioned below;

- The South Asian culture does not appreciate long sittings of a female with an unknown male. Although the families of the studied children were well aware of the purpose of this research, because the author was a member of their own community they did not expect to cross their cultural limits.
- Some fathers did not like to talk about their special needs child's conditions.
- In most of the families, the mother was supposed to be responsible for handling children's matters at home. [It was noticed that in some families this trend is changing and they are trying to adopt the western culture.]
- Fathers' earning liabilities.
- Stress of having a special needs child in the family.

Most interviews with fathers were conducted in the presence of the family or the mother and were conducted in an informal atmosphere. A few of them were not interviewed.

In one particular case where the child was in foster care the author, being a researcher, found it quite difficult to gain the confidence of some involved respondents, such as, foster parents and the social worker. They remained reluctant to give any interview and avoided the matter because of the complex nature of the case (discussed in Chapter 7).

On the professionals' side, the author found some colleagues non cooperative and racist. They also created some problems for this research within the school setting. For example, the

author asked one colleague for an interview and she refused impolitely (on racial grounds). The conversation went as follows:

Author: I want to take your interview about your experience working with these children. Would you please give me time?

Colleague: [she looked at the author and said] No. I don't want to talk with you. It is for your study. Isn't it?. Anyway I don't want to talk with you on any matter.

Author: Thank you very much.

Three senior colleagues kept giving excuses one way or another and did not give an interview. The author also found it unsuccessful to interview some senior colleagues. It was noticed the respondents chose their words carefully, gave vague answers and sometimes agreed with the author's opinion just for courtesy, particularly when discussing the school's management. Some colleagues welcomed the opportunity to air problems and to have their situation analysed by someone who understood the practical day-to-day realities of their task. But the problem was that some of them exaggerated the problems. Being an insider, it was easy for the author to understand their motives but for an outsider their replies could be misleading. Interviewing the headteacher was an interesting experience. During the first interview with the headteacher it was noticed that the respondent was not as free to say things as was expected. At the same time the interview was interrupted by phone calls or staff members. Before starting the interview, however, the author was very confident about her responses. The main reason for this confidence was that the author started this research with the consent of the headteacher and during all this time she gave full support. At the end of interview, connecting all the chains of the happenings during the interview, it was found that the nature of the Head's job which always kept her busy was the one cause of the unsuccessful interviews.

3.5.3 Observation

Nisbet and Watt [1980] say that:

"Interviews provide important data, but they reveal only how people perceive what happens, not what actually happens. Direct observation may be more reliable than what people say in many instances. It can be particularly useful to discover whether people do what they say they do, or behave in the way they claim to behave." [cited in Bell 1993, p. 108]

Walker [1985] argues that in observation it is rather more tempting to let the technique become a justification in itself, and for the purpose and intention to fall from view. Perhaps this is sometimes a good thing and provides the researcher with more freedom. Nisbet [1977, p. 15] says that:

"Observation, however, is not a 'natural' gift but a highly skilled activity for which an extensive background knowledge and understanding is required, and also a capacity for original thinking and the ability to spot significant events. It is certainly not an easy option."

Spradley [1980] outlines five types of observation:

- *Non-Participation:* It is the lowest level of involvement. Researcher does not present in the situation, but observes it through various other means such as watching a video or audio tapes.
- *Passive Participation:* The researcher is present, but does not interact with the participant. In other words is a passive element of the situation.
- *Moderate Participation:* The researcher attempts to balance the insider/outsider roles by observing, participating in some, but not all of the activities.
- *Active Participation:* The researcher does what the others do, but does not participate completely.
- *Complete Participation:* The researcher become a natural participant. For example a teacher making observations of his/her students.

Bell [1993, pp. 110-111] mentioned some drawbacks of complete participation. He says:

"It is difficult to stand back and adopt the role of objective observer when all the members of the group or organisation are known to you. If you are researching in your own organisation, you will be familiar with the personalities, strengths and weaknesses of colleagues, and this familiarity may cause you to overlook aspects of behaviour which would immediately be apparent to a non-participant observer seeing the situation for the first time."

The author agrees with Bell's [1993] comments about complete participation. But, a serious drawback of non-participant, passive, and moderate observers is that they might not immediately observe those aspects of the problem which a participant observer can. One or two appearances of an observer make the observed self-conscious which certainly affects their behaviour. However, the long term appearance of an observer surmounts this problem, as the observed psychologically accepts the observer as a part of the setting and behaves in a normal fashion, allowing the observer to get the true picture of the problem. In special needs research, active and complete participation could be the better approaches.

Observation was an important part of this research. It provided the author with an opportunity to check the validity of the information provided by the parents and professionals through interviews and questionnaire. It also allowed the checking of the impact of the author's presence and bilingual instruction on the behavioural and educational achievements of the children.

To get an accurate account of the problems, it was important for the author to make observations on two fronts; home and school. In this research, the author's role varies from complete participant to active participation. Due to the nature of the job and being a member of the community researched, on the school front, it could be said to be a complete participation, whereas, on the home front, it could be said to be an active participation.

In schools, observations were made about the problems of the professionals related to South Asian SLD children and their parents and the behavioural and educational achievements of the children. Making all these observations was not an easy task. It needed special care. It is necessary to describe the actual change which took place in the author's personality due to the changed role from a worker to a researcher. The author started observing the children on a regular basis, something other teachers never did. The children were not being observed in just classes but also in play-ground, in dining hall, during excursion trips, etc. Sometimes these observations were made in a group involving other staff members so that a comparison could be made. Some important matters regarding these children were also being discussed with other staff members, whom the author found neutral. These measures were taken to check the validity of the obtained data.

Since starting this research, the author's role has changed from a colleague to a researcher. The children did not notice this change, however, colleagues reacted differently. As mentioned earlier, a few of them showed full cooperation and always helped to implement any new

idea. However, others became very conscious of the author's presence which made the task complicated. Bringing them back to their normal behaviour was very important for this research. It was accomplished smoothly (As mentioned in Section 3.4.1). As Simons [1984] says, harmonious relationship and trust, however democratic the organisation, does not automatically exist between professionals. It has to be created. After some time an interest gradually established for a flow of information from them. Several other incidents happened in school which were related to the author's being a South Asian. These incidents (discussed in Section 6.5) caused stress in the school atmosphere. However, they provided the author with very rich information.

As far as observation carried out in the respondents homes are concerned, the author visited parents often and made a lot of informal discussions. During these visits, everything was observed carefully, including family members, parents, home environment, etc. During these visits very interesting information was obtained. For example, during a parent's interview, the father of a South Asian girl told the author that his daughter was not able to speak. However during home visits, it was observed that she always spoke with her sisters and with the author if she could get a chance. Much similar information was collected through observations.

To conclude, it could be said that observation was one of the main sources of information. It was also the main source for checking the validity of data obtained through interviews or questionnaires.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the nature, ethical basis and methodology adopted for this study. In the second section, it was explained that the author's social, cultural, religious background and linguistic skills enriched and aided the research process. For this study ethnography was chosen as a base and case studies, questionnaires, interviews and observation as building blocks. In different sections it was explained how these research techniques were used and what problems were faced during the study. In this study, questionnaires were not very effective, whereas informal interviews, observations, and common-sense methods of investigation were found to be more effective, which shows agreement with Hammersley and Atkinson's [1995, p. 21] ideas:

"Neither positivism nor naturalism provides an adequate framework. Both neglect its fundamental reflexivity: the fact that we are part of the social world we study, and that there is no escape from reliance on common-sense knowledge and methods of investigation."

*

PART II

Field Work Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations

4 The Broader Context: Analysis of Provisions in Seven Special Schools

4.1 Introduction

In a broader context, this chapter presents an analysis of seven special schools within the city of Crownbridge exploring the number and distribution of South Asian special needs children, staffing conditions and the nature and the extent of special provisions for these children.

Within the city limits were 109 schools, including mainstream primary, secondary and special schools. Of these 109 schools, 87 (80%) were mainstream - some of them had special units for children having one particular type of learning difficulty - whereas, 22 (20%) were special schools. The breakdown of these schools is given in Section 3.5.1. Of these 22, only seven schools had South Asian special needs children. From these seven, two SLD schools (*School1* and *School2*) were thoroughly investigated. A detailed introduction and the data analysis of both schools are given in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively.

This chapter presents an analysis of the number and distribution of South Asian special needs pupils, special provisions for these pupils and staffing conditions in seven schools where South Asian pupils were enrolled. The data presented here is based on interviews with headteachers, questionnaires and the author's personal observations made during visits to these schools. (See Appendix C.3 for the set of questions used in these interviews.)

4.2 Number of South Asian and White Special Needs Children

The breakdown of these seven schools, the number of special needs children and the number of South Asian special needs children are given in Table 4.1. In this table, *School1* and *School2* are the investigated schools and *School3* to *School7* were visited once and the headteachers were interviewed. Three important points from this table are given below:

1. The number of South Asian special needs children varied from 5% to 20% of the

Table 4.1: Number of special needs children in the seven special schools

	School1	School2	School3	School4	School5	School6	School7	Total
Type	SLD	SLD	MLD	HI	MLD	SLD	PD	-
Age group	3-19	16-19	5-12	8-12	5-12	3-19	3-19	-
Total SNC	86	17	86	10	40	40	86	365
South Asian SNC	8	3	4	2	2	2	4	25
Percentage	9%	18%	5%	20%	5%	5%	5%	7%

total pupil enrolment in each school. The 25 South Asian special needs children were 7% of the totally enrolled children in all schools, which was not a negligible minority.

2. The percentage of South Asian special needs children are the same in 4 schools (5%), whereas three schools - *School1*, *School2* and *School4* - had a higher proportion of South Asian special needs children (9%, 18%, and 20% respectively). Most of the South Asian community was living within the catchment area of these schools which could be the cause of this difference. Also some South Asian parents preferred the school which had bilingual support for their children. Two parents told me that the presence of bilingual staff encouraged them to choose *School1* which clearly shows the South Asian parents' positive attitude towards bilingual provision. It is important to mention that *School1* and *School2* were two linked schools. Both schools had the same headteacher and the same board of governors. *School1* had a full-time bilingual assistant. Although *School2* did not have any bilingual staff, on request the bilingual assistant of *School1* visited *School2* (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 for further details). As the headteacher of both schools was the same, it gave the impression that both schools offered bilingual support.
3. In these 7 schools, the total number of special needs children - including white and South Asian - varies from 10 to 86. According to the size of the school roll schools can be split into three categories - small, medium, large - shown in Table 4.2. The table shows two small, two medium and three large schools. The three large schools, *School1* is among them, had 86 children per school which was slightly lower than the 88 children of Inner London special schools [Evans & Ware 1987]. However, it was considerably higher than the 49 pupils of Welsh special schools

Table 4.2: Size of the seven special needs schools

Size	No. of children	No. of school
Small	fewer than 30	2
Medium	fewer than 50	2
Large	more than 50	3

[DES 1983], 65 of the North West special school [Preddy & Mittler 1981], and 70 of the West Midland special schools [Taylor *et al.* 1981]. A notable point is that Inner London was thickly populated- as mentioned in Evans & Ware [1987]. A higher population could justify the bigger school size of Inner London, whereas, Crownbridge was not as thickly populated as Inner London.

4. The two SLD schools focused on in this study were two of only three SLD schools in the city. These two schools accounted for almost three-quarters (72%) of the SLD pupils in the city, and for 11 (85%) of the 13 South Asian SLD pupils in the city.

An investigation into the reasons for bigger school sizes does not come within the domain of this study. Apparently, the limited number of special schools and the wider age group which these schools covered, could be the two main causes of bigger school size. For example, the 22 special schools of the city, shown in Table 3.6, give the impression of enough special schools within the city limits. In fact, from these 22 special schools, only two SLD schools catered for children of age 3-19 years and covered the full schooling age range. These two schools were only 1.8% of 109 schools and 9% of the 22 special schools.

Another reason could be that the schools were established before 1980. For the last 10 years the LEA had not opened any new special school, whereas the population of special needs children had increased within this period. This would have increased the load on existing schools. The issue needs full investigation. Apparently, the increasing strength of the South Asian special needs children along with their white peers demands more special schools within the city limits. As the study did not encompass the issue it is left for future research. The next section gives the analysis of special provisions for South Asian special needs children in these seven schools.

4.3 Special Provision for South Asian Special Needs Children

From previous studies a common consensus emerged, that, in the education of minority children, their cultural and communication aspects should not be ignored [Tomlinson 1993]. The issue was particularly investigated in this survey. It was noticed that in all the schools visited and investigated, with the exception of some bilingual support, no special provision was offered to the South Asian children that could meet their social, cultural and linguistic needs. Only *School1* had a full-time bilingual assistant and this was available on request in *School2*, whereas, of the other five, two schools had a visiting bilingual assistant and three did not have any bilingual support at all. At the same time, the provision offered was not enough to meet the children's needs. Two example cases are discussed below.

Table 4.3: Time-table of *School1* and *School2*

Sessions	Timings	Study hours	per week
School Opens	9:00	-	-
First Study Session	9:10-10:10	60 min	5 hours
Break	10:10-10:30	-	-
Second Study Session	10:30-12:00	90 min	7½ hours
Dinner Break	12:00-13:15	-	-
Third Study Session	13:15-15:15	120 min	10 hours
School Closes	15:30	-	-
Total study hours	-	4½ hours	22½ hours

1. In *School3* a bilingual assistant used to visit once a week for just two hours; however, the school had four South Asian children which meant that each child received only half an hour bilingual help per week. Table 4.3¹ shows that a child had 22½ study hours/week. It means that bilingual support was provided for just 2.3% of the study time, which could not be said to be sufficient for a Special Needs Child. Explaining the role of the visiting bilingual assistant, the headteacher of *School3* said:

¹Timetable in all visited schools were almost the same as shown in Table 4.3

"We do not have any arranged time-table for her. It depends on class teachers how they utilise her in their classes. I think they mostly use her in group work because it is difficult to work individually while the other class is around."

When I asked about his intention to employ any full-time bilingual staff, he said:

"I do not think there is any need for bilingual staff. These children are like the others. At the same time we do not have enough funds to employ any special staff for the South Asian children."

This statement made the situation controversial. On the one hand, by offering bilingual support for just two hours/week, the school was giving the impression that the provision was being offered. On the other hand, the headteacher was arguing that there was no need for bilingual support for South Asian children. Under these circumstances it could be said that the provision was no more than cosmetic.

2. In response to my question about communication problems with the South Asian parents, the headteacher of *School7* said:

"Apparently we do not have a problem. In case any problems arise we take help from one of our taxi drivers [who brings children to school], who is from the South Asian community."

During interviews, most of the headteachers accepted that the presence of any bilingual help for South Asian children would be useful as it could help them to establish good home-school relationships and overcome communication problems. At the same time, the presence of a bilingual assistant could help them to understand the South Asian children's religious and cultural needs. But, they showed no interest in employing a bilingual helper for the South Asian children. The new budget system (LMS) was said to be the main problem in the employment of any full-time bilingual staff. As the headteacher of *School7* said:

"The new formula system is a disaster and creates a hindrance in educating the Special Needs Children. We do not have enough funds to fulfil the basic requirements of the children. We are under great stress. If the authorities gave us enough money to fulfil the needs of these children, we would be in a much better situation to produce a better outcome."

One teacher of *School1* commented on LMS:

"Don't give me that school as an example of LMS. You know the head of that school has good contacts with industry and private agencies. He receives a huge amount of fixed charity funds every year. You can see the negative effect of LMS in other special schools which do not receive enough charity."

In Section 2.2.4 we discussed Allen's [1995] concerns about LMS. Allen [1995] mentions that by not providing enough information to the parents about special provision offered, some schools could give the false impression that they are not offering special provision, which could influence parents against choosing the school. In contrast, the study found another aspect that some schools, by providing bilingual provision for a very short period of time, created the impression that the school offered bilingual support, which also could mislead the South Asian parents.

4.4 Staffing Conditions

Table 4.4 and 4.5 show the staffing conditions of the seven special schools. Similar to the previous chapter, the term "staff" is used here for teachers and assistants available to work in the classroom with the children on a full time basis. Head teachers, deputy heads, part timers and volunteers were not included in teacher-pupil, assistant-pupil and staff-pupil ratios.

Table 4.4 shows that the three ratios vary from school to school: teacher-pupil ratio from 1:5.0 to 1:10.8; assistant-pupil ratio from 1:2.9 to 1:7.2; and the staff-pupil ratio from 1:1.9 to 1:8.5. Comparisons with previously conducted surveys are given in Table 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8. Some of the important points from these tables are given below:

- In four schools the **teacher:pupil** ratio was higher than that of 1984 survey. In most of these schools, there was only one teacher/class. Both specifically investigated schools were among these four. In particular, *School2* had the highest teacher:pupil ratio.
- In five schools, including *School1*, the **assistant:pupil** ratio was higher than that of 1984 surveys; see Table 4.7.
- In five schools, the **staff-pupil** ratio was higher than that of the 1974, 1977, 1982 and 1984 surveys; shown in Table 4.6. Only two schools had a lower staff-pupil ratio than in these surveys. However, this was achieved by employing a large number of assistants.

Table 4.4: Staffing in the seven schools

School's name	School1	School2	School3	School4	School5	School6	School7
Type	SLD	SLD	MLD	HI	MLD	SLD	PD
Total Children	86	17	86	10	40	40	86
Teachers	9	2	8	2	6	7	12
Ratio	1:9.6	1:8.5	1:10.8	1:5.0	1:6.7	1:5.7	1:7.2
Assistant	12	0	12	0	5	14	20
Ratio	1:7.2	N/A	1:7.2	N/A	1:8.0	1:2.9	1:4.3
Staff	21	2	20	2	11	21	32
Ratio	1:4.1	1:8.5	1:4.3	1:5	1:3.6	1:1.9	1:2.7

Table 4.5: Lowest and Highest Teacher:Pupil, Assistant:Pupil and Staff:Pupil ratios in seven schools

Ratio	Highest	Lowest	Mean
Teacher:Pupil	1 : 10.8	1 : 5.0	1 : 7.9
Assistant:Pupil	1 : 8.0	1: 2.9	1 : 5.5
Staff:Pupil	1 : 8.5	1:1.9	1 : 5.2

The condition was similar to Evans & Ware [1987] in which authors mentioned that often a lower staff:pupil ratio is achieved largely by the employment of extra assistants, who are frequently unqualified.

- In two small schools, *School2* and *School4*, *School2*, the investigated school, had two full time teachers and two part time assistants, whereas, *School4* had two full time teachers and three part time assistants. In both schools the staff-pupil ratio was much higher than previous studies and the staffing conditions were not as good as mentioned in the survey by Evan & Ware [1987, p. 23]:

"Those 16 to 19 units we saw were often housed in demountable classrooms, which on the whole were well equipped. They also appeared to be very highly staffed and to concentrate heavily on training the more able young people in independent living skills."

Table 4.6: Teacher:Pupil, Assistant:Pupil and Staff:Pupil ratios of previous surveys in special schools

Year	Number of Schools	Teacher: Pupil	Assistant: Pupil	Staff : Pupil
1974 ^a	70	1:7.6	1:6.8	1:3.6
1977 ^b	55	1:7.2	1:6.8	1:3.5
1982 ^c	29	1:5.9	1:7.5	1:3.3
1984 ^d	63	1:6.9	1:7.0	1:3.5
1994 ^e	7	1:7.9	1:5.5	1:5.2

^aFigures from [Predy and Mittler, 1981]

^bFigures from [Predy and Mittler, 1981]

^cFigure from [GB.DES,HMI Wales, 1983]

^dFigures from [Evans and Ware, 1987]

^eCurrent survey

Table 4.7: Comparison of seven schools' Teacher:Pupil, Assistant:Pupil and Staff:Pupil ratios with 1984 surveys

Ratio	No. of school having Higher ratio	No. of school having Lower ratio
Teacher: Pupil	4	3
Assistant: Pupil	5 (3 + 2 with no assistant)	2
Staff: Pupil	5	2

Table 4.8: Comparison of seven schools' Teacher:Pupil, Assistant:Pupil and Staff:Pupil ratios with previous surveys

Survey	No. of school having Higher ratio	No. of school having Lower ratio
1974	5	2
1977	5	2
1982	5	2
1984	5	2

The analysis shows that the staffing conditions in most of the special schools were not good enough. The three ratios in five schools were much higher than in previous surveys, which shows that the staffing conditions had deteriorated since 1984.

4.5 Multi-Professionals' Support

To meet the multiple needs of the special needs children, similar to *School1* and *School2*, all of the other five schools visited had multi-professional help from physiotherapists, speech therapists, social workers, hearing, sight, educational and clinical psychologists, doctors, medical nurses, and dentists. In all schools, most of these professionals were visiting, or were available on request. None of the schools had a full time nurse. Often a trained staff member was used for this purpose; which was disruptive for his/her own class, (while he/she was dealing with the school's emergencies). The survey found that the visiting hours of the required professionals in the seven schools visited were unsatisfactory; particularly in the cases of the speech therapists and the physiotherapists. As one head teacher said:

"The speech and physiotherapists are the most important professionals for our school, as most of the children are in great need of them. But the visiting professionals do not have enough time to see every child during their visits. I know the situation is not satisfactory, but we do not have enough money to employ these professionals from our budget. I feel uncomfortable at not providing all the facilities to fulfil the children's needs."

The same concern was shown by the headteachers of other schools. This situation was similar to Preddy and Mittler's [1974 and 1977] and Evans & Ware's [1984] surveys which also mentioned the lack of professionals in most of their surveyed schools.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we provided some information on the wider context regarding the education of special needs children in general and South Asian special needs children in particular. In the city where the study was carried out we found:

- Only seven special schools within the city limits had South Asian special needs children.

- In these seven schools, the number of South Asian special needs children were an average of 7% of the school roll.
- Only four schools out of seven were offering bilingual support for the South Asian children. Of these four, only one had a full time bilingual assistant. The other three only provided provision for very short periods of time, which was not enough to meet the requirements of children with difficulties.
- Communication problems with the South Asian parents were mentioned by all the head teachers. Many of them were agreed, in principle, that bilingual support would be beneficial for the South Asian children as well as for the school, but, due to lack of resources no one was interested in taking any practical step.
- In none of the seven schools were any special provisions made for the South Asian children to meet their social, cultural and linguistic needs (other than the minimal bilingual support).
- The overall staffing conditions were not good. Only two schools were well staffed, though the good staffing conditions were achieved by employing assistants. Five schools were poorly staffed and were poorer than in previous surveys carried out in 1974, 1977, 1982 and 1984.
- The system of Local Management of Schools (LMS) was found to be a limitation to offering better services to the special needs children.
- In all schools professional support such as physiotherapist, nurse, speech therapist, etc was unsatisfactory.

This analysis indicates that the special schools' environment within the city limits was not only unsatisfactory for the South Asian special needs children but for the white pupils as well. There was a need for the authorities to take some measures to improve the situation.

5 Introduction of Two Investigated Schools

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a general introduction to the two specifically investigated SLD schools where the children studied were enrolled. The demographic details of these children are given in Chapter 7 and the detailed analysis of provisions and staffing conditions of both schools is given in the next chapter. The information given in this chapter is based on the schools' annual reports, interviews of headteacher, teachers and assistants and the author's personal observations.

5.2 Governors and Volunteers of *School1* and *School2*

Both schools was overseen by a group of eight governors; two were appointed by the County Council, one was elected by the teachers, one was nominated by voluntary organisations, two were appointed by the other governors, and two were elected from parents. All of them were white. Both schools also had a volunteer group of parents and staff members which arranged several events for fund-raising. Neither group had any South Asian member. The lack of South Asian parents' representation in both groups raised some important issues. For example, on the one hand, the teaching staff had the impression that the South Asian parents were not taking any interest in their children's educational programmes, and on the other hand, the South Asian parents were isolated from the decision making processes of the school's management, which made them passive and powerless members of the school organisation. These aspects directly affect home-school relationships. (Detailed discussion is given in Section 6.6.)

5.3 Educational Aims of *School1* and *School2*

The main aim of both schools was to fulfil the educational needs of children with severe learning difficulties, having particular regard to the quality of life possible for such children when they

leave school. To achieve this aim, all staff members were exerting the greatest possible efforts, and were using different methods to educate children individually and in groups, to seek out and to encourage those pastimes which might aid integration and may give lifelong satisfaction.

5.4 *School1: An SLD School*

School1 was solely concerned with the education of special needs children who had severe learning difficulties. In 1971, the Local Education Authority (LEA) took over its control from the Health Authorities and turned it from a training centre into a school. The school catered for all such children in the City; consequently children attended from a wide area and a cross section of local communities. In April 1994, The LEA introduced the Local Management Scheme (LMS) which made the governors and headteacher responsible for finance and planning.

5.4.1 Curriculum of *School1*

School1's curriculum was Portage-based; a system imported from America, originally designed for the education of special needs babies, where each learning process is broken down into very small steps. The school, however, offered a varied curriculum including the National Curriculum where appropriate to pupils with severe learning difficulties, hearing and visual impairment, behavioural difficulties etc. The Makaton sign system and the Derbyshire Language Scheme were used throughout the school. The Makaton system is similar to sign language for the deaf, but specifically formulated for children with severe learning difficulties, while the Derbyshire Language Scheme is a structured scheme encouraging the child's comprehension of English and use of expressive language in small developmental stages. The school curriculum included English language, maths, science and technology, P.E. and music. Social and play skills, self-help and motor skills were also included in the curriculum so that the needs of the whole child could be met, and not just their academic development.

5.4.2 Placement in *School1*

Each child's placement at the school was determined by the Assistant County Education Officer in consultation with parents, following Educational, Medical and Psychological assessments. The final decision was made by the Divisional Placement Panel who normally used to meet fortnightly. The school catered for pupils with severe learning difficulties from $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 19 years. Traditionally the school did not cater for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties,

as it had no special care facility. However, if pupils were ambulant and could benefit from the school curriculum they were transferred in from other schools.

School1 had 86 children with physical, behavioural, mental, or sensory difficulties from different ethnic origins including 90% white and 10% South Asian. The children were placed in nine different classes according to their educational needs and age group. The class teachers constantly reviewed the class composition so that children should be placed in the class group best able to meet their needs. Under the integration scheme, some pupils were attending their neighbourhood mainstream schools on a part-time basis.

5.4.3 School Building and Provisions in *School1*

School1 had eight class rooms and a special unit for children, aged 16-19, exhibiting some form of challenging behaviour in addition to their severe learning difficulties. This unit offered a domestic setting in which the behavioural patterns which cause parents and pupils varying difficulties were tackled in a relaxed, non-academic environment. It comprised a general work/dining area, a kitchen with both gas and electric cookers, work units, sink units, and a refrigerator, a laundry area with automatic washer/dryer, a carpeted lounge with easy chairs and colour T.V., toilets, a shower cubicle and a lobby. Pupils were encouraged to be actively involved in the classroom activities which helped them to develop self-help and social skills.

All the class rooms had a small store room attached. However, the size of the stores was not big enough to put large class equipment in. Some of the equipment was placed in corridors. Each class room was equipped with enough educational and special needs apparatus for its pupils, and had a BBC computer with useful software for special needs children.

School1 had its own trainer swimming pool on site, a play ground and a big hall used for various purposes such as assemblies, dinner, physical education and social gatherings. The school had a language room which was also used as the school library, and for music therapy, medical examinations, parents' meetings and relaxation.

School1 offered the facility of dinner for staff and children and, provided the opportunity for some pupils to journey abroad to give them the experience of life in other countries. The school also arranged children's visits to local clubs for ski-ing and horse-riding. In addition to this, local visits to post offices, hospitals and shopping centres were also routine. These visits were undertaken in the school mini-buses or on foot, with the aim of teaching social interaction. *School1* had four small coaches, two mini-buses and a taxi arranged by the Area Education

Office to transport the children to and from school. All outdoor activities were free of charge. Every year lots of functions and activities were carried out to show the diversity of methods and the ability of children in the field of art, craft, music, science, sports, religion etc.

The school had links with other schools and colleges within the city limits. Every summer a number of young people from different organisations came for two weeks to gain useful experience in working with special needs children. The school encouraged parents' involvement as much as possible, both in the life of the school and in helping to plan educational programmes for their children. In the case of South Asian parents, however, it would appear that the schools had failed to do this (See Chapter 6 for further detail).

5.4.4 Staff and Multi-Professionals' Support in *School I*

Along with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, *School I* had nine teachers, twelve ancillary assistants (the author among them), a caretaker, a cook supervisor, two catering assistants, and four dining room assistants. Except for the author, all of them were white. The teacher-management of the school comprised a team of three people, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a teacher who held the responsibility for integration within the school. This team was responsible for the day to day management, staffing policies and forward planning of the school. An extra teacher was also employed for two days a week in order to relieve class teachers and give them 'non contact' time in which they could make visits to other establishments, make home visits, or do record keeping and other paper work. The deputy head did not have responsibility for a class, but visited all classes to conduct Waldon therapy or TEACCH programmes, and relieve teachers for specific visits elsewhere. In Waldon therapy the children learned to sort and match, make patterns and discriminate between different types of small apparatus in order to build their concentration. In the TEACCH programme, individual children, usually those exhibiting Autistic tendencies, follow their academic studies and daily routine in a highly structured manner.

In 1992, *School I* employed a South Asian bilingual assistant - the author - on an experimental basis for the first time. The school had visiting professionals employed by the Health Department, such as a school nurse, school doctor, and dentist, physiotherapist, a speech therapist, a clinical psychologist and an educational psychologist who worked with individual children and gave advice about their future programmes (see Section 6.7.4 for details). The school also got help from the community team of nurses, a social worker and an educational

welfare officer, who visited the school regularly to offer advice and assistance to the families of SLD children.

School1 had the opportunity to get help from the carers service, and special educational needs advisory support service which helped in the areas of advice on visual and hearing difficulties. It also had Specialist Social Workers - appointed by the Social Services - to handle the problems of parents who had special needs children and were in receipt of help from social services.

5.5 Routine Work in *School1*

The routine work in an SLD school was obviously quite different from the main stream schools. During the academic year, every staff member was very busy throughout each day. The school started at 9:00 am and finished at 3:30 pm. Most children came to school on school transport. As soon as the children entered the school boundary, staff members started looking after them. Each child needed special attention and was not to be ignored even for a single moment, as their unpredictable behaviour sometimes created unexpected and difficult situations.

There were two breaks between three study sessions. The first, at 10:10 to 10:30 for play and the second from 12:00 to 13:15 for dinner. These breaks were common for all classes which provided a good opportunity for children to interact with the children of the other classes.

During study sessions every class followed its own time table laid down by the class teachers. The activities for each individual were selected by the class teacher according to the child's age and his/her needs. The class teacher also gave instructions to class assistants. During the week every child followed a defined timetable. However, every day children were required to perform different activities - such as science, craft, art, social skills and those for personal development such as road safety, number work, music, language, maths - so that they should not lose their interest and become bored doing the same activities every day. Computers were commonly used to teach mathematics and to develop cognitive skills such as number work, matching symbols, making stories, playing games, etc.

Different class teachers used different techniques to conduct these activities. For example, some teachers preferred to use sign language for communication purposes. Some teachers used the Waldon therapy, whereas others preferred to use the TEACCH programme. All these activities were carried out in informal sessions either individually or in groups. However, the

motive behind every activity was to teach the pupils something about everyday life. Teaching through play was very successful.

Mini-bus outings were a weekly activity for each class. During these trips children were introduced to the social environment so that they could learn about society. Taking SLD children out from school was a big responsibility - to keep children safe from any danger - for teacher and assistant. During outings everybody had to be very careful, otherwise serious consequences could occur, such as children being lost or hurt. It was a tiring job for the staff but was very useful for the children. On the one hand they had the pleasure of the outing and, on the other hand, they learned new experiences for their integration into society; such as shopping in super stores, visiting farms and sports centres.

Teaching SLD children is a hard, time-consuming, and courageous job. Formal class room methods of teaching could not be used, as each child was an individual having different educational needs, depending on his/her disabilities. Behavioural management was the most difficult task. One moment a child was happy and the next sad, upset, and aggressive. For example, in class one and two a particular child would often start crying and some times he kept crying for the whole day. One can imagine how difficult such situations were to handle. Handling SLD children was not only a physically tiring job but also mentally exhausting. Except for tea or dinner breaks one could not think of any rest. Working in a special school needed extra patience, courage and stamina.

Teaching SLD children requires a fully trained and skilled person who understands the needs of children with special needs and has the ability to handle them effectively in order to accomplish their educational goals. Working with one child did not mean that one should be vigilant concerning that child only. The teachers were required to be careful about others, as an aggressive child could harm anybody. The children were so unpredictable that sometimes they hit the staff members which caused serious injuries. Such incidents were routine in the school.

Although, the school finished at 3:30 pm, staff had to wait till every child was sent home on school transport. Sometimes teachers stayed late for staff or parents' meetings, as during school hours it was quite difficult to spare time for such activities. The staff members deserve full recognition for giving all their attention and best efforts to achieve the educational goals of these difficult children, by keeping them busy mentally and physically in different kinds of activities, such as arts, crafts, science, social skills, technology and woodwork, etc.

5.6 School2: An SLD School House

School2, selected for the investigation, was a school house in the community and was located elsewhere in the city. It was attached to '*School1*' and was controlled by *School1*'s management team.

5.6.1 School's Building and Provisions

School2 was a two story, four bedroomed, semi detached house, altered according to the needs of the school. It had an office for the teacher in-charge, a dining room, a kitchen, a store, a physical exercise room and a big back garden plus bathrooms, a classroom, a computer room and a room for wood work, art and craft.

The school provided transport for children. The school had two vans and two taxis. The children came to school on the school's transport. The school also offered the facility of dinner to the children.

5.6.2 Staff, Curriculum and Multi-Professionals' Support

School2 employed two full time teachers, one of them also acted as teacher in-charge, and two part time class assistants. Both teachers and part-time assistants were white. Though *School2* was under *School1*'s management, the teacher in-charge looked after the daily affairs of the school. The school did not have any bilingual staff, however, it utilized the bilingual assistant of *School1* whenever necessary.

The school had visiting professionals employed by the Health Department, such as a school nurse, school doctor, and dentist, physiotherapist, a speech therapist, a clinical psychologist and an educational psychologist who worked with individual children and gave advice about their future programmes (see Section 6.7.4 for details). The school also got help from the community team of nurses, a social worker and an educational welfare officer, who visited the school regularly to offer advice and assistance to the families of SLD children.

School2 offered education in the setting of a 'house in the community' with a varied curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties between the age of 16-19 years. It worked on literacy, numeracy and self-help skills in a house setting, coping with the complexities of modern life.

The pupils were also being introduced to the world of work, including factory work, stable-work, and catering for functions. As the school was a member of a Consortium for

Technical Vocational Education Initiative, the children benefited financially from this initiative. Under an integration programme, the school children visited a local college for one hour/week.

In this chapter we gave a general introduction to the two specific SLD schools investigated. A detailed analysis of both these schools is given in the next chapter.

6 Analysis of Fieldwork Carried Out in Two SLD Schools

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the provisions, staffing conditions and general environment of the two linked SLD schools investigated. It is important to mention that the research carried out was concerned with South Asian special needs children but some aspects of the analysis covered the entire community - White and South Asian special needs children - as the schools' provisions and the staffing conditions were the same for all children. Therefore, firstly, we discuss some particular aspects related to South Asian special needs children, such as their number, special provision for them, some cultural and racial issues and home-school relationships. Later, we expand to look at the general provision available for all special needs children, and discuss some common problems.

The information presented here is acquired through interviews with the headteacher, deputy-headteacher, teacher in-charge, teaching and non-teaching professionals. Some of the information from teachers and assistants was acquired through questionnaires. Above all, the author's personal observation was an important source of this information. The demographic details of the children referred in this chapter are given in Chapter 7.

6.2 The Number of South Asian and White Special Needs Children

The number of children enrolled in both schools is shown in Table 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. The tables also show the number of South Asian children and their ratio with other school children. The tables show that in *School1* the number of South Asian children varies from 0 to 2 in different classes, whereas *School2* had only one class, having three South Asian children. The average percentage of South Asian children was 9.3% in *School1* and 17.6% in *School2*. With a total number of 11, they were 10.7% in the two linked schools. The numbers of South Asian

Table 6.1: Special needs children enrolled in *School1*

Class	Age	Children	White	South Asian	South Asian:White Ratio	Percentage
One	3-5	10	9	1	1:9	10 %
Two	5-6	8	7	1	1:7	13 %
Three	6-7	9	7	2	1: 3.5	22 %
Four	7-8	9	7	2	1:3.5	22 %
Five	8- 10	9	8	1	1:8	11 %
Six	10- 11	11	11	0	-	0 %
Seven	11- 12	11	11	0	-	0 %
Eight	12 - 13	12	12	0	-	0 %
Nine	16-19	7	6	1	1: 6	14. 3 %
Total	3-19	86	78	8	1: 9.8	9.3 %

Table 6.2: Special needs children enrolled in *School2*

Class	Age	Children	White	South Asian	White: South Asian Ratio	Percentage
One	16-19	17	14	3	1: 4.7	17.6%

Table 6.3: Total ratio of South Asian special needs children in both schools

School	Children	White	South Asian	Percentage
<i>School1</i>	86	78	8	9.3%
School 2	17	14	3	17.6 %
Total	103	92	11	10. 7%

children were increasing noticeably; within the study period five South Asian children were admitted to both schools.

6.3 Bilingual Provision For South Asian Children

Within the city limits, *School1* was the only special school which had a full time bilingual assistant (the author). According to the job description, the author was supposed to provide bilingual support to the South Asian children and their parents. The author was also supposed to visit *School2* whenever required.

In *School1*, the author was a "floating" staff member who used to work in classes which had South Asian children, and often replaced other staff in case of any absence. During the research period, it was noticed that most of the class teachers used the bilingual assistant just to assist them during outdoor visits, swimming sessions, or group work, which could not be said to be an effective use of bilingual support. There was no well defined plan or structured curriculum to use the bilingual support for the South Asian children. This particular aspect was also noticed by the other school teachers, as one teacher of *School1* said:

"Do you [the author] think your timetable is arranged for bilingual support? To me [the teacher], it doesn't seem that you are doing anything different from the other school assistants. The only difference is that you are Asian."

Giving another example, according to the job description the bilingual assistant was supposed to provide bilingual support to the South Asian parents, but, within three years, except twice at annual reviews, the author was not invited to any parents' meetings, medical or annual reviews of the South Asian children. However, the communication problems with South Asian parents were clearly reported by staff members and other professionals. As during an interview the social worker said:

"It was really an embarrassing situation at Sharun's [a Sikh girl] annual review. Mr. Gopal [Sharun's father] was unable to understand English and there was no interpreter. I could not understand why they didn't call you there."

Though the school offered bilingual support, it was not sufficient to meet the needs of the South Asian children. For example, *School1* had three study sessions/day, whereas, Table 6.1 shows that six classes had South Asian SLD children. According to the timetable, designed on a termly basis, the bilingual assistant was able to spend time in three classes, one session per day per class. Giving assistance to the rest of the children was only possible if the bilingual assistant could have been shifted to the other three classes; but it did not change the situation.

An important aspect of this study was to investigate the effect of bilingual instruction on the educational achievements of the South Asian children and to see the effect of the author's presence on their behaviour. For this purpose it was necessary to work with the South Asian children independently. Though the headteacher specifically asked the class teachers to let the author work independently with the South Asian children, only three teachers appreciated the use of bilingual instruction and provided the opportunities for her to work with the South Asian

children independently. The others usually argued that South Asian children were just like other children, and there was no need to use bilingual instruction. As one teacher said:

"I don't think they need bilingual instructions at this level, because they have been in this education system for years."

The author found it quite hard to convince them of the significance of bilingual instruction for the South Asian children. Giving another example, in the very early days of the study, the author explained to a class teacher about the use of concurrent translation and counselling-learning techniques to teach Makaton (sign language) to the South Asian children. In response the class teacher said:

"We already use the same technique for Makaton. I don't think bilingual instruction will do any good."

During the study it was clearly noticed that the South Asian children showed a positive attitude toward their mother tongue and they appreciated the presence of a staff member from their own community. Some examples are quoted below:

- One day, a class teacher told me that the previous day Asif's [a Muslim boy] mum went to see him. After she left, he became very aggressive and the carers locked him out in the garden. He was still in a bad mood. "I am worried it looks risky to take him on the outing". I went to him and talked with him in his mother tongue, and sang some Urdu songs to him. After some time he calmed down and we went for the day trip.
- Phool [a Sikh girl] did not like to swim with white staff members and usually made false excuses. But whenever I asked her to go with me, she swam happily.
- Pavan [a Sikh boy] used to cry a lot in the early days of his admission to school and would not stop crying for other staff members. My presence in the class helped him, I used to take him on my lap and spoke Punjabi with him, which gave a kind of protection and he stopped crying.
- Ali [a Muslim boy] always came to me during break times if I was not in his class that day, and talked about all his family members one by one by name.

- I sometimes cooked South Asian dishes at school for all the children. I still remember when I first cooked at school assembly. Though the children were very happy, they were also surprised; how did it happen? One child said; "My mum cooked this for me. Are you going to cook it every day?". The children were so happy that all the staff members noticed it clearly and appreciated it. One teacher said:

"We will remember the lovely food which you cooked for us when you leave. You provided us with very useful information about Asian culture."

- At school, I wore mixed dress, Western and South Asian. Whenever I wore South Asian dress, the South Asian children, particularly class 1 and class 2, often held my Dopata [a long cloth to cover the head] or the corner of my shirt and walked along. This is a typical habit of South Asian children. They often do this with their mothers. In school many South Asian children called me 'Didi' [Elder sister].
- I helped the Local Social Services in Sharun's case, who had refused to go to school since 1989. Though one white social worker had been trying to bring her back since she left the school, there was no success. My headteacher explained the problem and asked me to work with him. In the month of October 1992, I started this assignment. In my early visits, I tried to gain Sharun's confidence. After gaining her confidence, using inducement techniques, I encouraged her to come to school. During this period I noticed that she was an able girl, but nobody had acknowledged her abilities. After some time she started coming to *School1* with me. At school she showed interest in every activity I asked her to do. As her placement was in *School2*, the headteacher sent her to *School2*. I was based in *School1*; it was not possible for me to give her full-time assistance. After two months, Sharun refused to go to school and still there was no sign of her return. Her mother told me "When she [Sharun] was with you [the author] we were not worried but now in this school [*School2*] there is no South Asian who can understand our cultural requirements. We do not feel our daughter is secure there."

- During her interview Asif's teacher said, about the presence of the bilingual assistant "I am quite happy with current arrangements concerning Asif and always feel able to discuss any points with the bilingual assistant."

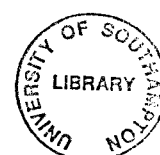
These were not the only examples; there were many more like this which clearly showed the positive effect of the author's presence on the South Asian children. The examples also show that the presence of a staff member from their own community gave the South Asian children a sense of security and friendliness. In the light of these examples it can be argued that, particularly in special schools, the presence of any staff member from their own community could create a better environment for the South Asian children. On the one hand, in school, it could provide a home-like environment for the special needs children; and on the other hand, it could help to build good home-school relationships. As the headteacher of *School1* said:

"We feel that your [the author's] input is invaluable and there are lots of situations that can be helped, not only in translating but also in gaining the confidence of minorities; now we have started taking pupils, which we did not a few years ago; they were not coming through. I think we have gained the confidence of the community and I think that is an essential part for our school, in a multiethnic society in a city like Crownbridge."

6.4 Curriculum and Class Room Assessment

DES [1980] states that the curriculum comprises all the opportunities for learning provided by the school, including a formal programme of lessons in the timetable and other out of school activities deliberately promoted or supported by the school. The curriculum also covers the climate of relationships, attitudes, styles of behaviour and the general quality of life established in the school community as a whole. In the case of minority special needs children, who have cultural and linguistic differences from white educational professionals, these aspects become more important.

The study found that neither school was offering education to the South Asian special needs children according to their social, cultural and linguistic needs. The lack of resources, the staff's inclination towards cultural assimilation and their lack of knowledge of South Asian culture were some of the main causes. On discussing cultural assimilation, most of the staff members and the headteacher considered it an educational goal. As the headteacher said:



"I think we have already provided much information through different agencies, because they are in this system for years. It would be difficult to arrange a meeting for the [South] Asian parents; you have to handle them very subtly, I think. I don't think we discriminate against any child, whatever background they come from; you have just got to get on with them."

School 1's visiting nurse said:

"I think it is a western school you know; I don't think they [authority] made any concessions. I think they [South Asian children] just have to fit in."

Similar kinds of feelings were shown by other staff members (some of them are given in Section 6.5). None of the South Asian children were receiving any special curriculum devised according to his/her social, cultural, linguistic needs. Teachers were facing difficulties in understanding the special needs of the South Asian children and in making social contacts with South Asian parents. As one teacher said:

"I think it is very good to have you, at least we have got somebody to contact the families, because I never found it easy to talk to Asif's mum. I think Asif also finds it easy when you talk with him. Probably I should give more time to cultural things but I have not got enough time for this."

Explaining her personal experiences one teacher said:

"When Phool's parents came for the first time, it was quite difficult because her dad did not appear to speak any English or very, very little English. They spoke to each other in their own language, I remember feeling quite excluded, you did not know what they were thinking and really what they felt about the school."

The school's speech therapist said:

"I found hardest the cultural side of things. You know the rules, for visitors, about whether you accept a drink or something to eat. Another thing which I noticed was that in South Asian families, I mostly met with the women of the family at home and found it less able to include the fathers. It seemed that the women were running the household and dealing with the children. It felt very different."

One teacher said:

"In the majority of the [South] Asian families, we found it interesting that fathers brought their children in, and we have spoken to the fathers more than the mothers at school. That is quite a big difference to us."

This lack of cultural knowledge, on the one hand, made it difficult for teachers to devise a curriculum for the South Asian children which could match with their social, cultural and linguistic needs. On the other hand, it created complications for teachers in their classroom assessments.

The case of Sharun provides a good example. Learning to swim was an educational goal for her but she was reluctant to go swimming. The class teacher thought that Sharun was frightened of swimming, as she did not have this experience before, and with some encouragement she thought she might start swimming. The class teacher spent nearly two months trying to achieve this goal, but did not succeed. Then she discussed the matter with me. I explained to her that Sharun would not do swimming as her home culture does not allow her to do so. In addition to this lack of confidence, communication and shyness were the three main problems with Sharun. Her home language was Punjabi. Nobody spoke English at home. She was unable to explain herself in English. She was aware that she was not as handicapped as people thought. She intentionally did not do things if she noticed that others were treating her as a SLD child.

She belonged to a religious family. Her parents did not allow her to talk with unknown males or go out alone. However in school, she had to work with other male peers. In the school, all staff members were white. She did not find it easy to explain herself to them. At the same time the teacher insisted on her doing things which were not allowed in her home culture. Under these circumstances, she could not adjust herself, and stopped coming to school.

During the study period, it was noticed that the shyness of South Asian girls was assessed as a behavioural problem, whereas, in South Asian culture this characteristic is appreciated. On another occasion, due to a behavioural misunderstanding Phool was assessed as not being able to differentiate colours, which made her parents unhappy.

Another issue related to the South Asian children's dietary requirements. The school did not provide special dietary provisions for the South Asian children. The South Asian children were either suffering or compromising with the existing provisions. For example, the teacher of 'School2' said:

"Asma [a Muslim girl] needs a lot of protein to meet her physical requirements but the worrying thing is that she cannot eat meat at school because she needs halal meat, which the school doesn't provide. We are giving her vegetarian dinners and she doesn't like them and her health is deteriorating day by day."

Asif [a Muslim child] was eating normal school dinners. When the author asked his parents why he was eating meat which was not halal; they replied:

"We know it is prohibited in Islam but what can we do? There is no other option. He does not like vegetarian food and the school does not provide halal meat. We have to compromise for the health of our child."

Alia [a Muslim girl] was having chicken [which was not halal] in school dinner. When I asked her teacher, she showed ignorance of the fact that Alia should eat only halal meat.

It can be seen from these examples that the education authority and health services did not take into account the minority children's cultural and religious needs. In parallel the staff's lack of cultural knowledge about South Asian children was creating problems for both staff as well as South Asian children.

6.5 Racial and Cultural issues

The staff members were asked particularly about their awareness of South Asian culture, South Asian children's dietary requirements, and religious matters. In the teachers' and assistants' questionnaire, three questions were asked; the first was related to their knowledge of these matters, the second was about the sources of their information, and the third was whether they would like to attend a course about cultural orientation. Some of their responses to the first two questions are quoted below:

Question 1: cultural awareness

- "Nominally. I am aware of the backgrounds of the children to the extent that the pupil notes tell me."
- " [the family] Punjabi speaking; no beef eaten."
- " Parents speak punjabi (I think). Ahmed eats only Halal meat, therefore is vegetarian at school. Pavan eats no beef. Mothers wear clothes which cover their legs."

- "Not in any greater detail."

Question 2: Sources of information

- "Pupil notes, parental contact, (this is very important). In addition, the advice of the bilingual assistant is very important."
- " School files, parents meetings, media"
- " My observation, pre-school reports, by questioning parents, health visitor."
- "Class notes (from child's file). Talking to previous teachers and talking to bi-lingual assistant in school."

Their responses showed that most staff members had very little knowledge of South Asian culture. The media, pupils' files, and parents' meetings were the source of their little knowledge. None of the staff members had close relationships with any South Asian families, or any neighbour from the South Asian community.

In response to the third question, all staff members showed their deep interest in attending a course which could provide awareness of the social and cultural aspects of the minority children. A common consensus was that it would be beneficial for their own professional development and for that of the children.

Though many of the staff members were very liberal, an element of cultural and religious racism was there which could be noticed from the following examples:

- One day, during break time, I was eating an orange. One teacher came and asked, "are you not fasting today". I told her, yesterday was the end of the fasting month. Another religiously biased teacher instantly responded "Welcome back to civilisation."
- Once I was returning with other colleagues from attending a study course. One staff member said " Britain is becoming over-crowded. You know why? It is due to these immigrants. They are occupying all the jobs; that's why many white people are out of jobs. There is nothing left for us. The Government should stop giving visas to immigrants."
- During one discussion when I mentioned the problem of the South Asian community, one staff member said, " Nobody asked them to come here. If

they feel there are not enough facilities for them here [in Britain] they should leave this country.”

- On another study day for assistants about child abuse, I raised some points about cultural differences which might be acceptable in White culture but are prohibited in the South Asian culture. In response, some staff members argued very strongly that South Asian people should do what we are doing as they are living here. If they want to live in Britain they should do everything which the British society does. None of the other assistants negated their points of view or said anything against their arguments.

These examples clearly indicate the situation which Dench [1986] describes:

"On the one hand, ethnic minorities are urged that the most appropriate way for them to achieve equality of opportunity and acceptance into the nation is to give up adherence to cultures, languages, customs and values, and regard themselves as 'British'. But at the same time the white majority - which includes parents and teachers - remains hostile to ethnic minorities and denies them entry into the idea of the 'nation'."

During the study, it was noticed that those who were racially biased always tried to exploit other staff members who did not have clear knowledge about South Asian culture and had stereo-typical views. This, on one hand, created the wrong image of the entire South Asian community and on the other hand, created a tense atmosphere within the school. For instance, the aftermath of racist comments being made towards the author by one individual caused great division within the school. Staff took sides, and some staff members were ostracised because of their opinion. Much unhappiness was created, and the school environment became stressed and uncomfortable for some time. However, with the exception of a few elements, the attitude of most of the staff members was impartial. It could be suggested that education authorities should arrange study days about cultural orientation so that staff could deal with minority children and their families effectively.

6.6 Home-School Relationship

Being a bilingual assistant, the development of good Home-School relationships with South Asian parents was part of my job. My behaviour towards the South Asian parents and their

children was very informal, such as making courtesy phone calls, making home visits, discussing their children's activities at the school, involving them in their children's education and working individually with the children. All these activities increased the parents' trust in the school and they became more satisfied with their child's programme at school. They openly discussed their problems with me, which I usually explained to the headteacher who tried her best to solve them. I gave the South Asian parents courage to discuss everything about their child's education openly with the teachers like other white parents. The main aim was to increase the parent's confidence. As a result, they discussed their suspicions and worries with the teachers, but a few teachers thought that explaining the child's progress to South Asian parents was a waste of time. For example, after Phool's annual review her mother rang me to tell me about the meeting. She said:

" . . . I discussed all the areas of Phool's education with them [Phool's class teacher and headteacher] but I felt that in a few things they underestimated her. . . . I also asked about Phool's future programme. . . "

Next day, when I asked Phool's teacher about the review, she replied:

"Wasn't her mum scatty? She wanted to discuss everything. I think we did not have enough time but we had to listen to her."

Similar remarks were often made by staff members about South Asian parents who wanted to know detailed information about their child's educational programmes. Such negative attitudes sometimes prevented South Asian parents from active participation.

During the study it was found that the presence of a bilingual assistant in the school was valuable for South Asian children, their parents and the staff members as well. As one teacher said:

"Greater cultural awareness would enable me to operate with more sensitivity towards South Asian families. A good working relationship with the bilingual assistant facilitated my learning. It also helped me to improve the home/school relationship. "

About the effectiveness of the bilingual assistant, one teacher said:

"She [bilingual assistant] translates words of comfort for new and unhappy small children and gives instructions if they do not respond to English. She tells me

when particular festivals that the families will be celebrating are on, and mentions activities that would be appropriate. She prepares the sort of food the children would be eating at home, occasionally. Most parents I have met are able to speak English, but someone able to speak their own language makes them feel comfortable."

Some important aspects of the presence of a bilingual assistant in the school noticed during the study are:

1. it was very helpful for the South Asian children and their parents;
2. the school administration got better feed back from South Asian parents;
3. it helped other staff members to understand social, cultural and religious issues and the needs of the South Asian children and their parents.

Having said all this, it does not mean that there were no problems related to Home-School relationships. The nature of relationships between white staff members and South Asian parents were the same as reported in many previous studies [Tomlinson 1993; Munn 1993]. Very few teachers had visited the South Asian children's homes. There were noticeable differences between parents and teachers about the child's achievements and goals. The teachers' point of view was that the South Asian parents did not feel much responsibility, or show involvement in the education of their children. They did not understand that the education system, methods of teaching, and educational goals could create problems in the way of educating the South Asian child. The parents' point of view was that some teachers were not cooperative and did not explain clearly the educational goals to them. This situation created tension between both worlds. There was a need to build a bridge between parents and staff members so that good home-school relationships could be established.

6.7 General Provision for All Special Needs Children

Up to now we have been discussing the issues related to South Asian special needs children in particular. Next, we will analyse some of the common provisions available for both South Asian and white special needs children.

6.7.1 Staffing Conditions in Both Schools

Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 show the staffing conditions of both schools. As in previously conducted surveys [Evans & Ware 1987], the term "staff" is used here for teachers and assistants available to work in the classroom with the children on a full time basis. The headteacher, deputy head, part timers and volunteers are not included in teacher-pupil, assistant-pupil and staff-pupil ratios.

The tables show that the three ratios varied from class to class. Table 6.6 shows that in *School1*:

- teacher-pupil ratio varies from 1:7 to 1:12 with a mean value of 1:9.5;
- the assistant-pupil ratio varies from 1:3.5 to 1:11 with a mean value of 1:7.2;
- the staff-pupil ratio varies from 1:2.3 to 1:5.5 with a mean value of 1:4.1.

In *School2* the teacher-pupil and staff-pupil ratios were 1:8.5 as there was no full-time assistant. However, *School2* had two part-time white assistants.

Both schools were often helped by volunteers. It was appreciated that the volunteers were helpful but they were usually not qualified and did not have enough experience of working in special schools. Most of them, strictly speaking, were students and young people taking part in various youth training schemes, placed in special schools as part of their training. Evans & Ware [1987, p. 26] mention that "trained teachers cannot be equated with untrained welfare assistants". So they are excluded from these ratios. The same occurs with part-timers as they were not available for the full day but were used for extra activities such as outdoor visits, swimming, dinner supervision, or similar activities, and sometimes for class room activities.

In both schools the three ratios were higher than those found in previously carried out surveys of staffing condition in special schools; shown in Table 6.7.1 reported in [Evans & Ware 1987]. The higher ratios indicate that both schools were poorly staffed.

Anyone who works with children with special needs would know that these children need one to one attention. In the case of minority children who do not have English as their mother tongue, it becomes more important. Due to poor staffing conditions, teachers were unable to give appropriate individual attention to the South Asian children. The issue of poor staffing did not only concern the South Asian children. It affected the education of all other school children.

Table 6.4: Staffing in *School1*

Classes	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Total
Children	10	8	9	9	9	11	11	12	7	86
Teachers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Ratio	1:10	1:8	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:11	1: 11	1:12	1:7	1:9.5
Assistants	1.5	1.5	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	12
Ratio	1:6.7	1:5	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:11	1: 11	1:6	1:3.5	1:7.2
Staff	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	21
Ratio	1:4	1:3.2	1:4.5	1:4.5	1:4.5	1:5.5	1:5.5	1:4	1:2.3	1:4.1

Table 6.5: Staffing in *School2*

Class	Children	Teachers	Ratio	Assistants	Ratio	Staff	Ratio
One	17	2	1:8.5	0	N/A	2	1:8.5

Table 6.6: Mean of three ratios in both schools

School	Teacher: Pupil	Assistant: Pupil	Staff : Pupil
<i>School1</i>	1 : 9.5	1 : 7.2	1 : 4.1
<i>School2</i>	1 : 8.5	N/A	1 : 8.5
Mean	1 : 9	1: 7.2	1 : 6.3

Table 6.7: Three ratios in previously conducted surveys in special schools

Year	Teacher: Pupil	Assistant: Pupil	Staff : Pupil
1974 ^a	1:7.6	1:6.8	1:3.6
1977 ^b	1:7.2	1:6.8	1:3.5
1982 ^c	1:5.9	1:7.5	1:3.3
1984 ^d	1:6.9	1:7.0	1:3.5

^aFigures from Predy and Mittler's Greater Manchester Survey [Predy and Mittler, 1981]^bFigures from Predy and Mittler's Greater Manchester Survey [Predy and Mittler, 1981]^cFigure from HMI Wales Survey [GB.DES,HMI Wales, 1983]^dFigures from Evans and Ware's Inner London Survey [Evans and Ware, 1987]

The high numbers of class children put an extra work load on staff members which, on the one hand, made it difficult for them to give individual attention to all children which ultimately affected children's education; and on the other hand, it put extra stress on staff members which could be said to affect their health. (Similar kinds of concerns are reported in [Tilstone 1991]). Nearly half of the staff was suffering with back pain. All of them got it during this job. It is important to mention here that in the last year of this study, four class teachers left the school. The apparent cause - as three of them told me - was the extra workload.

Though the missing staff were replaced by supply teachers, the absence of regular staff disturbed the children's education as well as their social behaviour. The authority's attention needed to be drawn to the fact that the staff-pupil ratio should not be so high. Apparently, a high staff-pupil ratio does save money, but in the long term could cost more. As the headteacher of a surveyed school which had a low staff-pupil ratio said:

"I always prefer the children, not the authorities who do not have any interaction with these children. They just tick papers and try to save money. I do not think it is a wise decision to save money at the stage where children are educatable, and they can learn how to live independently. The money we spend at this stage is much less than that spent when they are grown-up and not able to live independently."

6.7.2 Staff Qualifications

Tables 6.8 and 6.9 show the staff qualifications in both schools; headteacher and deputy headteacher are not included. It can be seen that most of the teachers had a certificate or diploma level qualification. These teachers gained their qualification before the start of the B. Ed. course. Three of them had studied special education during these courses. Three teachers had degree level qualifications. In the Second Special School both teachers had certificate level qualification, however, one had the additional qualification of a diploma in special education.

The tables show that in *School1* only 33% teachers had degree level qualification, whereas, in *School2* no one had degree level qualification. The figure of teachers having degree level qualification in *School1* is higher than the 5.6 percent of Preddy and Mittler's day-school sample in 1977, but was much lower than the 42% of Evans and Ware's sample of 1984. The non-availability of highly qualified staff at the time of employment could be the main reason. Nevertheless, the staff had good experience of teaching in special Schools which could not be ignored.

Table 6.8: Teachers' qualifications in *School1*

Qualifications	No. of teachers	Percentage
Degree	3	33%
Certificate in Education	5	56%
Diploma in Education	1	11%
Diploma in Special Education	0	0%
Total	9	100%

Table 6.9: Teachers' qualifications in *School2*

Qualifications	No. of teachers	Percentage
Degree	0	0%
Certificate in Education	1	50 %
Diploma in Education	0	0%
Diploma in Special Education	1	50 %
Total	2	100 %

The qualifications of the assistants were not available on record. According to the information gathered during the assistants' interviews; with the exception of two - one of whom had a diploma in the Nursery education and one (the author) had degree level education - most of the assistants were unqualified. Nevertheless, they had good experience of working in special schools. Many of the assistants were dinner ladies in the special schools before becoming assistants. The analysis shows that the staff of neither school was highly qualified and almost all of them had no specialisation in special education.

6.7.3 Teacher Training Programmes

The school arranged many valuable courses for staff with the INSET coordinator such as emergency first-aid, resuscitation, lifting techniques, etc. The school also arranged educational seminars which refreshed the knowledge of the staff in current methods of teaching and controlling the serious situations related to the children's behavioural, emotional and other problems. Every year, the school arranged useful study days for teaching staff. It was the best aspect of the school to provide an opportunity for the staff members to learn the latest

techniques in working with children with special needs. However, there was no special course related to minority special needs children, although one teacher had attended a local one day course on Islamic tradition some eight years before the field work took place. Most of the staff members mentioned in response to their questionnaire that they were interested in attending culturally orientated course about the South Asian community if the opportunity was provided. During an interview, the INSET course co-coordinator was asked about the possibility of a course which could provide the opportunity for white staff members to become aware of the South Asian children's culture. The reply was that in the next two years there was no free day for any such course.

6.7.4 Multi-Professionals' Support in Both Schools

To fulfil the multiple needs of the SLD children, both schools received help from different professionals such as; physiotherapist, speech therapist, social workers, nurses, hearing, sight, educational and clinical psychologists, doctor and dentist. Both schools were visited by all of these professionals. Tables 6.10 and 6.11 show the time allocated to their visits in both schools.

Both tables show that in both schools professionals only visited; some of them were available on request. A striking thing was that the children usually had severe medical problems, and medical cover was necessary. At the same time, occasional accidents happened in which children or teachers were hurt. Neither school had any full time nurse. Class teachers, who had done first aid courses, provided medical assistance. Nor was the time given by the professionals adequate. For example, *School1* had a speech therapist, visiting under a block system of three weeks/term. She did not have enough time to work with all those children who were in need, which frustrated the class teachers. The conditions for physiotherapy were also not good. A physiotherapist visited the school one morning/week, in which she usually did occupational therapist jobs, such as sorting equipment, and gave very little time to the actual physio of the children. Teachers found it unsatisfactory for the needs of the children. The situation was same in *School2*, and teachers showed the same concerns.

6.8 School's Environment and Some General Issues

In any school, the class room environment plays an important role in the education of children. The teaching staff was asked whether they were satisfied with classroom space and other

Table 6.10: Visiting professionals's amount of time spent in *School1*

Professional	/week	/month	/term	Others
Nurse	-	-	-	On request
Physiotherapist	1/2 day	-	-	-
Speech therapist	-	-	3 weeks	-
Edu. psychologist	-	-	-	40 days/year
School Doctor	-	2 days	-	-
Occupational therapist	-	-	-	On request
Clinical psychologist	-	-	-	On request
Social worker	-	-	-	On request
Dentist	-	-	-	once/year
Psychiatrist	-	-	-	On request

Table 6.11: Visiting professionals' amount of time spent in *School2*

Professional	/week	/month	/term	Others
Nurse	-	-	-	On request
Physiotherapist	1/2 day	-	-	-
Speech therapist	-	1 day	-	-
Edu. psychologist	-	-	-	40 days/year
School Doctor	-	1 day	-	-
Occupational therapist	-	-	-	On request
Clinical psychologist	-	-	-	On request
Social worker	-	-	-	On request
Dentist	-	-	-	once/year
Psychiatrist	-	-	-	On request

available facilities. A common consensus was that the class rooms did not have sufficient space to educate children effectively. Usually the children were in need of one to one attention, but there was no special room or place for this purpose. A corner of the class room was used

for individual work, but the presence of other children caused disturbance, which ultimately disturbed the individual child's attention. (See Appendix F for the layout of two classrooms.)

Though the teaching material and other necessary equipment to fulfil the needs of the school children were sufficient, there was not enough space to put it all in classrooms or stores. So some of it was placed in corridors which created mobility hindrances for children as well as for staff members. In general, classes were over crowded. One South Asian parent did not admit her child to *School I* because of the high number of children in class. When I asked the child's mother why she preferred the other school she said:

"We could not put our child's life at risk for the sake of bilingual support. I don't know how you people manage so many children in one class. It is too risky."

During the study period it was noticed that the South Asian mothers who were born in the UK and had experience of the UK educational system had different attitudes towards professionals than the South Asian parents who did not have any experience of UK schooling. The mothers who had experience of UK schooling often argued with professionals, and did what was right for them and for their children.

Another point which needs attention is that some of the staff members considered special schools as no more than care units where parents send their children for care purposes, and that SLD children are un-educable. (Similar feelings by staff members towards SLD children have been quoted in Evan & Ware[1987]). As a staff member said:

"I am the most senior staff member, and I think these children were much better under the health authority. These children are un-educable. Spending money on their education is just wastage. Anyway they are not going to be fully independent in society."

If this assumption is considered acceptable - though in practice it is not - then a lower staff-pupil ratio just for care purposes can be achieved by employing part timers or getting voluntary help. But, special schools are like mainstream schools where children come for learning. With some exceptions, SLD children are educable though their level of achievement would not be the same as that of 'normal' children. It is very obvious that the main aim of special schools is not to make the children become equals of those who are normal, but to help them develop maximum independence, which may lie anywhere on a continuum between total independence on the one hand, and total dependence on the other, and to build the greatest

degree of integration into the local community. As Adam [1990] mentioned, teachers have a duty to educate children with learning difficulties to their full potential.

One particular complaint from staff members was about the lack of a staff room, as neither school had one. In *School2*, it was not a serious problem as there were only two full-time staff members, but in *School1*, it was a considerable issue. As *School1* did not have a staff room - it did have offices for the head teacher and secretary - staff members felt uneasy. The school had had a staff room previously, but, it was now used for other purposes. Having no staff room directly affected the social life of the staff members. Staff of each class used their own classrooms for this purpose, which isolated them from other staff members. Under this situation they were unable to share their experiences of the children or make combined plans for the betterment of the school. Also, this isolation caused a lack of team work. Each class was just like an independent unit which had no concern for other classes. Every class teacher was thinking that he/she was doing better than any other, and his/her job was more complicated than others. With some exceptions, the lack of job satisfaction, lack of interest in school development, lack of confidence about job future and low morale were very obvious among staff members. As a whole, the environment of both schools could not be said to be effective for the education of special needs children. It could be suggested that the schools were in need of what Tilstone [1991, p. 138] said:

"Teachers of pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties need not only to be highly trained, but the schools need to value and recognise their work and to ensure job satisfaction."

6.9 Conclusion

The study found that except for bilingual support, neither school provided any special provisions or curriculum for the South Asian children. The South Asian children were either suffering or compromising with the existing provisions. Having a bilingual assistant, '*School1*' offered better bilingual support to the South Asian children than *School2*, but the provision was not enough and was not used effectively.

The study found that the presence of a bilingual assistant encouraged the children to perform better and increased their confidence. It also had a good impact on home-school relationships. However, the home-school relationship between white staff members and South

Asian parents needed to be strengthened.

The study found that almost all white staff had very little knowledge of South Asian culture. The only source of the information they had was through the pupils' files, media and parents meetings. Many of the staff members had stereotypical beliefs about the South Asian community. Some were racially and religiously biased, but many of them were impartial. The lack of cultural knowledge of the South Asian children made it difficult for them to devise a curriculum for the South Asian children according to their social cultural, and linguistic needs. Also it created complications for them in their classroom assessments. The staff members were interested in attending any cultural oriented course; but, there was no chance of arranging such a course in the near future.

The study found that both schools had unsatisfactory multi-professional provision, particularly speech therapy and physiotherapy, and were poorly staffed. The teaching staff was not highly qualified nor specialised in special education. The teachers were unable to give individual attention to the children. The high number of children in classes also exerted an extra work load and stress on staff which affected their health.

The analysis given in this chapter shows that both schools were in need of improvement so as to offer better services for the special needs children in general and South Asian special needs children in particular.

7 Introduction of the Case Studies

7.1 Introduction

The research presented in this thesis revolves around 11 South Asian SLD children - 5 girls and 6 boys enrolled in two SLD special schools - their parents and families. The primary intention of the study was not to investigate the full range of disabilities and handicaps present in the total population of special needs children. A group as small as 11 is unlikely to be able to do so. Instead, the intention was to investigate the problem and experiences of South Asian special needs children and their parents, related to the provisions offered.

A study which is so heavily based on personal experiences, opinions and observations must give a detailed introduction to its main characters rather than a brief summary. In this chapter we give the demographic details of the families and the handicapping conditions of these children. The information given in this chapter is based on interviews with teaching and non-teaching professionals, children's parents and other family members, home visits, formal and informal meetings, courtesy phone calls and the author's personal observations. Throughout this thesis, the children will be repeatedly referred to by name, as will their parents, siblings and different characters from the school. However, their names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

7.2 Case Study Number 1: Pavan Singh

- ***The Child:*** Pavan was a four year old attractive, happy, little boy having generalised developmental delay, microcephaly, poor mobility and feeding difficulties. Due to his hip dislocation, he was unable to sit up unsupported. He could walk rather unsteadily for a short distance but tripped over easily due to his poor balance; so when going out for any distance, he had to use a push chair.

Pavan's vision and hearing were normal. However, his play and cognitive skills were severely delayed. At the age of four, he was functioning like a nine month old child. He

was unable to do any thing for himself and barely co-operated when things were done for him. He needed to be fed with special care, otherwise in the blink of an eye made himself and others messy by squashing and throwing food. He wore nappies day and night.

In general, Pavan was an exploratory child and loved to hear music or watch television (sitting in a supported chair) for a long time. He gave good eye contact to others at school as well as at home. Socially, he was a happy boy and interacted well with his brother and other extended family members and liked to play with them. He also interacted happily with unfamiliar people.

During my home visits and at school, obviously he recognised me and made noises to get my attention. He loved to sit on my lap. Whenever he cried, he found his dummy his best friend! He needed a high level of specialist help to develop his mobility, play, self help, cognitive and language skills.

- ***Ethnic Background and Family Religion:*** Pavan's mother and father were Indian Sikh. All family members had a strong belief in Sikhism.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Singh was a house wife and was expecting her third child. She spent most of her time looking after the children and household. She was born in the UK and had the experience of formal education in UK schools. She was in her twenties and got married at the age of eighteen. Mrs. Singh was a very quiet, sensitive, tense, and reserved woman. At home visits I usually found her very tired and drowsy; as, during the nights, Pavan's bad sleep did not let her sleep properly and in the day time, she had to do her share of work for all the extended family members¹. Pavan's special needs and the extended family structure were exerting a great stress on her. She felt herself very unfortunate in having a special needs child among the other family members who had normal children. However, I found her a little more relaxed in the absence of her mother-in-law.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Singh was a sociable healthy man in his late twenties. He was a financial consultant in the same city. He was the youngest son of his family. Mr. Singh was born

¹In South Asian extended family system, females of the house divide household tasks among themselves and every body has to do her share of the work

in India and came to Britain in his early childhood. He had his formal education in the UK and was happy with his job. He was very loving and caring to Pavan and mostly handled matters regarding him.

- **Siblings:** Pavan had a normal elder brother who was very caring and loving to him and always tried to involve him in games.
- **The Family:** Pavan lived with his elder brother and parents in an extended family of 14 members. The other members were: paternal grandma, two paternal uncles, their wives and their five children, his older brother and parents. They lived in a four bed room house situated in the area where most of the South Asian community lived². Pavan and his brother used to sleep in his parents' bed room. His mother told me that this made it easier to look after him during the night. The house was always over crowded. Their relatives lived near by and made frequent visits. I rarely found the house without any guests, which often interrupted interviews.

Also, the presence of children was unavoidable. Conducting interviews under these circumstances was very difficult for me.

Cultural values were strictly followed in the family, particularly by females. Females have to do Purda (that is not show their faces) in the presence of male in-laws and always cover their heads. The family did not like mixed gatherings, and males avoided sitting in a female gathering. Due to this reason, I found interviewing Pavan's father at home quite difficult. Females only wore shalwar-qamiz (traditional dress) and did not like western dresses. Males liked to wear trousers. Some of them wore turbans and some not. Younger members had to give respect to elders. Being the eldest person of the family, decisions about family matters were made by grandma. She even gave instructions on serving guests.

Except for Pavan, all the other extended family children were healthy and studying in main stream schools. No other family member had any kind of special needs. Pavan was very much attached to his father who I found very caring. At home, the grandma took special care of Pavan's food and he showed a great respect for her. For example, during my visits, I found it very interesting that whenever she gave him anything to drink, he

²This area was also commonly known as the red light area.

sat next to her on a settee and drank water/milk with his own hands without spilling it. In school, he used a lidded cup, and even then he did not hold it properly and spilt the drinks all down his neck.

His parents were very worried about his future. However, their involvement in school was not very active. His mother showed her willingness to send him for respite care for short periods but wanted to be assured that the staff should be aware of their culture; whereas, his dad preferred to keep him at home. He thought that Pavan was just like other children and they should look after him like others.

- **Home Language:** Pavan's first language was Punjabi, mostly spoken by elders at home with children. His grandma and other family members spoke Punjabi with him and he tried to copy them. The sounds which he produced, however, were not clear. Other family members - children and adults - spoke a mixed language - Punjabi-English with the main vocabulary being Punjabi - for inter-communication.
- **School:** Pavan was admitted to school at the age of three. He came to school on the school's transport regularly. In the early days of his admission, Pavan was often away, for ill health or family reasons, and this caused him to have difficulty in settling into school. Also he found the separation from his family very difficult. Initially, he did not settle well at school and cried a lot. However, my presence helped in settling him down. He liked to sit with me and responded better in his mother tongue. Later, continuous attendance helped him to make progress in the development of his required skills. He felt more secure and often showed better performance in required tasks. He was fully settled in school now and showing good progress, although very slow.

In class, he was learning basic social skills. These skills were taught in both individual and group environment. He was trying to explore his environment and to initiate social contact with others. He enjoyed school dinners rather than tinned foods. He was also on a toilet training programme.

Both his parents, mother and father, attended parent meetings, but his father was the dominant parent and played a more significant role in Pavan's school life e.g. met the education psychologist, school doctor etc. Staff at the school felt rather frustrated that their questions to Pavan's parents in his home notebook, such as reasons for absence, whether his sleep pattern was disturbed etc, were not answered.

7.3 Case Study Number 2: Ahmed Malik

- ***The Child:*** Ahmed, was an attractive shy little boy of five years old. He had been diagnosed as having microcephaly and severe developmental delay. He had total hearing loss in the right ear but was able to hear with the left ear using a hearing aid. His comprehension and communication were poor although he could make himself understood to some extent to his family. Recently, he had started to vocalise vowel sounds.

Ahmed was able to dress and to undress himself by taking continuous instructions. He was fully toilet trained, except when he accidentally wet himself. His motor skills were normal. He was very babyish in feeding. He mostly chose not to hold a spoon by himself and preferred to be fed by others. Sometimes he wanted to eat independently but ate in hand-over-hand style. His food had to be mashed down as he could not chew properly or swallow lumps, and he often vomited.

- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Ahmed's mother and father were Pakistani Kenyan. The family religion was Islam.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Malik, a slim and small, very sociable, educated woman in her early 40's had had her formal education in Kenya. She worked as a part time teacher in a local mainstream school. She took a full part in her child's education, however, and was very worried about his placement and future. She was fully aware of the national curriculum and provisions but was not satisfied with them. She was also reluctant to contact professionals as she thought they created more problems for parents.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Malik, a very kind and good natured man in his late 40's, was in a well paid job in a local firm. He had his education in Pakistan and Kenya. He came to the UK from Kenya and settled here along with his family. He was an active member of a local volunteer group for children with severe learning difficulties and used to do voluntary driving for other SLD children on Sundays. He spent a considerable amount of time with Ahmed. He loved him very much, and, was very concerned about his son's future.
- ***Siblings:*** Ahmed was the youngest child in a family of three children. He had two sisters, sixteen and thirteen years old, studying in local mainstream schools. Both sisters were very caring, and were very eager to see him progress. The elder sister especially

was very close to him. She was always keen to know about his daily progress in school. She used to check his home-school note book and stuck his school work - which he brought from school - on the walls of her room, with affection.

- ***The Family:*** Ahmed's family was a westernized family who liked to wear western dress and liked western life style. The family was living in a nice house and was well off. Being the youngest family member, Ahmed was the baby of the family. He slept in his parents' bedroom. Ahmed's sisters slept in separate bedrooms. All the family members were very supportive and caring. They preferred him to do nothing for himself, which was not good for his future. The whole family was very concerned about his progress and assisted him in any way.

Ahmed's parents took an interest in school matters. They attended parents meetings. They were happy about the presence of bilingual staff at school. Ahmed's parents were aware of provisions, but were not interested in sending him to any respite care unit or to get help from professionals. They thought these units and professionals created more problems for parents.

- ***Home Language:*** The family spoke a mixed language - English and Punjabi - with a maximum vocabulary of Punjabi words. The two sisters, however, preferred to speak in English. With Ahmed, the family members spoke a mixed language using non-standard signs and symbols which he innovated. This practice made him confused at school where he was being taught Makaton sign language. It was difficult to convince the family that they should be firmer with Ahmed and use Makaton signs, in common with his school practice.
- ***School:*** Ahmed started school at the age of four. He came to school regularly on school transport. He was enjoying his school fully and was gaining confidence to participate in individual or group activities. He was at a pre-verbal speech level and followed a speech therapy programme. He was also visited by an advisory teacher from the local deaf children's unit. At the same time I was assisting him using bilingual instruction, in learning different skills including Makaton sign language.

Ahmed was among the more active members of the class. He loved running about until he was told off by any staff member. His concentration span was very short and could be

easily disrupted by others' noises, which made it difficult for the staff to carry on class work with his full concentration. He also participated in other class activities and liked PE and swimming, but got cold easily.

7.4 Case Study Number 3: Sara Warren

- ***The Child:*** Sara was a six year old, friendly, sociable and enthusiastic little girl. She was adopted by a white family very soon after her birth and now lived with her guardians. She suffered from Down's syndrome, developmental delay, congenital ventricular septal heart defect (repaired), conductive hearing loss, and impaired concentration. She was a girl who was interested in everything happening around her. She was very talkative. Her level of understanding was getting better, but she always preferred to say things rather than to listen. She was toilet trained but was not very reliable, so she made herself wet if she was not told to go to the toilet. She was able to get dressed, undressed, and feed independently. Her motor skills were satisfactory. For the last three years, as I observed, she had a continuous cold and runny nose problem.
- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Sara's natural parents were Indian sikh. Sara's guardians were white Christians. However, Mrs. Warren told me that they did not consider this an issue, as it was Sara's personal matter and she would decide for herself.
- ***Adoptive Mother:*** Mrs. Warren was a good natured woman, in her mid 40's. She was a very co-operative and helpful lady. She did not work outside her house and was busy looking after her children. She was also studying a course in a local college. She adopted Sara when she was only ten days old. She had much experience of fostering children and knew all about the provisions, rules and regulations for special needs children. She was a well organised woman and made her best efforts to make Sara's life sociable. She was well aware of school activities and had clear plans about Sara's future. She often visited school to talk with staff members and the headteacher about Sara's educational goals. I found her a good guardian and can say that Sara was a lucky girl to have such a nice guardian.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Warren was a pleasant man, in his late 40's. He was a maintenance engineer. His behaviour with Sara was also very good. In the absence of Mrs Warren,

he looked after Sara. Sara also showed great affection to him.

- ***Siblings:*** Information about Sara's natural siblings was not available as her natural parents were unaccessible. However, her guardian had a fourteen year old son and a sixteen year old daughter. She lived with them. Both children encouraged Sara in learning constructive skills and building confidence for social life. All three children were well integrated.
- ***The Family:*** Sara's natural parents were Indian sikh. When doctors told them about her condition they willingly declared that anyone could adopt her. However, they told their relatives that Sara was born dead. After that day they had never tried to contact Sara. However, Sara did not know this fact and she considered Mr. and Mrs. Warren her real parents. Sara's adoptive family was very supportive and encouraging.
- ***Home Language:*** Home language is English.
- ***School:*** Sara started school at the age of three years. She came to school on school transport and had school dinners. She came to school happily and went back home happily. She liked to participate in small group tasks and liked school assemblies very much. In class, she shouted a lot, bossed others about, and interfered with their work. She loved the kitchen corner but her time table also included number work, speech, swimming, music, PE and the development of social skills. She was making slow progress in learning her required skills and needed individual help. Her concentration impairment made it difficult for class teachers to work with her.

7.5 Case Study Number 4: Sam Panday

- ***The Child:*** Sam was a lovely, sociable boy of seven years old. He had Down's Syndrome and developmental delay. His motor skills were not very good, although he could walk independently. He spoke with blurred words which were difficult for most people to understand. However, he could explain himself. He was fully independent in toileting, dressing, feeding and in every-day needs. He took an interest in games as well as class work. He liked to interact with other children and did not show any shyness. His behaviour was very unpredictable. Sometimes he became very aggressive, and would

push other children very hard, which was harmful sometimes. With the passage of time, he was getting more sensible and gaining more confidence in his cognitive skills.

- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Sam's dad was a Tamil Hindu whereas his mother was white Christian. But Sam's mother told me that religion was not an issue, it was up to him which he preferred.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Panday was a tall, nice and co-operative white lady. She was a full-time housewife. She lived in her own house with her children. She spent all her time looking after her two children. She had been a paediatric nurse in a hospital but left her job when she had her children. As her husband was not in the UK, she preferred to look after her children herself. She had no desire to return to nursing in the near future. She took a special interest in Sam's education and occasionally discussed his progress and educational goals with the headteacher. She had full information about provisions and the school's curriculum. However, she did not want to utilise any respite care facility. She thought that the mother could look after the child better than anyone else. Her family were living nearby and helped her in taking care of Sam. She was actively involved in the school and came to school as a voluntary helper.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Panday was a medical doctor in a foreign country. He went there six years ago. Every few months he would come to visit his family or they would visit him. This was very disruptive for Sam and his absence affected Sam's behaviour. Although he kept weekly contact with his family on the phone, Sam still missed him very much. In school, during play time, he would make pretend phone calls to his dad. At home, he liked to watch the video of his dad's wedding ceremony and wore a similar kind of dress.
- ***Siblings:*** Sam had one younger sister of four years old, with whom he dwelt affectionately and with love. He did not show any aggression or jealousy to her.
- ***The Family:*** Sam was the elder child in a family of two children. He had a supportive family, specially his mother who was looking after her family alone. The absence of his father, created a huge gap in the progress of his mental development. However, the children were coping with this separation well. His sister loved him very much. At home, both children played together. The family mostly spent their holidays abroad with Mr. Panday.

- **Home Language:** All the family spoke English at home.
- **School:** Sam joined the school at the age of three. He came to school on school transport and had school dinners. In class, he was proceeding very well through the school reading scheme and was on book 20, which was written in English using Makaton symbols and photographs. Although he could read well using symbols, he had not yet graduated to reading actual words. He was also learning sign language, but his mother preferred him not to. She thought Sam's speech was understandable and there was no need for sign language. In this, she overestimated Sam, who spoke in a deep voice which was difficult for others to understand, he needed to learn sign language to convey his meaning to others. He loved swimming and music sessions. He always showed interest in learning more but liked to play alone. He was also on an integration programme and attended another local main-stream school weekly to increase his social and language skills, and to become known to the children of his community.

7.6 Case Study Number 5: Vijay Anund

- **The Child:** Vijay was a big strong, noisy but attractive nine year old boy. He suffered with microcephaly and had shunted hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and severe developmental delay. He occasionally had epileptic fits. He had a bad temper and the frustration characteristic of many fibrosystic children.

His motor skills were very poor, though he had a little independent movement in his arms and legs. He could not walk, but could sit up-right without support and shuffle around on the floor. Due to his restricted mobility outings of any distance had to be made by wheel chair. He was not able to talk and his ability to understand what was going on around him was minimal. He was at a pre-verbal stage, but signed a few words. He had very little comprehension. He had poor coordination and was inclined to be clumsy. In general, he needed individual attention all the time.

- **Family Religion and Ethnic Background:** Vijay's parents were Indian Hindus and had a strong belief in Hinduism.
- **Mother:** Mrs. Anund was a very attractive and nice lady in her early thirties. She was a housewife and helped her husband in their family shop. She was very supportive and

caring to Vijay. Vijay could amuse himself for short periods of time but soon became angry and frustrated. His mother took it very much in her stride and did not find such tantrums difficult to cope with. She was very eager to see Vijay progress. Mrs. Anund did not have any formal education in UK schools, but received her basic education in Kenya.

- **Father:** Mr. Anund was a tall, handsome and caring father in his mid thirties. He was a businessman and always busy in his shop. He always tried to fulfil Vijay's needs at home and school. Mr. Anund had his formal education in Kenya but did not have any formal education in the UK.
- **Siblings:** Vijay was the eldest child in a family of three children. The other two children have normal health. His seven year old younger brother was very affectionate and played with him at home. His brother also helped his mother to look after him. Vijay had a younger sister of two months . He did not show any jealousy towards her.
- **The Family:** Mr. Anund came to the UK with his family from Kenya. The family lived in the upper story of their shop. Both parents were busy running their family business. Vijay's younger brother looked after him in their absence. Due to their business routine, they did not attend the school's formal functions but came to school for Vijay's annual reviews or medical reviews. They often visited school informally to see Vijay's progress and the way the teachers worked with him. Both parents were unhappy about the school, particularly about Vijay's physiotherapy. The school had only one visiting physiotherapist who visited once a week for only one session. It was difficult for her to give time to each child, but Vijay needed regular treatment. Now the family have arranged a private physiotherapist at home. The family also showed great concern about provisions, and were not happy with the professional's attitude. Mrs. Anund told me that they sent Vijay twice to the respite care centre, but decided not to send him again as they did not find it useful.
- **Home Language:** Gujarati was the home language. However, the parents were also very good at English. Vijay responded better in his mother tongue than in English.
- **School:** Vijay started at this school at the age of five years when the family moved to Crownbridge. Before that he was in another special school. He usually came to school

on school transport and had school dinners. He was mostly unhappy, noisy and wanted individual attention in school. Music and swimming were his favourite sessions. He liked to play rolling balls on the floor. Noisy toys attracted him very much. He was a big strong boy who needed special attention, as his behaviour was unpredictable. Often he started moaning and throwing things towards others which was dangerous for other children in the class. Every day, he needed many different items of equipment to help him walk, sit, stand and go out, such as a wheelchair, standing frame, bar to pull himself upright, classroom chair, pedro boots, kaye walker and standing frame. He wore nappies by day and night. He did not co-operate in washing and dressing, but could feed himself. He was doubly incontinent. My presence had had some good effect on his progress in social behaviour. He was much calmer than in the previous year. Physically he was going down hill quickly and was not showing any progress in language or cognitive skills.

7.7 Case Study Number 6: Phool Kapoor

- ***The Child:*** Phool was a nine year old fat, responsive, adaptable and social girl. She was a cheerful and bright child with a strong sense of humour. She had Down's syndrome and developmental delay. She also had speech and language problems. Her motor skills and self help skills were reasonable. She had a boyish nature and liked rough and tumble play such as football, wrestling, etc. She could speak a little, but had very little expressive vocabulary so used sign language to explain herself. She got frustrated when she could not get people to understand her. She was very reliable in toileting, and kept herself clean and dry. Her vision and hearing were normal.
- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Phool's parents were Indian Sikh and had a strong belief in Sikhism.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Kapoor was a very supportive and ambitious woman in her late 30s. She worked on a part time basis in a local hospital as a nurse. She was also actively involved in a local volunteer group. She had the experience of being a Governor in a local mainstream school. She was very interested in my proposal of arranging evening groups for South Asian parents with special needs children. (Unfortunately due to shortage of time I could not implement this idea.)

Mrs. Kapoor was very enthusiastic about Phool's progress, both at school and at home. She gave extra time to Phool to develop her cognitive skills such as reading, writing, colour recognition, etc. She was very supportive towards Phool.

Mrs. Kapoor was born in the UK and had her formal education here. She was fully aware of provisions offered but was not satisfied with them and deliberately tried to avoid professionals. She told me that the lack of knowledge of professionals about South Asian culture created problems for parents. She was also not satisfied with the school's assessment of Phool.

- **Father:** Mr. Kapoor was a good natured man in his early 40's. He was very caring and felt a special attachment towards Phool. He had a very positive approach towards Phool's special needs and had the same love and affection for Phool as his other children. He got worried quickly about any thing which happened to Phool . He was a full-time worker in a car factory. He came to the UK in his teens and was not very fluent in English. Mr. Kapoor did not have any formal education in the UK.
 - **Siblings:** Phool had one older brother of sixteen years and a younger brother of one year. She usually played football with her older brother. She also tried to play with and to look after her younger brother, but could not handle him properly. Her younger brother sometimes tried to copy her, which made her parents worried.
 - **The Family:** Phool belonged to an extended Sikh family. Her parental grandparents also lived with her. In the absence of her parents, her grandparents looked after the children. The family lived in their own big house. The whole family was very caring and supportive. The family's attitude made Phool's behaviour more socially acceptable. The family had a realistic approach towards her special needs and understood her needs very well.
- The parents were very keen for Phool's integration to another school on a part time basis; but did not get any positive response from the school, which made them very unhappy. None of the family felt that Phool imposed any substantial restriction on their social life.
- **Home Language:** Mother could speak good English. However, Punjabi was the home language. Phool could understand her mother tongue easily; however, she also responded to English. Her grandparents were unable to speak English, and Phool's parents were

insistent that Phool must understand Punjabi, as it is the family and Gurdawara language.

- **School:** Phool joined the school at the age of two and a half. She usually came to school on school transport and had school dinners. She loved coming to school. In class she took an interest in group tasks. She often tried to copy other children, which made her teachers and parents worried. She was very quick at learning the bad habits and idiosyncrasies of others. She had her own group of friends in class and was very happy in that group. Her concentration span was very short, and she was distracted very easily by others who worked around her. During physical education (P. E) she liked to sit and watch others, and needed continuous encouragement to finish given tasks. As a bilingual assistant, I worked with her using bilingual instructions, which showed positive effects on her learning process. I noticed that she did not want to do particular tasks with the other teachers, and made false excuses as she was a good actress.

7.8 Case Study Number 7: Ali Aslam

- **The Child:** Ali was a ten year old attractive and chatty boy, diagnosed as microcephalic with developmental delay. His hearing, sight, speech, eating, and motor skills were normal. He was dry and toilet trained, and was independent in his dressing and undressing skills. He was a very responsive, valued and popular member of his class.

He had a good vocabulary, and was among the most able speakers of the school children. He could write and spell his name. He was very caring and wanted to keep his teachers and peers happy. He was obsessive about fish and loved to talk, and be talked to, about them. He was currently living with foster parents. He usually behaved normally but sometimes became very upset due to his family problems.

Ali's life was full of mishaps. When he was six, his parents asked for foster care as they thought they were unable to cope with his special needs. During this time, many events occurred, which caused him psychological disturbance. Many factors involving his parents, foster parents and social services combined to make him more disturbed. Meanwhile his parents split-up and got divorced, which affected his mother's health badly. As a result, social services put the other children in the family into foster care as well. At first, he and his elder brother were fostered by the same family. Later, his brother and younger sister were sent to another foster family, but he lived with the same

foster family. After some time, Ali was sent to another foster family, with whom he was living during this study. In the past, his mother was allowed to see him once a week, but recently social services decided that she could only see him once a month. Ali could not understand why his mother was not coming every week. Such incidents made him mentally disturbed and were affecting his social and educational life.

- **Family Religion:** Ali's natural family was Muslim, although he was fostered by Christian families. Personally he believed in Allah (God) and told me that he was a Muslim. Due to his circumstances he did not have any knowledge of Islam.
- **Natural Father:** He was inaccessible.
- **Natural Mother:** Ms. Aslam was in her late thirties. She was born in Kenya and came to the UK after her marriage. She received her basic education in Kenya and did not have any formal education in the UK. Her mother tongue was Kachi. She could explain herself in English, but did not have full command of the language.

Ms. Aslam did not have a happy married life and got divorced because of her husband's cruel behaviour. Her unsuccessful matrimonial life made her mentally and physically upset which led to her becoming seriously ill. She was admitted to hospital for a long period of time. As she was unable to look after her children and had no close relatives who could look after them, the social services sent all the children to foster care. These incidents made her condition worse. Later, her parents came from Kenya to look after her. Her parents' presence helped a lot in her recovery. Now she was fully recovered and doing part time work. Through court intervention, she got her young daughter back and the elder son started spending two days a week with her. She was very worried about Ali's future. One thing which worried her a lot was that Ali's foster parents were Christian. She told me that she was planning to contact the court to get Ali back, as professionals were making her and her son more disturbed. On the other hand, professionals were taking it as a personal matter. (This is discussed in the next chapters). She was also worried about her future as her husband was still creating problems for her. She was worried about her finances.

- **Natural Sibling:** Ali had one fifteen year old brother and an eight year old younger sister. They both loved him and wanted him at home with them. His younger sister

especially missed him very much and wanted to play with her brother. All the children knew each other very well and were suffering due to such uncertain conditions.

- ***Foster Family:*** Ali lived with white Christian foster parents. Ali 's foster mother was in her late 40s. She was very reluctant to talk about Ali without the permission of the social worker. I tried my best to meet her but she always gave excuses. Ali was more settled with the current foster parents than the previous ones, but he constantly talked about his real family and mother. He wanted to go back to his family, with his sister and brother.
- ***Language:*** Ali was fostered at the age of six. He still remembered a few Urdu songs, and used to sing them with me. His mother tongue was Kachi. His brother and sister were learning their mother tongue.
- ***School:*** Despite the last two traumatic years, Ali made good progress and achieved last year's educational goals. He usually came to school on school transport and had school dinners. He was participating in a programme of study leading to Level one or above of the National Curriculum within the school Curriculum, but surprisingly was not on any integration programme. He participated in all types of class activities except messy things like sticking with glue and playing with playdough etc.

7.9 Case Study Number 8: Asif Mian

- ***The Child:*** Asif was an overweight eighteen year old boy. He had severe learning difficulties, developmental delay, epilepsy and speech and behavioural problems. He was a co-operative child, although he had an element of aggressiveness. He was reluctant to do things which he did not like; if pushed to do them or provoked by staff or children, he fought back , kicking, smacking, punching and screaming loudly. His facial expressions reflected his moods. In an aggressive mood, he started to bite his lips and made a lot of conversation in his own language. He was socially aware of his class fellows, but in an aggressive mood became dangerous to others. He was able to dress and to undress himself fully except fastening the buttons. He was toilet trained and stayed dry all day and night. He liked to go for a walk but become breathless because of his weight. Asif ate his dinner nicely with a knife and folk. He liked listening to music, watching T.V.

and looking through catalogues. Asif always used stereotypical phrases and words in his mother tongue. Mostly he used body language for communication. He conveyed his friendly nature by patting his friends on their backs and legs.

As his mother told me, Asif's problem started at the age of eighteen months when his parents noticed that Asif blinked his eyes unusually. They took him to the local GP, but the doctor told them that it was just their own worries as the child did not have a problem. He would be all right as he grew up. His parents were not satisfied, and took him to another doctor, who also said the same thing. His mother told me about the communication problem which they faced due to their poor English. On the one hand nobody was taking what they were saying seriously, on the other hand they were unable to understand what the doctors were saying properly. Anyway, the parents' continual complaints and regular visits made the doctor take the matter seriously. At the age of two and a half years, the GP referred him to a specialist, who diagnosed that Asif had epilepsy. His mother said, "I was always worried, and at last the doctors diagnosed that he had epilepsy, nothing else, and over the passage of time, he would get better". Asif did not have any fits before the age of two and a half, but would sometimes nod his head and sometimes hit his head on the floor. At the age of three, his mother took him to Bangladesh - for a year- for treatment as someone told them that his condition was due to black magic. He did not get cured and his parents brought him back to the UK. She told me that till the age of five, Asif was able to count up to 20 and say some verses of the 'Quran' (Muslims' Holy book), and was able to speak. He had no other disease, except epilepsy. In order to control the epilepsy he was heavily sedated, but as the frequency of the fits decreased, Asif began to develop quickly and had many other physical problems. He got very hyperactive and became very difficult for his parents to control. As she told me "During that time he was so difficult that my daughters and I shared the parts of the nights among us for his and the other younger children's safety at home". (In their words they devised a rota system to watch him).

At the age of seven, doctors kept saying that he would be all right but his parents were worried that his speech was not coming on. At the age of eight - as she said - " the doctor told me that he was brain damaged. He said, not very much damaged but the kind of damage that might be reversible". Doctors did not explain to them why all these things were happening and how he became brain damaged. His mother said that " it was true

that the medicine reduced the number of fits of epilepsy but ruined the life of our child and the family. He was normal except for having epilepsy, which was a curable disease. It was very difficult to look after him, because of his fits and his aggressiveness.” At the age of eight, the doctors declared Asif to be a brain damaged child with learning difficulties. This discovery made the whole family upset. When I asked how she felt about this news, she replied; "My feelings, our feelings, now I cannot explain, even I cannot explain a single word that all our world became dark and meaningless to us, you have sons and brothers and you can understand better". She cried a lot and I felt guilty at giving her so much pain by asking about her feelings. After this incident they took him to Bangladesh to visit holy places. They thought that maybe this visit would be successful, as Mrs. Mian said; " we thought Allah [God] would put every thing right after this visit. When we came back, his epilepsy was all right but his brain damage was the same, even it is still same and not recovered a bit".

Over the passage of time Asif's body and strength built-up, and his parents kept him in the lower story of the house where they lived. Social services advised that Asif's presence at home could be difficult and dangerous for other family members. A stay in a residential unit would be beneficial for Asif and also for his family. Mrs. Mian told me; " I became very frightened and scared that they want to separate him and I cannot live without him, but what can we do? You know once these people decide to do something nobody can stop them. We have to accept their decisions.”

During this study, Asif was living in a residential unit. He did not like living there but the care unit people took him back by force whenever he had a home visit. His condition deteriorated daily compared to when he was at home. His parents asked the professionals and carers about things that happened to Asif at the care centre but they were not given any satisfactory explanations. For example one day Asif came with a twisted arm and was in pain. His mother asked about it and the carer told her that maybe he fell down during the night. Another day his underpants were full of blood. She asked for an explanation and they said Asif had piles. His parent did not understand why his condition was becoming worse and he was getting new diseases which he had not had before, when he was at home. When I asked why she did not complain about this, she replied "I do not want any clash with these professionals, otherwise you know I am afraid one day they will simply say that you are not able to see him. You know what they have

done with Ms. Aslam". These issues are discussed in detail in chapter 8.

- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Asif's parents were Bangladeshi Muslim. The family religion was Islam.
- ***Mother:*** She was a small, nice lady in her mid 40s. She was very caring and concerned about Asif. She was an emotional person, who loved her eldest son very much. She was a housewife and spent all her time with her other children and family members. She visited Asif twice a week and Asif visited home twice a week. She was very close to Asif. She had a very unrealistic approach towards Asif's special needs and hoped that one day he would be all right. She loved him deeply.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Mian was a quiet man in his mid 50s. He owned a restaurant in the city nearby. He was extremely depressed about his son's special needs, because he was the eldest boy in the family. He never participated in the meetings relevant to Asif's case.
- ***Sibling:*** Asif had three sisters and one younger brother, studying in a mainstream school. All of them were very supportive and loving towards him. They missed Asif a lot, and wished for a better future for him. One sister told me of her future plans, that she would not get married. After finishing her studies she would spend her life taking care of Asif. Asif's condition had affected their family life very much. His sisters in particular were very sensitive on this matter. They often cried during discussions about Asif's condition. They were very angry with the professionals' attitude.
- ***Family:*** Asif's three sisters, one younger brother, one niece, one nephew, brother in-law, and both parents lived together. They were very supportive, loving and concerned about his daily life. They wanted to be informed about all his activities, what he did in school, and at the respite care centre. They were not satisfied with the available provisions from social services and from other agencies dealing with Asif's case. His mother and sisters dealt with meetings and matters relevant to Asif. There was nobody to help them in times of trouble or need, because they did not have any relatives in the UK. In all circumstances they controlled the situation themselves. As his mother said " I sort every thing out with my husband and daughters, because in his early childhood, there was nobody to understand us, we felt ourselves more frustrated and helpless". When I asked her about the current situation, she said, "Do not ask me about this. Our life is nothing,

we are neither living nor dying”.

Asif was five when he joined the school. Mrs. Mian explained Asif’s placement. She said, " We went to see the school, it was heart breaking for us because in our view our child was not so handicapped as to go to a SLD school. The conditions of other children were very much worse and they were physically handicapped. We thought, how will our child cope in this school? It was very difficult for us to send him to this school, but we have to send him to this school as they have made his placement there. And we were not aware what to do. But we knew that in this school he could not learn anything, because of the nature of the school".

His sister replied to the question about his improvement at school . She replied, " No he did not improve at all. He started making silly noises, and before he never used to scream like other handicapped children. He learnt all these things from school".

- **Home Language:** The home language was Bengali. The parents knew little English, but the other children had a good command of English. Asif recognised his first language, and could follow small instructions.
- **School:** Asif usually came to school on school transport and had school dinners. He enjoyed school time. He needed continual encouragement to finish given tasks. As a bilingual assistant, I worked with him using bilingual instructions which showed a positive effect on his learning process and behaviour. Particularly, he felt secure and enjoyed my company.

7.10 Case Study Number 9: Sharun Gopal

- **The Child:** Sharun was a beautiful girl of eighteen with speech delay and behavioural problems, but very aware of her beauty. She was very shy, nervous and hesitant to talk with any unknown person. In particular she was very reluctant to communicate with any unfamiliar white person. At the age of seven months Sharun came to the UK with her family from India. At an early age she was sent to a school for children with moderate learning difficulties. She did not go to school very often and spent two years at home. Later her parents contacted Social Services and got the help of a social worker, as they explained that Sharun was unable to bath herself. Later an educational psychologist

suggested that she needed to go to a school for children with severe learning difficulties.

- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Sharun's parents were Indian Sikh. The family had a very strong belief in Sikhism, and practised strictly.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Gopal was a small, active woman in her mid 40s. She was uneducated and did not know much about dealing with children with special needs. She did not understand English and needed an interpreter for every meeting with school or social services. She was a full-time housewife, as their family tradition did not allow woman to go out of the home for any type of work. She was very rigid in keeping to her old traditional norms and values. During the research period she became pregnant for the 10th time and gave birth to a boy. She also had continual financial worries. Sharun's stubborn temper placed a considerable strain on her mother.
- ***Father:*** Mr. Gopal seemed to be a strange and emotional man in his early 60s. He was unable to do any work and was on social benefit. The burden of a big family was keeping him in continual stress and tension. He was very attached to Sharun and was sensitive to her special needs, and described it as worse than it was. He always underestimated her abilities. He did not let her go out or talk to any third person, especially men, in his presence at home.
- ***Sibling:*** Sharun had two older, and seven younger sisters and brothers. They all went to mainstream schools. Being a special needs girl, nobody was her friend at home. Her best friend was the T.V. Her sisters and brothers did not share any activities with her and always discouraged her.
- ***The Family:*** She belonged to a very strict religious family of thirteen people including her niece. They lived in a three bedroomed council house. (By the end of this study the council gave the family another three bedroomed house just next door, so the family now had a six bedroomed house). The family was not very supportive towards her because they had a large family to look after. They were concerned for her education and independent future. The family circumstances were not good because both parents were constantly suffering with different kinds of illnesses. This affected their children's education. Nobody in the family was employed, and they were living on allowances. Her parents tried to hide her special needs from other relatives. The family were receiving

regular visits from a local social worker to discuss problems related to Sharun. The home was always over crowded, with Sharun and her other younger sisters. Mrs Gopal and the other children formed a close-knit family group and the children were always present at all meetings.

- **Home Language:** The home language was Punjabi. Both parents had very little knowledge of English, which was a hindrance in communicating Sharun's physical and educational condition with professionals. The children were also learning to write and read in their first language. The parents preferred Punjabi to English.
- **School:** She joined *School1* in 1992. Her school attendance records were very poor. She never felt easy about going to school. When I joined the school, with the permission and consent of social services, I started visiting her parents, and tried to make a good relationship with her. On request, social services arranged special transport for her and I used to pick her up from home and take her to school. She never showed any interest in going to school. She preferred to stay at home. Whenever I went to her home she was either sleeping or watching TV (Indian movies or programmes).

She liked to do things in her own way. At the same time her parents did not ask her to do anything and often discouraged her by saying that she was with special needs and would always do things wrong. Her absence from school was not only due to her special needs; her parents were also involved in her absence from school. Every night the whole family watched Indian movies late, till 3 or 4 am and then they slept. Every day I had to prepare her for school. During this time I observed that she could do anything that she wanted. She was aware that she was much more able than others thought her to be. Through my personal efforts she started coming to *School2*. In *School2* she was happy and co-operative with staff and her class fellows. There were two other South Asian girls, with whom she had good eye contact and relationships. In individual tasks, her level of work was good. She was socially an adaptable girl, who behaved very nicely with others. In *School2* she preferred to work and to play with a group of female peers. She enjoyed nearly all the activities which had been arranged within the group or on an individual basis. Sharun's performance on all the tasks presented to her was well below average for her age. Her reluctance to communicate was a major problem, which affected her performance in every day life. She was very independent and could walk,

feed, dress, bath and be fully continent. She had a certain amount of comprehension and started gaining confidence by attending school.

Later, she started attending school regularly on arranged transport without my presence. In the meantime, I came back to the main school, *School1*. My absence from *School2* took her back to her previous condition. She again stopped going to school. There were many factors involved in this. For example, her parents never appreciated her going to school, her English was not very good, in *School2* she was reluctant to talk with white staff and this gave her no interest in *School2*. White staff set some goals which directly clashed with her religion and family norms, such as swimming and talking with males. Ultimately, she refused to return to school after the summer holidays. She was still at home by the end of my research and showed no sign of returning.

7.11 Case Study Number 10: Alia Akmal

- ***The Child:*** Alia was a nice, pleasant, likeable 16 year old girl. She had severe Bronchiectasis [which means continuous infection in the lungs which required antibiotic treatment on a regular continuous basis] and suffered from a chronic respiratory condition, which resulted in her having an almost continuous infection in her lungs. She required regular physiotherapy twice daily, once at school and once at home. She had special educational needs due to moderate learning difficulties. Alia's basic skills were limited. She was shy and quiet, but willing to communicate with people she knew, in a familiar atmosphere. She could initiate simple conversations with staff and friends. However, her comprehension of the spoken language was severely delayed which made it difficult for her to continue conversations or discussions. Sometimes she was surprisingly quick with answers, but usually she was held back by a lack of understanding, and difficulty in expressing herself. It occasionally made her frustrated. She was easily hurt and often cried.
- ***Family Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Alia's parents were Bangladeshi Muslims. The family believed in Islam.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs. Akmal was a slim little Bengali woman in her late 40s. She was a full-time housewife and spent her time looking after the children. Her husband died a

few months ago. She faced financial problems after the death of her husband and was desperate for help. Her appearance and way of life reflected this clearly. She was very concerned about Alia's future. She wanted to marry her daughter to any boy who could cope with Alia's special needs. She liked to send her daughter to school, but was worried about the atmosphere of the school, and whether the school was fulfilling her religious and cultural needs. She was also not satisfied about the physiotherapy treatment given at the school.

- **Father:** Mrs. Akmal told me that Alia's father died recently. He was unemployed and on social benefits.
- **Sibling:** Alia had 4 siblings, all of them boys, the eldest being 18 and the youngest 5 years. All of them were very caring. The eldest one recently got married and the other three were studying in mainstream schools. They helped Alia in doing household work, and encouraged her to speak more.
- **The Family:** Alia lived in a family of five persons in a Social Services three bedroomed house situated in the area where most of the South Asian community lived. Alia and her younger brother were sharing a bedroom with their mother.

The family had a good relationship with their neighbours. Every time the family was visited, three or four neighbouring women or girls were present at their home. It provided an opportunity for Alia to mix with other community members, but she was very shy and hesitated to talk to anyone. At the same time her family did not encourage her. The family did not have any information about the education system or the school's activities. The family's financial condition was not good enough to fulfil their everyday requirements. On every visit, Alia's mother mentioned her financial problems.

- **Home Language:** The home language was Bengali. Alia's mother could not understand or speak English. However, the other children knew English.
- **School:** Alia started at the unit once a week from April 1994, and full time from June 1994. Her relationship with her peers was good. She participated in all activities, but was not strong physically and needed to rest occasionally due to her bad chest. Alia's social development and her academic progress were both hindered by her lack of comprehension and poor attendance. She was felt to be making very slow educational progress, one of

the reasons being her frequent absences from school because of medical reasons. Alia was learning to give opinions and tried to work independently to the best of her limited ability; however, she needed to improve her confidence and self-esteem. Her lack of confidence meant she needed a lot of individual help and encouragement. Despite all her difficulties and her poor health, she was a brave girl who did her best to cope with all this.

7.12 Case Study Number 11: Asma Amir

- ***The Child:*** Asma was an 18 year old shy girl with dark features, who suffered from Down's Syndrome, Ventricular septal defect, Atlanto Axial problems (instability in her neck) and who could not participate in some physical activities. Asma also coped with mild right sided Hemi-Paresis (muscular weakness), had severe learning difficulties and speech and language problems.

Asma's health was satisfactory and she did not take any medicine. She was able to walk independently but dragged one foot along side and walked awkwardly. She was also able to dress and undress herself, to use a knife and fork, to drink from a cup without spilling, to wash and dry dishes and to brush the carpet. She was also able to understand simple commands in both English and Bengali but preferred to listen to her mother tongue. She used single words and gestures in order to demonstrate her needs, and felt relaxed and was more likely to do things herself when others showed appreciation of her. She could copy very neatly from books and also from the blackboard. She did not go out unaccompanied.

- ***Family's Religion and Ethnic Background:*** Asma's parents were Bangladeshi Muslims. The Family believed in Islam.
- ***Mother:*** Mrs Amir was an uneducated elderly Bengali woman in her late 60s. She could speak only Bengali and was a very isolated woman, who did not participate in social activities. Asma was very dependent on her mother and things had to be done by her, which put a lot of stress and burden on Mrs. Amir. She did not get any help from anybody. She thought that it was her responsibility to look after her daughter and give her every comfort in life. She was worried about the mixed education of school,

and was very concerned about Asma's involvement in class activities with male peers. Asma's mother was not satisfied with the provisions provided by social services, which also made her very tense. She was worried that nobody was giving her any guidance about her daughter. She was very sad at her daughter's special needs, and was unable to make plans for Asma's future.

- **Father:** Asma's mother told me that he died in 1991. He was unemployed and on social benefit. He was in his 70's.
- **Siblings:** Asma had one older sister. She was divorced and lived in another city with her two children. She was also unhappy about school, provisions and social services attitude.
- **The Family:** In Asma's extended family was one older married sister who lived elsewhere. Her own family lived in a three bedroomed house provided by social services. The family was very sociable. Asma's mother told me that the neighbours were co-operative with them and helped them in need.

Asma's family was financially poor and was on social benefits. Her mother did not help with Asma's educational programmes, as she was an old lady and did not have enough energy to cope with all the things at home. Also she was not an educated lady.

- **Home Language:** The home language was Bengali. Asma's mother could not understand or speak English. However, the other sister knew English.
- **School:** Asma joined the unit nearly two years previously after the death of her father, when she moved here from another city where she used to go to a special needs school. Currently, she was studying among 17 children with mental and handicapping conditions. She had a positive attitude towards learning and was working towards the targets for key stage one, within the school curriculum. She was a very enthusiastic girl and wanted to join in all the activities at school. She was able to sort colours but could not identify them individually. Her severe learning difficulties meant she needed a structured programme to meet her specific educational and social requirements. She also needed a lot of encouragement to use sign language for communication. The unit used very little Makaton, and did not give support to children using sign language. Personally I felt that

it was very important to use sign language as a means of communication, for the benefit of Asma's future.

8 Analysis of Fieldwork Concerning the South Asian Parents and Families

8.1 Introduction

The analysis presented in this chapter revolves around 11 South Asian SLD children - 6 boys and 5 girls enrolled in the two SLD schools that were the particular focus of study - and their families. The ethnic background of the selected group is shown in Table 3.1. The members of the group studied cover almost all the main ethnic groups and countries of the Indian sub-continent and accounted for 85% of the South Asian SLD pupils in the city of Crownbridge. Hence, it could be considered that these eleven cases give a good picture of the situation in the city. The detailed introduction to these cases is given in Chapter 7. In this chapter we analyse the information gathered from parents and families about their personal experiences of having a special needs child, their attitude towards the child's special needs, the pattern of using the available provision, and problems related to the education of the children with special needs.

The information presented here is collected through formal and informal interviews (details are given in Section 3.5.2), courtesy phone calls, courtesy home visits, informal gatherings at parents' and the author's home and the author's personal observations. (See Appendix C.1 for the set of questions used or the topics focused on in these meetings and interviews). During these meetings the respondents were encouraged to be frank in their assessments and were repeatedly assured of the confidentiality of their comments. There is therefore no reason to suspect them of having been constrained in expressing negative or critical comments. (Some transcribed samples of parents' interviews are given in Appendix D)

Having a child with special needs could put various limitations on parents' working conditions and could cause extra financial burdens on the family's finances; the related issues are discussed in Section 8.2. The general experiences of having a special needs child in the family is discussed in Section 8.3. The presence of a special needs child in the family could

have a variety of consequences on the other family children. The related matters are discussed in Section 8.3 and Section 8.4. In South Asian families, relatives and other family members could be a vital source of help for the parents of a special needs child. This section also discusses the parents' pattern of getting help from their relatives and other family members.

Parents' education, and communication problems with white professionals are discussed in Section 8.5. Parents' attitude towards teaching their mother tongue to the children with special needs is discussed in Section 8.6, and the home-school relationship is discussed in Section 8.7.

Parents were asked about any particular training which they felt could be useful for them; their responses are discussed in Section 8.8. The pattern of parents' use of community care and other provisions are discussed in Section 8.9. Parents were also asked about any particular provision which they felt could be useful for them as well as for their special needs children. Their responses are discussed in Section 8.10. The matters regarding the placement of children in SLD schools are discussed in Section 8.11.

8.2 Families' Finances and Parents' Working Conditions

Having a special needs child could put various limitations on the parents' working conditions as the every-day care of a special needs child needs special attention. It could also put extra expense on the family's finances. This section has three subsections. These subsections discuss the working conditions of the parents and the effect of the child's special needs on their working conditions. The last subsection discusses the financial conditions of the families and mentions some of the financial worries which families were facing due to their special needs child.

Table 8.1: Working conditions of the mothers

Status	No of Mothers	Percentage
House Wife	8	73%
Part time work	2	18%
Self Employed	1	9 %
Total	11	-

Table 8.2: Working conditions of the fathers

Status	No of dad	Percentage
Social Benefit	1	11%
Working	6	67%
Self Employed	2	22%
Total	9	-

8.2.1 Mothers' Working Conditions

In the South Asian families investigated, the concept of women was much the same as it is in the Indian sub-continent. In almost all families, the mothers were responsible for the home and children's affairs; particularly, the every day care of the special needs child which is obvious from Table 8.1. From this table it can be seen that no mother was employed full-time. Only two mothers, about 20%, were engaged in part time jobs and one mother was helping in the family business. The proportion of mothers working was similar to that found in one previous survey, but lower than in another: (i) Family Fund applicants in which 20 percent of mothers worked part-time and 4.2 per cent full time; (ii) 1974 Household Survey, in which 27.9 percent mothers worked part-time and 12.8 percent full-time [quoted in Glendinning 1986].

In interviews, the mothers were asked about their intention to do any paid job. With the exception of two mothers, they explained that the child's special needs, family set-up and cultural values were the main limitations. They mentioned that their child's every day care did not allow them to go out for any paid job. As Alia's mother said:

"You know Alia is now a grown-up girl and she has brothers at home. I have to be very careful as she usually creates embarrassing situations. I cannot leave her alone. At the same time, she is unable to do any thing for herself and makes too much mess."

On another occasion she said:

"Because of her bad chest infection, I stopped sewing for people, and that was the only way to maintain our financial needs. You know with younger children income support is not enough to meet their every day needs. I wish I could go out for paid

job. One of my friends is working. Last month she bought a very beautiful gold bangle [showed a sign of hopelessness] but due to Alia's condition, I cannot go out for any paid job."

Mrs. Singh (Pavan's mother) said:

"I do not have enough energy to do paid job. His sleep is not good. I have to take care of him all night. It makes me so tired; especially now that I am pregnant, which makes me more upset and tired."

Sam's mother left her job to look after her children and did not have any intention of doing any kind of paid job. Her husband was working abroad and she was looking after the family in the UK alone; Sara's mother told me that she did not have enough time, as she was doing a part time course of study and also looking after her children. Two mothers who were doing part time jobs expressed their feelings in the following ways. Mrs. Malik said;

His [Ahmed] dad's income is not enough to meet the family's high expenditures. You can see that every day we have guests¹ in our house. I have to do some paid job to share the family expenses.

Mrs. Kapoor said:

"I cannot do a full time job. You know my mother-in-law and father-in-law are living with us and they are old. I have to look after them as well. At the same time, I have to drop and pick up the children from school; it doesn't allow me to do a full time job. I can only work when the children are at school. You know our financial condition is not good. Entertaining frequent guests cost a lot, and you need money to spend on the house, don't you."

In summary, it could be said that some mothers were interested in having paid jobs, but the child's special needs, family and cultural values restricted them from doing so.

8.2.2 Fathers' Working Conditions

In the selected group, four families were on social benefits. In two cases, the fathers had died; in one case the mother was a single parent and in another case, due to his medical condition,

¹ It was noticed that family guests were very common in some cases. Particularly, in three cases, I never saw the family without any guest. Although parents saw it as an extra burden, it was part of their social life.

the father was unable to do any work. In all other cases, fathers were responsible for the family earnings. Table 8.2² shows that 67% of fathers were employed full time and 22% were self-employed. In other words about 90% were working. It was noticed that the special needs of the special needs child and the family's social set up along with no extra financial support from other family members, put a great burden on fathers. This kept them very busy and made it difficult for the author to access them for interviews, particularly in those cases where fathers were self employed. Due to their financial liabilities, they were unable to spend much time with their special needs children.

In summary, in most cases fathers had the responsibility for family earnings which kept them busy and made it difficult to spare time for their children.

8.2.3 Financial Worries

The parents were asked about any financial worries caused by the child's special needs which they thought were difficult to cope with. Although all parents mentioned that the child's special needs caused an extra burden on the family financially, only three families who were on social benefits and income support mentioned any serious financial worries. They mentioned, that on the one hand, the amount of allowances was not enough to fulfil the family needs, but on the other hand, the child's handicapping conditions did not let them do any paid job. As Asma's mother said:

"I am an old woman. Every day she makes a couple of dresses messy. I do not have a washing machine. I mentioned the problem to my social worker, but, nobody has solved the problem. I wash her clothes by hand. She wants to watch T.V but we do not have enough money to live on so how could I buy a T.V for her! I take her to neighbours who sometimes don't like her visiting them as she is mentally handicapped. If we had television, at least she could stay at home rather than having to face others harsh looks."

In another interview she said:

"I have nobody to earn for us. Her [Asma's] father has died and we are on social benefits which are not enough to fulfil our requirements."

²In Table 8.2 the number of fathers are 9 as the father of two children had died.

In some families, the number of visiting guests was high, which, on the one hand, put an extra financial burden on the family and on the other hand made the house over crowded.

In summary, although, parents mentioned that the child's special needs put an extra financial liability on them, only three of them, who were on social benefits, mentioned any serious financial worries. In all the other cases, it appeared that parents were managing their finances from their own means.

8.3 Parents and Family Members' Experiences of Having a Special Needs Child

In this section we discuss parents and family members' personal experiences of having a special needs child in the family. The section has four subsections. In the first subsection we discuss the parents' attitude towards the child's special needs. Having a special needs child in the family could put a lot of stress on parents. Section 8.3.2 discusses parental stress. The presence of a special needs child at home could have a wide variety of effects on the family's social life, and the other family members. The issues are discussed in Section 8.3.3 and 8.3.4.

8.3.1 Parents' Attitude Towards the Child's Special Needs

The parents' attitude towards the child's special needs was from both ends of the continuum. For example, when a South Asian couple was told that the new born baby was with Downs' Syndrome, they abandoned her for adoption. Sara's adoptive mother said:

"Social services told me that her parents left her for adoption and then I thought why don't I adopt her, as she was already in foster care with me from immediately after her birth in hospital."

In those families where parents were educated or one of them had an experience of UK schooling, the parents' attitude towards the child's special needs was more realistic, particularly among those families who were told about the child's special needs at birth. They had accepted the child's special needs and generally felt easier about going along with it. As Mrs. Panday said:

"At his [Sam's] birth things were smooth and good. Nothing was wrong. When I gave birth, the nurse gave him to me, to have a look at my new born baby. When I

saw his hands I did not believe it and was astounded to see that my baby was going to suffer all his life with Down's Syndrome and that was shocking, very shocking for us. But it was a bitter reality which we had to accept."

Mr. Kapoor said:

"Doctors explained to us very clearly about Phool's special needs. We are unfortunate that God gave us a special needs child. It wouldn't be good for Phool if we did not accept her special needs. I know many members of our community believe that visiting holy places could cure her. Many of them advised us to take her to holy places. But we know it would not make any difference. She is a special needs child and will stay all her life like this."

In cases where the parents knew about the child's special needs later, they had not, mentally, accepted it completely. Some of them experienced uncertainty before a firm diagnosis was made and some of them still thought that one day their child would become normal. For example, Mrs. Mian said:

"I was always worried about Asif that some thing was wrong with him. I took him to the doctors who always said its just your love for your boy otherwise everything is all right. Nothing to worry about. A couple of year later, they told us that he had a sort of brain damage; this statement changed our life. We took him everywhere where anybody told us there might be a hope that he would get better. I took him to so many holy places to visit but his condition is the same, it has not changed at all. We still hope that Allah [God] might cure him from his this condition. "

Alia's mother said:

"In her childhood she was all right and then she had typhoid which created all these problems. It is our bad luck that we have got a daughter with this serious condition which could last for life."

Sharun's mother said:

"It is not fair to us that God gave us a daughter like her, it would be much better if she had been born dead or God took her back in her early childhood; at least we would be in a better situation to look after our other children."

Mrs. Malik said:

"It really takes a lot of courage to accept that there is something seriously wrong with your child. Nobody else can imagine the difficulties and problems of the family, unless they have been through these experiences. It is the love of parents who can not bear to hear any bad news about their child. On the other hand, professionals are doing their job without any sympathy, or knowing the feelings of the parents. . . . We had suspicions about Ahmed's hearing but were not sure about it. He was two years old and it was his hearing test. After the test the doctor came out and said that your son has total hearing loss in one ear and has partial hearing in the other, and he left us alone there. He did not even say a single word of sympathy. Neither, did he give any encouragement to us nor any suggestion about Ahmed's future treatment. That day we felt extremely sad. You can imagine what our condition would be after hearing that heartbreaking news."

It was noticeable that only one mother had a clear plan for her child's future, whereas, the others did not have any arranged or organised plan to work with their SLD children. At the same time, some of them were not providing an appropriate home environment to help their special needs child towards his/her independence. For example, in Sharun's case, her parents underestimated her abilities, which was shaking her confidence in participating fully in her family's social life. During my home visits her sisters and mother always kept saying that she didn't know how to sit, how to talk and how to do any work, and Sharun was sitting very sadly listening to all these discouraging remarks by her own family members.

In two cases the families were doing every thing for their children; which again was not good for their children's future. In one case, the parents were over-estimating their child's abilities and were creating problems for setting educational goals for the child. For example, Mrs. Panday said that there was no need for Sam to learn Makaton to communicate with other children. She thought that Sam's speech was normal, whereas the actual situation was that the child was speaking with a deep voice which was not clear and was difficult for others to understand.

In summary, it was noticed that families who were told about the child's special needs at birth felt easier about accepting it. However, the parents who came to know in later stages had mixed attitudes. Some of them accepted the child's special needs and some of them were still

uncertain. Most of the parents, even though they had accepted the child's special needs, did not have any organised plan for working with the child. Some of the parents were not providing a good environment for the child to learn to live independently.

8.3.2 Parents and Stress

Having a special needs child puts an enormous stress on parents. As Mrs. Mian said:

"Before the birth of a child every parent has high hopes and sweet dreams to enjoy the life of parenthood. We made so many plans about Asif's future. You can see he is the eldest boy in our family. We thought he would help his dad in his business. He was our hope for the future. But, all of a sudden after the statement of his brain damage, every thing went wrong and the world became dark for us. Now we are not sure about his future."

Mrs Panday said:

"I think subconsciously, whenever you have a child born to you, you have certain dreams of a complete healthy happy family. The birth of a child with special needs not only shatters your dreams but also makes you psychologically depressed and gives extra stress about the child's future."

It was clearly noticed that the parents were under continuous stress. Apart from some family members, they did not find anyone else who could understand their problems and stress. Some times the parents hesitated even to talk with their friends or relatives about their worries. Almost all parents mentioned their loneliness. As Mrs. Anund said:

"Sometimes I avoid telling my problems to my own sister or family members, because I do not want their sympathy always. And sometimes I hesitate to ask their opinions, I talk about Vijay's problems all the time. Now, I only share my pains and worries with my husband."

Mrs. Singh said:

"Even though our house is full of people; some times I feel so lonely in myself that I cannot stop my tears."

Table 8.3: Position of children in the families

Position in the family	Number of families
Eldest	3
Middle	4
Youngest	4

It was also noticed that the parents were doubly apprehensive. Firstly, the special needs conditions of the child smashed their dreams and ambitions; particularly where the child was the eldest son. Table 8.3 shows the position of the children in their families. In three cases the children were the eldest sons. In South Asian culture, after the father, the eldest son is considered the head of the family. He is supposed to share the father's responsibilities and to look after the parents in their old age. The presence of a special needs child shattered the parents dreams as well as making them psychologically depressed.

Secondly, the community's negative attitude was hurting them most. A few members of the community thought that a special needs child was a curse because of parents' sins, or sometimes the mother was blamed. As Mrs. Singh said:

"In our whole family I am the only mother who gave birth to a special needs child. Though the family members did not say anything to me I can feel they all are blaming me for this."

Mrs. Kapoor said:

"Nobody can feel the deep sorrows of our heart. I did not find anyone with whom I could share my experiences openly. Every one started giving suggestions which seemed to me that they were blaming us for our child's special needs. Particularly I feel more unfortunate when she [Phool] does something wrong in gatherings. People do not consider her special needs; they directly blame us for not teaching her manners."

Mrs. Gopal said:

"We never hurt anybody. I don't know why God gave us a special needs daughter. Nobody can feel our pain until they've been through this experience. The thing

which hurts me the most is the behaviour of some of our relatives and community members who do not let their children talk with Sharun, as if it is our fault for giving birth to a special needs child."

Mrs. Mian said:

"I know you [author] are very kind and doing a very good job in school. I know you are very sympathetic with us. But your feelings are no more than the tip of an iceberg.... Whenever, I look at him [Asif], it goes straight into my heart. I know he wants to say something to me but he is unable to do so. I wish I could understand - I could understand a little bit. But no..!" (And she cried a lot)

Mr. Mian said:

"I only avoid gatherings because every body ask me about the latest condition of Asif, which makes me sad and upset."

Mr. Singh said:

"I do not understand why people take so much interest in Pavan. Every body starts giving suggestions about him. It makes me upset and I feel guilty that the special needs of the child is due to our negligence."

Mr. Malik said:

"This child has made me older. Unconsciously, I feel worried about him all the time."

Mrs. Malik said:

"Ahmed becomes very excited whenever any guests come to us. He doesn't let me do any cooking or cleaning. It makes me very tense that he might do something dangerous or hurt himself. We pay extra attention to take care of him in the presence of guests. Some times I think that I should not invite anybody home as I cannot attend to them properly."

Mrs. Mian told me about her husband:

"He was a jolly man but Asif's special needs made him very serious. Now he neither talks much, nor laughs much. He avoids gatherings. He is a totally different man."

Mrs. Anund said:

"I am always tense, I am five months pregnant now and keep praying for a healthy baby. You know if you have the experience of a child with special needs, you cannot get rid off this tension until you give birth to a normal, healthy child; can you?"

In summary, these examples clearly show the stress of the child's special needs on the parents' life. From these examples it is obvious that the community members' attitude towards special needs children and their parents was not sympathetic. Parents feel that they are alone in the struggle of bringing up their child.

8.3.3 Child's Special Needs and Parents' Social Life

Parents were asked about any restriction which their child's special needs imposed on their social life. Answers to this question were mixed. Some parents felt that the child's special needs did not impose any limitation on their social life, whereas, others said the child's special needs did limit their social life. Some mothers said that they did not make any difference between their normal and special needs child and did not think the special needs child posed any serious limitation on their social life. But it was noticed that the child's special needs was affecting their social life. For example, in the very first meeting Mrs. Anund said that she was planning to see her relatives in Kenya, but, by the end of this study she was still unable to do so. At every meeting she mentioned that she could not find any one who could look after her son (Vijay) in her absence. I do not know whether she could make it in the future! As the headteacher of *School I* said;

"The biggest hurdle with [South] Asian parents of children with learning difficulties is the old chestnut of acceptance of the child. Culturally, the [South] Asian parents sometimes have much to contend with, with their family group not understanding the condition of the child."

8.3.4 Siblings and the Special Needs Child

Having a special needs child in the family could have a wide variety of consequences for the other children. The parents were asked to express their experiences and concerns about their other children. One common answer of all the parents was, the presence of a special needs

child in the family did affect the other children's performance and behaviour. The parents were unable to give as much time to the other children in the presence of the special needs child. But one thing about which some of the parents showed their deep concern was the effect of the special needs child on younger children. As Mrs. Kapoor said:

"It worries me a lot. Ramo (Phool's younger brother) copies her [Phool] all the time; he does what she does. Every day she comes back home from school with a new naughty thing. And he learns so quickly, I couldn't believe it."

During an interview with the sibling, Sharun's youngest sister said:

"She is very lucky that she does nothing and all the time just watches movies and listens to music. I don't want to go to school either; it would be fun. I want to be like her."

Another of Sharun's sisters said:

"Mum never asks her to do anything, she always asks us. She also ask us to do her things. She can do every thing but she doesn't; she just shouts and abuses us and mum too."

Mrs. Kapoor said:

"Hernam (Phool's elder brother) sometimes asks me if Phool's special needs is genetic. Will it effect my children also?"

Siblings of the families were asked about their feelings about having a special needs brother or sister at home. Most of the siblings had deep affection for their special needs brother or sister. For example Ali's sister said:

"Some times I want to play with my brother but he does not live with us. You know I gave him one pound on Eid; he was very happy and wanted to come home with me."

Vijay's brother said:

"I wish he was normal. We would go out together; play together and there would be lots of fun to do together; but I don't want to play with him because he cannot do any thing. Sometimes I don't want to give him my toys as he breaks them, but I always give them to him because he cannot fight with me for them."

Asif's sister said:

"They [health authority] don't allow him to live with us. We are not satisfied with the provision of the care unit for our brother. After my studies, I will not marry, and will keep Asif with me and take care of him."

In summary, these examples show the effect of a special needs child on siblings. In two cases in particular, the presence of a special needs child was having a negative effect on other children.

8.4 Every-day Care of a Special Needs Child

In interviews the mothers were asked about any help they received from their husbands in the every-day care of their special needs child. It was noticed that the majority of South Asian fathers did not share the responsibility of every-day care for their special needs child. Only three fathers shared some of the responsibilities which helped to reduce the stress of the mothers. It was also noticed that South Asian mothers did not like to ask for any help. For example, Mrs. Singh said:

"No, I cannot let him [Mr. Singh] do these things. What will the opinion of me in the community be if Pavan changes the nappies of his son. It would be insulting for me and for my family."

Mrs. Anund said:

"He [Mr. Anund] is earning money for the family and I am looking after the children. I don't think there is any need to ask him for any help. Vijay is my son and it is my moral duty to look after him... Anyway he is very kind. On weekends he spends most of his time looking after Vijay. He also helps me in household work."

Mrs. Gopal said:

"I don't think there is any need to ask him [Mr. Gopal] to share the every day responsibility of looking after Sharun. She is a grown up girl. You know; it would be shame on us to ask him to give her a bath or change her pads in periods. I and my daughters manage all this."

In summary, in all cases the mothers had the responsibility of looking after children; particularly the everyday-care of special needs child. Very few fathers shared these obligations.

8.4.1 Help From Relatives

In South Asian families other family members could be a vital source of help for the parents of special needs children. Parents were asked to describe the practical help and the emotional support they received from their own families. Three parents were getting help from their parents, sisters or brothers as they were living with them. Explaining the advantages of the extended family system Mrs. Kapoor said:

"It is very helpful that we are living in an extended family. Whenever we want to go for outings, her [Phool's] grand parents look after her. At the same time, our parents' personal experiences are very beneficial to us."

Mrs. Singh said:

"He [Pavan] is very attached to his grandma. During the day time, she helps me look after him. It makes it easy for me to finish housework and to take some rest."

Three mothers' parents were living near by. These mothers told me that some times they got help from their parents and other family members for a short period of time. As Mrs. Anund said:

"When my mum was alive, she looked after him a lot. Vijay was also very attached to her. But now it is difficult to leave him with anybody for a long period. Now my brother often comes to help me. But he is a student. He cannot spare too much time and I also do not want to disturb him too much."

Mrs. Panday said:

"Not very often, but some times I leave him with my mother. I have never left him for all day. Whenever we visit them, my parents and other relatives become more protective of him, as he is not a normal child and can always do something wrong. Someone has to keep an eye on him all the time which makes it difficult for them to look after him."

Some other parents do have their relatives living near by but they accepted very little help from them. They did not find other family members very cooperative and the parents avoided getting any sort of help from them. As Mrs. Kapoor said:

"The family is unwilling to accept Phool because of her handicapped condition. They do not let their children play with her or touch her. So we do not leave her with anybody."

Similar types of parents' findings are reported in Glendinning [1986].

In summary, the general impression from these families is that except for those who were living in extended families, parents did not get very much assistance from their relatives. Some of the parents did not accept help as they thought others had their own commitments. And some times they did not find other family members or relatives' attitudes very sympathetic or helpful.

8.5 Parents' Education and Communication Problems

Table 8.4: Parents education (varying from primary to degree level)

Parent	UK	Abroad	Total	Percentage	Un-educated	Percentage
Father	3	4	7	78%	2	22%
Mother	4	3	7	64%	4	36%
Total	7	7	14	-	6	-

The parents' education is shown in Table 8.5. The table shows that 78% fathers and 64% mothers were educated, whereas, 22% fathers and 36% mothers were uneducated. Some of the fathers who had their education abroad did not have a good command of English. The home language of the children was their mother tongue. In many cases, communication with white staff was not an issue as either both parents could speak English or one of them had a good command of English. But, in three cases, the parents were in need of an interpreter for communication with white professionals.

8.6 Parents' Attitude Towards Mother Tongue

During interviews, parents were asked about the role of their mother tongue in their child's future. Nine³ out of 11 showed great interest in teaching the child in his/her mother tongue; although they were equally interested in English. As Mrs. Anund said:

He is unable to go out by himself. We have to take care of him all his life. You see at home, family members speak Gujarati with him, whereas, at school teachers speak English with him. It would be good for him if he could understand English, but it is more important if he understands Gujarati."

Mrs. Kapoor said:

"We know English is important but Punjabi is our Gurdawara (temple) language. To make her sociably acceptable, the knowledge of her mother tongue is very important."

Mr. Gopal said:

"Most of our relatives are unable to speak English. It will be good for her to understand both languages. The knowledge of English will help her to deal with white people and knowledge of Punjabi will help her to understand her own community."

Mr. Kapoor argued about bilingual support in school:

"It would be much better if [South] Asian children could be taught in English as well as in their mother tongue. Due to your [the author's] work with her in both languages, we could clearly see the change in Phool's attitude. It is now easy for her grand parents to understand her. It is also easy for her to attend 'Gurdawara' functions and mix with other community members."

In summary, parents argued that any opportunity in schools for learning their mother tongue would be very beneficial for special needs children. They also mentioned that the knowledge of English for South Asian SLD children would be equally as important as the knowledge of their mother tongue.

³In one case the child's mother was a white lady and in the other case the child was adopted by a white family.

8.7 Parents' School Visits and Home-School Relationship

One particular issue which was raised in all previous studies was the lack of South Asian parents' school visits (See Section 2.3.1). The situation was not the same in this study. Except for social gatherings like coffee mornings, many parents came to school for visits. Except for three parents, which was only 27% of the 11 parents, the parents attended parents meetings, annual review and medical for their children.

In three cases the number of parental visits was very low. Three main reasons are mentioned here. Firstly, communication was the main problem. It often happened that an interpreter was not provided, which embarrassed both parents and professionals. As mentioned earlier, I was rarely called into any parents meeting, annual review or medical.

Secondly, due to their communication problem, some parents felt shy about coming to school. They thought that since they were unable to speak English teachers might think less of them. As Alia's mother said:

"I am not educated. I do not understand their language and the difficult words [terminology]. They are professionals. They know how to teach Alia. I don't think there is any need to visit the school very often."

Thirdly, the attendance of the South Asian parents at the school's social gatherings was very low. Nearly half of the parents said that the odd timings of the meetings were the main reason, the rest said that such gatherings were not useful.

One thing which I noticed very clearly, in 8 cases, was that the parents were deeply concerned about their child's education. Vijay's parents usually visited school at odd times without letting the teacher know. When I asked why they did so, they told me:

"We want to see that how are they working with our child. But whenever we visited the school we saw him playing down in one corner by himself and nobody was working with him. Whenever we asked the teacher why he was playing there alone; they had one pet answer. 'He just went there, because the class assistant has just finished working with him'. We are not satisfied with the way the school works with our child."

Parents always asked me about their child's condition and educational progress in the school. I asked them why they did not ask the class teachers. In almost all cases the answer

was that we know you are there and can take care of our child's needs, or at least will tell the teachers about them.

Some of the parents were not happy with the staff attitude. Many parents were not aware of their children's educational programmes. As Mrs. Kapoor said:

"I always asked the teacher to send the plans of the term and some language work so that we could do something at home with Phool; but she never did."

Some times, it happened that during the annual review the teacher told the parents that the child did not know something, and then parents argued that the child did. For example, in one annual review the teacher told Phool's parent that she could not recognise colours. The mother disagreed with her. She discussed this matter with me and the teacher concerned and demonstrated her great concern.

At the same time some incidents happened at school in which teachers created an embarrassing situation for the South Asian parents. After these incidents the parents showed less interest in meeting staff members.

For example, one day Phool's teacher told me that there was some problem at Phool's home because her mother had taken Phool's younger brother and left the family and gone to her parents' home. She asked me to find out the truth, because they thought this was causing Phool's bad behaviour at school. I told her that in our South Asian culture we often visit our parents and stay there for many days without any special reason. I did not think there was anything wrong. After school I visited the family, and found that it was as I had told the teacher.

Giving another example, one day, at Asif's medical, his mother brought a full dish of 12 Samosas for the whole class. The class teacher thought they were just for Asif and rang to tell the doctor that Asif was on a diet, but his mother had sent a full dish of Samosas for him. It created a critical situation in school. This incident not only angered Asif's mother but also made her unhappy, wondering why the teacher did not ask her before ringing the doctor.

In another case, after one parents' meeting, Mrs. Kapoor phoned me to ask why I was not there. When I asked about the meeting she said: "It was so so...". Next day at school, during the tea break, the relevant teacher said: "Wasn't it rude! they were both [Mr. and Mrs. Kapoor] speaking Punjabi to each other before answering my questions; and my assistant did not like their attitude either". The actual situation was that the father did not have a good command of English. Although, there were a few teachers who gave credence to parents' opinions and their

points of view, overall the white staff's attitude towards South Asian parents was not positive.

In summary, except for parents who had communication problems, the rest visited the school for the child's annual review, medical, and parents evenings. The attendance at the school's social gatherings was very low, as parents did not find them useful. The attitude of the white staff members towards South Asian parents was, at least on several occasions, not positive. Many parents were not aware of their child's educational goals and they mentioned that the school staff did not provide appropriate information about it.

8.8 Parents' Training

It was found that most South Asian parents had not been offered any organised schedule to work with their SLD children. They were dealing with them according to their own experiences, or as the elderly family members advised them. The parents were asked whether they were interested in any particular training which they felt could be useful. From the parents responses, it was noticed that most of them were not very keen on any formal training. For example, Mrs. Panday said:

"I don't think there is any need to ask a third person how to bring up my child. The mother is the only person who knows about every need of her child."

Mrs. Gopal laughed at my question and said:

"With all my children, I think I should know what techniques would be useful for her."

Asma's mother said:

"I don't want to do any thing with her at home because she goes for a long period of time to school. I think she becomes tired at school. I do not think there is any need for her to do any work at home."

Mrs. Malik said:

"We bought a video of children's songs to learn sign language, but mostly he has his own ways of telling us of his needs. We can understand what he says, but the school staff have problems in understanding him sometimes because he uses his own signs, which are different from school's."

In summary, though the parents did not show any interest in formal training they were in need of formal or informal training which would help them to work with their children in an effective way. Though the parents were working with their children in their own ways, special training would help them achieve better results with their children.

8.9 Parents' Responses to Community Care and Other Provisions

All the families included in this study had one special needs child, but due to their different special needs their social, medical and non-medical needs were quite different from each other. Each family was undergoing different life experiences. The parents were asked about their experiences with the welfare and other services provided by the local authority. All the families were receiving 'disability allowance'. In three cases the amount was not enough to meet the child's and family's needs. Usually, the parents used their own resources to meet theirs and their child's special needs. In the group studied, all except two children were cared for at home by their parents and other family members. Table 8.5 shows the services the group studied was utilising.

Table 8.5: Utilisation of services

Type of help	Using	Wanted to use	Not Interested	Not applicable	Total
Respite care	0	0	11	-	11
Fostering	1	0	10	-	11
Social worker	5	0	6	-	11
Community nurse	3	0	8	-	11
Speech therapist	0	5	5	1	11
physiotherapist	0	2	3	6	11
Care unite	1	0	10	-	11

One thing that is clear from this table is that many parents were not using the services and were not interested in using them in future.

In four out of five cases social workers were actively involved. Except for one single mother, all were unhappy with their services. Particularly in Ali's case (see Chapter 7, Section 7.8) there were big differences about the child's future between the mother and the social worker which were creating serious problems for the child and mother as well. Some

school teachers were concerned that the social worker was taking this case personally and she would not let the child go back to his mother. The mother was trying to get her child back. She was very worried that her son was living with Christian foster parents, who were neither providing him with any information about Islam nor taking care of his diet. She told me that she was going to court to take her son back, as social services were creating so many problems for her. Ali's mother said:

"Previously they let me see Ali weekly, and now they have decided that I can only see him monthly. I am his mother. He loves me. He loves his brother and sister. He wants to live with us. I do not know why the social services are creating all this trouble."

Ali's teacher expressed her feelings that:

"One weekend his mother did not go to see him because of illness, and his foster mother did not tell him because he gets very upset about his mother . . . I am Ali's teacher, I don't like to go to meetings about him; how can I say that he should not go to see his mother."

In school, Ali always talked with me about his family. In his interview Ali said:

"I love my sister and brother very much. When we were together we played together and had lots of fun. I love my mum. I like my mum. But I can't go there because they don't like me. My mum has broken my heart."

When I asked him who told him that they don't like him, he replied:

"Joy [foster mother] said to me that your mum don't like you. She's broken your heart."

From this conversation and from Ali's mother's interviews it can be seen that both, mother and son were suffering from this situation. Here I would like to mention that over two years I tried my best to interview the social worker and the foster mother involved in Ali's case but could not succeed. The foster mother always asked me to see the social worker first and then if the social worker gave permission she would give the interview. I tried my best to interview the social worker but she often made the excuse of being busy. I always tried to explain to her that I was a researcher and I wanted to listen to her point of view so that I could make comparisons

but she always showed hesitation. I once succeeded in getting an appointment with her but unfortunately on the day of the interview I was admitted to hospital for an operation so I could not make it. Later due to shortage of time I did not pursue her.

In Alia's case, physiotherapy for her chest was recommended twice a day but she received it once a day in school, and nobody was available for the second session. Her mother was very worried about her health.

In another case, Vijay needed physio everyday. The parents arranged a private physiotherapist. Mrs. Anund said:

"We asked social services to help us to build the stairs and bathroom for Vijay but they refused and said that we earn enough to arrange all these things by ourselves. After that we never contacted them. Now we have arranged physio for him privately, which costs a lot."

It was clearly noticed that many parents were reluctant to involve professionals, particularly social workers in any type of help. A common consensus was that professionals create more complications for parents. The parents intentionally avoided contacting professionals. As Mrs. Malik said:

"You know, I am also in the same education system [Mrs. Malik was a part-time teacher in a local main stream school] and I know many incidents in which after receiving social services help, the families are in more trouble now. Once you involve any professional from social services you are in big trouble. I think it is much better to stay away."

Ali's mother said:

"I wish we hadn't involved social services in our family matters; they have ruined my own and my children's life. I have two of my children back from them but they are making it quite hard to get Ali back and creating more problems for him as well as for me. They are arguing that I cannot look after him properly; you tell me! how can they say that a foster mother who is neither [South] Asian nor Muslim can look after him better. I asked them to arrange Muslim foster parents. If they could not find any one then give my child back to me. But they haven't done anything and are now creating more problems for me."

The parents were asked about the use of respite care. Many parents commonly felt that nobody was there from their own community who could understand their child's cultural and religious needs. Only one child, Asif, was in the care unit. His parents were not satisfied with the staff and professionals involved but were very scared and reluctant to say any thing about them. They were very frightened of the professionals' power and had the impression that if they took any action against the professionals, they would not let them see Asif any more. As Asif's mother said:

"He [Asif] is a piece of my heart. I cannot live without seeing him. I know my son is not happy there [in care unit]. His health is deteriorating day by day. He is getting new diseases every day. It seems to me nobody is taking care of him properly in the care unit. I asked the careers but nobody is giving satisfactory answers... I do not want a confrontation with professionals. I am scared, if I do so, they might stop me seeing Asif."

This was not only the case with one parent. I noticed that all South Asian parents were reluctant to say anything about professionals, particularly those from social services. Many were reluctant to talk about them. As Mrs. Malik said:

"After finishing your studies you will go back to your country. But we have to live with them all of our child's life."

In summary, many parents showed no interest in using any community services provided by the local authority. The parents of two children who were in a care unit and foster care were very angry with the professionals. The parents' fear of the professionals' powers was the most noticeable thing. Parents were reluctant to involve any professional in getting help.

8.10 Parents' Demand for Specific Provisions

Parents were asked whether they would like any particular type of help which they thought would be useful. Only seven of the 11 parents were able to cite any outstanding needs. Four of them would have liked more help with practical problems, such as finance and a holiday for their special needs child; two mothers would have liked an integration programme for their children; and six mothers said that they would appreciate being given the opportunity to talk with a social worker from their own community. As Alia's mother said:

"I think we need someone- like you [the author] - to visit us on a regular basis - someone who could understand us, someone with whom we could talk informally and share our experiences. It would make us feel that we are not alone in this struggle. The professionals only come if we ask them to come. At the same time due to our cultural limitation we cannot talk with them freely and openly."

Mrs. Gopal said:

"You know the complications of our culture, we cannot meet different people every day; particularly males. It is quite difficult for white professionals to understand our problems. It would be nice if a woman from our culture came and we built-up a good relationship, instead of different people coming in."

Ali's mother said:

"I wish that in my case the social worker was an [South] Asian lady. At least she could understand my problem. These white professionals do not understand our culture and family values. They do not understand our family structure, family needs, mother-child relationship. If I tried to explain myself, their remarks were, 'Ms. Aslam is a very difficult lady'. I do not understand how to deal with them. I personally feel social services should employ social workers from the [South] Asian community who could handle cases from their own community."

In summary, some parents would like more help with practical problems, such as finance, holidays, integration programmes. Many of them would appreciate being able to talk with a social worker from their own community.

8.11 Placement

The parents were asked about the placement of their child in an SLD school. About 82% - 9 out of 11 - showed no complaint, whereas, two of them were not satisfied with the decision; as Mrs. Malik said:

"We do not know what is their criteria in sending children to SLD schools. You can see many children with similar handicaps in special units of mainstream schools. In such units, there are better chances for a child to learn about normal ways of

living as they have a chance to interact with normal children during school time. In this school [SLD school], though, the teachers are trying to teach Ahmed in a better way but in his class the children have different difficulties so he learns naughty things from them which worries me."

Ms. Aslam said:

"I don't know why his [Ali's] foster mother has not asked school for his integration programme. Can't they arranged any integration program for my child? He is one of the best children in the school. Nobody is caring! It is no excuse that if we send him [Ali] on an integration program, maybe he would not be able to cope with it. Just for the sake of their [School's administration] suspicion they are undermining my child."

Some headteachers reported that some parents have refused to send their special needs children with severe learning difficulties to special needs schools. It is a debatable issue and needs further exploration as parents and professionals have different points of view about sending children to special needs schools. In this study we did not explore the issue fully and left it for future research.

8.12 Conclusion

The study found that in most cases fathers had the responsibility of earning for the family which kept them busy and made it difficult to spare time for their children, whereas, every-day care of the special needs child was the responsibility of mothers. Very few fathers shared these obligations, although some mothers would have liked to, but did not ask their husbands for help. Many parents mentioned that the child's special needs put an extra financial burden on them but only three families who were on social benefits mentioned any serious financial worries. Some mothers showed interest in doing a paid job so that they could share in the family finances but the child's special needs, family and cultural values restricted them from any paid job. In other cases, it appears that parents were managing their finances from their own means.

The study shows that the parents were under continuous stress. The general impression of these families was that, except for those who were living in extended families, parents did not get very much assistance from their relatives as they thought others had their own

commitments, and some times they did not find relatives' attitudes helpful. Also community members' attitude towards special needs children and their parents was not relaxed. Parents felt alone in the struggle to bring up their child.

The study found that families who were told about the child's special needs at birth felt easier about going along with it, whereas, the parents who came to know in later stages had mixed attitudes. Some of them accepted the child's special needs and some of them were still uncertain. Many parents, even if they accepted the child's special needs, did not have any organised place to work with the child. In some cases the environment was not good in promoting the child's independence. Parents were also worried about the effect of the special needs child on siblings.

The study found that except for three cases, parents did not have communication problems with white professionals. Many parents showed great concern in having their mother tongue taught along with English in schools. Another noticeable point was the parents' school visits. Apart from the parents who had communication problems, the rest visited school for their child's annual review, medical, and parents evenings. The attendance at social gatherings at school was low as parents did not find them useful.

The attitude of the white staff members towards the South Asian parents was not encouraging. Many parents were not aware of their child's educational goals and they clearly mentioned that the school did not provide appropriate information about them. Though the parents did not show any interest in formal training, they were in need of assistance to help them to work with their children in an effective way. Special training could help them to understand the education system as well as their children's educational goals.

The parents attitude toward available provision was not positive. Many parents showed no interest in using any community services provided by the local authority. Parents fear of the professionals' power was the most noticeable thing. Parents were reluctant to involve professionals in getting any help. Some parents pointed out specific needs, with which they would like more help such as; finance, holiday, integration programmes. But many would appreciate most the opportunity of talking with a social worker from their own community.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study. It also puts forward some proposals for some possible developments in services for South Asian SLD children and their parents which might be considered. These developments include suggestions to improve the existing services, and some additional form of provision which may meet clients needs.

This study was carried out to examine: (i) the number and distribution of South Asian special needs children, special provisions and staffing conditions in seven special schools within the city of Crownbridge; (ii) the educational environment and provision for these children in two linked special schools in the city; (iii) the problems of South Asian parents/families due to their special needs children and the extent to which the parents perceive both schools and other provision to be effective for their children and for themselves.

In Chapter 2, reviewing the current literature about the topics concerned, we pointed out some acute problems that needed to be underlined for the purpose of this study, such as *unsatisfactory home-school relationships and communication problems*, parental attitude to handicap, a lack of professionals from minority communities, a lack of parents' training programmes and printed material for minority parents, a lack of social, cultural and linguistically orientated assessment procedures and educational programmes and a lack of culturally oriented teacher training programmes. Two other points seen to be clear from this review were that improvements in provision for ethnic minority special needs children have been slow, and that there is a shortage of research specifically on South Asian special needs children carried out by researchers from the South Asian community. This provided a strong impetus for this research to seek in a small way to help remedy this, and especially to try and look at the situation from the point of view of such children's families.

In this study seven special schools where South Asian special needs children were enrolled were selected for inquiry within the city limits of Crownbridge. Within these seven schools the

South Asian special needs children were average of 7% of the totally enrolled children, which was not a negligible minority. Of these seven schools, five were surveyed only once, whereas two linked SLD schools were investigated in detail. These two linked schools accounted for almost three-quarters (72%) of the SLD pupils in the city, and 85% of the South Asian SLD pupils in the city (see Section 4.2). The study particularly focused on these 85% South Asian SLD children enrolled in both schools, and their families and parents. This group covered almost all the main ethnic groups of the Indian sub-continent (see Section 3.4.2) and would give a good picture of the situation in the city.

9.2 Our Experiences of the Research Methodology

For the investigation of the issues concerned we adopted the ethnographic path because it provided a natural style of investigation. Though establishing a natural setting was a time consuming and laborious task, the author's cultural background, communication skills and nature of the job made the researcher-respondent relationship more productive and natural. Our experience shows that this natural relationship allowed the researcher to study the social lives of the participants in their natural state and to portray a richly detailed picture of the issues researched, a picture that is interesting, informative, and potentially filled with implications. Though ethnography faces a criticism of typicality and reliability, we found it an effective method for this research. As far as the issues of typicality and reliability are concerned, in Chapter 3, we argued that every observer is unique in his/her own behaviour which certainly affects his/her choice of recording data and interpretation of his/her findings. In real life for the investigation of social issues like the one investigated in this thesis, we cannot avoid relying on the researcher's personal observation, nor can we avoid his/her interpretation of the events. Though it would raise the criticism of technical validity, we again argued that adopting a systematic way of inquiry, comparing data obtained in different context, and reporting the chain of incidents during the research period could help in establishing the internal validity of the study.

In this study, interviews - particularly unstructured interviews - informal meetings and observations were to be found effective tools for collecting the required data from the respondents. Informal meetings and unstructured interviews provided a relaxed atmosphere in which the respondents were more cooperative and confident in providing the information

asked, than the formal and structured interviews.

Discussing our experiences of interviewing, making appointments when interviewing South Asian fathers was the most difficult task. In some cases, interviewing mothers individually was also difficult as family members were like a close net. All family members liked to sit together and always participated in conversations. One particular drawback of informal interviews and the author's background - a member of the community researched - was the difficulty of keeping the respondents on track. Some respondents often started irrelevant discussions which sometimes destroyed the whole continuity of the interview. Though interviewing the respondents was a good experience, conducting interviews with parents could not be said to be enjoyable. The issue was so sensitive, that during interviews both the researcher and the parents were often in tears. Conducting such interviews was sad and painful.

On professionals side, the researcher found some colleagues non cooperative and racist. Some senior colleagues kept giving excuses one way or another and did not give an interview. Some times the respondents chose their words carefully, gave vague answers and sometimes agreed with the author's opinion just for courtesy, particularly when discussing the school's management. Some colleagues welcomed the opportunity to air problems, but the problem was that some of them exaggerated the problems. Being an insider, it was easy for the author to understand their motives but for an outsider their replies could be misleading.

In this study observations were found to be useful and effective. Observations allowed the researcher to check the validity of the data acquired through formal and informal interviews and questionnaires. At the same time, observations allowed her to collect data about those aspects which were not investigated through interviews and questionnaires.

● **Recommendations:**

In the light of the experiences learned from this study, it could be suggested that for research problems similar to the one investigated in this study, ethnographic approach, researcher's active/complete participation, informal and unstructured interviews and observations could provide a better environment for investigation.

9.3 A General Perspective of Special Schools of Crownbridge

The study concludes that the special schools included in this inquiry were not offering enough services for special needs children, in general, and for the South Asian special needs children in

particular. In the two schools investigated in depth the staff were trying hard to do a good job, often with considerable skill and imagination, but were hampered by inadequate professional support (particularly from speech therapists and physiotherapists), by the complexity of the children's handicaps and most of all by the lack of cultural knowledge of South Asian children and any specialist training.

9.3.1 Staffing Conditions and Multi-professional Provisions

The overall staffing conditions in special schools of the city could not be said satisfactory. Five schools were poorly staffed and were poorer than those in previous surveys carried out in 1974, 1977, 1982 and 1984 (see Section 4.4). Only two schools were well staffed, though the good staffing conditions were achieved by employing class room assistants. None of the seven schools had enough multi-professional support, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, social workers, educational and clinical psychologists, and medical nurses. Particularly the support of speech therapists and physiotherapists was unsatisfactory. Headteachers and the teaching staff were not satisfied with the current situation. Similar findings are reported in [Preddy & Mittler 1981; Evans & Ware 1987 and Wright 1990]. (See Section 4.5.)

In the two schools investigated in depth the study obtained what we can only describe as a very depressing view. Both schools had unsatisfactory multi-professional provision and were poorly staffed. Many of the staff were not highly qualified nor specialised in special education. Classrooms were overcrowded. Average class size was higher than the maximum of nine suggested by the DES (Circular 73/4) [cited in [Evans & Ware 1987], p. 27] (See Section 6.2). The teachers were unable to give individual attention to the children. The high number of class children put an extra work load and extra stress on staff members which could be said to affect their health. Similar concerns are reported in Tilstone [1991].

In general practice, to cut down the schools' running costs, the schools' management tried to get extra voluntary help, or preferred to employ part-time assistants. Arguably such practices would not be good for the education of special needs children. Similar concerns are reported in Williams [1990]. The staff were not in favour of such practices and felt that part-timers and voluntary staff could not replace the trained. Parents also showed their deep concerns about the situation. For example, Mrs. Gopal's concerns about the situation are given here. She said:

"At the time of her [Sharun's] placement we accepted the authority's decision that the school had bilingual support and would be very beneficial for our daughter.

But now with the passage of time we come to know that the actual situation in the school is different. The school is over-crowded, with no proper speech or physio provision; teachers are unable to work independently with children, the school does not appreciate the integration scheme. Now we feel our decision was wrong."

Some staff members reckoned SLD children were ineducable and argued that the children were better provided for under the Health authority. Some teachers argued that SLD children did not require qualified help to such an extent as children in mainstream schools. They were in favour of the extensive use of volunteers and unqualified assistants which could be said to be a negative attitude. In practice, the greater the multiplicity of handicaps, the more training is required by those who work with them [Evans & Ware 1987, p154-159].

● **Recommendations:**

In the light of above conclusions it could be suggested that the current situation of special schools can be improved by achieving a lower staff:pupil ratio. In similar to Evans & Ware [1987, p162], this study suggests that a staff:pupil ratio of 1:3 should be maintained at all times of the day. In addition, the schools should make adequate spacing arrangements which allow the staff to do individual work with children effectively. In the employment of teaching staff, specialisation and qualification should be given higher priority. Employing part timers and getting help from volunteers should not be appreciated. There is no doubt that the learning process of SLD children is heavily based on teachers. A teacher with good qualifications and experience could produce better results than untrained and less qualified staff members. It could also be suggested that schools having minority children should recruit trained bilingual staff and arrange multicultural training sessions for white staff to work with these children appropriately.

9.3.2 Special Provisions for South Asian Special Needs Children

Concerning the special provisions for the South Asian special needs children, the study found that four schools offered bilingual support. Only one of them had a full time bilingual assistant (the author) but the school's management did not have any structured plan to utilise this provision effectively. Three other schools offered bilingual services for a short period of time, which was no more than cosmetic. In principle, the headteachers were agreed that the presence of bilingual staff in the school would be useful for the South Asian children as well as for the

school. Lack of resources was mentioned as the main barrier in employing any bilingual staff (See Section 6.3, 6.4 and 4.3)

Except the bilingual support mentioned above, neither school, visited or investigated, provided any special provision or curriculum for the South Asian children that could meet their social, cultural, and linguistic needs. During interviews, few headteachers and teachers were found to be in favour of a multi-racial approach to education, nor did they feel that children should be seen or treated differently because of their race or colour.

Arguably, the time spent at school has a great effect on a child's life, but a school which only offers a curriculum that predominantly supports white culture could not be said to be effective for the education of minority children, who have cultural and linguistic differences from white culture. One basic problem is that teachers and the schools' curriculum, advocate the white culture and do not encourage the South Asian children to keep their cultural values. The South Asian parents, however, demand from their children continued respect for the values of their own community, and that they preserve the appropriate standards of dress, decorum, food and behaviour, even if this conflicts with what is on offer in the school [Rex 1987, p8]. This conflict of goals leads to a two fold problem. On the one hand, it makes the South Asian parents - who have great sensitivity, understanding and deep respect for their culture - worried about their children who were losing their own identity due to the schools' environment and on the other hand, it creates complications for South Asian special needs children who are already disadvantaged due to their handicapping conditions. Giving some examples; learning swimming was an educational goal that the school set for Sharun, although her home culture did not allow swimming with male peers. Due to a behavioural misunderstanding Phool was assessed as not being able to differentiate colours. Asma was suffering due to dietary provision. For the sake of his health, Asif was compromising with the situation and was eating meat which was forbidden by his religion. Ali was losing his cultural and religious identity due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the professionals.

The study found that the education authority and health services were not taking into account the minority children's cultural, religious and linguistic needs. The South Asian children were in need of a curriculum which would take account of their social, cultural, linguistic aspects, their diverse difficulties and their future life along with adequate resources of books, audio-visual and other aids.

● ***Recommendations:***

The point to put forward here is that Britain is a multicultural society, and needs to take into account the diversity of its population. This should be reflected in its education system; resulting in a school curriculum that recognises the needs of minority children, including specifically minority special needs children. In parallel, the authorities should provide adequate resources and material to meet the social, cultural, linguistic needs of these children. Giving education to the minority special needs children on these lines, as Troyna [1993] argues, will tie in with two of the key assumptions of the 'benevolent multiculturalist': (i) a child from an ethnic minority background will achieve greater academic success if her/his cultural background is acknowledged in the school; (ii) it would enhance equality of opportunity. At the same time it increases the chances of children's integration into the community, which could help them throughout the rest of their lives. We believe that what Verma [1987, p. 24] says needs more serious consideration to make society more multiracially equal. That is:

We know that men, women and children are suffering from economic, educational and social disadvantage because of race. It is now time for government policies to be clearly defined and machinery, including mainstream legislation, to be put in place which attacks racial discrimination not just in schools and in other educational institutions - they do not exist in a vacuum - but in society at large.

9.4 Cultural Awareness and Training Issues for Special Education Teachers

The study found that the professionals, teaching and non-teaching staff of two schools investigated in depth, did not have much knowledge of South Asian culture. Many of them had stereotyped beliefs about the lives, culture, and backgrounds of South Asian children and their families. The teachers obtained much of their information about the South Asian community from the media which encouraged them to think negatively about ethnic minorities [Verma & Pumfrey 1993; Tomlinson 1993]. Tomlinson [1993] mentioned and it was found to be equally true in this study, that teachers not having training to deal on a professional level with ethnic minority parents and children had often clung to a negative, stereotyped and patronising view.

The staff of both schools had no cultural education or related training courses which, on the

one hand, made it difficult for them to inform themselves about the social, cultural, religious and linguistic needs of South Asian children and parents, and on the other hand, made it difficult to socialise with South Asian families. It also created complications in their classroom assessment of the South Asian children. In particular, the assessment of South Asian girls, who were not encouraged culturally to mix with male peers, ended with a label of behavioural problems. At the same time some teachers set up educational goals which directly conflicted with the child's home culture. Sometimes, parents were not satisfied with teachers' assessment.

The staff were perceived by themselves and the parents to be in need of additional training and expertise, in order to meet the social, cultural, and linguistic requirements of the growing population of South Asian bilingual SLD children, to promote the positive social and cognitive development of these children, to develop an ability to work effectively with minority parents and to conduct non-biased assessment of these children. Lack of opportunities for such training courses for the teaching staff was an obvious factor. Though many staff members showed great interest in availing themselves of opportunities which would help them to develop awareness of the above mentioned characteristics, it was unlikely that their needs would be fulfilled in the near future.

● **Recommendations:**

The study could suggest that all people working with the minority special needs children should be given the opportunity to attend culturally orientated training courses in order to approach and to deal with them in an informal and effective manner. In common with other research [Collier 1989], the present study also suggests that such training programmes should not only simply borrow courses from each of the two areas, bilingual education and special education, but also provide a greater understanding of the particular cultural and linguistic characteristics of special needs minority children and the range and variability of special needs children's characteristics within an ethnic and cultural context.

9.5 Home-School Relationships

In the education of SLD children, the home-school relationship and its long-term consequences have been well established (see Chapter 2). The present study found that the relationship between white staff and the South Asian parents was not positive. For an effective home-school relationship, parental involvement, mutual understanding and open communication, for

the flow of information about their experiences, opinions, and ideas, between staff and parents are essential elements. Unfortunately, in both schools, neither parties had mutual understanding nor open communication. The white teachers did not see South Asian parents as a useful source of information about their children. With the exception of a few staff members, the attitude of the white staff toward South Asian parents was, on several occasions, unhelpful. A few of them exploited the other staff members, who had little awareness of South Asian culture, and made the school environment tense. Some of them passed remarks about South Asian parents in their absence. Situation like this could not be said to be good for home-school relationships.

Current research (see Chapter 2) suggests that teachers need to set children's educational goals in cooperation with parents with a full understanding of the role both parents and teacher have in achieving the goal. By and large, the South Asian parents were unaware of their children's educational programmes and goals. Some parents were positive about the way the teachers advised them on how and what to do for implementing teaching and therapy programmes so that they could teach their children at home. But lack of teachers' positive response made them reluctant to pursue this further.

In literature, many methods have been suggested to improve home-school relationships such as face-to-face dialogue, group meetings, school open days and home visits [Hegarty 1993]. This study found that South Asian parents did not appreciate face-to-face dialogue at school or group meetings, as they did not find them useful. In parallel, white staff did not visit South Asian parents very often. However, the author found home visits very successful, as they provided an informal setting for communication. It also promoted the sense of confidence and friendliness which led towards an active involvement. In general the study concludes that the home-school relationships in both investigated schools were unsatisfactory.

● **Recommendation:**

The study suggests that white teachers see the South Asian parents as a useful source of information about their children. In setting up the South Asian children's educational goals their parents should be involved, if possible. The teachers should also clearly explain to parents their children's educational goals, and demonstrate appropriate teaching techniques so that they could play a positive role in the education of their SLD children.

As discussed in Chapter 2 teachers must not lose sight of the fact that much of the education of special needs children goes on outside schools, and is the proper domain of parents. The

parent's involvement is personal, lifelong, based on common sense and emotional commitment, focused exclusively on the child and deployed in the home and community. Considering parents as a useful source of information gives twofold benefit; firstly, teachers can learn how children actually learn outside the school. Secondly, it builds up parents confidence in their children's education; as their knowledge and views are considered valuable. Involving the parents could improve the whole education process and therefore the children's achievements as well.

Tomlinson [1993] mentioned her suspicions that the involvement of South Asian parents as genuine partners in education would be more difficult to achieve, compared with white parents. It would be equally true that white parents do not face those problems which South Asian parents do. Due to their communication problems and cultural differences, the South Asian parents and the white teachers inhabit very different worlds, and view the children from different perspectives. Hegarty [1993] mentioned that unless there is a deliberate, sustained effort to bridge the two worlds, the likelihood is that the children's education would suffer. The current situation demands that white teachers take initiatives that would not only make the use of existing educational activities and achievements more effective, but would also enable the South Asian parent to begin to work in real partnership with professionals and with the educational services as a whole. Also, the parents and white teachers should share their knowledge about children's needs, their perception of the child's development, and their goals and expectations. The sharing of knowledge can encourage South Asian parents to play a positive role in complementing and supporting the work of the school in educating their children. Similar concerns are reported in Brighthouse & Tomlinson [1991].

The study noticed that gaining the effective involvement of South Asian parents takes time, effort, and patience. Cultural and linguistic differences and lack of trust, initially, could create some potential problems. Some parents may show a lack of confidence and ability to help in school affairs (like Asif and Phool's parents), while others may feel that school matters should be the responsibility of the teachers (like Alia and Asma's parents). But, with a continuous efforts, these negative attitudes could be overcome.

It could also be suggested that white staff members make home visits to the South Asian children's homes. A point which needs special consideration is that it would not be realistic to expect a teacher- who already had 9 to 12 SLD children in her/his class - to visit parents and to do all other paper work. Handling such a large number of SLD children in one class is a mentally and physically tiring job. Also, teachers have to write daily reports, make future

plans, maintain children's home notebooks daily, etc. In addition to this, teachers had to arrange parents meetings, which sometimes did not finish till 10 pm. In order to get better results, the teachers' work load should be reduced.

9.6 Parents' Knowledge of Education System and Training Issues

The study found that the parents did not have full information about the education system, their children's educational goals, and their own legal rights towards provision. Also, they did not receive any kind of practical training in bringing up their special needs children. Many parents mentioned that the 'First Steps' booklet [Social Services 1994], is good in demonstrating how to get help of any sort, but except for one mother, none of the parents had read it thoroughly. All the parents were asked whether they had any other relevant material to help them in understanding and handling their child's special needs effectively. South Asian parents did not seem to be enthusiastic about searching for such information. Parents were also asked about their interest in getting any professional training, which would be useful for their children as well as for them. Three of them showed strong interest in such training to learn how to handle their children effectively. However, others showed no interest.

● Recommendations:

It is obvious that the families with a child are often in crisis, and may need professional help in understanding, accepting, and coping with the extent and limitation of their child's handicap. Due to the handicaps of the child, they need teaching, parenting as well as other professional skills that parents of a normal child would not be expected to have, as special needs children provide very little natural reinforcement for their parents. Though, at this stage, most of the parents did not show any interest in parent training programmes, good counselling along with appropriate literature, could persuade them into such training. It is not impossible, but would need sufficient understanding and preparation. Parents want to learn, but need an appropriate environment to succeed. Parental training, also suggested in Webster [1986] and Halstead [1994], could help them to handle their children in a manner similar to professionals, and could increase their confidence. Also, training programmes which provide information about the education system and children's educational goals could encourage parents to participate actively in the school's activities.

9.7 Parents' Attitude Towards Mother Tongue Teaching and Presence of Bilingual Staff in Special Schools

Parents showed a positive attitude towards mother tongue teaching and the presence of bilingual staff in special schools. Most of the parents showed great interest in teaching the child in his/her mother tongue; although they were equally interested in English. They argued that any opportunity in schools for learning their mother tongue would be very beneficial for special needs children to become more sociable within the family and the community. As Mr. Gopal argued on this matter:

"Most of our relatives are unable to speak English. It will be good for her to understand both languages. The knowledge of English will help her to deal with white people and knowledge of Punjabi will help her to understand her own community."

In common with some other research [Houlton 1986], the present study found that the presence of a staff member from their own community and bilingual instruction had a positive effect on the South Asian children's all round intellectual/cognitive abilities and helped in their personal development. The use of bilingual instruction provided opportunities for the South Asian children, on the one hand, to increase their vocabulary in their mother tongue which helped them to become sociable in their own community and, on the other hand, to increase their English vocabulary which helped them to communicate with white staff and peers. As Mr. Kapoor said:

"It would be much better if South Asian children could be taught in English as well as in their mother tongue. Due to your [the author's] work with her [Phool] in both languages, we could clearly see the change in Phool's attitude. It is now easy for her grand parents to understand her. It is also easy for her to attend 'Gurdawara' functions and mix with other community members."

Another point which needs to be mentioned is about teaching Makaton (sign language) to South Asian SLD children. Sign language is perhaps the only way of communication with the SLD children who have speech and hearing disorders. The study observed very encouraging effects of teaching Makaton using bilingual instruction to the South Asian children. Unfortunately, the parents were not fully aware of Makaton signs. The children often learned

non-standard signs at home which usually created complications for the children as well as the staff. Parents were unable to get any proper training to learn Makaton. A lack of bilingual professional and training programmes were obvious factors. In parallel, the teachers did not provide enough information to the parents about the signs which the child was learning at school. There was a need to teach Makaton to the parents.

The presence of bilingual staff gave the South Asian children a sense of security, friendliness and a home-like environment. It also gave a sense of confidence to the parents about their children. Mrs. Gopal's reason for not sending Sharun to school shows this clearly. She said, "When she [Sharun] was with you [the author] we were not worried but now in this school [*School2*] there is no South Asian who can understand our cultural requirements. We do not feel our daughter is secure there."

The presence of bilingual staff also helped to build good home-school relationships and to gain the confidence of the community. Just to refresh readers' memory the statement of the headteacher of *School1*'s is given here. She said:

We feel that your [the author's] input is invaluable and there are lots of situations that can be helped, not only in translating but also in gaining the confidence of minorities; now we have started taking pupils, which we did not a few years ago; they were not coming through. I think we have gained the confidence of the community and I think that is an essential part for our school, in a multiethnic society in a city like Crownbridge.

● **Recommendations:**

In the light of experiences learned from this study it could be suggested that special schools should offer bilingual education to the minority special needs children. Teaching their mother tongue along with English to the South Asian SLD children is equally important for their parents/families who are to be long-term carers. In South Asian families it was a common trend that rather than institutionalise their SLD children, they demonstrated a willingness to care for these children at home (out of 11 children only one child was in a care unit and one in foster care. Nevertheless, neither parent was willing to leave them there).

South Asian families often consist of brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces. Many of them could speak very little or no English; particularly, the elderly people of the family. It is important to mention that elderly members of the South Asian families

give maximum help to the parents in the everyday care of special needs children; hence the importance of the mother tongue becomes more significant. At the same time, the community commonly speaks in their mother tongue. The knowledge of their mother tongue is very important in making the child more sociable.

Parekh [1986] argues that language is not just a means of communication, but a vehicle of culture, a mode of understanding for experiencing the world. Parekh [1986] further argues that in the case of SLD pupils the teaching of English as a second language just serves to add to their handicapping conditions. In many cases simple exposure to an unfamiliar and different language together with the school's culture just bewilders and stunts the pupil's articulation, further confusing their understanding. We would like to suggest that the knowledge of English and mother tongue is equally important. For example, in a hypothetical case, if in some unavoidable circumstance a child who has only been taught in their mother tongue was unable to live with their parents and needed to be sent to community care, it would be quite difficult for the child to adjust himself/herself to cope with the new situation. At the same time, it would be difficult for the carers to overcome communication problems. So both languages should be taught to the South Asian SLD children, side by side.

It is important to mention that introducing bilingual instruction for special needs minority children or just employing bilingual staff from minority communities will not automatically solve all educational problems. Providing such facilities, as Snow [1990] argues and this study demonstrated, could provide limited educational improvements. There is a strong need to design the type of educational programmes for South Asian children and their families which fulfil their social, cultural, linguistic and educational needs. For this purpose educational staff should be trained to understand the needs of South Asian special needs children and to work with them effectively.

The study would like to suggest that in class room assessment, the white teachers try to involve bilingual staff, if available. Conner [1991] argues that it is the task of a teacher to interpret the child's attitude and abilities. There is a danger that teachers with little knowledge of the child's culture could misinterpret the child's behaviour and abilities (as in Phool's case). The involvement of bilingual staff in this process would produce good results. Sometimes South Asian children need help to express themselves. The presence of bilingual assistance could assist the child as well as the teacher to handle such situations.

Lastly, the study urged the developing of bilingual material for teaching Makaton to South Asian special needs children as well as to their parents. Furthermore, the authorities should arrange training sessions for the parents. As mentioned earlier, the South Asian parents were not keen to attend training programmes, it would be more useful if authorities promote these training programmes through the media, and by making videos. In the preparation of these materials, the National Curriculum, the special schools' activities and the needs of the community should be well sighted. The study noticed that the Makaton vocabulary is not rich enough to meets the needs of the South Asian community. The vocabulary of the Makaton system must be upgraded.

9.8 Parents' Experiences of Having a Special Needs Child

The study found that the parents were under continuous stress and were doubly apprehensive. Firstly, the special needs of the child smashed their dreams and ambitions particularly where the child was the eldest son. Secondly, the community's negative attitude hurt them most. A few members of the community thought that a special needs child was a curse because of parents' sins, or sometimes the mother was blamed. They did not find anybody with whom they could share their experiences and worries. Many parents felt lonely in the struggle of bringing up their child.

Some parents said that the handicapping conditions of the child put extra financial and every-day-care liabilities on them. Many parents tried to fulfil these liabilities from within their own means. Very few parents got help from their relatives, as some of them thought others had their own commitments, and some were not found to be helpful.

The study found that the majority of South Asian fathers did not share responsibility of every-day care for their special needs child. It was also noticed that South Asian mothers did not like to ask for any help. In all cases the mothers had the responsibility of looking after children, whereas the fathers were responsible of family earning. Only two mothers were engaged in part time jobs and one mother was helping in the family business. When asked about their intention to do any paid job, with the exception of two mothers, they explained that the child's special needs, family set-up and cultural values were the main limitations. They also mentioned that their child's every day care did not allow them to go out for any paid job.

Another thing about which some of the parents showed their deep concern was the effect

of the special needs child on younger children. In two cases the presence of a special needs child was having a negative effect on other children. Parents mentioned that having a special needs child in their family put many restrictions on their family life, such as they were unable to give proper attention to their other children, and due to the child's every-day care many mothers were unable to enjoy their social life fully. The presence of a special needs child also affected some mother's psychologically. Mrs. Anund (Vijay's mother) is a good example. She said:

"I am always tense, I am five months pregnant now and keep praying for a healthy baby. You know if you have the experience of a special needs child, you cannot get rid off this tension until you give birth to a normal, healthy child; can you?"

The parents' attitude towards the child's special needs was mixed. It was noticed that families who were told about the child's special needs at birth felt easier in accepting it, whereas, the parents who came to know at a later stage had a mixed attitude. Some of them accepted the child's special needs and some of them were still uncertain. The parents, even though they had accepted their child's special needs, did not have any organised plan for working with their child. Some of the parents were not able to provide a good environment to enable the child to learn how to live independently.

● **Recommendations:**

In the light of above conclusions the study proposes some measures which can be considered to improve the situation:

- Professionals from the community should arrange support groups for the South Asian parents where the parents could share their experiences and learn how to handle their children at home in a professional manner.
- Serious considerations need to be given to parents' counselling. Counselling, as Cooley [1979] and McDowell [1976] mention, is concerned with the emotional balance, social competence and psychological growth of human beings. It could help the parents of special needs children to understand themselves and adjust to the circumstances of their life.
- Better respite care services are needed. In particular, the staff of these centres should be trained to understand the needs of the South Asian special needs children.

- To change the attitude of the community towards these children and their parents, mass education through the media is much needed.

9.9 Parents' Responses to Existing Services and Relationships with White Professionals

The two main resources of a special needs child's life are: (i) Government-funded professionally staffed care systems which offer specialist facilities and expertise in advising families on how parents can help themselves in bringing up a special needs child; (ii) the parent/family which is the main source of protection, nourishment, a sense of belonging and education. In the upbringing of a special needs child, both resources have a close relationship, which directly affects the child's development. A good relationship would promise good results and a bad would create problems for the family, the child, and society as a whole, on a long term basis. Unfortunately, the outcome of this study shows a poor relationship between both resources. Many parents did not show any interest in using any community service provided by the local authority, or in getting help from professionals. They did not find professionals helpful in connection with their child's health and medical care, with his/her every-day care and development or with other family problems. Unfortunately, the parents thought of them as problem creators. The studies by Glendinning [1983] and Jefford [1990] about social work with the families of special needs children have reported similar findings. Parents fear of professionals' powers was one of the noticeable problems of South Asian parents with special needs children. Parents were reluctant to involve professionals in getting help. Two parents, Ali and Asif's, were using the available provision of foster care and a care unit respectively, but neither were satisfied with professionals' attitudes.

In Ali's case the parent were quite dissatisfied with the placing agencies and the decisions of the professionals involved. Ali's mother was very worried about him losing his identity culturally and religiously. At the same time, in spite of helping Ali's mother, his social worker and foster parents were making the case more complicated. In Asif's case, neither the child nor his parents were satisfied with the care unit staff or other professionals involved. It always happened that when Asif came home to visit, he would refuse to go back to the care unit. It is very obvious that if a child prefers one place, he/she would like to stay there. And if he/she has some problems, then certainly he/she will object to staying in there. Asif's health

was deteriorating from the day he went into the care unit. His parents asked the relevant professionals, but nobody gave them any satisfactory answers. Although the parents were not satisfied with the provision, fear of professional power did not let them complain against the authorities.

Some parents pointed out some specific needs with which they would have liked more help, such as; finance; holidays; integration programmes, but many of them would appreciate talking with a social worker from their own community.

● ***Recommendations:***

The study showed the problems of the parents who were utilising the provisions offered. Crownbridge did not have a very big South Asian community. Most of the community members knew each other, and knew each others' problems. If two parents who were utilising the provision were facing such problems how could we expect other parents to agree to utilise these provisions? There was a need for the authorities to take notice of these things. It could also be suggested that the social workers involved should not take cases as a personal matter. Their task is to help the child and parents, not to create problems for them.

To improve the situation, the study suggests that authority should employ professionals from ethnic minorities concerning the offered services. A lack of professionals from the South Asian community could be argued as a main barrier in their employment. To overcome this problem, the South Asian community should take the initiative and motivate its young people to join these professions. It is quite difficult for white professionals to understand South Asian clients' cultural, religious, and social needs. If the South Asian community wants to solve its problems, it should promote professionals from among its own community. In parallel, it is vitally important that the government should give some incentive to youngsters of the community to join these professions.

Appendices

- **A** **Letters Requesting Research Respondents' Permission**

- **B** **Questionnaires Used in the Study**

- **C** **Sets of Questions Used in Respondents' Interviews**

- **D** **Transcribed Samples of Parents' Interviews**

- **E** **Maps of Two Classrooms Showing Classroom Spacing**

A Letters Requesting Research Respondents' Permission

- A.1 Letter Requesting the Parents' Permission.
- A.2 Letter Requesting the Headteacher's Permission.
- A.3 Letter Requesting the LEA's Permission.

A.1 Letter Requesting the Parents' Permission

The following letter was sent to the parents of the children studied in order to gain their permission to collect data about their children and themselves.

Dear parents/guardians

I am a bilingual assistant at *School1*. At the moment I am studying as a part time student for the Degree of M.Phil in Education at the University of Southampton. As part of the degree course I must do a research project. For my research, I am investigating the problems of the Asian ethnic minority families from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who have children with special educational needs, particularly children with severe learning difficulties and children with handicapping conditions.

I would be grateful if you could help me to complete the questionnaires and give me some interviews, which are very important for my research project. I would be pleased to come to your house. If you would like to help me with my research, please sign the slip below and send it back with your child to school. I will then contact you personally for a time when I can come to see you.

I can assure you of absolute confidentiality, in that I will not identify you or your family in my final report by name.

Thank you for your attention, I hope that you will be able to help me with my research project.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs. Shaheen Pasha
Bilingual Assistant

I am able/ unable to help with your research project.

Sign.....

A.2 Letter Requesting the Headteacher's Permission

The following letter was sent to the headteacher of *School1* and *School2* in order to gain her permission to conduct research about the staff, the children enrolled and the staff.

The Headteacher,
Special *School1*,
Crownbridge.

Dear Madam,

I am a full time bilingual assistant at your school. I am also studying for a research degree of M.Phil, as a part time student, in the department of education, University of Southampton. My research is related to investigate the potential problems of SLD children from the South Asian ethnic minority and their families within the city limits of Crownbridge. I am also investigating whether the available facilities are fulfilling the needs of SLD children and their families. If not then what measures should be taken to improve these facilities. In this regard I need to carry out some case studies about these children.

School1 and *School2* have a considerable number of children from the South Asian ethnic minority. I have been working here for the last two years and built a good relationship with the families of South Asian children which provides a suitable environment for my case studies. I would be grateful if you give me permission to carry out case studies for my research from your school.

I can assure you of absolute confidentiality. I would not identify the names of any subject related to my case studies. The findings of questionnaires and interviews with parents and staff members will remain private between me and them. I also assure you that I would not identify them by name in my final report.

Thank you for your attention. I hope that you and your staff members will be able to help me with my research project.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Shaheen Pasha,
Bilingual Assistant.

A.3 Letter For Asking the LEA's Permission

The following letter was sent to the LEA of Crownbridge in order to gain permission to collect data from headteachers of schools within the city limits.

The Local Education Authority,
County Council of Crownbridge,
Crownbridge.

Subject: Permission to collect data on special needs children in South Asian families within the city limits of Crownbridge.

Dear Sir,

I am a bilingual assistant at *School 1* and a post graduate student in the department of Education, University of Southampton. My area of research is "Special Needs Children in South Asian Families". For my research I need data on children with special needs in South Asian families who are studying in mainstream or special needs schools within the city limits of Crownbridge. In this regard I need a letter of permission from your office, so that I can collect this information from the headteachers of various schools in Crownbridge. This data is vital for my research. I shall be very grateful to you if you grant me this permission. The questionnaire which I will send to the headteachers is attached with this application. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Shaheen Pasha,
Department of Education,
University of Southampton.

B Questionnaires Used in the Study

- B.1 The Letter Accompanying Teachers' and Assistants' Questionnaires.
- B.2 A Questionnaire Given to the Class Teachers.
- B.3 A Questionnaire Given to the Class Assistants.
- B.4 A Questionnaire Sent to the Headteachers.

B.1 The Letter Accompanied with Teachers and Assistants Questionnaires

A questionnaire was given to the teachers and class assistants of *School1* and *School2*, accompanied with the following letter.

Dear Colleague

I am a part time student at the University of Southampton, Department of Education. My area of research is "Special Needs children in the South Asian Ethnic Minorities". For the purpose of my research, I wrote to the Head teachers of every school with-in the city limits of Crownbridge to collect data about the South Asian Ethnic Minorities. Now I have that information and I would like to know about the child of this category in your class. I am sending you a questionnaire to investigate the child's perspectives in class, school and home or in the unit where he lives. The questionnaire is attached herewith. I should be very grateful if you could kindly complete it and return it to me by 31st January 1994. I appreciate that a considerable amount of work will be involved, but the information and comments will be of enormous value for my research. I assure you of absolute confidentiality. I will not identify your name in my final report.

Thank you very much for your attention. I do hope you will be able to help me with my research project.

yours sincerely,

Mrs.S. Pasha

Bilingual assistant

B.2 A Questionnaire Given to the Class Teachers

Please note. If you have more than one child of South Asian background in your class please answer separately for each child, giving the child's name in each case. Confidentiality will be respected both for you and the child. Please use a separate sheet for answering.

1. Do you know the cultural background of each South Asian child in your class?
2. Can you list some of the main cultural features of this child's background ?
For instance: the language(s) spoken in the home, any special dietary requirements, dress, etc.
3. What is your source for this information ?
4. Have you ever made allowances for the fact that the child may not be fully conversant with the English language ?
5. Are you satisfied with the criteria that the psychologist uses to assess the South Asian children?
6. Do you feel able to communicate fully with the parents of the children ?
7. Are the parents able to communicate their feelings and hopes for the child to you satisfactorily?
8. Are you aware whether the parent or extended family co-operate with, or follow-up on, the school's programme?
9. Are the parents quite clear about the aims and objectives the child is working towards?
10. How could you better facilitate communication (home - school links) with South Asian parents and families?
11. Do you undertake class activities specially geared to South Asian culture? (eg. religious or cultural festivals, foods, etc)
12. Would you like training in order to become better informed about the different cultures of our children?
13. Do you feel that you are able to make appropriate use of the bilingual assistant?
14. How would you like to see her best used; for example by translating parents interviews, interpreting requests/instructions to the children, telling you about religious festivals and customs, or in other ways?

B.3 A Questionnaire Given to the Class Assistants

Please note. If you have more than one child of South Asian background in your class please answer separately for each child, giving the child's name in each case. Confidentiality will be respected both for you and the child. Please use a separate sheet for answering.

1. Do you know what the cultural background of each South Asian child in your class is ?
2. Can you list some of the main cultural features of this child's background ? For instance: The language(s) spoken in the home, any special dietary requirements, dress, etc.
3. What is your source for this information ?
 - a). Do any of your South Asian children have specific dietary requirements? (if Yes)
 - b). Do you know why this is?
4. Some children wear religious pendants and jewellery, are you aware of their significance?
5. Do you know why South Asian girls mostly wear traditional dress?

B.4 A Questionnaire Sent to the Headteachers

The following letter/questionnaire was sent to the headteachers of the schools of the city by the headteacher of *School1* on the behalf of the author.

Dear Headteachers,

Mrs Shaheen Pasha is a special schools assistant employed as a bilingual assistant at *School1*. Mrs Pasha is registered as a part-time student to complete an M. Phil degree at the University of Southampton.

Mrs Pasha's research will be concerned with pupils from [South] Asian ethnic minorities with special needs. In particular she will be looking at the educational opportunities offered and taken up by [South] Asian families within the City. We hope that her research will be beneficial to Crownbridge City schools. I am writing to ask if you would be kind enough to forward to Mrs. Pasha the names, age, and addresses of pupils with special needs from the [South] Asian ethnic minorities in your school. If it is not possible then just send the numbers and their ages, and religion.

This information is very important to enable Mrs. Pasha to continue her studies. We have spoken to the LEA office about this research. If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Shaheen Pasha or myself at the above address.

Please reply as soon as possible after half-term.

Thank you for your assistance.

yours sincerely,

Headteacher

School1

C Sets of Questions Used in Respondents' Interviews

- C.1 A Set of Questions Used in Parents' and Families' Interview.
- C.2 A Set of Questions Used in Teachers' Formal and Informal Interviews.
- C.3 A Set of Questions Used in Headteachers' Interviews.

C.1 A Set of Questions Used in Parents' and Families' Interviews

The following set of questions was used in the interviews of both parents and families. Most of the questions were asked of all the interviewees, however, some of them were directly related to some particular cases. In this appendix the questions are arranged according to general topics, however, in actual interviews the order of questions was not the same.

• Mother

1. What is the mother's age?
2. What is the mother's religion?
3. What is the mother's ethnic background?
4. When did the mother come to the UK?
5. How many years has she spent in this country?
6. Is this marriage the only marriage of the mother?
7. When did the mother get married?
8. Are you a single parent?
9. How many children do you have?
10. What is the mother's education?
11. Has the mother experience of UK schooling?
12. What is the mother's occupation?
13. What is the mother earning?
14. Would you like to do a paid job?
15. Do you think your child's special needs does not let you do a paid job?
16. What are your feelings about the child's special needs?
17. How often have you visited your country of origin?
18. Did you take your child to your country of origin for any treatment purposes?
19. What kind of treatment was it? religious, traditional or any other?
20. Is this your own house?
21. How long have you been in this house?

• Father

1. What is the father's age?
2. What is the father's religion?
3. What is the father's ethnic background?
4. When did the father came to the UK?
5. When did the father get married?
6. Are both mother and father related?
7. Is this the only marriage of the father?
8. What is the father's education?
9. Has the father experience of UK schooling?
10. What is the father's occupation?
11. What are the father's earnings?
12. What are your feeling about the child's special needs?

• Transport

1. Have you a car?
2. Can mother drive?
3. Can father drive?
4. Do you live near the child's school?
5. Would you like to take your child to school by car or do you prefer to use school transport?
6. Does the child go to school on school transport?
7. If you prefer school transport, what are the reasons? Are you too busy? or do you feel the school transport is a safer way to send your child to school?
8. If you use school transport, is the transport provided as often as you need it?
9. Did you have any difficulty regarding school transport?
10. Would you like to put forward any suggestion to improve the situation regarding transportation?
11. Does your child attend school regularly? if not then what are the reasons for absence? transport, time, energy, child's health, or any other reason?

• Social Life

1. Do you take your child with you? if not then with whom do you leave him?
2. How often do you take your child with you to social gatherings?
3. Do you always take him on outings or to social functions where you have taken the other children?
4. Do you take him along with you during shopping?
5. Do you take him for outings? if yes then does mother or father, or both parents go along?
6. How do you feel when you take him to social gatherings?
7. How do you find other peoples' reactions?
8. Does it make you feel upset, bad, etc?
9. Do you find most people helpful or un-helpful?
10. Have you seen any change in your child's behaviour since he/she started attending the school? Is this a positive change or negative?
11. Do you have any financial difficulty in coping with the child's special needs?
12. Do you find the child's special needs is creating any severe limitation on your social life?

• School

1. How did you come to know about your child's school?
2. Who gave you this advice?
3. Did the professionals involve you in your child's school's selection?
4. When did you come to see it for the first time ?
5. Did you both (mother and father) come to visit together? or did one of you visit the school and explain it to the other?
6. Did you bring you child along with you?
7. Was the school the kind of place you expected it to be? if not then could you explain why?
8. What were your feelings about the school when you visited it for the first time?
9. Did it hurt you when you saw that your child was going to study with other children with learning difficulties?

10. Did you think that this school was not good for your child? if yes, then did you talk with any concerned professional? if yes then did you find them helpful?
11. Did you discuss your child's school with a friend, relative or any body else?
12. Would you prefer your child to be taught at this school or at a mainstream school?
13. What do you not like about the way your child is educated in school?
14. Are you happy for your child to be involved in assemblies and religious education?
15. Have you noticed any change in your child's behaviour since he/she started school?
16. Are you happy with the school environment?
17. Do you think the school is offering enough provision to fulfil the needs of your child?
18. Are you satisfied with the provision offered in the school?
19. Are you happy with the dietary provision?
20. Are you happy with the school's staffing conditions?
21. Are you satisfied with the number of children in classes?
22. What do you suggest to improve the situation?

• **Home-School Relationship**

1. How do you find school's staff?
2. How do you find the relationship with the class teachers?
3. Do you feel free to talk with the teacher about your child's education?
4. Are you fully aware of your child's educational programmes and goals?
5. Did they explain the educational goals of the child clearly?
6. Did you understand what they explained to you?
7. Do you know the child's school curriculum? are you satisfied with it?
8. Did they ask you to follow work to do with the child at home?
9. Did you argue on any point which you felt was not good for the child?
10. Are you fully aware of your legal rights?

11. Did any teacher explain to you the importance of your involvement in the child's education?
12. Has any teacher from school visited you? if yes did you find it useful?
13. Did you find their visits helpful?
14. Would you like a teacher from school to visit you at home in order to give you information about the child's educational programmes?

• **Mother Tongue Teaching**

1. Which language do you speak with the child at home?
2. Do you feel it important for your child to speak your mother tongue?
3. Do you feel boy and girls should be taught separately at any stage in their education?
4. Would you like to see a teacher from your community?
5. What are the benefits of bilingual education?
6. How were things different before the bilingual assistant was appointed?
7. How do you find the presence of the bilingual assistant in the school?
8. Did you find any change in your child's behaviour and achievements due to the presence of the bilingual assistant?
9. Do you feel that your child should be taught in mother tongue only, English only, or both?
10. Do you use your mother tongue to your child to make him more sociable?
11. Would you like the school to provide mother tongue support to your child?

• **Parents Involvement**

1. Do you carry out some of the activities at home?
2. Do you play with your child?
3. Would you like to participate by being a school governor?
4. Would you like to do any voluntary work in school? if not then why not?
5. Would you like to be more involved with any activity at the school?
6. Do you attend the parents meetings, coffee mornings? How often? If not then why not?

7. Do you visit the school? How often? Would you like to be able to go more often? if yes, are you prevented by lack of transport, ill health, other children, other responsibilities or any other reason?
8. Did you find these meetings helpful? If yes then in which way are these gatherings helpful?
9. Would you like to attend these meeting more often? Any suggestion which could improve your attendance?
10. How do you find the teachers behaviour during these meetings?

• Child

1. Child's sex?
2. What is child's date of birth?
3. Country of child's birth?
4. What kind of difficulty does your child have?
5. What kinds of problems does your child suffer from?
6. Are the problems mild or severe?
7. Who told you that your child had special needs? Doctor, Nurse, Health visitor, Psychologist, or someone else?
8. Have you had genetic counselling?
9. How old was the child when you found out that he/she is with special needs?
10. How did you feel when you were told? Sad, upset, angry, disappointed, helpless, resigned?
11. At that time, did you find the professionals helpful?
12. At that time, was there any communication problem? If yes then did the professionals concerned provide you with any interpreter or translator?
13. If you had communication problems, did they provide any translator?
14. Were you satisfied with the way they explained about the child's special needs for the first time?
15. As you child has a learning difficulty, has someone explained what affect your child's problem has on his/her progress?

16. Have anybody come to see to you about your child? How often? What was their purpose?
17. Has your child been examined by doctors or other professionals at the school?
18. Would you prefer to take him/her to a clinic or hospital?
19. Have you been given sufficient advice about your child and his problems or special needs?
20. Are you fully aware of your child's treatment?
21. Who gave you this information?
22. Have you received any special equipment for your child?
23. Was this equipment to overcome the child's physical difficulties or educational difficulties?
24. How do you cope with white English professionals?
25. How often do you get help from white English professionals?
26. Do you feel it would be helpful to talk to any professional who belongs to your own community?

• **Assessment**

1. What was your role in the assessment process?
2. Did the professionals concerned actively involve you in the assessment procedure?
3. Did you face any communication problem?
4. If yes were you given enough translation to satisfy you?
5. Do you have any suggestions to improve the assessment procedure?

• **Toys**

1. Have you got toys upto the level of your child's age at home?
2. How do you buy toys for the child?
3. Do you get any advice from any one, or just buy toys yourself?
4. Do you buy toys for him/her very often?
5. Do you use any toy library borrowing facility?
6. Do you have any financial difficulty in buying useful toys for your child?

7. Do you ask for any help?
8. Do you feel it is worthwhile to get advice before buying any toys?

• Sibling and Family Life

1. Have you a friend or relative living near you, or with you, with whom you can discuss your problems?
2. Is an adult living near you, or with you, who helps you?
3. Has your child been looked after for a few days, or longer, by someone other than a member of your family, or a friend?
4. If you left your child with someone, was it in a friend's house, foster home, residential care unit, hospital, or some where else?
5. How have you felt since your child has been attending school?
6. Does it give you a break and help you feel a little more relaxed?
7. Do you feel it is helpful for you to do things which you might otherwise not be able to do?
8. Do you have any difficulty in handling your child?
9. How do your other children behave with the child at home?
10. What is the effect of the special needs child on their personalities?
11. Do they ask you about his/her special needs?
12. Would it help you to be able to have your child cared for while you have a rest for a few days?
13. Who would you choose to care for your child? friend or residential care units?
14. Have you ever used any such facility? If not then why not?
15. Have you had any practical help from anybody?
16. How do you find living in an extended family system?
17. Is the attitude of other family members different because you have a special needs child?
18. What is the attitude of other family members towards the child?

• Some General Questions

1. Have you read the 'First Step'?

2. How did you hear about it (the First Step Book)?
3. How do you find it?
4. Have you been given information about other resources?
5. Do you know of any other source of information?
6. Would you like to attend any training programme?
7. What kind of help would you like which is not provided yet?
8. What kind of help would you expect which you are not receiving now?
9. What kind of practical help would you like to have?
10. Any other particular problem which you want to mention?

C.2 A Set of Questions Used in Teachers' and Assistants' Interviews

The following set of questions was used in the interviews of both teachers and assistants. Most of the questions were asked of all the staff interviewed. However, some of them were specifically asked of certain teachers relating to individual children, in order to gain the required information.

1. How long you have been in the profession of special education?
2. Did you get any special qualification in special education?
3. How long was the training?
4. Do you think that teachers who work with special needs children should have any specific education to work with these children?
5. Do you think it is fair for MLD children to be educated with SLD children in this school?
6. Do you think the number of staff in your school is sufficient to do individual work with children?
7. Do you prefer to work with full time assistants?
8. How do you find volunteers?
9. Do you feel part timers are as effective and efficient as full time assistants?
10. Can you give suggestions to the headteacher regarding full time assistants?
11. Do you know the cultural background of every South Asian child in your class?
12. Do you know the main features of different cultures?
13. Are you strict about keeping the requirements of their dietary conditions according to their religions?
14. Did parents inform you about their diet?
15. What is your main source of information about different cultures and religions?
16. Did you make any allowances for the fact that the child may not be fully conversant in the English language?

17. Are you satisfied with the criteria which educational psychologist use to assess the children of your school?
18. Do you find it easy to communicate fully with South Asian parents?
19. Do you think the parents are able to communicate their feelings about the future of their child openly with you or do they hide things from you?
20. Would you like them to tell you more about their child?
21. Do you use an interpreter, when any South Asian parent visits for any purpose?
22. Do you think that the parents are satisfied with the provisions made for their children at school?
23. Do the parents co-operate with the future planning for their child, which the school presents?
24. Have you ever arranged any meeting for parents, in order to give them information concerning the conditions of their child?
25. Are the parents aware of the objectives and aims which their child is working towards in school?
26. How could you better facilitate communication with South Asian parents?
27. Do you sometimes undertake class activities according to other cultural festivals?
28. Would you like to be better informed about the different cultures of the children?
29. Would you like to see more male staff at school?
30. Do you think it would be more beneficial for the school to have full time bilingual staff?
31. Do you want to say anything about school management?
32. Are you satisfied with your role as teacher-in-charge of this school?
33. Are you happy with your job in the school?
34. How many South Asian children have been through your class?
35. What is your way of dealing with the South Asian parents?
36. Do the parents always attend parents meetings, coffee mornings etc?
37. what did you feel was the opinion of South Asian parents when they first visited the school?

38. Did you do any home visits to South Asian families?
39. Why do you not write negative things about a child in their annual review, along with positive things?
40. Do you think that the South Asian ethnic minority should become assimilated into English society?
41. Do you think the adoption of an South Asian child by white English parents affect the child?
42. Do foster parents usually have children in order to ease their financial life?
43. Are they usually people on a low income?
44. Do parents give their names to social services for fostering and adoption of children?
45. Is every child in the school referred from the Wordsworth Unit?
46. Does the absence of a father affects the child's life?
47. Do friendships with other children make children more sociable?
48. Is the South Asian parents' approach towards the special needs of their child realistic?
49. Do parents' co-operate with the school's programmes at home?
50. Do you think the parents are open in telling you everything about their child and their feelings?
51. Do you judge parents' status by their clothes?
52. Do you think parents' financial circumstances affect their child's achievements?
53. Is integration in mainstream schools a good step?
54. Do you think South Asian children who live with their parents and with extended families would be more responsive in their mother tongue?
55. Do you think they are more familiar with their mother tongue?
56. Do parents reply to your queries about their child next day in the school note book?
57. If they are given any advice about their child to carry on at home, did they do it?
58. Do you think that 2 or 3 visits to a child's home are enough for assessment?
59. Do you take any account of the bilingual staff's comments on any South Asian child?

60. Do you think as a bilingual staff member I increase your work load on any South Asian child in your class?
61. Does the presence of bilingual staff help to improve home- school relationships?
62. What do you think about school management?
63. What are your comments on the staffing policy?
64. Do you think there should be a separate class for the more physically handicapped children?
65. Do you think the speechtherapist's hours are enough for the speechtherapy of children at school?
66. Do you think the amount of time the physiotherapist has for the treatment of children is enough?
67. Is the school building appropriate for the education of children?
68. Is the bilingual staff member being used properly to educate the South Asian children?
69. Is there any difference in the home-school relationships with South Asian families having bilingual staff available?
70. What is the attitude of people in general towards special needs children in present society?
71. Does the work load, and physical and mental condition of the children affect your health?
72. Do you give information about respite care to parents?
73. Do you think the child in your class is happy in care unit?
74. Do you think parents accept their children living in foster care and in care units happily?
75. Does he/she create more difficulties by being from another culture?
76. Has he/she got a separate room in the care unit?
77. Do you think he/she feels relaxed about seeing his/her parents once or twice a week in the care unit or foster care?

78. Do you think South Asian children feel comfortable when talking with a person from their own community, such as a bilingual assistant?
79. Who makes the decision about the child's permanent, foster or care unit residence for the future?
80. How many agencies are involved with a fostered or adopted child or one who is in a care-unit?
81. What should be the role of social services between foster parents and the actual parents?
82. What is your opinion of the extended family system in South Asian culture?

C.3 A Set of Questions Used in Headteachers' Interviews

The following set of questions was used during the interviews of the headteachers of the seven school. Most of the questions were common to all interviews, however, some of them were specific to the headteacher of the two schools specifically investigated.

1. How many teachers are in your school?
2. How many teachers per class?
3. How many assistants are in your school?
4. How many assistants per class?
5. How many children per class?
6. How many of them are South Asian?
7. Do you get help from volunteers?
8. Who are these volunteers? Are they qualified, experienced or just trainees?
9. What is the staff:class ratio in your school?
10. What is the staff:pupil ratio in your school?
11. Do you think the staffing is adequate?
12. Have you thought of reducing the staff:pupil ratio?
13. Would you prefer to employ full time teachers or classroom assistants to reduce the staff:pupil ratio, or would you prefer to have help from part timers and volunteers?
14. What are the qualifications of teachers?
15. Do they have any specialisation in special education?
16. Did they attend any special educational training or diploma courses?
17. What is the criteria for employing a teacher in school?
18. What is your preference; education, experience or low salary.
19. What are the qualifications of assistants?
20. Do they have any specialisation in special education?
21. Did they attend any special educational training or diploma courses?
22. Do you think teachers need class assistants with any kind of training or do you prefer to employ them without considering it?

23. What kind of special provisions does your school offer to the South Asian children?
24. Do you think that they need any special provision?
25. Do you think class teachers take account of their social, cultural and linguistic aspect in designing South Asian children's educational plans?
26. How do you find contacting South Asian parents?
27. Do South Asian parents come to school very often?
28. Do you find any communication problem? if yes, then how do you overcome this problem?
29. Do you have any bilingual assistant at school?
30. Do you want to employ any bilingual assistant?
31. Do you think the presence of a bilingual assistant is helpful for South Asian children?
32. Do you think the presence of any bilingual staff could help the school administration in contacting South Asian parents?
33. Do you think that South Asian parents have full trust in you when telling you things or would you like them to be more open when talking to you?
34. Have you ever thought of arranging any meetings to educate South Asian parents in the special needs of their special needs children?
35. Do you think they have the right to know what are their children's' educational requirements and how the teacher behaves with their children?
36. Why do not any South Asian parents take part in school activities?
37. Are you trying to involve South Asian parents in school activities?
38. Do you have the right to make decisions about the future of children in your school?
39. Do you think that some children are a danger for other school children?
40. Do you think the school buildings are appropriate for the proper education of children?
41. Would you prefer to have bigger buildings?
42. What do you want to say about the management of the school?
43. How many governors has the school?

44. Are they all parents?
45. What are their responsibilities?
46. Are they paid by the county?
47. Do they have the right to employ any staff member?
48. What is your school policy about 'racism'?
49. Who would take the first steps in reacting to any racist incident?
50. Do you think, it is necessary to tell other staff members about any incident of racism in the school?
51. What should be the qualities of a good head?
52. What is your criteria in dealing with different behaviours by the staff?
53. How flexible are you in accepting the staff's suggestions on school matters?
54. What are the good things about being a headteacher?
55. Do you think that all the decisions which the senior management team make are acceptable to the staff?
56. How rewarding is the job of being a headteacher of a special school?
57. What do you think of the load of paper work on teachers and on you?
58. What is your opinion of the LMS system?
59. Do you have enough resources to fulfil the required needs of the children?
60. Do you feel the budget the school receives is enough?
61. What kind of relationship has the school and the LEA?
62. Do you think the LEA takes account of each individual child's needs in the allocation of resources?
63. Do you think the provided resources are enough?
64. Do you have enough money to run the school smoothly?
65. How do you overcome money problems?
66. How could we improve the situation?
67. Does the school receive help from multi-professionals?
68. What is their pattern of help?

69. Are you satisfied with their help; the amount of time they spent in school?
70. Why don't you employ your speech and physiotherapists directly?
71. Do you think the current situation affects the children's educational and social achievements?

D Transcribed Samples of Parents' Interviews

- D.1 A Sample From Mrs. Mian's Interview.
- D.2 A Sample From Mrs. Panday's Interview.
- D.3 A Sample From Mrs. Kapoor's Interview.

D.1 A Sample From Mrs. Mian's Interview

Interview's Setting:

I went to interview Mrs. Mian straight after school. She was asleep and her husband woke her up. She took me to the ground floor sitting room. One daughter sat with her mum during the interview, and her young four year old son and one year old granddaughter were watching T.V. in the same room. After few minutes general discussion I turned my questions. The interview was conducted in Urdu. A simple English translation is given below.

Author: Are you aware, what kind of problems and special needs your child suffers from?

Mrs. Mian: Yes, doctor told us ... [she thought a little while and said] ... When he was two and a half years old. When he was younger at 18 months old, he used to blink his eyes, which made me worried. I took him to hospital and he was not a mental doctor, he was an ordinary G.P. He said that it is mother's love which feel worries, he has not got any problem ... [A long pause and she started again] ... Even than I was always worried and at last the doctors said that he has got a kind of epilepsy, nothing else and over the passage of time he will get better ... [Pause] ... He had not had any fits before the age of two and a half years, [Pause and trying to recall] just nodding his head, perhaps because of epilepsy. Sometimes his condition was so serious that he used to bang his head on the floor as hard as if somebody was hitting him.

Author: [Did not ask the next question and gave an intentional Pause.]

Mrs. Mian: ... [After a while she started again] ... Whenever I took Asif to the doctor they always said it was just a kind of epilepsy. Then somebody told us that he had the evil shadow of black magic.

Author: Then what you did?

Mrs. Mian: I took him to Bangladesh, we thought, he would be alright after the special treatment of highly religious people and they will take his 'genies' out. But there was no effect on him. So, he got very tense there and used to bang his head on the floor and it was very painful for me to see him in such severe pain.

Author: Then what you did?

Mrs. Mian: We came back.

Author: How long did you stay there?

Mrs. Mian: Nearly six months.

Author: After coming back, did you consult any doctor here?

Mrs. Mian: Yes. I went to the doctor. My daughters were very little that time, there was nobody to interpret for us. So the doctor gave him very high potency medicine and I kept giving him that . . . [little pause] . . . Until he was 5 years old, he never had any other disease except epilepsy. But I was so worried about why his speech was not coming on clearly.

Author: Did you mention this to the doctors?

Mrs. Mian: Yes, I always mentioned to the doctors. But they kept giving the same answers. Then a health visitor came and said did the doctors not tell you what is the problem? We said no. Then she helped us a lot.

Author: At what stage did you come to know about his mental illness?

Mrs. Mian: . . . [trying to think] . . . He was seven years old . . . [little pause] . . . the doctors told me that Asif had got brain damage. They said, not very much damage but a kind of damage, that he might well recover from. We did not know that had happened was that his brain was damaged.

Author: When the doctor told you, what were your feelings?

Mrs. Mian: My feelings . . . [little pause] . . . our feelings, . . . [little pause] . . . now I can't explain a single word that all my world become black, dark and meaningless to me. [she cried a lot. At that time I felt guilty about asking her these type of questions, which caused her pain and grief. Three of us were crying at that time . . . But after few seconds I had to continue.]

Author: When you went to see the school for the first time, what were your feelings?

Mrs. Mian: We went to see the school, it was heart breaking for us because in our views, our child was not so handicapped that he had to be admitted to a severe learning difficulties

school. The condition of other children was very much worse and they were also physically handicapped. We thought how would our child cope in this school? It was very difficult for us to send him to Crownbridge, because we thought that our child would be alright after some period of time.

D.2 A Sample From Mrs. Panday's Interview

Interview's Setting:

It was Saturday morning 10 O' clock. I went to interview Mrs. Panday. She lived far from our house, it took nearly 25 minutes to reach there. On my arrival she was waiting for me. Sam and his younger sister Marry were playing in the kitchen. She offered me a cup of coffee and children started asking why had gone to their house, had their mum invited me, would I go there again etc. I explained to them that their mum and I had got to talk about very important things, so not to disturb us. We both sat down around the dining table with our cups of coffee. I got my tape recorder and questions ready. It was just on the second or third question that the children started interrupting. Marry brought her bag of hair bands and clips to show me, then Mrs. Panday told Marry that it was not helpful, let her talk with Shaheen. Then she put a video on to keep the children quiet and busy. The interview was conducted in English.

Author: Was it a normal delivery?

Mrs. Panday At his [Sam] birth things were smooth and good. Nothing was wrong. When I gave birth, the nurse gave him to me, to have a look at my new born baby. When I saw his hands I did not believe it and was astounded to see that my baby was going to suffer all his life with Down's Syndrome and that was shocking, very shocking for us. But it was a bitter reality which we had to accept.

Author: Who confirmed to you that your child had special needs?

Mrs. Panday: The doctor eventually, but we did know, as we ourselves had been professional people.

Author:: Oh, so you got it first?

Mrs. Panday: Annn . . . when Sam was born, we knew first before they knew. Because I am a paediatric nurse, and when Sam was born . . . [very loud shouting and screaming along with the cartoon video] . . . I looked at his hands, you know how you look at your new born baby's fingers and I noticed that he only had one single crease, palmer crease, one instead of two, he had got one and he just had it on one hand because most Down's children have it on both hands. That is the clear sign of it, and when I happened to pick up the hand that had one single palmer crease. I just knew it straightaway.

Author: So, how was he [Sam] looking at that time when you checked?

Mrs. Panday: Oh, just a healthy normal boy.

Author: So, after his birth you knew straightaway?

Mrs. Panday: Oh, yes, yes.

Author: How did you feel when you know it?

Mrs. Panday: I knew that . . . that . . . [babbling for few seconds with shock] . . . I think when you give birth to . . . [left sentence incomplete] . . . if your emotions are a lot . . . [left sentence incomplete again. May be she wanted to say, 'if your emotions are a lot up and down'] . . . I really don't know about that time, probably it would be a bit of a shock, but we waited for the results from the doctors, which came after two weeks.

Author: After two weeks what was your reaction?

Mrs. Panday: I think you go grieving quite a lot really . . . [pause] . . . and I don't think I ever stop . . . [left incomplete] . . . Having a child with special needs. You live with it . . . [Interruption by Sam's younger sister, she wanted to brush my hair]

Author: Who was more upset, you or his dad?

Mrs. Panday: I think we both really coped with it quite well, I think, I don't know really, I think we both probably reacted differently, may be . . . oh you do . . . there is no question of . . . annnn . . . we both knew what it was and we both understood it, so, because . . . [was finding words to say] . . . we probably had all the worries straightaway which most people don't have. They gradually get used to coping with . . . [her daughter pulled my hair and Mrs. Panday said, 'sorry Shaheen' and she continued giving the interview] . . . things when they find out more and more. And for us we probably knew everything straightaway. So it may be quicker than with most other people, I don't know because of that and . . . [long silence and she left the sentence incomplete] . . .

D.3 A Sample From Mrs. Kapoor's Interview

Interview's Setting:

It was a Tuesday evening. I went to interview Mrs. Kapoor after school at six o'clock. When I reached there, Phool's grandparents and all the other family were sitting in the drawing room. I sat there with them and chatted for nearly fifteen minutes with them, then I looked at Phool's mum. She understood and told everyone in the room that the author was here to interview her, so please leave the room. Nearly everybody left the room except the grandfather and Phool and her younger brother who was only six months old. Then I said "let's start straightaway". I turned on the tape recorder and started talking to her. The interview was conducted in Punjabi. A simple English translation is given here. After few questions I asked her,

Author: What kind of problems does your child suffer from?

Mrs. Kapoor: Annnn ...[long silence, she was thinking very deeply] ...problems that she suffers with ...understanding ...annnn ...when not aware of danger ...[pause] ...more ...

Author: You just carry on saying, what you want to say?

Mrs. Kapoor: Sleeping problems ...hooon ...

Author: Does she sleep more or less?

Mrs. Kapoor: Less, she is getting better now, she used to sleep a maximum for four hours and wonderful half an hour but it is improved ...hoooon.

Author: Are the problems she suffers with mild or severe?

Mrs. Kapoor: Annnnn ...well, I will consider them to be in between the two ...[Five minutes Interrupted by a phone call].

Author: Who told you that your child had special needs?

Mrs. Kapoor: Annn ...[she thought very hard and said] ...hoooon ...paediatric doctor.

Author: Before or after birth?

Mrs. Kapoor: After birth, three days later ...[suddenly looking very sad].

Author: How did you feel when you were told about her special needs?

Mrs. Kapoor: Very upset, very angry, disappointed and helpless ... [long silence] ... Just hard to accept that we had a child ... [left incomplete] ... heart broken ... Annnn.

Author: When did you first hear about *School1*?

Mrs. Kapoor: It was through the portage system and through the Ladybird Unit. It was organised and ... [pause and she forgot what she was saying].

Author: So, it means that you were told by Ladybird Unit?

Mrs. Kapoor: And the Education Authority as well, because they asked us to go and see it.

Author: What were your feelings about school, the first time you saw it?

Mrs. Kapoor: Annnn ... I felt more upset, when I looked at the other children. It was hard to decide whether that was the right school for Phool or not ... [Granddad started talking with his younger grandson, who was playing nicely on the carpet with his toys. After nearly five minutes I started talking again.]

Author: Would you like to see a teacher from the Asian ethnic minority?

Mrs. Kapoor: Yes I would.

Author: Did you feel any change since having bilingual staff at school?

Mrs. Kapoor: Yes, I do feel a change in my daughter. Because she is having bilingual help at school. She could use Makaton signs in Punjabi and signs in English, when she wants.

Author: In your view, what is the benefit of having bilingual staff?

Mrs. Kapoor: The outcome of that, is that your child would be able to communicate to the grandparents, who do not speak English at all, go out to the community, go out to the place of worship, religious worship places, and she will understand what is going on. She knows a lot of Gurdawara now I noticed that ... hnooo.

E Transcribed Samples of SLD Children's Reading Sessions

- E.1 A Reading Session with an SLD English Girl: Group Work
- E.2 A Reading Session with An Asian SLD Girl: Individual Work.

E.1 A Reading Session with an SLD White Girl: Group Work

Class Setting:

There are nine children in class three. They are aged from six to seven years. Four have Down's syndrome, one is Autistic and has Mental Illness, three have Epilepsy conditions and one child has a Rare Genetic Disorder.

Student No.1	-----	G (Ashley)
Student No.2	-----	E (Emma)
Teacher	-----	Marry
Assistant No.1	-----	Assis1 (Monolingual)
Assistant No.2	-----	Assis2 (Bilingual)

Reading Session

G: The . . . car . . . is . . . in . . . the . . . ga . . . garden.

Assis2: Good girl (group laughing).

G: Ann . . . is . . . is . . . in . . . the . . . the . . . dog . . . in . . . the . . . car.

Assis1: Good girl! lovely reading.

G: The . . . dog . . . like . . . the car.

G: The . . the . .

G: (called) Marry (T3)

G: Dog . . . is . . . with . . . dad . . . in . . the . . . car.

G: Here . . . are . . . our . . . new . . words.

G: Car.

Assis1: With.

G: With.

Assis1: That's a good girl G! Now You're going to read book nine.

G: Yes.

E: And me.

G: No.

Assis1: This is a new book and its the first time she's ever read this one.

E: And me.

G: No.

Assis1: Excuse me! G is reading a book.

Assis2: When you read that book, then you will have this
microphone! all right.

G: They like to . . . play . . in . . the the . . garden.

E: Good girl Ashley

G: Anna . . . and David . .[whispers] Marry

Assis1: She is listening.

G: are . . in . . . the garden.

E: Good girl Ashley.

Assis2: Very good Ashley.

G: [Whisper] Marry.

Assis1: Marry is listening.

G: Play in the garden.

E: Good girl Ashley.

Assis2: Yes, She is.

G: They . . . play ball in . . . the garden.

E: Well done Ashley.

Assis1: She only learned this today.

G: [Whisper] Marry.

G: They eat . . . in . . . the house.

E: Well done Ashley.

G: The drink in the . . house.

E: Well done Ashley.

Assis1: 'They' that's a 'they'.

G: They . . . like . . . to . . . play . . in . . the . . garden.

E: Well done Ashley, well done.

G: Here . . . are . . . our . . new . . . words.

G: Play.

Assis1: No, They.

G: They.

Assis1: Good girl.

Appreciation from teachers.

End of reading session.

E.2 A Reading Session with A South Asian SLD Girl: Individual Work

Class Setting:

There are nine children in class three. They are aged from six to seven years. Four have Down's syndrome, one is Autistic and has Mental Illness, three have Epilepsy conditions and one child has a Rare Genetic Disorder.

Class Teacher	-----	Teacher1(English)
Supply Teacher	-----	Teacher2(English)
Assistant No.1	-----	Assis1 (Bilingual)
Assistant No.2	-----	Assis2 (English)
Student	-----	Phool (Asian SLD girl)

Words written in bold italic letters are spoken in the child's mother tongue; Punjabi.

Reading Session

- Assis1: *O.K. Phool, we are going to read this nice book. Can you read it for me?*
- Phool: Yes.
- Assis1: *Then read it loudly!*
- Teacher1: Oh, four eyes, from here then. [Taking with other children]
- Assis1 O.K start reading then.
- Phool Ga
- Assis1 The
- Phool [Silence]
- Assis1 The
- Teacher2: Do you want your hearing aids? Put them on [She was talking with another girl and Phool started looking at her.]
- Assis1: O.K Phool!
- Phool: is
- Assis1: is. *[Ask Phool to speak loudly]*
- Phool with Ha D DA . . DY Dady
- Assis1: *Speak properly.*

- Phool daddy in . . . the Caaar
- Assis1: *[Ask Phool to do the signs]*
- Phool Phool tries
- Assis1: *Not like this*
- Assis1: *[Assis1 do the sign properly]*
- Phool Phool tries again
- Assis2 *Good [Appreciation]*
- Assis1: *[Ask Phool to read next]*
- Phool H Here
- Assis2 here
- Phool is is a . . . car . . . ca . . r . . . car.
- Assis2 What's the colour of this car?
- Phool [No response]
- Assis2 What's the colour of this car? [Asked again]
- Phool car
- Assis2 *What's the colour of this car?*
- Phool green [also makes the sign]
- Assis2 *What is this?*
- Phool dad
- Assis2 yes, dad.
- Phool e . . is . . is in . . . in . . . the
. . .the . . . ca . . car
. . . ha ha . . . [Long breaths]
- Teacher2 We don't want rain [Teacher2 said to another boy]
- Phool [Started looking at her]
- Assis1 Phool, next!
- Phool Dad . . . dad . . . is . . . is . . . in . . . in . . . the . . . G . . . G . . . Ga . . Garden.
- Assis1 Well done. Next
- Phool This . . . this . . . this this *[Showing Assis1 putting her finger on the picture of dog and daddy in the car and started discussing things on that page.]*
- Phool *Dee Dee this* [Calling Assis1(Dee Dee means big sister)]

Assis1 What
 Phool This
 Assis1 What is this?
 Phool Dog
 Phool *Dee Dee . . . this*
 Assis1 *Come on! what is this?*
 Phool Dog . . . ga
 Assis1 Yes!
 Phool ga . . . ga . . . ga
 Assis1 the
 Phool the
 Assis1 Dog
 Phool Hog Dog ga
 Assis1 with
 Phool wa with daddy.
 Assis1 Well done.
 Phool huum [she started looking other children]
 Assis1 Don't look there.

[Interruption for 2 minutes: teacher from another class telling Assis1
 about the rest of her schedule of the day]

Assis1 Ok Phool! [to get her attention back]
 Phool here . . . is . . .
 Assis1 are
 Phool A . . . are . . . new [signed it also]
 Assis1 *not new! What is this?*
 Phool Hum [Long breath]
 Assis1 New
 Phool New wo . . wo . . rd . . s
 Assis1 words

[Interruption due to other children]

Assis1 Say it again.
 Phool Wor . . ds

Assis1 *Show me how to do the sign of 'new'*

Phool [She signed it]

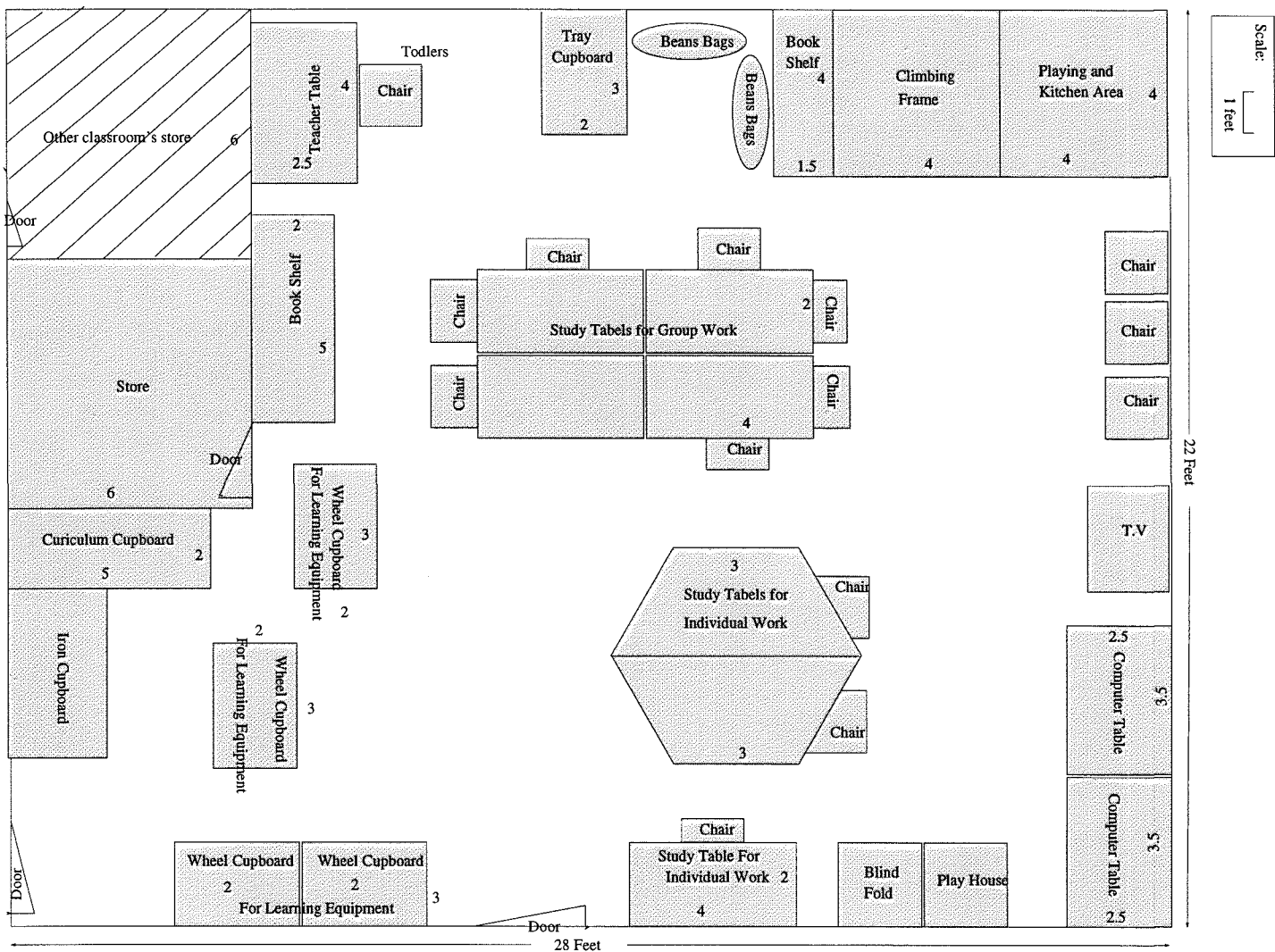
Assis1 Yes. Good girl.

End of study session.

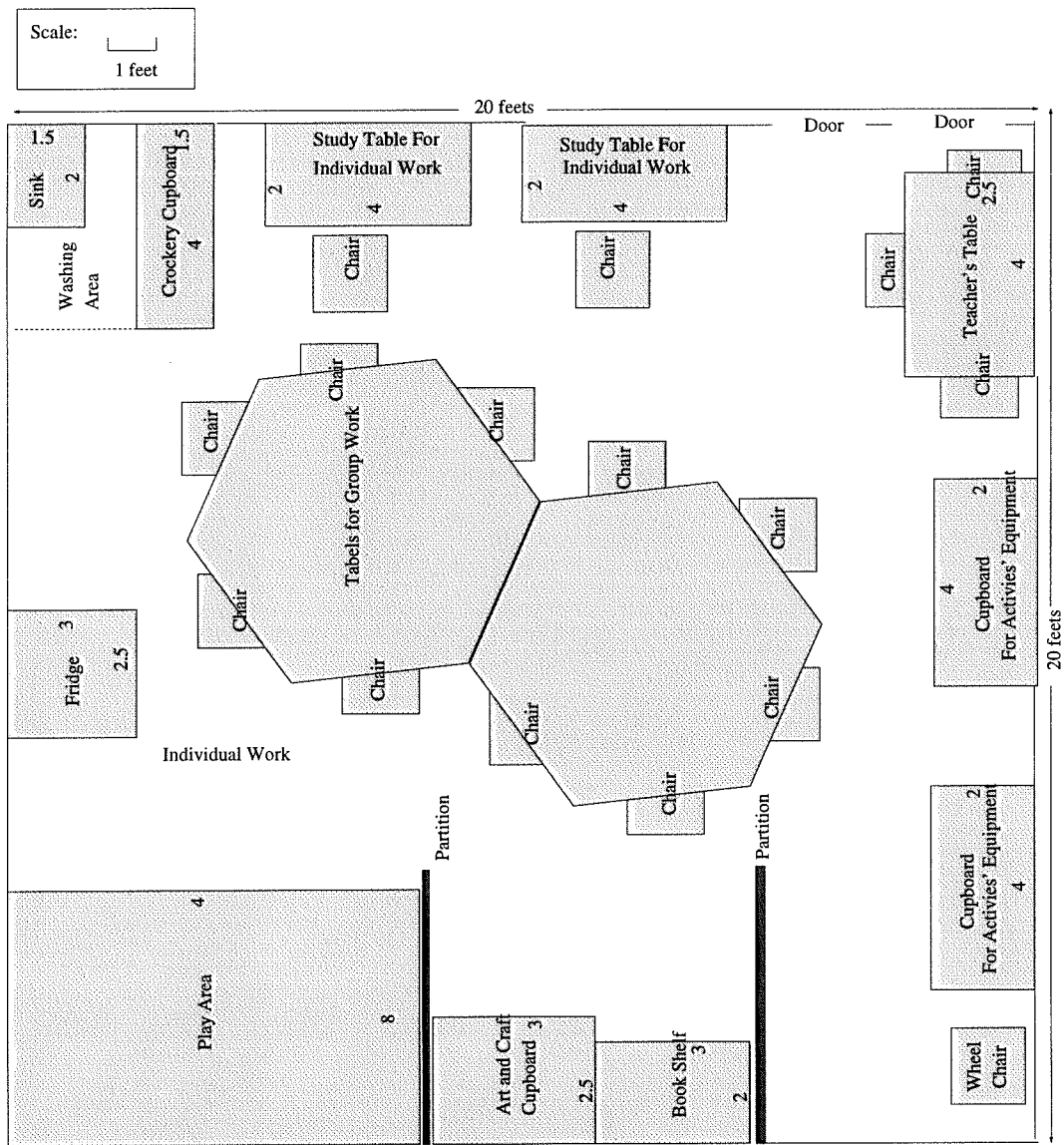
F Maps of Two Classrooms Showing Classroom Spacing

- F.1 A Layout of a Classroom Having 10 SLD Children.
- F.2 A Layout of a Classroom Having 11 SLD Children.

F.1 A Layout of a Classroom Having 10 SLD Children



F.2 A Layout of a Classroom Having 11 SLD Children



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