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**What type of policy might help?
School mobility and children in care**

Thesis submitted by
Fiona Navin B.Ed. (Hons)
in February 2012

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Education at James Cook University

Statement on the Contribution of Others

I acknowledge the intellectual support of my supervisory team, Professor Angela Hill and Associate Professor Leanne Dalley-Trim, who provided ongoing contributions to my research design, proposal writing, and data analysis and also editorial assistance with this thesis.

I have received financial assistance from the School of Education in accordance with the *James Cook University Minimum Resources Policy*. The James Cook University Faculty of Arts, Education and Social Sciences' *Graduate Research Scheme* enabled me to participate in courses and national and international conferences. Additionally, I have received a stipend in the form of an *Australian Postgraduate Award*. I have not sought or received any other contributions.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). The proposed research methodology received ethics clearance from the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee (approval number H3172) and the project was approved by the Department of Education and Training (reference number 550/27/779).

Fiona Navin

Date

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Abstract

The educational needs of children in care are highlighted as requiring more research (Cashmore, Higgins, Bromfield, & Scott, 2006), in particular, the extent to which individual factors impact on educational outcomes (P. Taylor et al., 2008). The research presented in this thesis explored one factor that can affect the education of children in care – school mobility. The school mobility of children in care can be seen as a ‘wicked’ policy problem, occurring at the intersection of the education and child protection systems. As such, this research adopted a policy analysis approach, considering the antecedents of current policy and imagining what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

This study engaged a critical lens, beginning with an understanding that within democratic society it is important to consider the agency of citizens, framed by an understanding of the relationship between citizens and the state (Garrick, 2011). This relationship can be explored through policy analysis which, Garrick (2011) notes, ‘brings to the surface’ the role of state activity. An examination of the role of the state, its policy drivers and modes of governance can reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions and perspectives that define institutional practices. In view of this, and using critical theory as a lens for investigation, the education and child protection systems within Queensland were examined.

This study was situated within a larger project that explored school mobility and trialled a position known as the Mobility Support Teacher. As such, the design of the research presented in this thesis was partly informed by the larger project. This doctoral study involved three distinct components. The first component explored the

role of the state in navigating and responding to the various shifts and pressures created by globalisation, and in part neoliberalism, with regard to the school mobility of children in care. The second component examined current Queensland policy, as specifically related to the education of children in care, and highlighted that there exists a ‘confused’ policy framework. The third component explored *le quotidien* (the local or daily life) through a case study approach. The case study presented statistical profiles of the population and communities within which the research was situated and conducted under to develop an understanding of context. Additionally, the characteristics of school mobility of 50 children in care were examined and interviews with five teachers and four Mobility Support Teachers provided an insight into teachers’ perceptions of working with this ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn, Smithgall, & Chen, 2009).

Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis was used to investigate and explain teachers’ work within this ‘confused’ policy framework. In particular, teachers’ positioning of themselves and their students, as well as the perceived legitimacy of power relations between teachers and others involved with children in care, was explored. The framework exposes a complex interplay of interests and how teachers navigate through, and negotiate with, the child protection system. The data were further analysed to understand teachers’ constructions of children’s needs.

The research confirms that the state is navigating complex territory and, presently, has not addressed the contradictions created by neoliberal modes of governance. Instead, ‘temporary settlements’ (Dale, 1989) are reached by the state which creates the policy landscape in which educators and Child Safety Officers must work. Consequently, educators find themselves operating within a policy framework,

characterised by lacunae, or spaces. Examining the enactment of policy highlights the difficulty that educators face when operating within such a space and some possible subsequent impacts on the education of children in care.

The implications of the data analysis suggest that the type of policy response that might best support mobile children in care should be underpinned by a more holistic view of school readiness coupled with more significant emphasis on resourcing for case management. The thesis demonstrates that the state remains a significant influence on policy despite the shift in the locus of control and that this shift has minimised the state's capacity to prioritise equity issues. Given the current formation of the state, this thesis highlights that it is important to consider policy implications and educational consequences for children in care and, more particularly, children in care who are mobile.

Table of Contents

Statement on the Contribution of Others	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Glossary	xiii
Acronyms	xv
Chapter 1: Mapping the fields	16
1.1 Overview	16
1.2 A system in ‘crisis’	19
1.3 Defining ‘children in care’	25
1.3.1. The education of children in care	27
1.4 School mobility	30
1.4.1 School mobility and contexts of disadvantage	31
1.4.2 School mobility and children in care.....	33
1.4.3 Conceptualising the school mobility of children in care	36
1.5 Teachers’ work with children in care	41
1.6 Wicked problems	43
1.7 Situating the research project	48
1.7.1 Study approach.....	50
1.7.2 Scope of the study	51
1.7.3 Objectives of the study	51
1.7.4 Research questions	52
1.8 Structure of the thesis	53
Chapter 2: Approaching the research	55

2.1 Overview	55
2.2 Positioning the research: Methodological paradigms and research design	59
2.2.1 Critical theory and transformative goals	60
2.2.2 Critical theory and research design	62
2.3 The collection of data	66
2.3.1 Documents as data.....	68
2.3.2 Determining and binding the case.....	70
2.3.2.1 Demographic data	74
2.3.2.2 Descriptive statistics.....	78
2.3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews.....	80
2.4 The analytical frame	87
2.3.2 Defining the state	88
2.3.3 Theories of the state	91
2.3.2.4 The state and educational policy	93
2.3.3 Policy analysis through a critical lens	95
2.3.4 Discourse analysis through a critical lens	97
2.3.2 Document analysis and discourse analysis.....	101
2.5 Limitations of the research.....	106
2.6 Critical researcher standpoint	109
2.7 Conclusion.....	111
Chapter 3 Navigating neoliberal policy frames in education and child protection:	
Identification of lacunae	113
3.1 Overview	113
3.2 The role of the state in neoliberal times	115
3.3 Responding to disadvantage and risk: The unresolved role of the state	118
3.3.1 The locus of state power	118
3.3.2 Role of the state: The purpose of education	122
3.3.3 The role of the state: Students changing schools	125

3.3.4 The role of the state: Welfare provision.....	127
3.3.5 The role of the state: Teachers’ work.....	130
3.4 Lacunae: The enactment of child protection and education policy	135
3.4.1 Children in care: Entangling the role of the state.....	137
3.4.2 Policy responses: Determining the ‘right’ approach	139
3.5 Conceptualising the role of the state in the context of mobile children in care	146
3.6 Conclusion.....	149
Chapter 4: Contradictions within neoliberal frames of governance: Filling-in by and with policy	151
4.1 Overview	151
4.2 The policy moment.....	154
4.3 Filling-in the gaps.....	161
4.4 The Education Support Plan.....	172
4.4.1 Talking back to policy.....	174
4.5 School mobility: Differential articulation	179
4.5.1 Conceptualisation for some key stakeholders	180
4.5.3 School mobility: A policy dilemma	185
4.6 Managing teachers’ work.....	187
4.7 Conclusion.....	191
Chapter 5: Navigating, creating and reclaiming spaces.....	194
5.1 Overview	194
5.2 Context: The concatenation of circumstances	196
5.3 The extent of knowing (to enable doing)	203
5.3.1 A select mobile cohort	205
5.3.2 Multiplicity of movements	206
5.3.3 Responding to school mobility: What is enabled?.....	208
5.4 Teachers positioning within a range of discourses.....	214
5.4.1 Teacher as rescuer: <i>You want to make sure that in one place they feel safe and they feel secure</i>	217

5.4.2 Teacher as professional: <i>I begged them not to move him</i>	225
5.4.3 Teachers' multiple identities	230
5.5 Barriers to different professional positionings	233
5.5.1 Navigating the system: <i>It feels like this secret society</i>	233
5.5.2 Barriers to basic professional requirements: <i>That would have been a good thing for me to know</i>	242
5.6 Enablers: <i>You're not starting on the backfoot</i>	249
5.7 Conclusion: Navigating teachers' work	254
Chapter 6: Innovating 'ideal' spaces through collaboration: 'Taming' a wicked problem.....	257
6.1 Overview	257
6.2 Reviewing key findings	259
6.3 Returning to the research questions.....	263
6.4 An alternative role of the state	265
6.5 Framing what type of policy might help	269
6.5.1 Integrated governance arrangements.....	270
6.5.2 A collaborative culture	272
6.5.3 A shared vision.....	274
6.6 Providing practical ways forward	284
6.6.1 Intelligent accountabilities and adequate resourcing.....	286
6.6.2 Holistic/ecological understandings	287
6.6.3 Providing space for constructive talk/interagency collaboration	289
6.6.4 Creating a clear framework.....	294
6.7 Next steps for research.....	296
6.8 Final remarks	298
References.....	301
Appendices.....	354
Appendix A: Position description of Mobility Support Teacher	354
Appendix B: Child Health Passport	357

List of Tables

Table 1.1. A snapshot of recent Australian child protection and abuse/neglect inquiries	22
Table 1.2. Characteristics of wicked problems	44
Table 2.1. Components of research	65
Table 2.2. Documents for analysis.....	69
Table 2.3. School sites involved in the case study.....	74
Table 2.4. Summary of Mobility Support Teacher experience.....	81
Table 2.5. Summary of teacher experience.....	83
Table 2.6. Framework for document analysis.....	105
Table 3.1. Frameworks of the education and child protection systems	149
Table 4.1. Policy moments in the Queensland child protection system, 2001-2011 ...	155
Table 4.2. Conceptualising ‘good performance’	173
Table 4.3. The process of developing an Education Support Plan	175
Table 4.4. A framework for counting school mobility	187
Table 5.1. Descriptive statistics of Collection Districts, 2006.....	197
Table 5.2. IRSD score, 2006.....	198
Table 5.3. ABS and AEDI data to examine local contexts, 2009/2010.....	200
Table 5.4. Summary of student background, 2009	202
Table 5.5. Reasons for mobility of enrolling children involved in the child protection system, 2009	207
Table 5.6. Information received upon enrolment of children involved in the child protection system, 2009	208
Table 5.7. Support agencies and programs accessed for enrolling children involved in the child protection system	211

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Transition points for children in care	18
Figure 1.2. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory of child development.....	30
Figure 1.3. Ron Baker’s ‘relationship web’	38
Figure 1.4. Ron Baker’s ‘relationship web’ of a refugee.....	38
Figure 1.5. Possible ‘relationship web’ of a child in care.....	40
Figure 2.1. Binding the case	72
Figure 2.2. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model for discourse analysis	99
Figure 4.1. A system for protecting children	158
Figure 5.1. Mobility Index of schools, 2009.....	205
Figure 5.2. Teacher subject positions	216
Figure 5.3. Teacher subjects within discursive spaces	231
Figure 5.4. Conceptualising teachers’ work	256
Figure 6.1. The ‘Best Interests Framework’	276
Figure 6.2. Working towards an ‘ideal’ space	277
Figure 6.3. A conceptual model of policy to support children in care who are mobile	283

Glossary

Children in care Children of any age for whom their parents/caregivers are unable or unwilling to provide adequate care or protection and it is therefore deemed necessary for child protection services to place the child in a safe environment with an approved carer. Placement of the child may be with or without parental consent.

Children involved the child protection system Children in this study who enrolled in any of the 14 project schools after Day 8, in 2009, and were identified as, or previously identified, as ‘children in care’. For example, children in care who, upon enrolment at a school involved in this study, returned to their parents’ care.

Department of Child Safety Refers to the Queensland Government department that encompasses child protection services – be it the Department of Child Safety or the Department of Communities, unless otherwise stated, for example when discussing structural differences and approaches to child protection services encompassed by each department.

DoCs Used by teachers and Mobility Support Teachers interchangeably to refer to the overseer of child protection services i.e. Department of Child Safety and Department of Community Services.

state

An abstract concept employed to refer to government, public bureaucracies, statutory authorities, the judiciary, etc. Chapter 2 provides a definition of this abstract conception.

State

Specific States or Territories, for example, Queensland, Victoria or the Northern Territory.

Acronyms

CSO	Child Safety Officer
DChS	Department of Child Safety
DoCs	Department of Child Safety/Department of Communities (see glossary)
ESP	Education Support Plan
GO	Guidance Officer
MST	Mobility Support Teacher
NAPLaN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

Chapter 1: Mapping the fields

Transition is at the core of foster care, just as much as care is (McIntosh, 1999, p. 29).

1.1 Overview

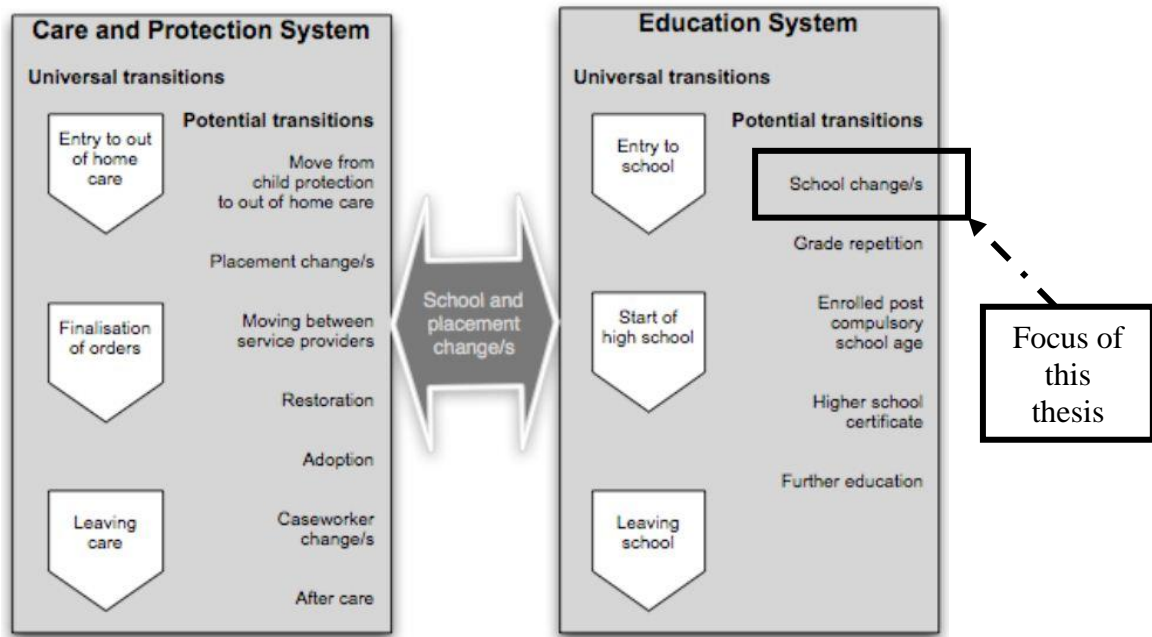
International research highlights that the educational and life outcomes of children in care are poorer than those of the general population (Farruggia, Greenberger, Chen, & Heckhausen, 2006; Vinnerljung, Öman, & Gunnarson, 2005). Within Australia, Osborn and Bromfield (2007) suggest that “young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups” (p.2). Stone (2007) argues that the importance of education, as a ‘pervasive protective factor’, cannot be overstated for children in care. There is an imperative, then, to ensure that policies and practices in both child protection and education are effective in supporting children in care.

Within Australia, there has been increasing focus on greater policy coherence through the Federal government’s social inclusion agenda. Australia is considered a wealthy country, ranked 10th in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranking of material wellbeing (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2008b), and a country in which the schooling system is able to partially compensate for socio-economic disadvantage (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). However, as the then Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, noted in 2008: “For too many Australians, access to experiences and opportunities that are fundamental to their wellbeing and dignity are simply not available. In a nation as prosperous as ours this is both morally and economically

unacceptable” (“Acknowledgements” section, para. 16). It is this “poverty alongside plenty” (Gillard, 2008, “Acknowledgements” section, para. 11) that is the ‘driving reality’ (A. Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008) for the social inclusion agenda. As will be discussed, for children in care there is a complex interplay of factors that contribute to their educational outcomes. According to Smyth (2010), the government’s social inclusion agenda should consider the complexities of disadvantage.

This thesis explores one aspect of the education of children in care – school mobility. As outlined by McIntosh (1999) in the opening quotation, transition is at the core of foster care. Children in care can experience a range of transition points in both the child protection and the education systems – entry/re-entry to care, movement between services, movement to permanent placement, entry to primary school, entry to high school, placement change, placement breakdown, restoration to family, exiting school, transitioning to independence (Department of Community Services, 2007; Department of Families and Community Services, 2004). Townsend (2011) highlights that some of these transition points are universal, whilst others are described as potential – see Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1. Transition points for children in care



Source: Adapted from *Are we making the grade? The education of children and young people in out-of-home care* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), by M Townsend, 2011, Lismore, Australia: Southern Cross University, p. 79

This research focuses on the transition point of school change/s (referred to in this thesis as school mobility), teachers’ perspectives of school mobility and the work of teachers in contexts of disadvantage in supporting children in care who are mobile.

Underpinning the research is the premise that the role of the state must be understood in order to understand policy; particularly in terms of the way that state formations frame policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Offe, 1985). Therefore the state, that is, the state beginning with a lower case “s”, is used to refer to the state in general – a concept employed to refer to government, public bureaucracies, statutory authorities, the judiciary, etc (Lingard, 1992). Chapter 2 provides a definition of this abstract conception. By contrast, State with an upper case "S" is used to refer to specific States or Territories, for example, Queensland or the Northern Territory.

This chapter maps some of the current research regarding the school mobility of children in care and provides an overview of the research presented in this thesis. The chapter begins by exploring the current structure of the child protection system within Australia, with a particular focus on Queensland. Next the interplay of factors that can affect the educational outcomes of children in care is briefly explored, explaining the value of ecological perspectives. The chapter then turns its focus to the current research on school mobility in contexts of disadvantage and of children in care, before exploring the role of teachers in supporting the education of children in care. The notion of ‘wicked problems’ is examined and it is suggested that the school mobility of children in care can be considered a wicked problem. This research then, aims to ‘tame’ the problem of the school mobility of children in care through the overarching research question: What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? In light of this focus, the aims and structure of the research are presented.

1.2 A system in ‘crisis’

Child abuse, neglect and exploitation have occurred throughout civilisation. Examples include infanticide in Ancient Greece and China, physical abuse of children to appease gods or spirits, child labour through the industrial revolution, sexual abuse and exploitation, prostitution or child trafficking, abduction of children to become child soldiers, and also the recent ‘discovery’ of emotional abuse (Hall, 2006; Tomison, 2001). Whilst child maltreatment is evident throughout history, Radbill (1974, cited in Tomison, 2001) outlines that there have also been advocates of children’s rights, such as Plato in 400 BC advising teachers to instruct children “not by compulsion but as if they were playing” (p. 47) and the case of Mary Ellen – often noted as one of the first

instances of child maltreatment that resulted in intervention from outside sources (Fogarty, 2008; Jones, Pickett, Oates, & Barbor, 1987; Tomison, 2001). Within western society, issues of child protection were not a public concern until the 19th century (Fogarty, 2008; Tilbury, Osmond, Wilson, & Clark, 2007; Tomison, 2001). Several suppositions for the development of public concern are proposed, including the changing conception of childhood, concern for the rights of the child and the significantly high rate of child mortality (C. Goddard, 1996a; Jones et al., 1987; Tomison, 2001).

Today, the child protection system is “part of the institutional framework for managing social inequalities” (Tilbury et al., 2007, p. 6) and, as such, the system provides a range of services aimed at prevention, assessment, support and responses to child abuse and/or neglect. The range of services are often conceptualised as three levels of prevention (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; Helyar et al., 2009; Tilbury et al., 2007):

1. Primary prevention activities are generally universal (that is, targeted at the whole population) and aim to prevent child maltreatment through awareness-raising and the development of programs and resources for children, families and communities. For example, education, housing and employment services.
2. Secondary prevention activities are targeted at disadvantaged groups or individuals and aim to enhance family functioning and increase parental skills and knowledge to prevent maltreatment occurring.

3. Tertiary prevention activities are targeted at children and families where maltreatment has been identified and aim to avert its recurrence. (Tilbury et al., 2007, p. 13)

In order to institute these protective mechanisms, government departments can exist in various structural arrangements – a stand-alone department or a ‘super-department’ (Tilbury et al., 2007).

In Queensland, there have been several structural rearrangements for managing child protection. In 2004, the Department of Child Safety was created as a stand-alone department focussing on the tertiary aspects of child protection. In 2009, during the writing of this thesis, the Department of Child Safety was amalgamated into the Department of Communities, which encompasses primary, secondary and tertiary preventions. Despite the amalgamation, the Department of Communities currently applies many of the Department of Child Safety policies, including all of the policies focussed on the education of children in care. As such, when used within this thesis ‘Department of Child Safety’, unless stated otherwise, refers to the department that encompasses child protection services – be it the Department of Child Safety or the Department of Communities. Having noted this, the variations on the structural arrangements of these departments, and the approach to child protection that such an arrangement represents, will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. So, too, the Department of Education and Training refers to previous educational departments.

The creation of the Department of Child Safety in 2004 was a result of a public inquiry into the outcomes and wellbeing of children in care. Over the past decade, several public inquiries into child protection services have been undertaken across the

nation (see Table 1.1 below) – suggesting a system in ‘crisis’ (Harries, Thomson, & Lonne, 2005b).

Table 1.1. A snapshot of recent Australian child protection and abuse/neglect inquiries

Year inquiry launched	Inquiry
2011	Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry
2009	Inquiry into the Child Protection System in the Northern Territory (the ‘Bath Inquiry’) Victorian Ombudsman – Own motion investigation into the Department of Human Services Child Protection Program
2007	Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales (the ‘Wood Inquiry’) New South Wales Ombudsman Ebony New South Wales Ombudsman Dean Shillingsworth Review of the Department for Community Development (the ‘Ford Review’), Western Australia
2006	Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (‘Little Children are Sacred’)
2004	South Australian Commission of Inquiry into children in state care (CISC). Also led to the establishment of the Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Foster Care (Protecting Children: An inquiry into abuse of children in foster care) Australian Capital Territory Review of Safety of Children in Care
2003	Senate Inquiry into children in Institutional Care
2002	Review of Child Protection in the State of South Australia (the ‘Layton Inquiry’) Child Protection Services Inquiry, New South Wales Queensland Ombudsman Baby Kate Victorian Protecting Children Review
2001	Queensland Ombudsman Brooke Brennan Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities (the ‘Gordon Inquiry’), Western Australia
1999	Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (the ‘Forde Inquiry’)

During the period in which these inquiries took place, the States and Territories were the main service providers and funders of the child protection systems, with the Federal Government providing broader welfare measures, such as income support (Tilbury et al., 2007). More recently, however, social policy has become a key policy focus for the Commonwealth Government, ushering in a new federalism in a range of spheres – health, education and child protection included (Keating, 2009). Particularly within the Australian context, there is an importance in understanding Federal-State relations within the broader political and constitutional contexts of federalism (Harris-Hart, 2010). Power and control are fundamental aspects of federalism, demonstrated through competing centripetal (centralisation) and centrifugal (decentralisation) forces (Gageler, 1987; Harris-Hart, 2010). Whilst education remains a residual power of the States, with a shared funding responsibility, there has increasingly been Federal intervention through centralisation/decentralisation processes – that is, the Commonwealth provides funding attached to accountability measures that schools must meet (Lingard, 1991). The unique system of Australian schooling and Australian federalism has created a set of dynamics that are problematic to access to, participation in and for outcomes of education (Keating, 2009). To address these issues, Keating (2009) argues that a new federalism is required.

Within the child protection system, the Federal Government has agreed to work collaboratively with States and Territories to implement the first *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009). The framework acknowledges that whilst reducing abuse and neglect is important, so too is ensuring that children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect receive appropriate services.

In light of a focus on improved services, national standards for out-of-home care have been developed as a key action. Included within the *National Standards for Out-of-home Care* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs & National Framework Implementation Working Group, 2011) are three standards focussing specifically on education – individualised plans; access to and participation in early childhood education; and, support until the age of 18 to engage in education, training and/or employment (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs & National Framework Implementation Working Group, 2011). While the current standards in the Queensland child protection system align strongly with the *National Standards for Out-of-home Care* (KPMG Consulting & Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2010), it is currently too early to determine the impact of the collaborative reform between State/Territory and Federal Governments. Given the strong alignment between the Queensland child protection system and the *National Standards for Out-of-home Care*, it is unlikely that the current practices of the Department of Communities (adapted from the Department of Child Safety) are likely to be substantially revised with the new collaborative approach.

Underpinning any reform is the need for research and re-evaluation to ensure that such reforms are effective in supporting those at whom they are aimed (Bromfield & Arney, 2008). The *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) argues that there has been no evaluation of the Queensland policy aimed at supporting the education of children in care since its creation in 2004. Throughout the thesis, the effectiveness of current policy is considered with a view to inform ‘what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile’.

1.3 Defining ‘children in care’

For the purposes of this research, ‘children in care’ refers to children for whom their parents/caregivers are unable or unwilling to provide adequate care or protection and it is therefore deemed necessary for child protection services to place the child in a safe environment with an approved carer (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006). It is important to note that, depending on the specific situation, children may be placed in care with or without parental consent and legal guardianship may remain with the parent or transferred to the Chief Executive of the Department (Department of Child Safety, 2007a; Department of Communities, 2011a). While diversely defined, there is a multitude of terms used to refer to ‘children in care’ – describing a specific type of care placement (e.g. foster, kinship foster, residential, relative) or a generational category (e.g. children and young people). Each of the aforementioned categories is useful in acknowledging that children in care are not a homogeneous group and that a child’s needs change over her/his life course. This thesis focuses on primary school settings and does not include a focus on different types of placement. As such, the term ‘children in care’ is used throughout, unless other terms are required for clarity, to refer to those children who are not residing with their parents/caregivers and have been moved to a care placement.

Nationally, there has been a growing public concern about the number of children entering, and remaining, in care (Hatty, 1991; Tomison, 2001). Within Australia, the number of children in care increased from 18 241 in 2000-01 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2002) to 35 895 in 2009-2010 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011a). Applying a ‘stock and flow’ analysis of child protection data, Tilbury (2009) shows that the rate of children entering and exiting care has remained relatively stable over an eight-year period (2000-01–2007-08), however, the rate of children in

care has increased from 3.9/1000 children to 6.3/1000 children over the same period. The increased 'stock' of children in care is attributed to an increase in the length of time that children remain in care (Tilbury, 2009). An implication of this analysis is the need to ensure policy and practice meet the needs of children who are in care for increasingly longer periods of time (Tilbury, 2009).

Although child abuse and/or neglect occur across all socio-economic groups (Dyson, 2008), research has shown correlation between measures of economic income and rates of child abuse and/or neglect (Department of Human Services, 2002; Dyson, 2008; McConnell, Llewellyn, & Ferronato, 2000; J. Thomson, 2003). Similarly, distinct family-types and household-types are more likely to be represented in the child protection system, for example, single parent families, young-parent households, and Indigenous households (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006; Department of Child Safety, 2008a; Department of Human Services, 2002; McConnell et al., 2000). Individual parental factors can also increase the risk of abuse and/or neglect, as seen with drug/alcohol misuse, domestic violence, intergenerational abuse, criminal history and mental illness (Bromfield, Lamont, Parker, & Horsfail, 2010; Department of Child Safety, 2008b).

Within Australia, many of the families that come to the attention of the child protection system have experienced a range of disadvantage – including poverty and isolation, unstable housing, homelessness, poor health, disability, mental health issues, behavioural problems and past experiences of abuse/neglect (Booth, Booth, & McConnell, 2005; Bromfield et al., 2010; Fleming, Mullen, & Bammer, 1997; Frederick & Goddard, 2007; Leek, Seneque, & Ward, 2009; Wood, 2008). Indeed, Vinson (2007) has shown that, where there are high concentrations of disadvantage,

there are also high levels of child abuse and/or neglect – highlighting the connectedness of factors that increase the risk of child abuse and/or neglect. Bromfield, Lamont, Parker and Horsfail (2010) observe that, while substance misuse, mental health concerns and domestic violence are ‘key risk factors’ for child abuse and/or neglect, families experiencing such issues are often “situated within a wider context of exclusion and disadvantage” (p. 11). As such, “families with multiple and complex problems . . . have become the primary client group of modern child protection services” (Bromfield et al., 2010, p. 11). While it stands that disadvantage can contribute to child abuse and neglect, so too the intersection of disadvantage and abuse and/or neglect can impact on a child’s educational outcomes. The research presented within this thesis explores the education of children in care within contexts of disadvantage, with a particular focus on school mobility.

1.3.1. The education of children in care

Research that focuses on children in care has arisen from a variety of academic fields, including social work, psychology, social policy, education, health, law and sociology (Cashmore et al., 2006; Higgins, Adams, Bromfield, Richardson, & Aldana, 2005; McDonald, Higgins, Valentine, & Lamont, 2011). Through a review of Australian research on child protection and out-of-home care between 1995 and 2004, Cashmore, Higgins, Bromfield and Scott (2006) highlight a lack of research into educational needs and outcomes of children in care. A more recent audit (McDonald et al., 2011), focussing on Australian child protection research undertaken between 1995 and 2010, did not include the education of children in care as a subtopic for analysis. As such, it is difficult to ascertain the growth of the knowledge base on the education of children in care within Australia between the period of the two audits.

Despite limited Australian research on the educational outcomes and needs of children in care, recent reports suggest that children in care do not achieve the same educational outcomes as the general population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011b). Although specific results vary between States and year levels, children in care are less likely than the general population to achieve year-level benchmarks on the national literacy and numeracy tests (NAPLAN) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011b; Kids in Care Education Committee Working Group, 2003; White & Lindstrom, 2007) and are more likely to leave school before completing Year 12 (Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, 2010; Cashmore & Paxman, 1996; CREATE Foundation, 2004, 2006). Between 35-39% of students in care complete Year 12, compared to approximately 80% of students who live with their families (Townsend, 2006).

There are a variety of risk factors that can influence the educational progression and attainment of children in care (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004; Choice et al., 2001; Frederick & Goddard, 2010). Risk factors are considered to operate both prior to entering care and after entry into care. In a context of disadvantage, there is a 'clustering' of risk factors that can contribute to poor educational attainment (Centre for Community Child Health, 2009; Hilferty, Redmond, & Katz, 2009; Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards, & Hayes, 2008). Dyson (2008) suggests that children who experience abuse and/or neglect in contexts of poverty are 'doubly disadvantaged'. Additionally, a range of structural factors can contribute to poor educational attainment, such as a lack of co-ordination and communication across education and child protection systems (Advocates For Children of New York, 2000; Altshuler, 2003; Choice et al., 2001; Conger & Finkelstein, 2003; Fletcher-Campbell, 1998; The California Education Collaborative for Children in Foster Care, 2008). In light of research into the education

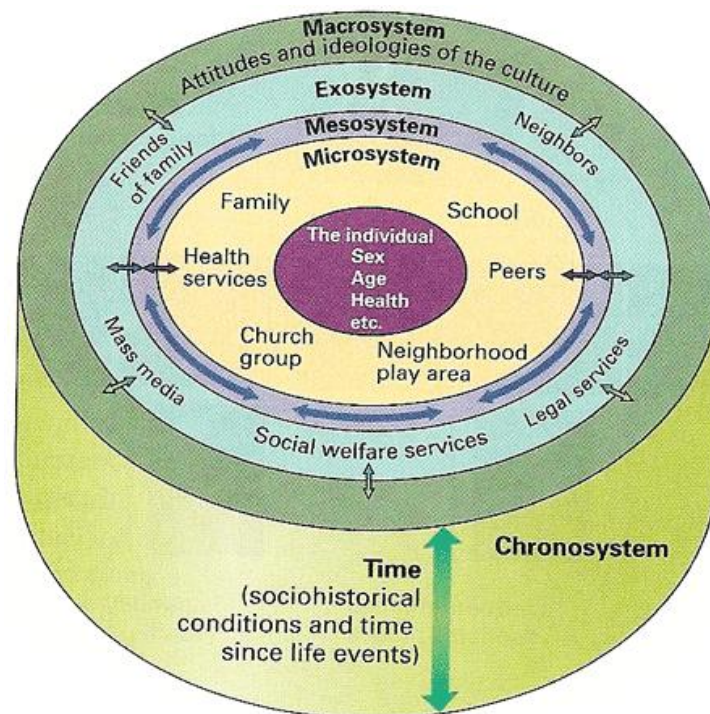
of children in care, many researchers stress the importance of acknowledging that the educational outcomes of children in care cannot necessarily be attributed to involvement in the child protection system, but can be a result of the interplay of a variety of factors before and after entering care (Berridge, 2007; Francis, 2000; J. Goddard, 2000; Jackson, 1988).

To take into account the complex relationships and interactions between risk and protective factors that can potentially affect the educational outcomes of children in care, ecological theories provide useful perspectives. Specifically, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) Ecological Systems Theory suggests that individuals develop in inter-related, nested systems and the myriad possible problems within these systems exert their effect upon the individual in a complex and dynamic manner (see Figure 1.2 below). To understand an individual's positioning one must see within, beyond and across each system (McTurk, Nutton, Lea, Robinson, & Carapetis, 2008).

A strength of Ecological Systems Theory is that it encourages a holistic view, highlighting the various systems that can impact the individual. For children in care, the differing ideologies of the macrosystem are likely to influence their experiences to a substantial degree. This thesis explores the school mobility of children in care within a particular framing of the macrosystem – a neoliberal framing. As used within this thesis, Ecological Systems Theory draws attention to the tensions between the global discourses of education and articulation, and enactment, at the local level (S. Taylor & Henry, 2003). In doing so, the tensions between social-democratic and neoliberal approaches to social justice are in focus. Chapter 3 will discuss the consequences of a neoliberal framing of social policy at the macro level in more detail. The above discussion has shown that a holistic conceptualisation of children in care is required to

understand the complex interplay of factors that can influence educational outcomes. The following section explores one aspect of education – school mobility.

Figure 1.2. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory of child development



Source: *Longitudinal study of Australian children: Key research questions*, by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Institute of Family Studies, & Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, from <http://www.aifs.gov.au>

1.4 School mobility

There exists a body of national and international research that explores mobility as an educational issue and the lack of a common definition of school mobility within these research publications, complicates how mobility can be conceptualised, named, measured and examined (Dobson, Henthorne, & Lynas, 2000; Hartman & Franke, 2003; A. Hill, Navin, & Lynch, 2009; KPMG Consulting, Australian Council for Education Research, Department of Defence, & Department of Education, 2002; McAndrew & Power, 2003; Rumberger, 2003). In relation to this lack of common

definition, and throughout the literature, a variety of terms are employed, including mobility, itinerancy, transience, relocation and turbulence. These terms position both participants and researchers in different ways, drawing attention to different aspects of mobility. Often mobility is framed as a ‘problem’ of children and/or their families, juxtaposing mobility and stability; or conversely research into the effects of mobility adopts a positivist perspective “that the world can be interpreted in terms of cause and effect relationships” (Henderson, 2001, p. 2).

There are many reasons for school mobility and it is important to note that these reasons may not be mutually exclusive. The first factor often cited in educational literature is residential moves and factors relating to familial circumstances or lifestyles. Often geographical/residential transfer is accepted as a necessary aspect of employment for occupations such as police or military personnel and fairground employees or Traveller families (Currie & Danaher, 2001; Department of Education, 1992; KPMG Consulting et al., 2002; Strand & Demi, 2005). For others, mobility is necessary for career advancement (Department of Education, 1992; KPMG Consulting et al., 2002; Pribesh & Downey, 1999), related to a specific event, such as death, divorce, separation or financial instability (KPMG Consulting et al., 2002; Pribesh & Downey, 1999), or factors related to the school itself.

1.4.1 School mobility and contexts of disadvantage

There is limited international research on the intersections between mobility and poverty and what this means for the work of teachers and schools. What is known is that “high mobility schools tend to have higher proportions of disadvantaged children” (Dobson et al., 2000, p. 81) and that, while the root causes of mobility might lie beyond

the influence of schools and teachers, there are strategies that can be enacted at the school and classroom level that work to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of school mobility for both the students and the school. Rumberger (2003) calls on research from the United States of America to describe an extensive set of strategies shown to be effective in reducing mobility and in the transition of new students. In England, a number of large-scale projects have been undertaken to determine patterns of school mobility (Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Dobson et al., 2000; Office for Standards in Education, 2002). This research has led the Department for Education and Skills (2003) to produce a comprehensive guide to working in highly mobile (although not necessarily disadvantaged) contexts. In this guide the Department for Education and Skills provide a systematic approach to managing mobility, including inducting new students, enabling curriculum access and involving external agencies.

In Australia, State jurisdictions have also made some efforts to measure and monitor school mobility. In South Australia, the Department of Education, Training and Employment (1996) produced a guide for supporting mobile students and more recently the Commonwealth government has produced a series of booklets aimed at smoothing school transitions (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2006a, 2006b). While there is a body of work that describes what can be done to mitigate the impacts of mobility, there remain limited comprehensive data that accurately present the extent and nature of school mobility generally, and of children in care specifically, within States or within the nation.

1.4.2 School mobility and children in care

Internationally, several studies highlight children in care as a mobile cohort (Berridge, 1989; Choice et al., 2001; Fletcher-Campbell, 1990; Jacobson, 2001), with school mobility perceived either as positive or as potentially detrimental. Some studies suggest that changing schools can be beneficial for children in care, providing a ‘fresh start’ (Conger & Finkelstein, 2003) or that children perceive the new school as ‘better’ than their previous school (Chapman, Wall, & Barth, 2004; Fox & Berrick, 2007). Conversely, other studies frame school mobility as a potential ‘barrier’ to educational attainment, highlighting the difficulty in maintaining enrolment when a child enters care or changes placement (Choice et al., 2001; Fletcher-Campbell, 1990). As such, strategies that consider how to address the educational outcomes of children in care acknowledge school stability as important and desirable (Department for Education and Skills, 2007; Social Services Improvement Agency, 2007; The California Education Collaborative for Children in Foster Care, 2008).

Noting the perceived desirability of school stability, in some international locations there have been steps taken to reduce the incidence of school mobility. In Massachusetts, United States of America, districts are reimbursed for the costs associated with educating children in care outside their placement district, allowing students to remain in the school for the remainder of the year (Jacobson, 1997, 2008). Other strategies focus on a specific educational advocate or ‘champion’ for children in care (Jackson, 1988; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2004, 2005; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2006). These ‘champions’ variably work with case workers, teachers and schools to ensure that educational issues, such as the impact of school movement or behavioural circumstances that may lead to school movement, are prioritised by case workers and that teachers are aware of the child’s circumstances outside school that may influence

behaviour or impact on learning. In this way, the ‘champions’ can provide support and minimise the negative consequences of school mobility.

Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011b), an Australian pilot study into the educational outcomes of children in care, illustrates that shortcomings in data collection systems constrain exploration into the extent of school mobility of children in care – therefore precise figures are difficult to establish. However, of the research that has been conducted, several studies have included the percentage of children in care who change schools, sometimes disaggregated by number of previous schools (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011b; Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Wise, Pollock, Mitchell, Argus, & Farquhar, 2010), and some have linked school mobility with placement movement (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004). In South Australia, Barber and Delfabbro (2004) found that children with more placement movements are more likely to attend multiple schools (primary and secondary), and that age is the only significant predictor of number of school changes, along with the geographical distance children are placed from their family. Thus, school mobility is more likely to be experienced by older children with a longer placement history (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004). Given Tilbury’s (2009) assertion that more children are remaining in care, Barber and Delfabbro’s (2004) findings are significant.

Within Queensland, where this study was undertaken, a number of studies explore the school mobility of children in care. Each year the *Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian* conducts surveys to understand better the views of children in care. As part of the survey, children are asked to report on the number of schools

attended. Different presentation of the data makes comparisons across years difficult; however, in 2008 and 2010 the number of schools attended ranged from 1-20, and in both years approximately one third of those surveyed reported attending three to five primary schools (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2008a, 2010). Despite growing concern about the school mobility of children in care, within Australia, there appears to be no attempt to reduce or ‘smooth’ the experience of school mobility. This may be, in part, due to the unreliability of the data about the extent of school mobility. The recent pilot study into the education of children in care – *Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011b) – notes that additional research is required to explore measures of schooling stability, and how school mobility may affect learning outcomes.

With regard to a relationship between school mobility and academic achievement, the results from the literature are varied. Although working with a limited data set, initial analysis of the educational outcomes of children in care within Australia suggests that the number of schools a child attends is not a significant predictor of achievement (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011b). In a more comprehensive study, albeit not of children in care, it was found that school mobility can compound other factors that have a negative impact on learning outcomes (KPMG Consulting et al., 2002). In light of the research reviewed above, the findings from the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Defence (KPMG Consulting et al., 2002) would suggest that school mobility may negatively impact on the educational outcomes of children in care who are exposed to other risk factors. However, before a response to school mobility for children in care can be introduced in Australia the incidence of mobility needs to be determined. As such, to develop a better

understanding of school mobility of children in care, the research presented in this thesis, in part, explores the incidence and characteristics of the school mobility of a select cohort of children in care. Whilst the incidence of school mobility is important, equally so is developing an understanding of the experiences of school mobility, to which this chapter now turns.

1.4.3 Conceptualising the school mobility of children in care

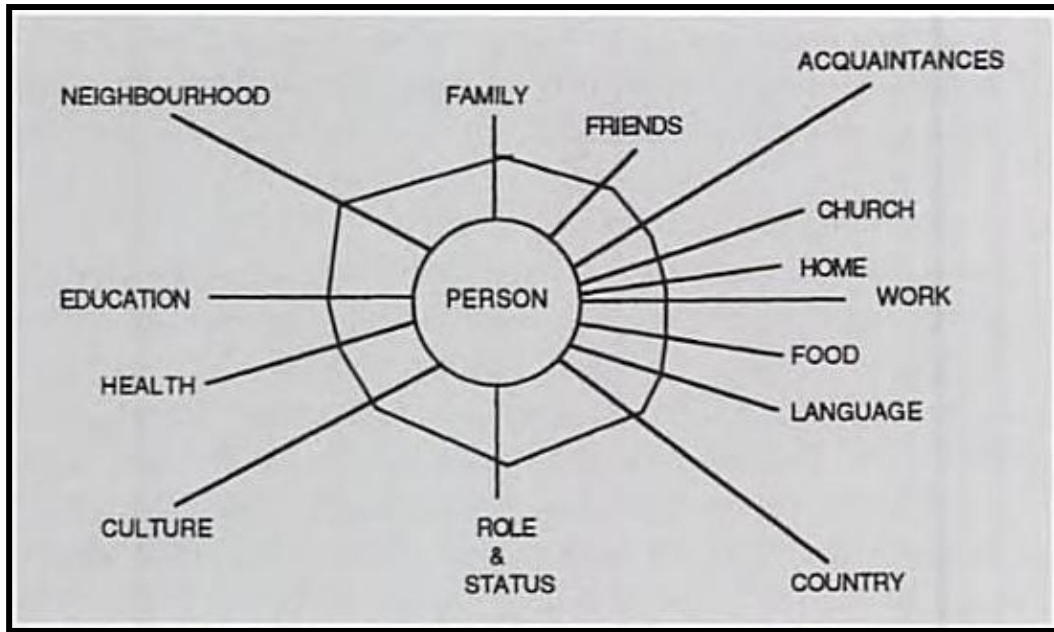
Western child development theories provide some insight into the experience of school mobility, suggesting that it is likely to have an adverse impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of students. In light of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, a change in school represents an ecological transition (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Bronfenbrenner (1989) suggests disruption is a destructive force within the system and argues that "the degree of stability, consistency, and predictability over time in any element or level of the systems constituting an ecology of human development is crucial for the effective operation of the system" (p. 241) – in this case, the school environment (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). For children in care, disruption may be experienced in the school and home environment if school and placement change coincide.

The holistic perspective encouraged by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory highlights the *physical* and *relational* aspects with any transition or movement. In a similar vein, Tilbury and Osmond (2006) adopt a holistic understanding of permanency, highlighting that permanency extends beyond placement and "is about *relationships, identity and a sense of belonging*" (p. 3) and that "continuity in placement is different from a 'sense of permanence'" (p. 4). To consider

the *physical* and *relational* aspects of permanency, Ron Baker's (1983) 'relationship web' provides a useful perspective.

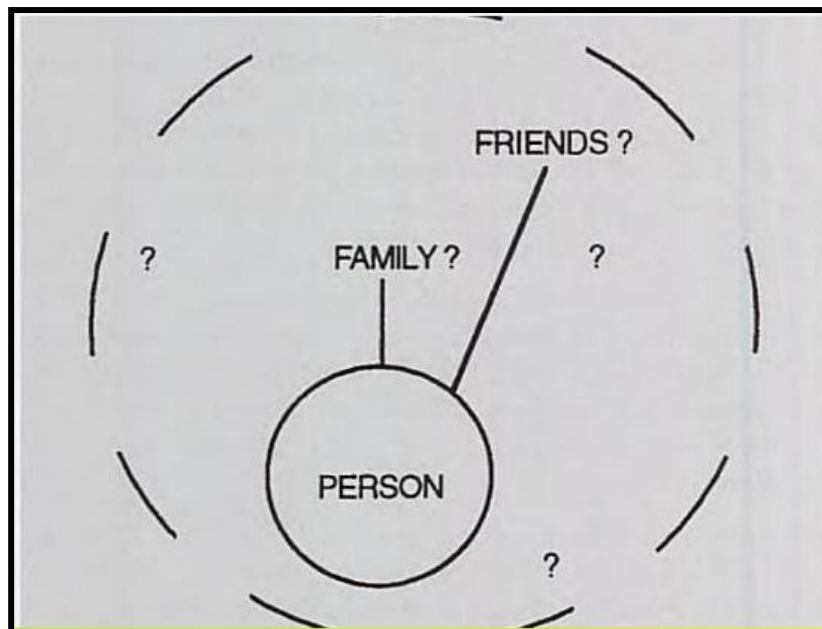
Baker (1983) suggests that people are held in position, and supported, by a relationship web of connections to people and structures which provide status, affirmation, and a sense of connection and belonging (Rutter, 2006; G. Smyth, 2009) – see Figure 1.3 below. When an individual moves, the relationship web is altered. Importantly, the circumstances under which an individual moves differentially affect the relationship web (Baker, 1983). Through his work on refugees, Baker makes a distinction between the reasons for movement for migrants and refugees, which is extended to children in care in this thesis. Baker (1983) outlines that migrants are 'pulled' by enhanced prospects, movement is planned and systematic and that choice dominates. Refugees, on the other hand, flee for fear or are 'pushed' (Kunz, 1975 in Baker, 1983). Consequently, the relationship web of a refugee is fragmented resulting in a loss of status, identity and security (Baker, 1983) – see Figure 1.4 below. According to Baker (1983), this type of movement would represent a challenge to a child's coping and adaptive strategies.

Figure 1.3. Ron Baker's 'relationship web'



Source: *The psychosocial problems of refugees*, by R. Baker, 1983, London, England: The British Refugee Council. p. 2.

Figure 1.4. Ron Baker's 'relationship web' of a refugee

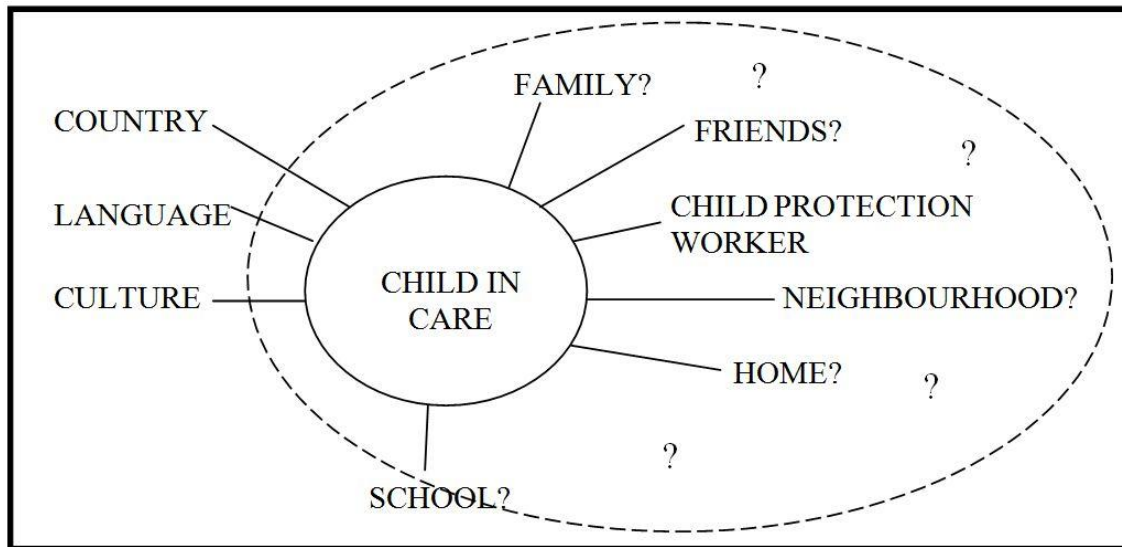


Source: *The psychosocial problems of refugees*, by R. Baker, 1983, London, England: The British Refugee Council. p. 2.

The different motivations behind moving residence require various understandings in terms of the assistance required in resettling (Baker, 1983; G. Smyth, 2009). Rutter (2006) distinguishes between the needs of refugee pupils and other migrant pupils through the *Refugee Pupil Identikit*, and again comparisons can be made between refugee children and children in care. The *Refugee Pupil Identikit* highlights that refugee children are unannounced, traumatised, transient, insecure, provided with no choice, offered no support and have little cash. There are obvious differences in the types of support that need to be provided to a student who experiences a strategic move as opposed to one who experiences reactive moves.

For a child in care who has moved placement, some structures may remain but others may be lost, as shown in Figure 1.5 below. McIntosh (1999) suggests that ‘transitions’ or changing placements is the “most vulnerable point in a child’s foster care experience” (p. 30), creating feelings of loss, confusion, isolation, disorientation and affecting the child’s self-agency and sense of control. As outlined in McIntosh’s (1999) research, children’s experiences of movement suggest a feeling of losing ‘pieces of self’. When entering care, particularly in a crisis situation, children’s emotions are heightened and the child may be in a state of shock (Department of Child Safety, 2006b). Views from children in care highlight that, initially, many do not understand why they are placed in care and that no one explains the reasons to them (Cashmore & Paxman, 1996; Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2008a, 2008b, 2010). Additionally, many children in care report that they are not told what to expect when they enter care (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2006, 2008a, 2010) and some (approximately 20%) worry about having to move in the next month (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

Figure 1.5. Possible 'relationship web' of a child in care



School (see Figure 1.5 above) is intentionally placed between the structures which are lost and the structures which remain to consider the effects of school mobility on the relationship web in the educational setting. If a child moves school and residence then her/his positioning is akin to that of a refugee pupil. However, if a child is able to remain in the same school when moving placements, additional structures would remain in her/his 'relationship web', such as friends and role and status within the school. The continuation of structures would decrease the demand on a child's adaptive capacities, and the school, in already 'knowing' the child, would be able to provide or continue individualised support (Comber, 1998). Baker (1983) suggests that support should focus on rebuilding the relationship web and Smyth (2009) adds that the school, as a constant, can play a large role. The role of teachers in supporting children in care who are mobile is a key focus of this doctoral study, and to which this chapter now turns.

1.5 Teachers' work with children in care

A distinctive theme throughout the literature on the education of children in care is the place of schools and teachers as sources of stability. Teachers are often touted as advocates for children in care (Noble, 1997; The California Education Collaborative for Children in Foster Care, 2008; White & Lindstrom, 2007), with many booklets and frameworks providing guides to what teachers or schools 'need to know' or 'should do' (Haeseler, 2006; Lovitt, 2010; Meese, 1999). Additionally, teacher expectations of children in care have been examined, with concern for self-fulfilling prophecies; however, it is reported that, whilst teachers view the potential outcomes of children in care as 'below average', their perceptions are seen as a "realistic reflection of children's poor prospects rather than a cause of them" (Francis, 2000, p. 29).

A notable absence from the research literature is the 'voice' of teachers and their perceptions of teachers' work with children in care. Recently, this topic has gained attention, particularly in the United States of America. One example is a recent study conducted in Los Angeles which focussed on teacher understanding of the child protection system and how students are affected by involvement in the child protection system (Watson-Davis, 2010). The study found that many teachers do not have an understanding of the child protection system, believe that students in the child protection system are not identified by schools and additionally consider it necessary to notify teachers if a child in the class is part of the child protection system. Notably, 93% believed that greater supports are required for the education of children in care, specifically with regard to teacher professional development (Watson-Davis, 2010).

The Center for the Future of Teacher and Learning in California has also noted the gap in teachers' perceptions and, in 2009, held discussion groups with teachers. From these discussion groups, 'wish lists' from teachers' ideas about how schools,

communities and districts can support teachers' work with children in care were created (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d). Teachers saw communities as "untapped but potential allies" (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010a, p. 19) that could provide physical resources required for school and opportunities such as mentoring or job shadowing. Teachers outlined that more effective communication from and between schools and districts would better enable teachers to support children in care, as would further professional development – particularly focussing on effective classroom practices and the availability of resources within and outside the school (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010a). Furthermore, teachers suggested that schools could provide additional planning time to teachers, on-site resources and support (including counselling) for children in care, and programs to benefit all students, such as life skills, conflict management and peer support programs (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010a). From districts, teachers highlighted that supporting school stability, providing greater guidance and support for post-school options and, when a student moves schools, ensuring the student receives credit for work completed at previous schools, would benefit both the child and teachers in supporting children in care (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2010a).

Within Victoria, Australia, O'Neill conducted a longitudinal, action-oriented research project from 1995-1998 focussing on teachers' work with children in foster and permanent care. Over this period, 17 teachers, from a range of schools, were interviewed on several occasions. O'Neill (1999) concludes that the teachers involved in the study had limited knowledge of the care system and felt that they were inadequately consulted regarding the needs and circumstances of the child in their class. For this reason, O'Neill suggests that it is important for child protection workers to

facilitate teacher understanding of the student in their class. So, too, issues of power and control in relation to children's behaviour and between foster parents and teachers were raised, highlighting misunderstandings regarding expectations. This thesis seeks to add to the literature on teacher perspectives of working with children in care who are mobile.

1.6 Wicked problems

Teachers and other professionals who work with children in care who are mobile are situated within various legal, social and organisational contexts. Within each of these contexts are numerous factors that both constrain and enable practice – for example, time-lines, policies, legislation, the limits of the training of staff and the staffs' own psychological agenda (McIntosh, 1999). Child protection work occurs in a complex socio-political field (Tilbury et al., 2007) – a focus on education adds to that complexity. Within policy arenas, issues that are complex are often termed 'wicked' problems.

The notion of 'wicked problems' is generally attributed to Rittel and Webber (1973) who, in their influential paper 'Dilemma in a General Theory of Planning', suggest that the plurality of society means that top-down approaches are no longer adequate for solving societal problems. Rittel and Webber (1973) argue that the problems faced in social policy are intrinsically different from those in science and engineering – the latter, they claim, are generally 'tame' or 'benign' in that there is a clarity in both problem definition and solution. By contrast, wicked problems do not possess such clarity. Rittel and Webber (1973) identify 10 characteristics of wicked

problems and, more recently, the Australian Public Service Commission (2007) has identified nine characteristics – both sets of characteristics are presented below.

Table 1.2. Characteristics of wicked problems

Characteristics of wicked problems	
Rittel and Webber (1973)	Australia Public Service Commission (2007)
1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem	1. Wicked problems are difficult to clearly define
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule	2. Wicked problems have many interdependencies and are often multi-causal
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad	3. Attempts to address wicked problems often lead to unforeseen consequences
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem	4. Wicked problems are often not stable
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly	5. Wicked problems usually have no clear solution
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan	6. Wicked problems are socially complex
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique	7. Wicked problems hardly ever sit conveniently within the responsibility of any one organisation
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem	8. Wicked problems involve changing behaviour
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution	9. Some wicked problems are characterised by chronic policy failure
10. The planner has no right to be wrong	

Source: "Dilemma in general theory of planning," by H. W. J. Rittel & M. M. Webber, 1973, *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), p. 155-169 and *Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective*, by the Australian Public Service Commission, 2007, Canberra, Australia: Author. p. 3-5.

Head and Alford (2008) outline that, "according to one school of public management research, the *uncertainty* generated by wicked problems is what makes them so apparently intractable" (p. 5). They describe three different types of uncertainty – substantive, strategic and institutional.

‘Substantive’ uncertainty refers to gaps and conflicting understandings in the knowledge base, with the consequence that there is no agreed or clear understanding of the nature of wicked problems.

‘Strategic’ uncertainty refers to the fact that many actors are involved, with different preferences, and the interaction between their perspectives is unpredictable.

‘Institutional’ uncertainty refers to the fact that relevant actors are attached to a variety of organisational locations, networks and regulatory regimes, so that processes for reaching decisions concerning wicked problems are likely to be messy and uncoordinated. (Head & Alford, 2008, p. 5)

In relation to this research, the specialised knowledge of child protection workers and teachers points to ‘substantive’ uncertainty regarding the education of children in care. As has been highlighted, there are numerous stakeholders involved in the education of children in care, suggesting both ‘strategic’ and ‘institutional’ uncertainty. School mobility adds further complexities to these ‘uncertainties’ as the stakeholders involved change as a child moves school.

As described above, a feature of wicked problems is that there is no clear or correct solution; thus the literature discusses solutions in terms of ‘taming’, ‘tackling’ or ‘coping with’ (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Head & Alford, 2008; Roberts, 2000). Roberts (2000) suggests three main ‘coping strategies’:

- *Authoritative strategies* – An individual or select few, identified by their knowledge, expertise, organisational position, or their coercive power, are tasked with ‘solving’ the problem and others abide by their decision.

Authoritative strategies are efficient and swift but risk adopting a narrow perspective, potentially overlooking or missing important issues and considerations.

- *Competitive strategies* – Stakeholders pursue and compete for power, influence and/or market share. These approaches can lead to innovation; however, there is the possibility of conflict and stalemates.
- *Collaborative strategies* – Collaboration is premised on the principle that by joining forces more can be achieved than by individual action. It is particularly relevant where the solution involves behavioural change from stakeholders and/or systems change. Key advantages include higher stakeholder commitment, more comprehensive and effective solutions, and the use of fewer resources by one individual. However, ‘transaction costs’ are increased and, in the worst case, conflict can occur (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; Roberts, 2000).

Roberts (2000) outlines that the level of conflict, the distribution of power among stakeholders, and the degree to which power is contested influence the choice of strategies. Whilst authoritative and competitive strategies are useful in addressing some aspects of wicked problems, it is generally accepted that collaborative strategies are most useful and can include authoritative and competitive aspects (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Roberts, 2000). In addition to advocating for collaborative approaches, the Australian Public Service Commission (2007) suggests a range of techniques that can be used to ‘tame’ wicked problems. These techniques are outlined below:

- *Holistic, not partial or linear thinking* – thinking that grasps the big picture, including the interrelationship of policy problems. The need for this kind of thinking is a result of ‘social complexity’ whereby problems are seen from multiple perspectives.
- *Innovative and flexible approaches* – the need for a systematic approach to social innovation by replicating the kind of practices employed by private sector research. There is a focus on creating ‘learning organisations’.
- *The ability to work across agency boundaries* – as wicked problems go beyond the capacity of any one organisation, there is a need to work across agency boundaries.
- *Increasing understanding and stimulating a debate on the application of the accountability framework* – existing accountability frameworks may constrain attempts to resolve wicked problems.
- *Effectively engaging stakeholders and citizens in understanding the problem and in identifying possible solutions* – there is a need to understand the full dimensions of each situation through engaging with relevant stakeholders. Behavioural changes are more likely if there is a full understanding of the issues by stakeholders.
- *Additional core skills* – develop skills in communication, big picture thinking and influencing skills and the ability to work cooperatively.
- *A better understanding of behavioural change by policy makers* – although the traditional ways by which governments change citizens’ behaviour will still be important (e.g. legislation, regulation, penalties, taxes and subsidies), such

practices may need to be supplemented with other behaviour-changing tools that better engage people in cooperative behavioural change.

- *A comprehensive focus and/or strategy* – as wicked problems have multiple causes they require sustained effort and resources.
- *Tolerating uncertainty and accepting the need for a long-term focus* – solutions to wicked problems are provisional and uncertain, and this fact needs to be accepted by public managers and Ministers. There are no quick fixes and solutions may need further policy change or adjustment (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007, pp. 35-36; Head & Alford, 2008, pp. 14-15).

The thesis, then, in part explores how the school mobility of children in care could be ‘tamed’, considering ‘what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile?’ With this question in mind, the following sections describe the unique location of and approach to this research.

1.7 Situating the research project

The research presented in this thesis was situated within a larger, externally funded research project and, as such, it is important to set this doctoral research within its context. Operating within a critical participatory action research framework, the larger project explored how one set of external factors in lower socio-economic communities – school mobility or movement between schools – impacts on students’ lives and teachers’ work. The schools were engaged in a collaborative research project involving state primary schools in a range of locations across Queensland, Australia and university researchers. As the researcher of this thesis, I was employed as a Research Assistant for the life of the larger project and developed a working relationship with

each of the schools involved in the larger study, and hence also involved in this doctoral study.

As part of the collaborative research work in the larger project, a new position, a Mobility Support Teacher, was trialled. The Mobility Support Teacher, or MST, is based loosely on the work of the Mobility Induction Worker in a British study on school mobility (Dobson et al., 2000), and was designed to ease the transactional pressure of enrolment. The MST was charged with a number of tasks, but significantly ensured that the transition of enrolling students, particularly students enrolling at non-standard times, was positive. The position was also charged with supporting exiting students (see Appendix A for the Position Description of the Mobility Support Teacher).

Mobility Support Teachers were often the point of contact for families entering the school. Whilst ensuring a positive transition into the school was a key aspect of the role, Mobility Support Teachers also worked with a range of professionals who are already involved with or who may be able to support the family. For example, the Mobility Support Teacher would contact previous schools, liaise with support staff within the school, Advisory Visiting Teachers, community organisations and government departments, such as the Department of Child Safety. The work of the Mobility Support Teacher supported not only the family but also the teacher, through providing relevant background knowledge on the student and organising any required supports. Importantly, the Mobility Support Teacher was a qualified teacher, enabling the MST to conduct diagnostic testing of students and suggest individualised teaching strategies to the classroom teacher. Teachers were better enabled to support the

learning of the student entering their classroom through the information provided by the Mobility Support Teacher (A. Hill, Dalley-Trim, Lynch, Navin, & Doyle, 2011).

Findings from the larger project suggest that policy responses to the issue of school mobility need substantial revision, particularly in the context of communities experiencing disadvantage (A. Hill & Lynch, 2008). Hill and Lynch (2008) argue this after a sustained period of engagement with the schools and note that the complexity of school mobility within a marketised education framework creates a set of demands for schools, largely invisible to policy makers. As Dale (1989) and Ball (1997) suggest, exposing how policy impacts in a local setting can suggest ways forward.

1.7.1 Study approach

Whilst the larger study used an action research approach, the research presented in this thesis adopts a critical theoretical approach, focussing on the contradictions created by neoliberal governance. A fundamental aspect of a critical paradigm is the focus on emancipation. As will be further discussed in the following chapter, a specific application of a critical paradigm is used within this study. Namely, as the researcher, I am cautious of the ‘grand claims’ often made by critical theorists and am conscious of the view that critical theory is not often implicated in the solutions of practical problems (Ozga, 2000). The research presented in this thesis provides voice to teachers (who are largely absent from educational research on children in care) and aspires to a social justice agenda; it is in these ways that the work is considered to be within a critical paradigm. Additionally, the conclusion chapter provides practical recommendations with a view to contribute to ‘tackling’ the school mobility of children in care.

1.7.2 Scope of the study

This doctoral research investigates how the role of the state shapes, and is played out in, policy documents that are aimed to support the education of children in care. A historical review explores the changing role of the state within Australia. The study pays particular attention to the conceptualisation of school mobility and teachers' work within the current neoliberal framing of educational reform.

A policy analysis framework is adopted to investigate documents from the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training in Queensland. Documents are examined through critical discourse analysis as the research tools. Fairclough's (1992b) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis is applied to examine documents on a micro level as texts, a macro level as discursive practices, and on a meso level as social practices.

A case study approach is also adopted to explore *le quotidien* (the local or daily life). To appreciate the context of the 'local level', school and community demographics are examined for 14 schools across Queensland, Australia – those that were involved in the larger project described above. The characteristics of school mobility of children in care from the 14 schools are also examined. Finally, teacher perspectives from five schools involved in the larger study are presented. The teacher perspectives are compared to the characteristics of school mobility of children in care, and analysed using Fairclough's (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

1.7.3 Objectives of the study

There is a relative lack of research knowledge about the school mobility of children in care and much less about teachers' perspectives on their work with children in care who are mobile. Research theorising the role of the state in both child protection and

education exists; however, there is little that examines the consequences of the intersection of these two systems in neoliberal times. The objective of this research, then, is to address this lack of knowledge. The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To trace and map the contradictory discourses within the changing role of the state in neoliberal times.
2. To trace and analyse the support currently provided in policy for children in care who are mobile, examining the construction of the role/s of teachers.
3. To identify the characteristics of school mobility of children in care.
4. To identify and analyse teachers' perspectives of working with children in care who are mobile.
5. To identify and explore what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

1.7.4 Research questions

This study is structured with a view to answer one overarching question – *What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile?* This overarching question is supported by three enabling questions, of which each of the components of the study, as described above, seeks to answer. The three enabling questions are:

What support exists in current policy and how was such policy formed?

From the perspective of teachers, what might policy for children in care who are mobile need to look like and why?

What are the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care?

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The overall thesis is structured to reflect each of the components of the study, followed by a concluding chapter that theorises what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. The body of the thesis contains six chapters as summarised below:

Chapter 1 – Mapping the field has provided an overview of the research that contributes to understanding the school mobility of children in care. As has been noted, research arises from a variety of fields and, presently, there are several gaps and absences within the research knowledge base. This chapter also highlighted the catalyst for the research – that is, my involvement in a larger research project. The place of this research within the larger project is important in understanding the scope and limitations of the research, as described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 – Approaching the research describes the theoretical positioning and methodology. The chapter outlines and justifies the critical theoretical perspective used as the methodological framework. The chapter explains the choice of documents for the document analysis and discusses the use of Fairclough's (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis as a method for analysing the selected documents. Additionally, the 'bounded system' of the case is described, and the various data collection and analytical tools explained and justified. Finally, the chapter explores the limitations of the research and examines the researcher standpoint.

Chapter 3 – Navigating neoliberal policy frames in education and child protection: Identification of lacunae explores the contradictions of neoliberal governance in education and child protection. Theories of governance are used to explore the role of the state in addressing the inherent contradictions of neoliberalism. A

focus on Queensland policy maps out the tensions and relationships among the varied and changing policy orientations and the varied advocacies and critiques of policy options.

Chapter 4 – Contradictions within neoliberal frames of governance: Filling-in by and with policy examines specific Queensland child protection and education documents in light of the theories of governance reviewed in Chapter 3. The chapter explores the response to the education of children in care in current neoliberal times. Additionally, the conceptualisation of school mobility, teachers and teachers' work within each of the documents is examined.

Chapter 5 – Navigating, creating and reclaiming spaces presents the findings from the case study. The chapter presents an overview of the contexts of schools and communities involved in the study and examines the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care. Additionally, interview data from teachers and Mobility Support Teachers from five of the schools are examined to explore the perspectives, the enablers and challenges to working with children in care who are mobile.

Chapter 6 – Innovating 'ideal' spaces through collaboration: 'Taming' a wicked problem provides a summary of the key arguments and moves to a synthesis of findings. The synthesis is presented as a series of 'layers' each of which contributes to describing the type of policy that might support children in care who are mobile. In light of the critical theoretical framework informing the research, the chapter summarises the contribution of this research and suggests implications for practical action.

Chapter 2: Approaching the research

Critical theory is directed to the social and political complex as a whole rather than to the separate parts. As a matter of practice, critical theory . . . takes as its starting point some aspect or particular sphere of human activity. . . . The critical approach leads towards the construction of a larger picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component, and seeks to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved. (Cox, 1980 cited in Ozga, 2000, p. 46)

2.1 Overview

The starting point of this research was an examination of the extent of school mobility of children in care. In line with Cox's description of a critical approach to research, it was from this 'one component' that the construction of a larger picture was developed – that is, determining what type of policy might support the education of children in care who experience school mobility. Fundamental to this doctoral study, then, was an examination of the role of the state within educational and social policy, within the context of the 'crisis' (Habermas, 1976) described in Chapter 1. It is this 'crisis' (Habermas, 1976) and the social anxiety (Sachs & Mellor, 2003) surrounding child protection that has led Goddard and Liddell (1993) to suggest that policy development in child protection is often a "policy development by press release" (p. 24). Such an approach is in contrast to policy developed through, and supported, by research and enhanced through a circular policy process that closes the challenging 'space' between policy and practice (Hendrick & Young, 2012). 'Taming' a wicked problem, such as

the school mobility of children in care, requires a systematic approach to policy analysis and development, and calls for comprehensive research to support policy decisions. Presented in this thesis then, is research aimed to provide support in ‘taming’ the ‘problem’ of the school mobility of children in care. It is important to acknowledge however that this research does not claim to ‘solve’ the ‘problem’, but rather explores and answers an aspect – as will be discussed.

Theorisation and conceptualisation of the role of state is fundamental in a study that adopts a critical paradigm and a focus on policy. Whilst critical theory has been criticised by postmodernists, such as Lyotard, for its use of ‘grand narratives’ (Amoko, 2006), in this study, the arguments of Dale (1989) and Apple (1989) are considered more persuasive. That is, macro political and economic structures can, and do, influence what occurs at the micro level (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). How these larger political and ideological perspectives and social realities play out at the micro level is fundamental to critical theorists, and this research. Whilst examining macro structures is essential, educational policy research designed to address inequality and social injustice needs to be mindful of the many ways that marginalisation and social exclusion are experienced as a ‘lived reality’ (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

This doctoral study simultaneously engaged with the global-local nexus by drawing together several threads of analysis to answer an overarching research question: What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? The research was designed with two broad goals in mind: to increase understanding of the school mobility of children in care, and to support practical and positive policy change related to the education of children in care, particularly at the intersection of school

mobility and disadvantage. As will be discussed, it is this second goal that oriented this project towards critical qualitative research, rather than social inquiry, as a critical paradigm involves a commitment to “enabling change towards better relationships, towards a more just and rational society” (Gibson, 1986, p. 2).

The critical paradigm that influenced the overarching research question also framed the research design. In accordance with critical theory, a policy analysis framework was adopted to examine how dominant forces in society construct practices through policy discourse (Ball, 1994; Dale, 1989; M. Singh, Kenway, & Apple, 2005). A case study approach was then adopted to explore ‘real problems’ and to place these issues within the broader policy system. The critical theory framework enabled analysis of the personal and the interpersonal, the structural and the institutional levels of the ‘problem’ and encouraged the consideration of practical action to empower change.

In looking at policy, the research drew attention to the varied discourses that influence the education and child protection systems, considering the ways that these discourses shape the ‘problem’ and subsequent responses by the state. Current policy responses were considered in light of the ‘reality’ of school mobility of children in care through the exploration of school mobility and teachers’ work in multiple school sites. The overarching question – What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? – is supported by several enabling questions. These questions are formulated with the view of transformative goals and agency in policy. The enabling research questions are:

What support for the education of children in care exists in current policy and how was such policy formed?

What are the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care?

From the perspective of teachers, what might policy for children in care who are mobile need to look like and why?

This chapter describes how the methodological position shaped and framed the research questions, strategy of inquiry and data collection methods. The following section of this thesis explores several methodological paradigms, explaining why critical theory was adopted, how critical theory was interpreted within this research project and how critical theory influenced the research design. An explanation of the research design – a three study model using document analysis and a case study approach – is provided. The discussion of each of the research approaches contains the specific details of the data collection methods and analytical tools used.

Within the critical theory framework, a policy analysis approach put forward by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) was adopted, using Fairclough's (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis as the research tool. The policy analysis framework provided an understanding of policy as 'contested terrain' (Ozga, 2000), acknowledging the influence of both the state and other actors in policy. Fairclough's (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis provided a theoretical and methodological framework that enabled the synthesis of multiple theoretical sources (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002) and conceptualisation of the relationship between discourse and the social world (Henderson, 2005). Section 2.5 of the chapter explores the limitations of the research – both theoretical and logistical. In concluding, the chapter explores the critical researcher standpoint.

2.2 Positioning the research: Methodological paradigms and research design

Within the field of education there exist myriad of techniques and theories which may be applied to social research – with each methodology based on, at times, competing assumptions, purposes, constitutions of knowledge and social realities (Denscombe, 2009). This section discusses several theories that can be applied to research, highlighting why critical theory insights were incorporated in this research.

Qualitative research can be classified as descriptive research that adopts a naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Allen, 2001; Ary, Jacobs, Razaieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). The research design generally involves a multi-method approach to holistic inquiry that evolves throughout the study with the goal of a holistic picture rather than a discrete outcome (Ary et al., 2006; Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kervin et al., 2006; Silverman, 2003). Qualitative research enables the production of rich and diverse insights and within the educational academic field there is a focus on this type of research (Kervin et al., 2006).

From a qualitative perspective, an interpretive paradigm could have been considered a useful approach for this research as it describes an occurrence within a particular context with the intent to understand a facet of the world (Allen, 2001; Ary et al., 2006). Whilst interpretivism recognises the importance of everyday life, and appreciates that research is an ‘interactive process’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), the approach to research is purely descriptive, with no judgement attached. However, critical theory, as engaged in this study, seeks to move beyond description, engaging directly with ‘real problems’ and providing practical ways forward (Gibson, 1986). Hence, this research project asked different types of questions than would be expected

from an interpretive approach. The research presented herein contemplates the difference between how things are and how they ought to be, progressing from explanatory work to work that has the possibility to lead to transformation.

A purely descriptive approach to research, then, is at odds with an attempt to discover what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. As an interpretive paradigm is not necessarily concerned with transformation, it was deemed an inappropriate perspective to incorporate within this research study. In contrast, critical theory does not take a simple, explanatory stance but is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole (Gibson, 1986). As Horkheimer (1972, cited in Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011) notes: “Critical theory and research are never satisfied with merely increasing knowledge” (p. 167).

2.2.1 Critical theory and transformative goals

There is no unified critical theory, but rather critical *theories* (Gibson, 1986; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Moreover, there are many critical theorists, between whom there are disagreements (Gibson, 1986; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Locke (2004) outlines that often “the word ‘critical’ is a ubiquitous epithet attached to a variety of nouns” (p. 25), and, alongside Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), deem it as ‘risky’ to identify “an underlying commonality among ‘criticalists’” (p. 306). For the purpose of this research, Habermas’ concept of critical theory and his theory of communication or speech are applied to make sense of contemporary social life.

Often seen as a spokesperson for recent critical theorists (Edgar, 2006; Gibson, 1986; Spicker, 2008), Habermas revised the tradition of social thought and power through his theory of cognitive interests and knowledge and his later theory of

communicative action (Bernstein, 1995; Morrison, 2001; Popkewitz, 1999). Habermas' view of critical social theory places rationality (the ability to construct thought which improves an individual's understanding of things and actions) and communication (the capacity to share or exchange information with a joint or common interest) at its centre. He advocates that all too frequently relationships of communication are unequal, leading to the reproduction of society (Gibson, 1986; Ottmann, 1982; Pusey, 1987). Critical Theory is based on the assumption that all thought is "fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304) and that oppression is reproduced throughout society. *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Habermas, 1987a) investigates and reflects upon the "conditions of the possibility of emancipation from ideologies and power structures" (Ottmann, 1982, p. 79) and recognises the prospect for transformation of the world through the human potential for reason, partly through discourse ethics (Morrow & Brown, 1994). Critical research then, aims at emancipation and challenging the status quo to create a more humane and egalitarian society. Habermas' approach presents a "way of understanding the social world which is at the same time committed to the improvement of that world" (Gibson, 1986, p. 36).

Whilst this study was located within a critical theory framework, it did not aspire to the emancipatory goal of critical research. And while the overarching research question has transformational aspirations, criticisms of critical research were kept in mind – namely, that the claims of critical researchers can be abstract and grandiose (Ozga, 2000). In making such comments though, Ozga (2000) does acknowledge that critical research can impact social justice goals. In light of Ozga's (2000) observations, this research was framed in the pursuit of social justice, while seeking to address two issues. The first issue this study sought to address was the marginalisation of teachers

from the field of research with regard to the education of children in care (as outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.5). In light of the lack of teacher ‘voice’ within this field of research, this doctoral study engaged with teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. The second issue addressed in this study was to ensure that research undertaken contributed to practical suggestions and recommendations for policy. In view of this, the overarching question ensured a focus on practical policy implications. As such, this research is an example of a critical orientation to research through its pursuit of social justice goals, its dual focus of increased understanding and positive ways forward, and the acknowledgment of the value position of the researcher (as will be discussed in Section 2.6) (Gibson, 1986; Ozga, 2000).

2.2.2 Critical theory and research design

As flagged previously, this study engaged a critical lens to explore several different aspects of the ‘problem’ – the school mobility of children in care. Research in this area is not unproblematic – involving the intersection of two governmental systems. Additionally, research is complicated by the variety of potential stakeholders involved in the policy/practice dimension – including children in care, carers, parents, child protection workers, educators, other professionals such as speech language pathologists, Guidance Officers and policy makers. The research reported on in this thesis focussed on both the child protection and education systems through an examination of the role of the state. However, as highlighted by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1989) Ecological Systems Theory in Chapter 1, there are many systems that influence the experiences of an individual and there are not clear demarcations between educational policy and other areas of social policy (Ozga, 2000). As such, an examination of the role of the state

was expanded to include several social policy dimensions, such as the purpose of education, school mobility, welfare provision and teachers' work. In addition, the research engaged with two stakeholders – teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Critical theory provided a useful vantage point to explore the interplay of the role of the state, systemic structures and discursive practices from various levels – including the personal and interpersonal, the institutional and the structural (Gibson, 1986). Each of these different areas of analysis were drawn together to develop an understanding of what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

Just as critical theory informed the development of the overarching research question, so too did it frame the enabling research questions and research design. This doctoral research was a small scale, qualitative study consisting of three components – an historical review, an analysis of the current 'moment' and a case study focussing on *le quotidien* (the local or daily life). Each component of the study sought to answer a different enabling research question and ultimately contribute to developing an understanding of what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. Table 2.1 (see p. 65) details each component of the research as linked to an enabling research question/s, the focus of analysis, data source/s and details pertaining to how such data were collected and analysed.

The first component involved a review of the role of the state in social policy generally, and education and child protection particularly. In light of the critical theory frame, this review (see Chapter 3) explored the origins of everyday practices and problems that currently face the education and child protection systems. The review included discussion of the contradictory discourses with regard to the changing role of the state in neoliberal times. The literature also examined different policy responses,

considering whether the different approaches are reproductive or transformative and whose interests are embodied in each.

The second component of the research (see Chapter 4) examined publicly available government documents through a policy analysis framework, drawing on Fairclough's (1992b) Critical Discourse Analysis model. The aim of this component of the research was to find what support is already provided for children in care who are mobile, how the state negotiates differing needs and priorities, and 'who benefits' from the current policy settlements. Included in the analysis was a focus on the construction of teachers' work within the policy documents.

The last component of research (see Chapter 5) explored the 'local level', focussing on the characteristics of school mobility of children in care and teachers' work with children in care who are mobile. To develop a more holistic understanding of the school mobility of children in care, a case study approach was adopted exploring two aspects at/of the local level – characteristics of school mobility of children in care in 14 schools, and five teachers' and four Mobility Support Teachers' perspectives of the challenges and enablers in supporting children in care who are mobile.

Table 2.1. Components of research

Component of Research	Enabling research question	Focus of analysis	Data source	How collected	Analytical tool
Historical review	What support for the education of children in care exists in current policy and how was such policy formed?	Conceptualisation of the role of the state in the context of children in care who are mobile	Research literature	Literature searches	Document analysis
Analysis of current 'moment'		Conceptualisation of school mobility and the role of teachers Explore how the state has negotiated different needs	Documents from Department of Education and Training and Department of Child Safety (or predecessors /successors)	Publicly available documents	Document analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis
Case study of <i>le quotidien</i> (the local or daily life)	What are the characteristics (e.g. extent and nature) of the school mobility of children in care in selected school sites?	Understanding the characteristics of school mobility of children in care	Database developed as part of the larger project	Mobility Support Teachers collected and entered data as part of the larger project	Descriptive statistics
	From teachers' perspectives, what might policy for children in care who are mobile need to look like and why?	Understanding the local context of enactment Teachers' perspectives	Descriptive statistics Teacher and Mobility Support Teacher interviews	Publicly available community statistics Semi-structured interviews	Comparative benchmarking of key statistics Critical Discourse Analysis

2.3 The collection of data

The data for this research were gathered from multiple sources, using a range of methods. Specifically, data collection included:

- review and analysis of official documents from the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Child Safety (or their predecessors or successors),

and a case study approach consisting of,

- review and analysis of demographic data to develop an understanding of the context of teachers' work,
- review and analysis of descriptive statistics, collected as part of the larger project in which this doctoral research was situated, to examine the extent of school mobility within schools and characteristics of school mobility of children in care, and
- interviews (recorded) with five teachers and four Mobility Support Teachers to collect information on the challenges and enablers when working with children in care who are mobile.

Denscombe (2010) explains that this use of multiple sources of data and methods of data collection – or ‘triangulation’ – can be used to validate research findings, develop a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study and to compensate for respective strengths and weaknesses of the chosen research methods. This doctoral project drew upon triangulation as a tool to develop a comprehensive picture of the school mobility of children in care, rather than as an exercise in research validity or for the

strengthening of research design. Following below is a separate discussion of each data collection method.

As discussed previously, the research presented within this thesis formed part of a larger project. Ethical approval for the collection of data listed above was obtained as part of the larger project – the proposed research methodology received ethics clearance from the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee (approval number H3172) and the project was approved by the Department of Education and Training (reference number 550/27/779). The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). The *Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research* that requires researchers to:

- Maintain high standards of responsible research, by fostering and maintaining a research environment of intellectual honesty and integrity, and scholarly and scientific rigour
- Report research responsibly
- Respect research participants, that is researchers must comply with ethical principles of integrity, respect for persons, justice and beneficence (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Universities Australia, 2007).

In light of these guidelines, careful consideration was given to the research design to ensure that it conformed with ethical guidelines. Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008) outline capacity, information and voluntariness as aspects of effective informed consent – each of these aspects were in place for the research presented in this thesis. All

participants were provided with both verbal and written information regarding the research, their involvement and the topics to be discussed within the interview.

Specific ethical considerations pertaining to interviews with human subjects are outlined in Section 2.3.2.3 below.

2.3.1 Documents as data

The analysis of documents can be used to serve various purposes, depending on the aim of the research. Documents can be used as the primary or secondary source of data collection in both qualitative and quantitative research projects (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2010). Though visual and audible data sources are also labelled as documents, this discussion focuses on written sources as such data forms the basis of analysis undertaken herein (Denscombe, 2010). Numerous categories of documents exist and are generally organised into the subcategories of personal (diaries, letters, autobiographies), official (files, reports, policy) or popular culture (books, films, videos) (Ary et al., 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This research project used documents as the primary source of data collection, focusing on official documents produced by the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training, and the respective predecessors and successors of these departments. Whilst some official documents are private and require permission to access (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2010), all the documents analysed in this research were readily accessible to the researcher through the aforementioned government department websites. Some sections of the Department of Child Safety Practice Manual were restricted for staff only, however, staff within the Department of Child Safety advised that these sections did not contain information of relevance to the education of children

in care. For this reason, these sections were not included within this study. The documents for analysis, collected from the two leading agencies involved (as noted above), are summarised in the table below.

Table 2.2. Documents for analysis

Document Name	Author/s	Year of Publication	Text for Analysis
Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State	Department of Families and Department of Education and Training	2004	All
Child Safety Practice Manual	Department of Child Safety	2008	All publicly available sections
Government response to recommendations: Educating children and young people in the Care of the State	Department of Education and Training and Department of Families	2003	All
Education Support Funding Program: Implementation guidelines 2011	Department of Child Safety	2011	All
Carer Handbook	Department of Child Safety	2009	All
Child Protection Performance Framework	Department of Child Safety	2007	All

Each of the documents above assisted in understanding the program plan or operation of supports currently in place for the education of children in care. Such an understanding was important to determine if implementation at school sites reflected the plans outlined in documents.

As with any data source, there exist limitations to treating documents as data. As a key source of information, it is important to evaluate the quality of the documents under analysis – that is, the extent to which the documents are authoritative, objective

and factual (Ary et al., 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Denscombe (2010) argues that the extent to which documents are authoritative, objective and factual depends on the content. Official documents, such as those above, are deemed particularly subjective, representing an ‘official perspective’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The policy analysis framework then, was used to explore the possible affects of institutional and structural practices on the personal or interpersonal. Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis enabled an analysis of the construction of ‘reality’ within the ‘official perspective’ represented in the documents.

2.3.2 Determining and binding the case

Qualitative case study research is characterised by the examination of a particular problem or phenomenon in depth (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Determining what the case is, and what the case is not, is an important aspect of case study research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). ‘The case’ is a ‘naturally occurring’ phenomenon (Yin, 2009), thus there is no experimental design in which research controls are imposed (Denscombe, 2010). Drawing on a variety of data sources and research methods is often espoused as one of the strengths of the case study approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). To build an understanding of the school mobility of children in care at the ‘local level’, various data sources and research methods formed part of the study.

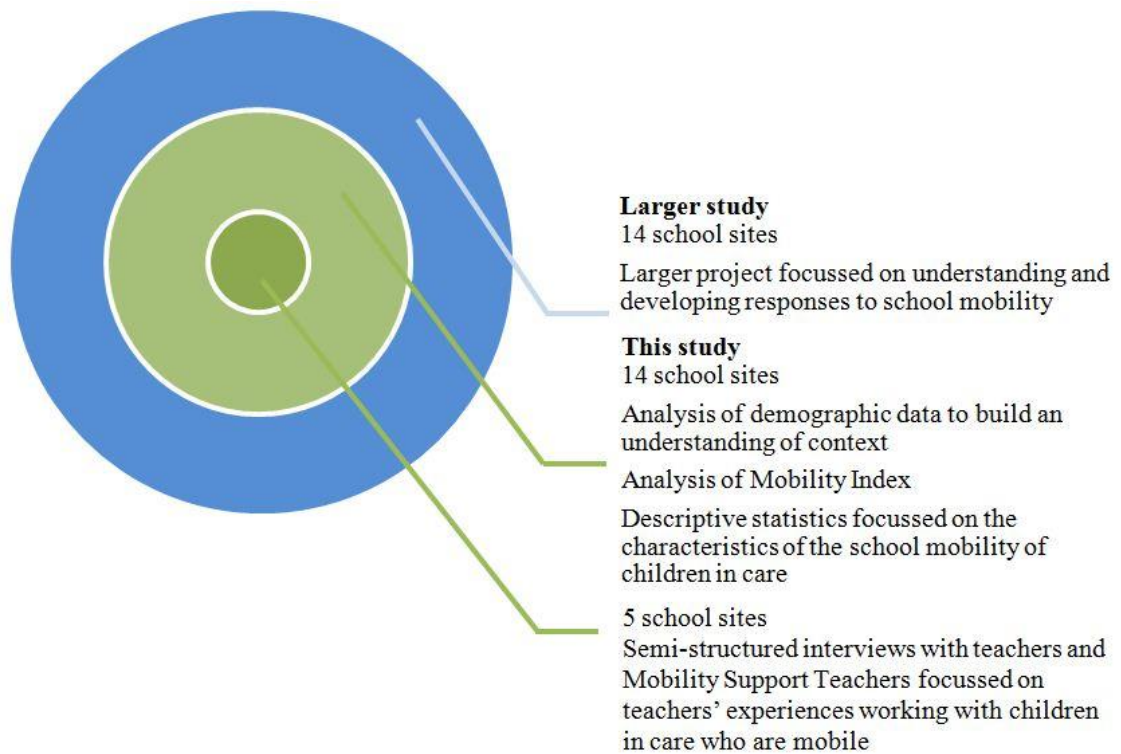
As has been discussed, this doctoral research was situated within a larger project that focused on developing an understanding of, and responses to, school mobility. The research presented in this thesis narrows the focus to the school mobility of children in care and teachers’ experiences of working with children in care who are mobile. It is

important to note that both the contexts of the schools and the characteristics of school mobility of children in care feed into and shape teachers' experiences of working with children in care who are mobile. Yin (2009) suggests that when contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon under study and the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear, a case study approach should be adopted.

Qualitative case studies are often referred to as a 'bounded system', thus there are features within and outside of the bounded case (Stake, 2005). Given that this study was situated within the larger study, it was, in part, necessarily bound by the larger study – thereby, binding it in time (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2006), place (Creswell, 2003) and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The case study was also bound by definition (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in that it focused on understanding school mobility of children in care at the 'local level'. This includes understanding the context of the schools involved (demographic data), the characteristics of school mobility in general and of children in care (descriptive statistics), and the experiences of teachers working with children in care who are mobile (semi-structured interviews). As described above, this research also included analysis of several documents relating to the education of children in care – such as, governmental plans, joint departmental guidelines, performance frameworks and guidelines for practice. These documents may influence what occurs within the 'bounded system' but were not part of the case study. The document analysis considered the proposed supports for children in care as outlined in the documents, whereas the case study explored the complexity of implementation in contexts of disadvantage – drawing focus to the policy/practice dimension. Similarly, teachers' experiences of working with students who are mobile but not in care, were not included as part of the case study. Such experiences were not included given the methodological approach – a case study that focused on the school mobility of children

in care, rather than school mobility generally. Figure 2.1 below presents the binding of the case diagrammatically.

Figure 2.1. Binding the case



Various authors (Ary et al., 2006; Bell, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003) outline that there is a diversity of typologies of qualitative case studies, each fulfilling a different purpose. Stake (2000) and Yin (2009), for example, use different terms to describe the variety of case studies. Yin identifies case studies as explanatory, exploratory or descriptive and differentiates between single, holistic and multiple case studies. Stake, on the other hand, categorises case studies as intrinsic, instrumental or collective. Stake (2005) maintains that there is no ‘hard-and-fast’ line distinguishing intrinsic and instrumental case studies but rather a “zone of combined purpose” (p. 445). In view of this, this case study sought, in part, to understand better

the school mobility of children in care at the ‘local level’ and thus could be described as intrinsic. However, in employing Stake’s terminology, this case study is best described as instrumental, insofar as it aims to provide insight into what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. Stake (2005) describes an instrumental case study as follows:

I use the term *instrumental case study* if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still is looked at in depth, its context scrutinised and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest. (p. 445)

As mentioned previously, a strength of the case study approach is that it enables and encourages the use of multiple data sources and research methods (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Denscombe, 2010). The case study undertaken in this research was divided into three interconnected components, each drawing on different data sources. Given the importance of the natural setting when undertaking case study research, the contexts of the 14 schools and the communities in which they are situated were examined through the use of publicly available school and community demographic data. Whilst it is important to note that any quantification is temporal in dimension, there is value in descriptive statistics in both gleaning understanding of the context and also, potentially, opening up avenues for exploration (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data collected as part of the larger project was analysed for two purposes – firstly, to determine the extent of school mobility within the 14 school sites, thus adding to an understanding of the context of teachers’ work and, secondly, to explore the

characteristics of the school mobility of children in care. Data was drawn from existing school databases and a database developed as part of the larger project.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews with teachers and Mobility Support teachers added to building a holistic understanding of the school mobility of children in care at the ‘local level’. It is important to note that the analysis of contextual data and data explaining characteristics of mobility both frames and influences the work of the teachers interviewed as part of the case study. As Baxter and Jack (2008) outline, each data source is one piece of the ‘puzzle’, with each piece contributing to understanding the whole phenomenon. Given Yin’s (2006) advice that data collection and analysis should occur simultaneously, the following describes the data sources and the analysis applied.

2.3.2.1 Demographic data

The 14 schools involved in the larger project were situated in a range of locations across Queensland, Australia. The schools were located in clusters of two or three schools that were in close geographical proximity. There were five clusters in four different locations, in a mixture of regional and urban centres. Demographic data, then, was presented as geographical summaries of the areas in which the schools are situated. The 14 schools, separated as clusters, are presented in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3. School sites involved in the case study

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Brolga SS	Ibis SS	Sandpiper SS	Tern SS	Raven SS
Scrubwren SS	Magpie SS	Pelican SS	Kite SS	Gannet SS
Figbird SS	Grebe SS	Kingfisher SS	Swan SS	

Within Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics provides a broad range of social, demographic and economic statistics. This statistical data is presented within five hierarchical levels at population census times. Collection Districts are the smallest spatial unit and States/Territories are the largest (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b). Collection Districts aggregate to form larger spatial units, such as Statistical Divisions – the largest and most stable spatial unit within each State/Territory (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b).

For the purpose of this study, data from the Collection District in which each school was located was compared to a range of national averages. Thus, the data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics are essentially descriptive, used to ‘unpack’ and develop an understanding of the context of teachers’ work. As each of the schools were located within different Collection Districts, the name of the school is used when discussing its respective Collection District – for example, Brolga SS Collection District (or CD).

A selection of demographic data that are potentially linked to mobility or risk of child abuse and/or neglect were examined. For each Collection District, the proportion of one parent families, unemployment rate, housing circumstance (proportion of fully owned and proportion of rented households) and living address one and five year/s previous to the census (2006) were examined. These descriptive statistics are readily available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, thus comparative benchmarking was employed. Whilst these descriptive statistics are useful in ‘unpacking’ and developing an understanding of the context of teachers’ work, some Collection Districts are characterised by pockets of advantage/disadvantage. It is, therefore, important to also consider more general measures of socio-economic wellbeing.

To measure the overall welfare of Australian communities, the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed four indexes summarising different aspects of the economic and social resources of households. The measures rank each area's level of disadvantage relative to the rest of Australia. The average score is 1000 – a lower score represents a higher level of socio-economic disadvantage in the area. For this thesis, the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) was examined for each Collection District. The IRSD measure examines variables related to disadvantage, such as low income, low educational attainment, unemployment and dwellings without motor vehicles (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage has a number of applications, including research into the relationship between socio-economic status and various outcomes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). While child abuse and/or neglect occurs across all socio-economic groups, as noted previously, research indicates that children who grow up in disadvantaged areas can be more vulnerable to some forms of abuse and/or neglect (Bromfield et al., 2010; Dyson, 2008). The IRSD is also used by the Centre for Community Child Health and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research to explore the relationship between community factors and childhood development.

For educational research, there is value in exploring how socio-economic conditions relate to children's developmental outcomes. The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a population measure of children's development as they enter school (Centre for Community Child Health & Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2011). The AEDI measures five domains of early childhood development from information collected through a teacher-completed checklist, namely: physical

health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills (school-based); communication and general knowledge. Results are reported as proportions of children who are considered to be ‘on track’, ‘developmentally at risk’ or ‘developmentally vulnerable’ on each domain. Significantly, the AEDI reports on early childhood development across a community and, when coupled with Australian Bureau of Statistics data, enables a more nuanced understanding of *what* is happening with regards to children’s development and *why* it is happening (The Royal Children's Hospital, 2009). With regard to this study, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Early Development Index data were selected due to their relevance and effectiveness in describing the local areas of schools. Additionally, these data sets are useful in coming to understand the complexity of teachers’ work and the complexity of various aspects of school and schooling in areas of disadvantage – such information is critical in developing a policy program that is responsive to the contexts within which schooling occurs.

An examination of the student population provided further insight into the work of teachers in disadvantaged contexts within this doctoral study. Australian Bureau of Statistics data, along with information collected by schools, is used to generate a school’s Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value. Based on research that links family background and educational achievement, ICSEA is a “scale that numerically represents the magnitude of this influence or level of educational advantage” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011, p. 1). The index facilitates an understanding of the levels of educational advantage (or disadvantage) within a school’s student population.

The publicly available data described above was useful in developing an understanding of the schools, and their respective communities, involved in this project. Data gathered as part of the larger project provided further insight into school mobility generally, and of children in care specifically. The specifics of the data collected as part of the larger project, as used within this doctoral study, is discussed in the following section.

2.3.2.2 Descriptive statistics

As described in Chapter 1, this thesis was situated within a larger research project that focused on understanding, and developing responses to, school mobility. As part of the larger project, school enrolment data from an existing school database was used to carefully map the movements of both joiners and leavers across 14 schools, thereby creating a more accurate and nuanced picture of mobility in terms of transactional pressure and school characteristics (Dobson et al., 2000). Through the project, school mobility was quantified through the *Joiners Plus Leavers (JPL)* formula (Dobson et al., 2000). This formula is used by the United Kingdom Department for Children, Schools and Families to establish a consistent measure of mobility across all schools. Within the larger project, use of the JPL formula was applied around a particular definition of mobility, that is, where students are making “non-promotional school changes” (Rumberger, 2003, p. 6) and are moving “into and out of schools at times other than the usual ones for joining and leaving” (McAndrew & Power, 2003, p. 3). It measures the aggregate of individual movements after the first census of the school year. In Queensland, and for the larger project, this date is referred to as the Day 8 census. This

is the date that, traditionally, the school population is reported for the purposes of resource allocation – including teacher numbers.

The JPL formula is:

$$\frac{\text{students joining the school} + \text{students leaving the school}}{\text{total school roll on the census date}} \times 100$$

Within this doctoral study, the Mobility Index for each of the 14 schools was calculated, thus contributing to developing an understanding of context. Additionally, through a linking of the existing school database and the database developed as part of the larger project, the proportion of children in care enrolling in 1 of the 14 schools in 2009 was examined.

The database created as part of the larger project aimed to capture in-depth information on enrolling and exiting students. For the purposes of this research, data from the database were analysed to build a more holistic understanding of the school mobility of children in care. The information entered into the database was collected by Mobility Support Teachers through enrolment interviews with the parent/carer/child protection worker and student, as well as through contacting previous schools. The Mobility Support Teachers gather a range of information including previous school/s, attendance history, work samples, NAPLAN results, individual supports or special needs and the main reason for movement. With regard to the characteristics of school mobility of children in care, data from the database were examined and is presented in Chapter 5. Additionally, one detailed case study of an individual student is included in Chapter 5 such that illustrates the ‘lived reality’ of the school mobility of children in care.

The analysis of this data set served two purposes. The first purpose was to describe the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care – as guided by an enabling research question (see Table 2.1, page 65). The second purpose was to substantiate statements from teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest such an approach, and comparison more specifically, is useful in exploring perceptions reported by interview subjects.

2.3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were employed as a method of inquiry. A strict interview structure was avoided to allow unsolicited responses/information and themes to emerge from the data. As Denscombe (2010) outlines, with semi-structured interviews there is a clear list of issues and questions to be addressed, however, there is flexibility in the approach. This flexibility enables the interviewer to follow up responses, seek elaboration or clarification and pursue or explore issues as they emerge (Kvale, 1996). It was expected that each interviewee would have unique experiences and stories which would evoke further questioning (Stake, 1995). In this way, the semi-structured interview was deemed most useful for this research as the goal was to develop insights and self-understandings of how teachers and Mobility Support Teachers understand and frame their work with children in care who are mobile (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Given that this research was situated within the larger research project described in Chapter 1, the selection of sites was confined by the larger project. The five sites were selected for two reasons – the contextual factors of the given schools and their geographical proximity to the institution at which I, as the researcher, studied and worked. Bearing these points in mind, the ‘best possible’ schools were selected within the resources available for the research – both time and fiscal (Denscombe, 2009). The

selection of interview subjects, then, was based on non-probability sampling (Denscombe, 2010). The role of the Mobility Support Teacher was created as part of the larger project, therefore, Mobility Support Teachers were deliberately chosen given the position they held. For this research, Mobility Support Teachers were initially seen as ‘gatekeepers’ in the sense that they could facilitate contact with teachers within the school (Korczyński, 2004). On behalf of the researcher, Mobility Support Teachers were asked to invite teachers who would be interested in the research topic.

Within the five selected sites there were four Mobility Support Teachers, as two worked across three school sites. The Mobility Support Teachers in this study possessed a range of experiences, both within and outside of the classroom – see Table 2.4 below. Significantly, all Mobility Support Teachers had over five years teaching experience and during this time had worked with children in care. Simone and Tamara worked across the three schools in a cluster – Sandpiper SS, Pelican SS and Kingfisher SS – sharing the workload at one school.

Table 2.4. Summary of Mobility Support Teacher experience

School	Name	Length of time as MST (Years)	Length of time as a teacher (Years)	Approximate number of children in care taught	Training/ Professional Development on the impact of abuse /neglect on learning
Brolga SS	Helen	2	10	7 as an MST Unknown number during teaching career	Nil
Ibis SS	Ruth	0.5	26	Unknown but has worked with children in care	Nil
Sandpiper SS, Pelican SS and Kingfisher SS	Simone	0.5	13	10 as an MST At least 5 as a teacher	Nil
	Tamara	0.5	7	10 as an MST At least 4 as a teacher	Nil

The five classroom teachers involved in this study also possessed a range of teaching experience and of working with children in care, as shown in Table 2.5 following. Notably, the teachers have held a variety of positions in the education system, worked with varying numbers of children in care and some (Gillian and Judy) have had unique involvement with the Department of Child Safety.

Jessica worked within the unique context of an Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP) attached to Ibis SS. The Early Childhood Development Program offers a range of programs and services to children with disabilities or suspected disabilities from birth to five years. The centre-based program in which Jessica worked caters for children aged 3.5-5 years. Children attend the program for a specified number of sessions per week and work through structured programs developed by teachers and supported by other Education Queensland specialist support staff (Department of Education and Training, 2010a). The ECDP is a non-compulsory part of schooling and, as such, school mobility was not mapped within the ECDP. Additionally, children in care are not required to have Education Support Plan if attending the ECDP. Jessica, then, brought a unique perspective to this research.

As a Research Assistant on the larger project, I was involved in the action research process described in Chapter 1, Section 1.7. Through my involvement in the larger project, I attended action research meetings and often visited school sites to undertake or assist in data collection. Through these interactions, a rapport was built with the Mobility Support Teachers and some of the teachers involved in this study. As such, the Mobility Support Teachers and some of the teachers were aware of my doctoral study before being invited to participate. Three of the interview subjects were ‘strangers’ to me, as the researcher. For these three participants, I – as researcher –

Table 2.5. Summary of teacher experience

School	Name	Length of time as a teacher (Years)	Approximate number of children in care taught	Additional Educational Experience	Links/ Experience with child protection	Training/ Professional Development on the impact of abuse /neglect on learning
Brolga SS	Gillian	10	10		Husband is a Child Safety Officer with Department of Child Safety	Nil but seeks guidance from husband
	Samantha	1 ½	3			Nil
	Maria	6	5	Taught in day care centres as a Group Leader for 10 years		Nil
Ibis SS	Jessica	11*	21	Was a director of a kindergarten and a teacher		Has attended several sessions regarding emotional attachment and children in care, and emotional development in general
	Judy	26	Unknown		Previously a foster carer	Not covered in interview due to time constraints

*In an Early Childhood Development Centre attached to Ibis SS

ensured that time was spent before and during the interview developing a relationship and “putting the subject at ease” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103).

Each of the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers were interviewed individually and on one occasion, with the exception of Tamara (MST) and Simone (MST) who participated in a joint interview. Given Tamara and Simone’s close working relationship it was not anticipated that there would be any inhibition to discuss topics. Indeed, given the unique role of the Mobility Support Teacher, through the interview it became apparent that Tamara and Simone saw the other as a ‘critical friend’ with whom they would often discuss their work and had, on occasion, collaborated to provide support to students and their families.

The interviews with the Mobility Support Teachers and teachers, in general, focussed on their experiences of working with, and supporting, children in care who are mobile. In addition, the interviews with Mobility Support Teachers sought to gain information about the types of decisions they made, and actions put in place, in relation to supporting children in care who are mobile and the enrolling student’s teachers. The interviews with Mobility Support Teachers also endeavoured to gain insight into the practices involved in enrolling a child in care who is mobile. Mobility Support Teachers were asked to discuss who was generally involved in the enrolment interview (e.g. carer, caseworker, other participants), the type of information they generally received when enrolling a child in care (e.g. behavioural, academic, learning needs) and, if necessary, the process/es of seeking any additional information to support the enrolling child in care.

When undertaking the interviews, Kvale’s (1996) advice regarding the structure of interview questions was taken on board – that is, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions should

be asked before 'how' questions are posed. For example, when discussing a child in care who is mobile entering the classroom, descriptive questions such as, "What happened and how did it happen?" and "How did you feel?", were put forward to elicit responses (Kvale, 1996). Such an approach, Kvale (1996) argues, generates spontaneous and rich descriptions.

The analysis of interview data was undertaken in several stages, beginning at the time of data collection. Within the field, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, with such an approach allowing me – as the researcher – to refine or expand the focus of the interview as issues emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Kvale, 1996; Richards, 2009; Stake, 2005). Taking onboard Kvale's (1996) suggestion that the interviewer should keep in mind the later analysis, verification and reporting of interviews, I was conscious of patterns emerging from the interview subjects' accounts of their work and would use this information to structure the following interviews.

Subsequent to the data collection process, a more formal process of data analysis was undertaken. Each of the interview transcripts were read with purpose (Richards, 2009), questioning what was said and looking for links to themes in the literature and from the document analysis. Once familiar with the data, the transitional process of coding began (Saldaña, 2009). To transcend the 'reality' (Saldaña, 2009) of the data, codes were developed, leading to the indexing of categories, and the creation of themes/concepts. Working up from the data in this way enabled a progression towards thematic, conceptual and theoretical understandings (Richards, 2009; Saldaña, 2009).

Central to reading the data was the positioning of the theoretical and analytical framework of the study – critical theory, theories of the state and critical discourse

theory. For the purpose of this particular component of analysis, Fairclough's (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis was drawn on to explore the ways in which discursive practice, as a form of social practice, both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations, whilst also being shaped by social practices and structures (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Through the use of critical discourse analysis, the researcher can describe, interpret and explain the relationships among language use and wider social practices (Rogers, 2004). Additionally, through language use, particular ways of interacting, representing and being are appropriated (Rogers, 2004). It is through language that individuals come to constitute themselves as members of the social world (Dalley-Trim, 2007). In this way, the interviews with teachers and Mobility Support Teachers enabled me (as the researcher) to "reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes" (Peräkylä & Ruusuvaori, 2011, p. 529). The use of Critical Discourse Analysis enabled an exploration of the discourses that teachers and Mobility Support Teachers drew on in their work, in their constructions of themselves and their work, and their constructions of others. Additionally, there was a focus on the ways in which the role of the state, as played out in policy, fed into or affected teachers' constructions of themselves and their work, and their work with children in care who are mobile more particularly. The analysis of interview data (see Chapter 5), then, is interwoven with theory, often moving from the specific text (micro) to social practices (macro). The interweaving of theory and analysis through a process of 'shunting' (Luke, 2002) between micro and macro levels is discussed more specifically in the following sections.

2.4 The analytical frame

Qualitative data analysis is the process of making sense of, coming to understand and interpreting data (Denscombe, 2010). As discussed above, the research presented in this thesis was framed by a critical theoretical paradigm. This overarching frame shaped the research questions and design, and guided the selection of analytical tools. Key philosophical underpinnings of a critical research framework include the consideration of how a particular order came about. Educational research informed by critical theory, Popkewitz and Fendler (1999) explain, “addresses the relations among schooling, education, culture, society, economy and governance” (p. xiii). In considering such relationships, this study explored social, political and economic structures through the role of the state. For this study, the changing relationships between the role of the state, the economy and teachers’ work can begin to unpack ‘who benefits’ from such relationships. Fundamental to the research, then, was an understanding of the role of the state and the way that state formations frame policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Offe, 1985).

Beyond a conceptualisation of the state, a policy analysis framework and Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis were each engaged with to frame and guide the analysis of documents and interview data. Each of these analytical tools contributed to answering the overarching research question: What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? The analytical tools, as were applied in this research, are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.2 Defining the state

Within this thesis, policy analysis ‘brings to the surface’ (Garrick, 2011) the role of state activity within the spheres of education and child protection. It is therefore necessary to define the state, as applied within this research, as the unique political structure of the state has not always existed in its current form, nor will it remain to exist (Hague & Harrop, 2010; Sodaro, 2008). As Hague and Harrop (2010) observe: “There was a world before states and, as advocates of globalisation tirelessly point out, there may be a world after them too” (p. 61). The emergence and changing functions of the modern state, as distinct from the property of a monarch, is generally divided into three historical periods – each of which is explored in turn below (Dunleavy & O’Leary, 1987; Leichter, 1979).

The sixteenth to the eighteenth century saw the emergence of the modern state, characterised by extensive state activity in both social and economic areas. During this time, welfare was structured as part of the state’s instrument in maintaining law and order. The provision of welfare was an exertion of power, rather than offered for purely paternalistic or religious reasons. Leichter (1979) suggests that during this period the state’s ability was hampered by inadequate bureaucratic and technological development.

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterised by *laissez faire* – a limiting of the state’s involvement in both economic and social life. This paradigm shift did not see the total abandonment of the state, rather a retreat to where the state was seen to provide the conditions for the best operation of the free market (Leichter, 1979). The work of Adam Smith (1776), *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, was particularly influential during this period as he called for individual freedom and limited state involvement – namely, in defence against external

threat; guarantee of rule of law and provision where the market did not provide (Pierson, 2006). However, in the late eighteenth century, the advent of the Industrial Revolution began to change the social, economic and political order (Leichter, 1979; Pierson, 2006).

The Industrial Revolution saw a period of economic growth, yet this growth came at the exploitation of the working classes. The reaction to the problems of industrialisation is seen as the third historical period. Here, the state intervened again but in a much more effective manner than in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Leichter, 1979). Pierson (2006) outlines that whilst there is some disagreement, generally, the process of industrialisation (the growth of industrial production, economic growth, urbanisation, demographic change, state development) prompted the formation of the modern welfare state.

Throughout this thesis, the functions of policy are examined through the role of the state, acknowledging the state as a terrain of policy struggle (Jessop, 1990). The research was underpinned by an assumption that an understanding of the state is necessary for an understanding of policy, particularly in the way that state formations frame policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Offe, 1985). This thesis explored two domains in which the state takes control of children’s interests – education and child protection. The tensions and contradictions for the state, as created by the intersection of the education and child protection systems, are explored throughout the thesis with a view to suggest effective ways of responding to the school mobility of children in care.

A conceptualisation of the state is not only necessary to understand what the state does, but also the how and why. Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987) assert that, conceptually, an understanding of ‘the state’ can only be gleaned in comparison to its

antonym, 'the non-state'. The state/non-state can be considered in two different ways, namely, 'the state and civil society' and 'the state and the individual' (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). For Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987), there is no distinct division between where the state ends and society begins. Others, in defining the state, caution against reifying the state. For example, Apple (2003) cautions that the state is "not simply *there*. It is constantly evolving, always in formation, as it responds to demands from social movements" (p. 4). Similarly, Johnson (1998) attests that the state is an abstraction which makes "analysis of it something of a problem" (p. 147). He goes on to suggest that when considering the role of the state, the "simplest strategy is to focus on the most obvious manifestations" (Johnson, 1998, p. 147) – namely, government and its agencies.

Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987) suggest that theories of the state can be contrasted by the approach taken in two spheres of intervention. The first sphere relates to the legal framework of society – maintenance of law and order, protection from external aggression and upholding certain traditional moral values. The second sphere relates to the economic system and welfare provision – regulation and management of production, redistribution of income and the provision of goods or services on a basis distinct from the market principle. Ball (1990) suggests that across all Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of the state a primary concept is that of relative autonomy. In Ball's (1990) view, there is "relative autonomy of 'the political' and 'the ideological' from 'the economic'" (p. 13). The relative autonomy of the state and the possible effect on policy-making, with regard to the theories of the state applied in this study, are discussed in the following section.

2.3.3 Theories of the state

There are several different theories of the state. Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987) identify five different approaches: pluralism, neo-pluralism, elitism, marxism and the new right. According to Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987), compared to other theories of the state, these five theories are particularly illuminating when applied to any Western democracy. Within this research, Marxist and New Right theories are considered most applicable, as discussed below.

A Marxist critique of the state is useful for the purposes of this research as it acknowledges the importance of capital in determining the underlying power structures of the state while also recognising that the state has relative autonomy. In this way, the state becomes a site of struggle over policy (Lingard, 1992). Marxists argue that the state has two main functions, which it must balance. The first is to enhance the conditions of capital accumulation. The second is to secure the legitimacy of capital accumulation through the pursuit (or appearance of pursuit) of the ‘common interest’ (Lingard, 1992; Offe, 1985). In part, legitimacy is secured through measures such as welfare policies, pensions and health services (Edgar, 2006; Spicker, 2008), and therefore, can frame or direct policy-making. However, the balancing of accumulation and legitimation functions and the contradictory nature of capitalism has led contemporary Marxist scholars to develop theories of crisis. Accumulation and legitimation are in constant tension (Offe, 1985) and the burden of legitimation leads to a ‘legitimation crisis’. The balancing of accumulation and legitimation processes is not the only problem for the state. A third ‘field’ of problems are “the technical and managerial problems of the state itself” (Ball, 1994, p. 5) – governance and control, costs and planning. Each of these tensions drive and shape policy as well as producing tensions and disjunctures (Ball, 1994; Lingard, 1992; S. Taylor et al., 1997).

For this study, the accumulation/legitimation functions of the state are in focus within the education and child protection systems. For the state, there is a vested interest in children both as citizens (Farrell, 2001) and as future workers (S. Taylor et al., 1997). Within both the child protection and education systems, the role of the state has, and is, constantly shifting in response to various political, social, economic, cultural and educational pressures (Farrell, 2001; Harris-Hart, 2010). Policy must, therefore, be examined through the lens of the role of the state and, as it relates to this study, a Marxist approach encourages the exploration of the tensions between various state structures and accumulation/legitimation functions.

Located at the other end of the ideological spectrum of state theories is the New Right. Contrary to a Marxist approach, the New Right suggests that the state inhibits the optimal functioning of the capitalist economy and therefore calls for reduced state involvement. For the purposes of this research, the New Right theory of the state is informative as it is argued to have had an extensive and immediate impact on contemporary Australian government. Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987) suggest that this impact is partly fortuitous, "but also partly lies in public choice and Austrian theorists' attempt to marry rigorous deductive analysis with well developed normative proposals for policy change" (p. 135).

In discussing the New Right's refocussing of the state, Lingard (1992) asserts:

One thing (and probably the only one) that can be said in favour of that situation is that it has forced us to consider the amount of state intervention necessary for equality of citizenship for all, for the creation of a civilised and decent society, while still allowing for a plurality of political and social perspectives. (p. 41)

This thesis, then, draws on a Marxist critique of the state, whilst acknowledging the influence of the New Right. The work of Habermas (1976, 1984b), Claus Offe (1985), Roger Dale (1989) – who draws heavily on the work of Offe – Bob Jessop (1990), and Richard Bowe, Stephen Ball and Anne Gold (1992) provides a useful critical theoretical framework from which to focus on the contradictory nature of state decision-making in education (Bonal, 2003).

The work of Offe (1985) and Dale (1989) is selected here as it is considered valuable in theorising the impact of the state on policy formulation. Dale (1989) is particularly useful when considering the role of the state in education. The work of Bowe et al. (1992) adds to the analysis through the recognition that policy processes occur at sites other than the state. Whilst Jessop (1990), who has built upon the work of Offe, suggests that people within the state have a ‘strategic impact’ upon policy-making. For critical theorists, the state is closely tied to education and educational policy.

2.3.2.4 The state and educational policy

Critical theory, as described above, is generally concerned with the ways in which factors such as the economy, race, class, gender and education, construct, constrain, reproduce, or transform individual’s lives and social systems (Gibson, 1986; Harris-Hart, 2010). Critical theory, then, can assist in understanding how educational policies and practices relate to larger political and ideological perspectives and social realities (Harris-Hart, 2010). As it relates to this research, critical theory encourages the problematisation of the role of the state within the education and child protection systems, specifically at the point of intersection of these two systems.

Essentially, examining policy through a critical lens means questioning who benefits and determining ‘how things came to be the way they are’. To fully understand educational change one must appreciate the demands on the state and how these demands affect the education system (Dale, 1989). For Habermas:

[There is a] need to take into account, within the purview of civil society as a context for citizens to activate change, the continuing importance of the role of the state in its bureaucratic and political decision-making functions, of the law and duly constituted legal functions, and of prevailing economic functions. (Collins, 2003, p. 76)

Such a view is supported by Carspecken and Apple (1992) who outline that education connects and contributes to the (re)formation of inequalities that operate within society. As critical theory views all thought as mediated by historically constituted power relations, deconstruction of state apparatuses – such as education and child protection systems – can reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions and perspectives that define institutional practices. Within this thesis, Chapter 4 explores policies of the Queensland education and child protection systems with a view to problematise the assumptions written into policy documents.

Critical theorists view education as playing a vital role in the reproduction of state power – schools are created by the state and, therefore, are structured to reproduce the principles of the state (Gibson, 1986). This relationship holds true in capitalist or socialist countries, being more apparent and powerful in some places (i.e. in the East rather than the West) (Gibson, 1986). This fact is consistently highlighted by Dale (1989) who suggests that the state can never resolve the demands and interests of all state apparatuses. This research explored how the state negotiates and resolves the

demands placed on it from the education and child protection systems. A key claim of critical theory is that education plays a significant role in the reproduction of state power and that “the State is not neutral in its relations with education” (Gibson, 1986, p. 50).

2.3.3 Policy analysis through a critical lens

As described above, this research explores the difference between how things are and how they ought to be – progressing from explanatory work, to work aimed at enhancing the educational outcomes of children in care. As flagged above, the research is positioned within a policy analysis approach. When undertaking policy analysis, Ball (1997) advocates for consideration of the many ‘voices’ that inhabit policy, stressing the importance of engaging with the “social and collective identities” (p. 271) of research subjects. Of this he states:

It is one thing to consider the ‘effect’ of policies upon abstract social collectivities. It is another to attempt to capture the complex interplay of identities and interests and coalitions and conflicts within the processes and enactments of policy. (Ball, 1997, p. 271)

Furthermore, as Considine (1994) argues, analysis of policy must consider who has influenced any policy decision, who has been excluded and who has achieved what they wanted. Although the final product of a policy may be attributed to a specific ‘elite’ of government officials, policy making is a shared process with many groups having their say (Considine, 1994) – what Yeatman (1998) terms a ‘participative approach’. Hence, this research explores what might education policy for children in care who are mobile

need to look like and why, and considers the diverse voices that inhabit educational policy.

Rigorous research is required to accompany policy analysis (Sikes, 2000) – representing the voices of the marginalised but also working in a society where government accountability for multiple stakeholders is paramount (Ball, 1997). Acknowledging the diversity of voices that inhabit policy is extended by Yeatman (1998) who argues that within the policy process, government is a “public authority working on behalf of public values and public interest” (p. 35). Therefore, policy might potentially need to engage with a range of viewpoints and needs. Ideally, research focussing on the education of children in care would consider the views of carers, parents, children, child protection workers, educators and other professionals who may be involved (for example, Guidance Officers), and examine how the state negotiates each group’s needs, why it has not already and what it would need to do. To address such issues it is imperative to determine how the state currently negotiates needs, an irresolvable task in Dale’s (1989) view, and if the state could better meet these needs.

The type of knowledge created by research is an important aspect to consider, particularly if there is a view to influence policy (Rist, 2000). Rist (2000) suggests that, predominantly, research can serve two key functions – an ‘engineering function’ and an ‘enlightenment function’. An ‘engineering function’ presumes that adequate knowledge can be presented to inform the direction of policy. In contrast, research that serves an ‘enlightenment function’ is aimed at generating and continually developing knowledge over time. This research is based on the notion that research should ‘enlighten’ policy responses and, as such, considers the complex interplay of factors that are associated with the school mobility of children in care. Qualitative research of

this nature can be significant in policy (re)formation as it studies the ‘social construction’ and ‘differing interpretations’ (Rist, 2000) of school mobility. Critical Discourse Analysis provides a framework for exploring and analysing ‘social constructions’ and ‘differing interpretations’.

2.3.4 Discourse analysis through a critical lens

As an analytical approach, discourse analysis focuses on the implied meaning of texts or images (Denscombe, 2010). The *critical* part of discourse analysis is concerned with power relations and is rooted in the Frankfurt school of critical theory (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Rogers, 2004). Thus, critical discourse analysis will ask particular types of questions about language use and discourse structures, focussing on the role of discourse in (re)producing social inequality (Henderson, 2005). Fundamental to understanding critical discourse analysis are six features that constitute texts (either written or spoken) – discourse is shaped by and shapes the world, discourse is shaped by and shapes language, discourse is shaped by and shapes participants, discourse is shaped by prior discourse and shapes the possibilities for future discourse, discourse is shaped by its medium and discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium, and discourse is shaped by and shapes possible purposes (Kula-Semos, 2009; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). In this way, language use is seen as a form of social practice and social practices “are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served” (Janks, 1997, p. 329).

It is important to note that there is a variety of approaches to critical discourse analysis, developed from different theoretical traditions and various disciplinary

locations (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Although these broader critical discourse approaches vary in the degree of analysis, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) suggest that these approaches are underpinned by eight key tenets, as presented below:

- Critical Discourse Analysis addresses social problems;
- Power relations are discursive;
- Discourse constitutes society and culture;
- Discourse does ideological work;
- Discourse is historical;
- The link between text and society is mediated;
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory;
- Discourse is a form of social action.

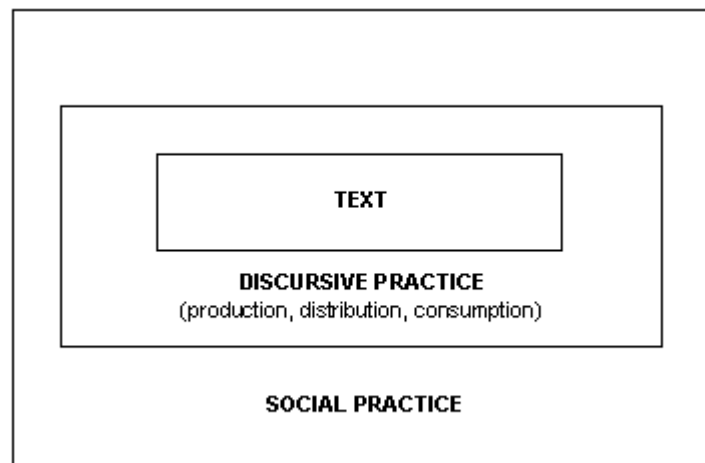
Critical discourse analysis was employed in this research to examine texts relating to the school mobility of children in care and the framing of teachers' work to reveal power relations and dominance (Fairclough, 2002). Additionally, as discourses shape everyday life events, situations, and relations with others (Fairclough, 1992a), critical discourse analysis is useful in exploring teachers' perceptions of their work with children in care who are mobile.

For the purposes of this study, Critical Discourse Analysis as conceptualised by Fairclough (1992b) is applied with a view to explore the power relations inherent in the selected documents and in teachers' perceptions of their work. Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) summarise Fairclough's approach as comprising "a set of philosophical premises, theoretical methods, methodological guidelines and specific techniques for

linguistic analysis” (p. 60). Fairclough’s three-dimensional model (see Figure 2.2 below) is an analytical framework for empirical research on communication and society (Fairclough, 1992b; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Fairclough (1992b) explains that the three-dimensional conception of discourse:

. . . is an attempt to bring together three analytical traditions, each of which is indispensable for discourse analysis. These are the tradition of close textual and linguistic analysis within linguistics, the macrosociological tradition of analysing social practice in relation to social structures, and the interpretivist or microsociological tradition of seeing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures. (p. 72)

Figure 2.2. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model for discourse analysis



Source: *Discourse and social change*, by N. Fairclough, 1992b, Cambridge, England: Policy Press. p. 73.

In application, discourse is perceived as text (micro level), as discursive practice (macro level), and as social practice (meso level) (Fairclough, 1995; Kula-Semos, 2009; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Analysis should cover each of the three dimensions, as the

model is based on, and promotes, the principle that texts cannot be understood in isolation (Fairclough, 1992b; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Rogers, 2004). Fairclough (1992a) suggests that each of the three dimensions requires a particular kind of analysis: “*description* of the text; *interpretation* of the interaction process, and their relationship to the text; and *explanation* of how the interaction process relates to the social action” (p. 11).

Fairclough (2001) advocates that there is flexibility in the guidelines provided for critical discourse analysis. Indeed, as Janks (1997) advises, a strength of Fairclough’s approach is that it offers “multiple points of analytic entry” (p. 329). Thus, as Luke (2002) suggests, there is a common strategy to approaching critical discourse analysis:

CDA involves a principled and transparent shunting back and forth between the microanalysis of texts using varied tools, semiotic, and literary analysis and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions, and power relations that these texts index and construct. If there is a generalisable approach to CDA, then, it is this orchestrated and recursive analytic movement between text and context . . . CDA sets out to capture the dynamic relationships between discourse and society, between the micropolitics of everyday texts and the macropolitical historical conditions. (p. 100)

The theoretical and methodological framework offered by Fairclough (1992b) enables the analyst to draw on a number of social theories to explore and conceptualise discourse and its relationship to the social world (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). For example, in this study, the role of the state is drawn on to explore both the welfare discourse and neoliberal consumer discourse. Additionally, Critical Discourse Analysis provides a useful framework for exploring the relationship between language use and

societal practices in general (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002) – for this study, specifically applied to teachers’ perceptions of their work. Finally, whilst critical discourse analysis has received criticism for being vague and “an exercise in interpretation” and, therefore, “invalid as analysis”, (Widdowson, 1995, cited in Fairclough, 1996, p. 49), Fairclough (1996) (in response to Widdowson’s comments) highlights that critical discourse analysis is explicit about its socio-political stance and the focus on how social problems are (re)produced, legitimated and contested (Henderson, 2005).

2.3.2 Document analysis and discourse analysis

Government publications, particularly policy documents, are often considered hybridised texts containing competing discourses but representing the values and beliefs of the state. In order to determine how the state negotiates the demands upon it, and consequently the competing discourses, a critical policy analysis approach was adopted. As discussed previously, a critical approach is concerned with current practices, why these are current practices and the possibility of reforming such practices. Taylor et al. (1997) outline that for critical policy analysis to be useful it “needs to concern itself with the question of how progressive change might occur and the desirability of alternative policy options” (p.38). This research examined current policy for children in care who are mobile and, supported by insights from the case study, considered what support children in care who are mobile might require.

Policy analysts stress the importance of acknowledging that policy is messy and often an ongoing process, with many interconnections throughout various stages of production and implementation (Ball, 1990; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Ham & Hill, 1993; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Analysis may focus on one or many of these stages.

Understanding the policy in context is essential when analysing any stage/s of policy production or implementation (Ball, 1994; Bowe et al., 1992; Kenway, 1990; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Taylor et al. (1997) provide a useful framework for policy analysis and, as such, it was adopted for this research. The framework examines the context, texts and consequences of policy (S. Taylor et al., 1997). Such a framework enables discussion of possible consequences of the policy currently in place as well as consequences of alternative policy options.

Broadly, considering the context of a policy questions why a certain policy was produced and/or adopted. Some analysts emphasise the importance of considering how problems are constructed (Bacchi, 2009; Yeatman, 1998), particularly when constructed by the government or media (S. Taylor et al., 1997). To determine what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile, a contextual analysis need focus on the antecedents of policy. In particular, how Queensland came to have a government department which focuses solely on the safety of children, as well as considering the economic, social and political factors which have led to a focus on the outcomes of children in care – particularly educational outcomes.

The analysis of policy text through discourse theory enables close attention to the ways in which language mediates underlying values and competing discourses (Alford, 2005; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Discourse analysis techniques help to illuminate the relationship(s) between the use of language and the exercise of power, specifically, the way that ‘reality’ is constructed by dominant forces in society. Ball (1994) draws attention to the analysis of policy text through discourse theory, stating: “We need to appreciate the way in which policy ensembles, collections of related policies, exercise power through a *production* of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’, as discourses” (p.21). By

bringing awareness to these constructions of reality and inherent power imbalances, discourse analysts aspire to incite action leading to progressive change (Fairclough, 1992b). Within this research, the analysis of policy texts aimed to illuminate common-sense assumptions, which are inherently ideological. As Codd (1988) argues, policy texts represent the outcomes of the negotiation of competing discourses:

Policy documents can be said to constitute the official discourse of the state (Codd 1985). Thus, policies produced by and for the state are obvious instances in which language serves a political purpose, constructing particular meanings and signs that work to mask social conflict and foster commitment to the notion of universal public interest. In this way, policy documents produce real social effects through the production and maintenance of consent. (p. 237)

Therefore, deconstruction of policy texts uncovered the role that the state is currently serving with regards to children in care, and in whose interests. This was achieved by drawing on Fairclough's (1992b, 1995) conception of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which views discourse as text (micro level), as discursive practice (macro level), and as social practice (meso level). There is an inseparability of these levels, however, as outlined by Table 2.6 following (see p. 105), there is some overlap between the levels of CDA and the stages of policy analysis framework. For this reason, the levels of CDA were incorporated into the levels of policy analysis framework.

As mentioned earlier, policy documents are often hybridised texts, sites of power struggle or, as Ozga (2000) states, 'contested terrain'. Competing interests impact upon policy and these are (often) apparent in policy texts. Just as there are many voices in

the policy process, writers cannot control a reading of the text (policy) or its subsequent implementation. Policy texts, of course, do not provide complete solutions but rather the texts shape, direct or steer the actions of those charged with implementation (Ball, 1994). It is, therefore, difficult to determine the consequences of any policy as enactment is effected by numerous variables, including but not limited to context and those enacting the policy (Ball, 1994; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Within this research, policy enactment from the perspective of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers was explored, highlighting the ways that education and child protection policies shape teachers' work. Similarly, the enactment of policy in the context of disadvantage also shapes the work of the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study.

In considering the consequences of policy, this thesis draws on current research regarding school mobility and children in care as well as data gathered through the case study. This approach enabled investigation of the relationship between constraint and agency in policy (Ball, 1994).

Table 2.6. Framework for document analysis

Policy Analysis Framework		CDA Three-dimensional Framework		Guiding Questions
Level	Description	Level	Description	
Context	Focus on pressures and antecedents of development of policy – Why? Why now?	Discourse Practice (macro)	Focus on structural and functional features of text	What policy currently exists? On whose terms was it created and adopted? Why? On what grounds have the selections been justified? Why? What, if any, silences exist?
Text	Focus on the language, competing discourses and the values underpinning the text of policy – How? What?	Textual (micro)	Focus on linguistic and content features of text	What does this text address? Who wrote it? Who is the intended audience? What is present/absent?
		Discourse Practice (macro)	Focus on structural and functional features of text	How does the text position implementers? How is education and school mobility conceptualised and prioritised? How are competing discourses and interests negotiated? What, if any, are the silences?
Consequences	Focus on possible gaps in implementation stage	Social Practice (meso)	Focus on contextual features of text	What impacts/outcomes might the text have? How are power relations reinforced/ challenged? What is the role of the state? How is this conceptualised?

2.5 Limitations of the research

The limitations of any research study can be many and varied. And whilst it is important to acknowledge and consider the limitations, it is also pertinent not to romanticise the role of the qualitative researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). So far, this chapter has outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each research method. The chapter now shifts focus to the limitations of the research, with particular attention given to potential impact on the quality of findings and effectiveness in answering the research question. In particular, it explores the limitations of the selection of participants and the specific context of the research as situated within the larger project.

As has been previously discussed, there are a multiplicity of voices and views that policy, and research that accompanies policy, should ideally engage with. With regard to the focus of this research such voices might include those of the following: children in care, parents, carers, child protection workers, teachers and additional relevant education and child protection staff. And so, while this research focuses on the perspective of teachers, a perceived limitation of the research is the lack of inclusion of other ‘voices’. However, this noted, attempts were made to include the voice of children in care within this research project.

In line with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the initial research design included research methods that focussed on gaining the view of school mobility from children in care who had experienced school mobility. At the time of research design, the view of children was considered particularly important and appropriate (Save the Children, 2000) as there was minimal research on children’s perceptions of school mobility within Australia – as highlighted in Chapter 1, Section 1.4. It is to be acknowledged here that since this time, Michelle Townsend has completed her doctoral research and, whilst the specific focus of her research is not

school mobility, it was raised and discussed by participants in her study, including children in care (Townsend, 2008, 2011).

Emanating from research conducted with or alongside children is the need for careful consideration of methodology (Harwood, 2010; Heptinstall, 2000; Liamputtong, 2007). The original research design for this doctoral study – that is, the inclusion of children in care’s ‘voices’ – was developed with support from the Queensland Department of Child Safety. The initial approach to the Department of Child Safety to the final outcome (i.e. the declination of the application to conduct research) involved a process spanning 1 ½-2 years. Within the time constraints of a doctoral thesis, pursuing alternative avenues or reframing the research project to include the voices of children in care was unrealistic.

Concurrent to working with the Department of Child Safety to develop a research project, as the researcher, I focussed on gaining the perspectives of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Whilst gaining the views of parents, carers, child protection workers and other relevant departmental staff would have been ideal, given the nature of the project – a doctoral study – there were time constraints on my ability to gain access to the variety of ideal stakeholders. In view of the research participants involved (and those not involved) in this research, the findings of the study are interpreted with caution. Careful consideration is given to the multiplicity of voices that could and should inform what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. Whilst acknowledging the potential limitation of not including multiple stakeholders, a pragmatic approach to the research was, necessarily, adopted.

With such limitations acknowledged, this research does make an important contribution to the field. The research presents one set of perspectives from a group of

stakeholders who have previously been largely marginalised from research on the education of children in care – those of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers.

Hence, as the enabling research question (From the perspective of teachers, what might policy for children in care who are mobile need to look like and why?) suggests, this research does not aim to directly answer a social problem, but rather presents practical offerings for an aspect of a social problem.

A second set of limitations is related to the position of the research within the larger research project. Section 2.3.2 of this chapter described how this research is necessarily confined by the larger project and, given the focus of the larger project, the information collected focused on a particular population – that is, those students who are mobile, as defined in Section 2.3.2.2 of this chapter. Not included in the dataset from the 14 schools, then, are those children who were in care and did not experience school mobility during the course of this study. Further, it is acknowledged that additional information on the children in care, for example, length of time in care or type of care, may have been useful to explore trends in the school mobility of children in care. However, such information was not collected as part of the larger project and has not, therefore, been incorporated in this study.

Despite the limitations of the study, the use of multiple data sources and the thick description enabled through the analysis offers valuable findings on the school mobility of children in care. Discussion of research design gives rise to consider the influence of the values of the researcher, which are discussed in the following section.

2.6 Critical researcher standpoint

A critical theory framework acknowledges that knowledge is socially constructed and that the researcher's standpoint is inextricably entwined in the research. It is, therefore, important that researchers reflect upon their own 'social reality' and its influence on the reasons for and positions of the research (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002; Gall et al., 2007). In view of this, I acknowledge that the formulation of this research practice is borne out of my own professional and political interests (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002).

Professionally, my interest in school mobility was sparked by a research project on which I was employed as a Research Assistant. The research was carried out in three local sites and examined the extent of school mobility in the region, as well as highlighting common determinants for mobility and certain sub-populations of mobile students, such as those in care. The small-scale, local project on which I was employed, expanded to the larger project within which this doctoral research was situated. My position as a Research Assistant on the larger project and the position of my doctoral study within the larger study are also important to note.

In undertaking the research, I initially felt that I would gain much more than the participants. However, through discussions with the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers, I came to realise that the benefits for these participants were 'intangibles' (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The participants were appreciative that their perspectives on the education of children in care were being explored and were hopeful that the research would influence the practices of other professionals involved with children in care who are mobile for the benefit of those children.

Additionally, many of the teachers within the schools involved in the larger project were supportive of the larger project (A. Hill et al., 2011) and appreciative of

the Mobility Support Teacher assigned to their school. In this way, the positive perception of the larger project may have carried across to this research and resulted in a willingness to participate. So, too, for some of the teachers in this project, the Mobility Support Teacher enabled their participation. As trained teachers, the Mobility Support Teacher was able to teach the class whilst I spoke with the teacher. This again speaks to the larger project in that Principals were willing for their staff to talk with me during school time.

My own personal interest in the perspectives of teachers grew out of my educational training and, as shown in Chapter 1, the realisation that research with regard to the education of children in care has been largely “teacher blind” (Seddon & Connell, 1989, cited in J. Smyth, 2001, p. 6). In particular, I felt that there was a need to know much more about the role of teachers in working with children in care who are mobile, and “the importance and the self-understandings teachers attach as insiders to the nature of the workplace and what it is they do” (J. Smyth, 2001, p. 6).

There is debate among critical theorists as to whether a researcher’s values and biases can stand outside the development of the research project. Whilst many researchers advocate that it is values that generally prompt and drive research (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002), it is important to acknowledge how such biases may affect the research. Whilst it is difficult to say in what ways my experiences have shaped the research, as an educator, I view education and schools as critical in addressing social inequalities (Apple, 2008). I suggest that my discussion of social justice issues, the decision to use policy analysis and critical discourse analysis provide insight into my viewpoints. Furthermore, in acting as a corporate parent or *in loco parentis*, I feel that the state has a responsibility to ensure that the needs of children in care are met. School

mobility is an additional complexity in meeting the educational needs of children in care and, in my view, there are practical ways forward to support children in care, teachers and other stakeholders involved.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established and outlined the theoretical positioning and methodology employed in this research project. It has argued that a critical theoretical lens enables an exploration of the complexity of the school mobility of children in care. Further, as critical theory “stresses the crucial role of education in the reproduction of state power” (Gibson, 1986, p. 148), the framework is deemed useful for examining the role of the state and how the interests of the state and groups within society are (or are not) served. Within the critical theory framework, policy analysis and a case study approach were adopted. The chapter has described the research tools and techniques of data collection and analysis within each of these approaches, and has introduced the research participants and sites. In doing so, the chapter also discussed the use of Fairclough’s (1992b) three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to conduct the analysis of discourses at play in the education and child protection policy arenas.

Additionally, this chapter has flagged the limitations of the research project. While acknowledging these, it is nonetheless advocated here that the policy analysis and case study approach provided sufficient evidence to answer the research questions. It has been highlighted that whilst many other ‘voices’ can potentially contribute to policy on the education of children in care, this research focused on teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Therefore, it was suggested that caution must be exercised in generalising the research findings.

As has been discussed, there were three components to the research presented in this thesis – a historical review conceptualising the role of the state in the context of children in care who are mobile; an analysis of the current policy ‘moment’; and a case study of *le quotidien* (the local or daily life). The study explored the national policy direction in education and child protection and examined the global-local relationship with regard to the school mobility of children in care. At the local level, the study investigated the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care and engaged with teachers and Mobility Support Teachers, contributing towards developing an understanding of the particular enablers and challenges within the policy/practice dimension in areas experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Each of these components of the study were drawn together to develop an understanding of what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile. Each of the following three chapters is dedicated to a research component. Chapter 3 entails an examination of the role of the state in a range of areas, in Chapter 4 the findings for the document analysis (or current policy ‘moment’) is presented and in Chapter 5 the findings from the case study are examined. The concluding chapter of the thesis, then, presents a discussion of the overarching research question.

Chapter 3 Navigating neoliberal policy frames in education and child protection: Identification of lacunae

I think it is time we abandoned the notion of leaving everything to some nebulous concept of society or focusing entirely on individual responsibility. We should replace these ideas instead with a concept of shared responsibility in which we act as a country to create communities in which individuals are given opportunities but accept their obligations, where they are given rights but have responsibilities, and where we understand that . . . the well-developed individual, capable of playing a strong and vibrant part in society, is likely to arise best from a strong and vibrant community. (Blair, 1994, p. 90)

3.1 Overview

The preceding chapter described a critical theory lens as the overarching framework that shapes this study. The critical theoretical approach influenced the overarching research question – What type of policy might support the education of children in care? – and the research design. As described in Chapter 2, this study drew together several components of research to construct a larger picture of the whole – namely, of school mobility of children in care. The components of the research were: a historical review, an analysis of the current ‘moment’ and a case study of *le quotidien* (the local or daily life). Presented in this chapter is one of these research components – the

historical review. The review conceptualises the role of the state in policy domains concerned with school mobility and children in care.

There are no clear boundaries between education and other areas of social policy, with aspects of each having implications for the other (Ozga, 2000). A focus on policies pertaining to the education of children in care, then, is necessarily broad. It is this potential array of policies, and the stakeholders involved in enacting such policies, related to the education of children in care that creates ‘uncertainties’ characteristic to wicked problems. A focus of this analysis is to explore the philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions that underpin the education and child protection systems – whilst also noting the complex socio-political fields in which the systems are situated and in which enactment of policy occurs.

Government institutions have been pressed, through a range of discursive shifts and resultant policy regimes, towards becoming more responsive, results-focused and accountable. In turn, within government departments, the practice of workers has been affected, creating a ‘tight and narrow’ (Lingard, 2009a) focus on accountability and performativity. The focus on the ‘tight and narrow’ has been framed by neoliberalism which, the former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd – along with others (Ball, 2003; Lingard, 2009a) – suggests has failed. In view of this ‘failure’, it is argued that a new social imaginary is needed to underpin the macro framings of educational and social policy, as Blair suggests in the opening quotation above (see also Lingard, 2009a; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Throughout this thesis the contradictions of the current framing – that is, neoliberal governance – in education and child protection are in focus.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the tensions between the education and child protection systems, as framed by neoliberalism. To understand these tensions,

gaps and silences, and the policy space they open up, the central role of the state, its policy drivers, and its modes of governance are examined. The chapter begins with an examination of the role of the state in neoliberal times, considering factors such as globalisation and the retraction of the welfare state. Theories of governance draw attention to the varied discourses that influence the education and child protection systems, such that create an unresolved role for the state. The chapter then turns to an examination of the enactment of policy in Queensland. A focus on Queensland policy maps out the tensions and relationships among the varied and changing policy orientations and the varied advocacies and critiques of policy options. The chapter concludes by conceptualising the role of the state in the context of, and with regard to, children in care who are mobile.

3.2 The role of the state in neoliberal times

There are many systems that influence the experiences of an individual and, for this research, the consequences of a neoliberal ideological framing of the macrosystem is in focus. As there are no clear demarcations between educational policy and other areas of social policy (Ozga, 2000), the structure of the welfare state is an important policy dimension when examining child wellbeing. There are a diverse range of approaches to the welfare state across the political spectrum and, as such, it is important to consider how political ideology guides policy (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). Traditionally, left-leaning governments have been strong advocates for bolstering social support systems while the fiscal conservatism of more right-aligned governments has meant a lesser consideration or rescinding of the welfare state. As Tweedy and Hunt (1994) point out, “a major feature of the configuration of the economic, political, and social institutions

of the period since the second World War has been the existence of welfare state and associated social rights” (p. 288).

Critical theory, with its strong commitment to social justice, draws attention to how the welfare state is structured and the potential capacity of individual rights to deliver social justice (Tweedy & Hunt, 1994). One such body of theories offers an interpretive analysis that seeks to understand the logics of contemporary strategies for effective management of the population within the boundaries of nation-states, or what those from a Marxist derived tradition would call ‘the State’. Two areas of interest manifest here – ‘the state and society’ and ‘the state and governance’. An examination of the political contexts includes an exploration of a variety of related terms and genealogies, for example: state, governance, government and recent transformations of government. Policy change is considered in terms of broad political directions and orientations, such as those indicated as key to the neoliberal governmental regime.

For some time now there has been an argument that, at a macro level, a large set of social policies have been framed by neoliberalism, which are in turn framed by economic policy (Lingard, 2009a). The basic premise for a neoliberal underpinning of policy is that the interests of all citizens and the population as a whole are best met through increasing market-based modes of operation (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Within this framing, the role of the state moves from provider to funder or regulator, and economic and individual competitiveness is privileged (Lingard, 2009a; Robertson & Dale, 2002).

Drawing on the work of Stone (1988), Lingard (2009a) highlights that all public policies in liberal democracies are framed by discourses of equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community. However, policies are framed by particular articulations,

definitions and emphases of each, depending on the macro frame. For example, if framed by neoliberalism, there is a strong emphasis on individual liberty and a weaker definition of equity. A social democratic frame, on the other hand, argues for a shift in the emphasis on individual liberty to community and for a stronger definition of equity (Lingard, 2009a; Pierson, 2006).

Within democratic society, educational policies generally aim to provide access to a high quality education system and are framed by an understanding of equity and growth. Australia is in a unique position, for, although generally highly ranked by international standards, there is considerable difference in academic performance between the highest and lowest performing students. In international comparisons of reading literacy, for example, Australia has been classified as ‘high quality/low equity’ by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). Ideally, the education system would be categorised as ‘high quality/high equity’ to ensure that “demography is not destiny” (Gillard, 2010, "Asking the right questions" section, para. 21).

In a keynote address at the QSA Senior Schooling Conference, Lingard (2009a) noted that the premise of “a decent society is one which is more equitable than perhaps the one we currently have” – and this is also the premise for this thesis. Central to this premise is the development of a policy regime that is underpinned by a philosophy that aims to develop a more equitable society. The educational outcomes of children in care point to the need for a focus in this area (see Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011b). However, within a neoliberal framing of the state, there exist challenges to achieving this aim, particularly in areas of disadvantage (Robertson & Dale, 2002; J. Smyth, 2010).

3.3 Responding to disadvantage and risk: The unresolved role of the state

Since the mid-twentieth century there has been ongoing debate around inequality in schooling (Baron, Finn, & Grant, 1981). During the 1990s, the notion of ‘social exclusion’ gave new impetus to this debate (Room, 1999), which was particularly highlighted in areas experiencing disadvantage. As Byron (2010) notes, there is mounting evidence of an increasing socio-spatial division caused, in part, by economic globalisation and economic rationalism in social policy (Lawson, 2005). As noted by Byron (2010), the processes of globalisation, and in part neoliberalism, have informed and shaped the role of the state. With this in mind, the following critically examines the extent to which globalisation tends to force a retraction of welfare support, within the changing role of the state. Broader processes of governance are considered, with a view to explore the unresolved role of state activity in areas such as schooling, welfare provision and teachers’ work.

3.3.1 The locus of state power

Generally, there is consensus that in the post-war years of economic growth there was widespread welfare state development (Pierson, 2006). This period saw a massive expansion of inputs as a way of stimulating both private investment and demand. However, with the rise of neoliberalism, such inputs were seen as wasteful and inefficient, and that there were no demonstrable gains (M. Sinclair, 2002). Thus, the incompatibility of the market economy and state provision of welfare suggested that a change in mechanisms was required.

Throughout the 1990s, numerous developments were seen as weakening the state’s ability to govern. Globalisation and the development of supra national bodies

meant increasing interdependence in society, pushing power upwards away from the state (Cope, Leishman, & Starie, 1997; Hudson, 2007). Processes of fragmentation and decentralisation of authority reduced central control, pushing power downwards away from the state (Cope et al., 1997; Hudson, 2007; Rhodes, 1996; A. Taylor, 2000). Increased privatisation or non-state mechanisms, to compensate for market failure (Robertson & Dale, 2002), spread power outwards away from the state (Cope et al., 1997). Coupled with the neoliberal rhetoric of choice, accountability and marketisation, it has been suggested that each of these elements contributed to putting the position of the state into question (Cope et al., 1997; Hudson, 2007; Rönnerberg, 2008). Hudson (2007) notes that standard policy solutions were seen as “increasingly inappropriate to meet diverging problems and more varied needs” (p. 267) and, as such, decentralisation of responsibility was called for to support flexibility and responsiveness in solutions. Together, these developments were said to contribute to a form of governance where policy and service provision were spread across the public and private sector (Hudson, 2007; Rhodes, 1997). The shift from government to governance led to what some have termed, the ‘hollowing-out’ of the state (Cope et al., 1997; Hudson, 2007; A. Taylor, 2000).

However, the notion of a hollowed-out state has been questioned by governance theorists (Hudson, 2007; A. Taylor, 2000). Taylor (2000), for example, suggests that hollowing-out has been adopted uncritically; questioning whether the process is indeed at work and whether it reduces the centre’s steering capacity. He argues that, “hollowing out has utility as a broad-brush description, but its attractiveness has obscured powerful counter-tendencies, [what many] term filling in, at work in government” (A. Taylor, 2000, p. 48). Indeed, this stance is supported by other versions of governance theory which argue that the state has not retreated or lost control

but rather changed its method of steering (Cope et al., 1997; Dale, 2005; Hudson, 2007). Through the process of centralisation, the state is strengthening its capacity inwards (Cope et al., 1997; Rönnberg, 2008) and increasingly placing importance on instruments connected to output steering, resulting in a simultaneous hollowing-out and filling-in of the state.

The processes described above are of relevance to this thesis in terms of considering the positioning of State policy. It is argued that decentralisation and fragmentation have weakened the state's ability to govern, hence, governance theorists suggest that through regulation the state maintains government in governance (Hudson, 2007; Rönnberg, 2008). Consequently, there has been a shift from input regulation to output control (Hudson, 2007) and from indicators of practice to performance (Ball, 1994), enabling "government to maintain its presence in governance" (Hudson, 2007, p. 270). The increasing role of evaluation, audit and checking can be traced back to several economic and political developments. Taylor (2005) suggests it is a result of neoliberalism, public choice theory and new managerialism. Others have identified corporate globalisation, fiscal crisis of the state, discourses of 'efficiency' and public distrust of political ideologies as the impetus (D. Taylor, 2005; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). The focus on output oriented measures, such as evaluation, audit and checking, leads to a re-regulation or new form of control by the state (Ball, 1994; Helgøy, Homme, & Gewirtz, 2007). In this way, a new paradigm of public governance emerges – that of 'steering at a distance' (Kickert, 1995).

Robertson and Dale (2002) note that there are contradictions created by a shifting governance arrangement associated with the neoliberal project, suggesting that 'local

states of emergency' have been created which present a particular problem for the state.

They argue:

The problem for the state is this: it is unable to withdraw as it had hoped and nor could it continue to act only as a coordinator of social policy (rather than funder/provider/regulator) as the two new players in the social policy governance framework, 'the market' and 'the community', have also failed and where their failure is a result of the new governance framework.

However, in order to secure legitimacy and social order to enable accumulation, the state must intervene more strongly. (Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 464)

Critical policy analysts argue that a neoliberal approach creates an appearance of autonomy, and that appearance is illusory (Ball, 1994). Firstly, the simultaneous processes of decentralisation and centralisation can restrict the scope for local action (Rönnerberg, 2008). Secondly, blame for shortcomings can now be directed at organisations when such shortcomings may be "inherent in or created by the policies" (Ball, 1994, p. 80).

Within this thesis it is acknowledged that various discourses play a role in shaping policy enactment at the local level. Engagement with competing discourses assists in understanding and examining "the changing demands on the state in carrying out its basic function and the way that these affect the structure and process of the education system" (Dale, 1989, p. 45) – and as relevant to this thesis, the child protection system. As Dale (1989) points out, "the State is not a monolith; there are differences within and between its various apparatuses in their prioritising of demands made on them and in their ability to meet those demands" (p. 29).

Thus, there are contingent tensions between government departments. This thesis focuses on tensions apparent in the enactment of policy within the Queensland Department of Education and Training and the Department of Child Safety as pertaining to the school mobility of children in care. Where there it is that the responsibility for addressing the school mobility of children in care lies is, presently, unclear. Given this, it is suggested here that an examination of the two leading agencies – Department of Education and Training and Department of Child Safety – may well reveal how the school mobility of children in care is governed. Examination may also reveal how policies support, or fail to support, the education of children in care who are mobile. Policies framed by neoliberal discourses of ‘accountability’ and ‘choice’ are central to the reconceptualisation of the purpose of education.

3.3.2 Role of the state: The purpose of education

While the role of the state highlights the marketplace within education, an examination of the pervading paradigms around the purpose of education is equally important. The role of education in promoting economic growth and efficiency and reducing wage inequality is widely recognised (D. Hill, 2006; Keeley, 2007; Lingard, 2009a).

According to Hill (2006), neoliberalism has influenced a restructuring of education to develop human capital and labour power more suited to the interests of capital globally. Lingard (2009a) cautions that schooling should not produce individuals who are centred on the pursuit of self-interest, with no notion of the common good; and that it is important to consider the purpose of education. That is, we should steer clear from schooling which serves to contribute to what Sennet (1998) refers to as the ‘corrosion of character’.

Reid (2009) suggests that there are three broad purposes of education:

The *democratic* purpose is located in a society that expects its schools to prepare all young people to be active and competent participants in democratic life. Since this benefits the society as a whole it is a public purpose

The *individual* purpose aims to advantage the individual in social and economic life. It treats education as a commodity, and supports school choice within an educational consumption approach. It posits education as a private good for private benefits and is therefore a private purpose

The *economic* purpose aims to prepare young people as competent economic contributors. Since this combines public economic benefits with private economic benefits, it is a constrained public purpose. (p. 1)

Under the 11-year term of the Howard government in Australia, education was treated as a commodity, with the main purpose an individual one (Reid, 2009). When the Rudd/Gillard government came to power in 2007, the ‘vocabularies of motives’ (Dale, 1989) altered, changing the purpose of education. The Rudd/Gillard government redefined the purpose for education to a broader economic goal, with a focus on the development of human capital for the labour market (Reid, 2009). Despite the difference in the purpose of education, both the Howard and Rudd/Gillard educational policies are framed within a neoliberal construction of the state (Lingard, 2010a). Within a neoliberal construction of the state, education is posited to support the economy and reduce the welfare burden on the state. Contemporaneous structural changes, such as new forms of funding arrangements and regimes of evaluation, were

legitimated by the discursive shift to an economic function of education (Mulderrig, 2003), paving the way for the *Education Revolution*.

A neoliberal human capital construction of schooling is based on the premise that the maximisation of individual self-interest will result in ideal economic outcomes for individuals and, through a ‘trickle-down’ effect, for society (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Lingard (2009a) suggests that, within a neoliberal frame, humans are thought of as economic beings – *homoeconomicus* – and cautions that whilst human capital is important, so are other types of capitals. Education, then, must work at developing these different capitals for all students, regardless of their spatio-temporality. However, it appears that the market driven reforms of the *Education Revolution* are unlikely to improve the spatio-temporalities of students in disadvantaged contexts, as evidenced by a number of critiques of such processes (see Ball, 2008; Hursh, 2008).

Former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, argued that the social democratic purpose of education must be considered and called for a new role for the state. He advocated:

Social justice is also viewed as an essential component of the social democratic project. The social-democratic pursuit of social justice is founded on a belief in the self-evident value of equality, rather than, for example, an exclusively utilitarian argument that a particular investment in education is justified because it yields increases in productivity growth (although, happily, from the point of view of modern social democrats, both things happen to be true). (Rudd, 2009, p. 25)

Rudd’s final point is important here – expenditure on education is important because of the “self-evident values of equality” but also as it leads to “productivity growth”.

According to Rudd (2009) and Lingard (2009a), any defensible macro philosophy of

the role of the state should be informed by a social-democratic understanding of human capital theory, rather than a neoliberal understanding, if education is to support all human beings. Such an approach is also broadly consistent with a critical theory paradigm. There is a multitude of factors to consider in ensuring that all human beings are supported through education – school mobility is one such factor.

3.3.3 The role of the state: Students changing schools

The globalisation of the economy has, some academics and politicians argue, resulted in a limitation of the state in determining its own directions due to numerous global pressures (S. Taylor et al., 1997). With the necessity to ensure a state remains competitive in the global market and that the economy continues to function, its policies must align with and support market operations. Globalised labour markets have contributed to the need for individuals to become flexible and mobile. Thus, the role of the state is to support mobility in order to support the operation of the market of education. The state achieves this through various structures, as will be discussed. Prior to such discussion, however, it is first necessary to explore the marketisation of education as a result of neoliberal educational reforms.

Conceptually, the idea of ‘choice’ is central to the neoliberal agenda and the marketisation of education, particularly in terms of parental choice in the selection of schools. This positions parents and students as consumers who, through self interest and market individualism, have the right to choose and the state as “simply enforcing general rules to protect the rights of individuals to choose” (S. Taylor et al., 1997, p. 88). However, such a view does not take into account research suggesting that the education system is advantageous to students from certain backgrounds and, therefore,

due to various social determinants, not all parents and students are able to take up the neoliberal demands of governance in useful ways. Given this, some students have more ‘choice’ over schools than other students, thus the notion of ‘problematic’ mobility arises (Hursh, 2008; S. Taylor et al., 1997).

While the notion of ‘choice’ can be seen as desirable, in the ‘marketplace’ of education (Dobson, 2008; A. Hill, 2009) choice policies can actually serve to reinforce social stratification (Apple, 2008; Ball, 2003; Hursh, 2005; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Several studies (Ball, 1990, 2003; Bowe et al., 1992; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995) outline how some families have more ‘choice’ than others and that this can result in the ‘more capable students’ (Hursh, 2005) being enrolled in non-government schools (Keating, 2009). This movement, Keating (2009) asserts, results in “residualised schools that are serving students with the greatest educational needs” (p. 31).

The role of the state in this situation, one might assume, would be to implement policy which promotes equality. This, however, does not appear to be the case at present. The state has devolved this responsibility to the Principals of schools while, at the same time, retaining its power through the setting of targets which schools must self-manage to meet. This enables the state to ‘steer at a distance’ (Kickert, 1995). So whilst schools are given greater autonomy in determining how to reach centrally determined goals, their abilities are limited due to the devolution of a range of administrative and budgetary tasks (S. Taylor et al., 1997).

While the state cannot ignore or combat the effect of globalisation or abandon the notion of ‘choice’ espoused by neoliberalism, it must, arguably, respond to ‘problematic’ mobility. Thus the tensions inherent in neoliberal modes of governance arise which the state will not be able to resolve, but will endeavour to reach settlements

between these tensions (Dale, 1989). With regard to school mobility and the education of children in care, these settlements are represented in policy documents created through the process of ‘filling-in’ (Rönnerberg, 2008).

3.3.4 The role of the state: Welfare provision

Much has been written regarding the increasing influence of neoliberalism on policy and the manifestation of this turn in policy. Although often presented as a simplistic dichotomy between neoliberal and welfare states, the apparent contradiction in state formations is not so simplistic. There is variation in the welfare make up as a result of the neoliberal transformation (Pierson, 2006), and a neoliberal state formation does not necessarily exclude a welfare state – rather welfare continues but is limited.

Discussions, then, are not about whether welfare should exist, but instead about the size and operation of provision.

Defenders of the welfare state argue that it functions as a means of social cohesion. The welfare state, some argue, can be seen as a cohesive social force (Marshall, 1950; Saunders, 2000). Writing in the 1950s, Marshall (1950) suggested that, through placing emphasis on individual self-interest, the capitalist market system fragments society. This noted, Marshall (1950) also acknowledged that the welfare state unifies society by granting equal rights of entitlement to everybody. More recently, Sullivan (2000) also suggests that there is a moral dimension underlying the welfare state which is integral to Australia’s sense of nationhood. How the state balances accumulation and legitimation functions thus become pivotal in policy reception and enactment.

Generally, the impact of economic globalisation and ‘new social risks’ has prompted a renegotiation of the welfare support provided in the post-war era (Pierson, 2006). One of the terms gaining prominence in post industrial societies is ‘new social risks’. The character of these ‘new’ risks and policy responses are generally framed in terms of risk threat, rather than a positive approach to wellbeing (Pierson, 2006). Esping-Andersen (1996) describes a series of *endogenous* challenges arising from “the growing disjuncture between existing social protection schemes and evolving needs and risk” (p. 7). Whilst the post-war consensus meant that most risks were mitigated by the state, as the needs described by Esping-Andersen (1996) became apparent, the state placed greater emphasis on the market and the individual (Mitchell, 2001).

Pierson (2006) suggests that the advance of globalised capitalism has created a shift in the solution to the ‘problem’ of the welfare state. The ‘problem’, he states, “has (once again) been presented as amenable to technical fix – only this time the ‘fixers’ are more likely to be economic specialists from the World Bank than the ‘traditional’ welfare professionals of the post war period” (Pierson, 2006, p. 3). A neoliberal paradigm, with its support of the free market and economic rationalism as ‘markers’ of an improved approach to social equality, represents a shift away from the previous post-war welfare effort (Apple, 2001; Yeatman, 1993).

The ‘dis-welfares’ developing as a result of the shift to a neoliberal paradigm calls for an increase in the “need for welfare, while at the same time emphasising the need to reduce the resources available to meet these needs” (Ellison, 2007, p. 332). Further, neoliberalism abandons the social ideals contained in the welfare state (Ellison, 2007; Williams, 2000), thus “rendering traditional paradigms of professional social work

unsustainable, particularly in relation to the protection of human rights and social inclusion” (Ellison, 2007, p. 332).

Concurrent to the shift in policy orthodoxy, as mentioned above, there is a continual questioning of the role and functioning of the state in broader aspects of social life (Dale, 1989; Lingard, 1992; Wyness, 1996). The re-growth of Social Darwinist (Apple, 1989) thinking in public policy has called into question the appropriate and desired amount of state intervention to ensure equality for all (Lingard, 1992). An examination of social policy can reveal the relationship between children and the state, and the extent to which state activity impedes and/or facilitates child wellbeing (Turnstill, 1999). Parton (2006) argues that as globalisation advanced, the state’s control over its own economic activity decreased and the importance of children, as the future labour force, increased. During this same period, threats to children and childhood were also perceived to increase. The net result, Parton (2006) explains, was “to extend control *over* children and the environments in which they live . . . and intervene at an earlier stage in order to prevent harm to children” (p. 172). Thus, the social services safety net increases to include all children who are in need or at-risk, resulting in the role of the state expanding and becoming more interventionist within the private domain of the family (Cashmore, 2004; Parton, 2006).

Within the welfare state, policies for children adopt a child welfare approach – such that is underpinned by principles of prevention and ecological understandings, and the state’s introduction of social services departments (Ellison, 2007; D. Hayes & Spratt, 2009). Within the neoliberal state, on the other hand, policies for children adopt a child protection approach which is socially constructed within the context of risk-management, and one wherein families are policed and a state apparatus prioritises

child protection (Ellison, 2007; D. Hayes & Spratt, 2009). In essence, social care is replaced by social control (Harries, Thomson, & Lonne, 2005a).

Within Queensland, the development of the Department of Child Safety in 2004 separated the child/family welfare and child protection activities of the state. Sammut and O'Brien (2009) commend this move and suggest that a stand-alone child protection department, focussing solely on child protection, greatly reduces the chance of children 'falling through the cracks'. In contrast to this view, Ellison (2007) argues that the division of children's and broader family services decontextualises responses and results in fragmented service provision that undermines holistic approaches. Essentially, each structural development adjusts the relationship between social workers (or child protection workers) – as arms of the state – families and other systems involved with children in care.

For this thesis, the relationship between the state and families is important in the way that 'risk' is conceptualised and how the subsequent responses to 'risk' are structured. The exploration of 'risk' and policy responses is taken up further in Chapter 4. So, too, for education, the relationship between the state, schools and teachers is important in understanding teachers' work with children in care who are mobile.

3.3.5 The role of the state: Teachers' work

Viewing schools as places of teachers' *work* is often forgotten (Apple, 1995; Connell, 1985). In considering teachers' work then, it is important to place schooling in its social and political context (Apple, 2010). As has been described above, the state plays a crucial, and evolving, role in the education system (Dale, 1989; Meshulam & Apple, 2010). As such, the relationship between teachers and the state is (and has been)

changeable (Ozga, 2000). In view of this, the neoliberalisation of the state, as described above, and the potential effects on teachers' work is considered an important aspect for this research.

Although teachers are state workers, their work is fundamentally different to that of other state employees (Apple, 1995; Connell, 1985) – namely, teachers exercise professional autonomy (Dale, 1989). However, autonomy can have various interpretations across different times and spaces (Hypolito, 2004). In recent times, a range of writers discuss a deprofessionalisation of the work of teachers through an increasing lack of autonomy (see for example, Ball, 1994; Connell, 1985; Dale, 1989; Ozga, 2000). Bottery and Wright suggest that pressure for deprofessionalisation can come from above (in terms of government direction) or from below (in terms of market forces). Similarly, Ball (1994) describes three key control mechanisms for teachers' work – the curriculum, the market and management. Increasingly, through these mechanisms, teachers' work is deprofessionalised as control is retained at the centre, responsibility is placed at the periphery and market-based modes of competition place teachers and schools in competition with each other (Apple, 1995; Bottery & Wright, 2000). In this way, teachers are positioned as technicians and 'accountable performers' (Ball, 1994). In Queensland, increasingly centralised forms of educational governance (as described above) and steering mechanisms (such as standardised tests) have reshaped teacher autonomy. Through the implementation of new regulatory controls, the state oversees the work of teachers – a process referred to as reprofessionalisation (Robertson, 1994). Thus, the processes of deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation are said to occur simultaneously.

Whilst the state has played an important part in the deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation of teachers' work, teachers can, and often do, contest the state's role in many ways (Apple, 1995; Hypolito, 2004; J. Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, & Shacklock, 2000). As Apple (1995) has shown, there can be some resistance from teachers. Such resistance is highly significant in considering the ways in which teachers negotiate their work and reconstruct and enact policy texts. So, too, it highlights that the state "should not be understood as a fixed entity but as an arena of social and political struggles" (Hypolito, 2004, Section 1, para. 4). As such, Bottery and Wright (2000) theorise that when focusing on teachers' work there are two spectrums to consider – state approaches to the teaching profession and teachers' perceptions of their own role. Of teachers' work, Hypolito (2004) suggests that multiple discourses exist and hence how teachers' work is conceptualised and defined is highly dependent upon who is talking and under what circumstances. Discourses, then, are a useful tool in exploring the ways in which the control of teachers' work moves through macro framings to the micro level of the classroom (A. Hill, 2009; J. Smyth et al., 2000).

For this research, there is a focus on a neoliberal conception of teachers' work as neoliberal reforms to education are said to have changed the nature of teacher professionalism (Hilferty, 2008). Within a neoliberal construction of teachers' work, Sachs (1999, 2003) identifies two dominant and competing discourses shaping teacher professional identity – managerial and democratic.

The first discourse – managerial – arises from the permeation of neoliberal ideology in social policy – most notably through the ideology of managerialism. The regulation of teachers' work through accountability and efficiency regimes is a result of

managerialism. Hilferty (2007) outlines that, as a discourse, managerial professionalism positions teachers as “unquestioning supporters (and implementers) of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy which corresponds functionality to the world of work” (p. 241). Managerialism has also affected the relationship between teachers and principals – teachers are viewed as professionals who work to meet output measures defined elsewhere; principals are situated as institutional managers, rather than senior colleagues (Sachs, 1999).

Democratic professionalism, on the other hand, is based on principles of collaboration and cooperative action and, Sachs (1999) argues, is emerging from the profession itself. For Apple (1996), democratic professionalism presents an alternative to state control of teachers’ work. Central to this concept is the ‘demystification’ of teachers’ work and an emphasis on collaboration from the community and other stakeholders involved in education (Sachs, 2003). In this way, teachers then develop collective responsibilities as a group, and as a profession, from the individual classroom to the wider community (Sachs, 2003).

For Sachs (1999, 2003), each of these discourses influences the professional identities that teachers can and do inhabit – noting that teachers can take up multiple identities. Influenced by managerial discourses, the entrepreneurial professional is characterised by a teacher who identifies with the “efficient, responsible and accountable version of service that is currently being promulgated by the state” (Sachs, 2003, pp. 127-128). In contrast, emerging from democratic discourses, activist teacher identities are described as having clear emancipatory aims (Sachs, 1999, 2003). Sachs (1999) maintains that democratic discourses, and the associated activist identity, reshapes teacher professionalism in positive ways. Notably, the reshaping of teachers

professionalism along these lines presents the possibility of more equitable involvement of teachers in the policy process and improved educational outcomes for students (Hilferty, 2007).

The practices that teachers engage with mirror their identities (Sachs, 2003). Whilst Sachs (1999, 2003) holds hope for the activist teacher identity, and has seen it in action, she cautions that the educational environment that the activist identity depends on has not yet been fully realised in Australia. She suggests that new forms and structures of affiliation and association between educators and other stakeholders are required (Sachs, 2003). These linkages, whilst necessary in the ‘taming’ of wicked problems such as the school mobility of children in care, are also difficult to navigate given the variety of potential stakeholders involved (Head & Alford, 2008). For the education of children in care, the forms and structures of affiliation and association between educators and child protection workers is, presently, unknown. This research, then, explores the association between educators and child protection workers, from the perspective of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers, and considers the types of professionalisms that are enacted. Chapter 5 describes these affiliations and the identities that teachers and Mobility Support Teachers take up in further detail.

With regard to education, school mobility and welfare provision, the state is balancing numerous tensions. Where ‘local states of emergency’ (Robertson & Dale, 2002) arise there is a perceived need for the state to intervene, yet doing so undermines the commitment to neoliberalism. The unresolved role of the state in each of these areas translates into a confused policy framework that those charged with the enactment of policy must navigate. Whilst the above has discussed the role of the state in broad

areas of social policy, the following narrows the focus to the enactment of policy within the child protection and education systems.

3.4 Lacunae: The enactment of child protection and education policy

The location of the state within policy is particularly pertinent in education, equally important is the examination of the enactment of policy (Lingard, 2009a). Good policy intentions may or may not follow through into practice (Lingard, 2009a), and local circumstances may have very different implications for the take-up of policy (Ball, 1993a). As has been discussed, the neoliberal paradigm insists on a greatly reduced role for the state and, hence, policy (and consequently practice) is steered towards various outputs. Policies intersect and interact with policies from other fields. It is argued throughout this thesis that the intersection of education and child protection policy has created a space in which teachers and child protection workers find themselves in a 'double bind'. Whilst each are steered toward different measures of performativity, both are working within a professional paradigm where the best interests of the child are an *a priori* concern.

In democratic society, a philosophy of schooling should be underpinned by a social democratic concept of equity (Lingard, 2009a). With this principle foregrounded, much academic research has examined what Australia can learn from countries that are ranked as 'high quality/high equity' by PISA (S. Thomson, 2010; S. Thomson & Bortoli, 2010). For example, through an examination of Gini co-efficients, Lingard (2009a) asserts that re-distribution of capitals is required to move to a 'high quality/high equity' system. Within Queensland, the introduction of the policy framework *Queensland State Education 2010* ushered in a focus on the equity agenda

“but in radically new neoliberal economic ways” (P. Singh & Taylor, 2007, p. 301). This era, as Singh and Taylor (2007) note, has had a simultaneous focus on the ‘individualised case management’ of students ‘at risk’ coupled with a revised equity agenda asserting a new role for the state, that of steering from a distance (Dale, 1989; Kickert, 1995). The new policy landscape requires that teachers and schools identify ‘students at risk’ but places the responses required for these students firmly with the school staff. The results are, subsequently, measured by examining a range of output measures – including student retention to Year 12, national test results and apparent retention rates.

In the context of educational policy, Singh and Taylor (2007) argue that global trends have influenced the ways that equity issues are framed and addressed. They state:

Although equity issues were still on the reform agenda, the approach taken to address educational disadvantage could be said to be a market-individualistic approach (Henry, 2001). There was a discursive shift away from the language of ‘social justice’ and ‘target groups’, towards ‘inclusion’ and ‘students at educational risk’. (p. 312)

Under neoliberalism, Taylor and Henry (2000) suggest that there has been a conjoining of equity and efficiency which has implications for the framing of educational policy, particularly in the formation of policy responses. In view of the overarching research question – What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? – the following considers key tensions in developing policy responses.

3.4.1 Children in care: Entangling the role of the state

Who is at educational risk? How do we know? And what strategies might make an educational improvement? (P. Singh & Taylor, 2007, p. 310)

Definitions of risk are socially and historically constructed – its origins stemming from insurance – with the implication that individuals ‘at-risk’ need to be managed lest they become an “economic burden on the state” (Gibson, 1986, p. 141). Whilst ‘labelling’ can be oppressive, Gibson (1986) states that the relationship between the label and reality must be considered, noting that:

With all categories (labels) the key question is: What is the relation between the label and reality? It is self-evident that some children *do* experience great difficulty in learning . . . Are they not in special need? Clearly the answer is yes. If a pupil has problems with learning he or she should receive suitable help. (p. 144)

Although critical theory opposes labelling, it is a fundamental concept of critical theory to address inequality. Within education, inequality is often addressed through the implementation of policies for specific populations (Henry, 2001), generally those ‘at-risk’. How the state is positioned to respond to individuals at-risk may be seen to be determined by how risk is conceptualised.

The research literature typically defines children in care as an ‘at-risk’ population. So, too, does it indicate that the various origins of risk lead to complexity in relation to possible responses. Farrington (2007) proposes that identifying and determining appropriate supports for students is not an easy task as there is a complex interplay between risk factors that are causes and risk factors that are correlated with causes, and that many coincide and interrelate. For those involved in supporting children in care,

views on risk emerge from a number of areas – namely ecological, biological and neurological – although it is difficult to differentiate factors into discrete categories. And teachers, it is to be noted, must navigate these discourses of risk that occur simultaneously. There are, for example, discourses of risk that link to learning readiness (Dockett & Perry, 2009; Hilferty et al., 2009; Smart et al., 2008), discourses linked to brain development (Anda et al., 2006; Downey, 2007) and discourses linked to involvement in the child protection system (Browne, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Johnson, & Ostergren, 2006; Fong, Schwab, & Armour, 2006).

For many children in care, the impact of abuse and/or neglect cannot be undone and, often, strategies to manage the effects of abuse and/or neglect are implemented after the problem has occurred (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2008a). So, too, children will have travelled along different pathways before entering school, pathways which will have affected their developmental state or ‘readiness’. The current child protection system is framed as a symptom of other problems, where “the majority of children are involved because of the complex interplay between a range of different adult-located problems impacting on a parents ability to provide the standard of care required by a child” (Devaney & Spratt, 2009, p. 638), rather than intentional abuse or neglect. It is this complexity and ‘messiness’ of social support issues that make disentangling and clearly articulating how best to support the education of children in care a ‘wicked problem’ – that is complex and highly resistant to resolution (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; Devaney & Spratt, 2009; Sammut & O'Brien, 2009). To ensure that those ‘at risk’ do not become economic burdens (Gibson, 1986), the state must navigate the multiple ways of conceptualising risk and develop an appropriate policy response. According to Taylor and Singh

(2005), one challenge in determining policy responses is the balancing of key aspects of social justice – *redistribution and recognition of difference*.

3.4.2 Policy responses: Determining the ‘right’ approach

As outlined previously, all public policies in liberal democracies are framed by discourses of equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community. However, policies are framed by particular articulations, definitions and emphases of each, depending on the macro frame. Within a neoliberal framing of educational policy, a redistributive policy response adopts a ‘weak’ approach to equity – that is, a focus on *equality of opportunity*. Critics of this approach argue that it fails to take into account broader social issues that contribute to educational outcomes (Henry, 2001). Chapter 1 highlighted that there are many factors that can contribute to the educational outcomes of children in care, and that these factors can operate within many of Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) ‘nested systems’. To take into account these various factors, a ‘strong’ definition of equity is more useful, such as that offered by a social-democratic approach. The goal of a social-democratic approach to equity policy is to produce *equality of outcomes* by acknowledging that some groups, such as children in care, require additional educational support (Henry, 2001; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Whilst critics maintain that such an approach encourages labelling of students – as outlined in Section 3.4.1 of this chapter – the relationship between the label and reality must be considered. In view of this, a *recognition of difference* (Henry, 2001) approach is useful in acknowledging that groups are not homogeneous and that some students may require more educational support than others.

Within a redistributive or recognition of difference approach, determining an appropriate focus – that is, target groups or individual students, schools or regions – complicates determining the ‘right’ policy response. Henry (2001) outlines that regardless of the approach adopted, reporting focuses on target groups. In practice, then, individualised and target group approaches tend to sit alongside each other (Henry, 2001). Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Taylor and Henry (2003) suggest that “the ‘balance’ between equality and difference may need to change depending on the particular ‘field of practice’ and associated ‘logic of practice’” (p. 333). That is, a *redistributive* approach may be required at the system level and a *recognition of difference* approach at the school level (S. Taylor & Henry, 2003). Thus, education policy designed to address inequality and social injustice needs to take into consideration the many ways that marginalisation and social exclusion are experienced, rather than simply providing access to education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Within a *social-democratic* approach to justice, ‘person rights’ are emphasised (rather than ‘property rights’) and the role of the state is to regulate markets – intervening “in and against the market to ensure an acceptable level of equality/inequality thought necessary to protect person rights” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 158).

Within Australia there exist examples of both individualised and target group responses. For example, support is provided for two distinct target groups of mobile students: the children of defence force personnel and travelling show children. For children with parents in the Australian Defence Force, support is provided through the Defence Community Organisation (Defence Community Organisation, 2007). In contrast, for travelling show children, educational support is provided by the *Queensland School for Travelling Show Children* (Henderson, 2004). However, Henderson (2004) explains that, whilst the school has been successful, the result has

been the creation of a parallel school as opposed to providing for this mobile cohort within mainstream schooling. The larger project within which this research sits provides an example of an individualised approach, whereby the Mobility Support Teacher individually case manages each enrolling student.

There exist concerns with the adoption of either a target group or individualised approach to policy, particularly in a neoliberal policy climate. Some argue that individualised case management decontextualises the multiple factors that place students at-risk (P. Thomson, 1999), whilst others maintain that individualised case management is successful for some students (A. Hill et al., 2009; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg & Kimm, 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006). While policy responses aimed at the individual are, generally, preferred in meeting the needs of children who possess a complexity of needs, it is a costly approach and may result in assisting less students than require assistance. Singh and Taylor (2007) highlight this issue, arguing that:

Devolution of decision making is a key element of the new global education policy orthodoxy . . . Such an approach to policy, however, assumes that various people allocated with accountabilities and responsibilities have the necessary resources, skills, and time to carry out this work. There is also an assumption of similar understandings of terms, even though these terms had not been clearly defined, and a consensus had not been achieved about their meaning within the various areas of the central bureaucracy. (p. 308)

Of the target group approach, a policy actor interviewed by Singh and Taylor (2007) outlined that such an approach was not seen to be a solution in providing educational support as it fails to:

- effectively ‘address issues of poverty’ [because] there was ‘no voice for it’;
- promote effective communication between policy officers working on different equity initiatives for specific target groups;
- focus on ‘kids as complex human beings’, and therefore produce professional development workshops that captured the whole rather than ‘slices’ of students’ ‘humanity’;
- research the new equity priorities created by the massive social, cultural and economic changes associated with globalisation and the new technologies; and
- deal with the ‘huge backlash against feminist educators’, and the rearticulation of gender to signal ‘boys’ education’. (p. 307)

In relation to children in care, the first, second and third points noted here are particularly pertinent, especially when considering a therapeutic approach to child protection.

Firstly, the creation and implementation of policy relating to the education of children in care is charged to two government departments, with enactment occurring in schools. The school – as a state apparatus – represents state power and, as such, presents a predicament for some families “who want educational advancement for their children but cannot deploy the techniques or resources called for by the school” (Connell, 1994, p. 134). For children in care, parents’ rights over education may have been removed as the Department of Child Safety operates *in loco parentis*. Yet, the Department of Child Safety is subject to fundamental pressures, namely safety, which

serves to place education and the voicing of concern regarding education, at the periphery of the organisation's agenda.

Secondly, although the goals of the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training overlap to some degree, each are subject to different fundamental pressures which effect their capacity to satisfy externally set goals (Dale, 1989). The Department of Child Safety is necessarily rowing – as opposed to steering – to ensure children are kept safe in a system in ‘crisis’, with limited carer and child protection worker availability amidst increasing notifications (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). The Department of Education and Training, on the other hand, are steered towards accountability targets, such as ensuring each child in care has an Education Support Plan. Within the policy frameworks and goals of each department there is ‘no voice’ for school mobility and, as such, there is limited space for school mobility to be considered an equity issue.

Furthermore, as each department focuses on its own responsibilities, effective communication and collaboration may be diminished. Ideally, for the best interests of the child to be served, professional knowledge from a range of areas would need to be considered and accessed. Through training and experience, the workers in each department have acquired specialised knowledge pertaining to different areas of child wellbeing. However, as Winkworth and McArthur (2007, cited in Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009) argue, “professionalism is characterised by domination, authority and control rather than collegiality” (p. 32) which can, in turn, interrupt recognition of the interdependence of the systems in promoting the best interests of the child.

Thirdly, numerous studies (Altshuler, 1998; Barber & Delfabbro, 2003a, 2003b; Dalmar, 2006) have highlighted that the needs of children in care are indeed complex. Particularly pertinent is work by Delfabbro (2008) who suggests that the different types of abuse or neglect experienced by children results in specific behavioural indicators. Further, the adoption of an ecological framework – one that serves to unpack the complexity of the interactions in each child’s environment – is also advocated as a means of better understanding the needs of children in care who are mobile. Accordingly, a policy response that is targeted at such a diverse group of students would create complexities for those charged with implementation.

Additionally, in determining the ‘right’ policy response, spatial dimensions must be considered (Bourke & Caniglia, 2010). Several studies highlight the increasing concentration of spatial inequality (Byron, 2010; Caniglia, Bourke, & Whiley, 2010; Vinson, 2007) and, as such, schools or regions located in areas of disadvantage may need to adopt particular policy responses to address the multifaceted nature of disadvantage experienced by students. In contexts of disadvantage, and in addressing wicked policy problems, ‘involvement’ is important for successful policy programs (Henry, 2001). For example, for the education of children in care an involved and co-ordinated approach would include teachers and schools, child protection workers and offices, the community and students. A co-ordinated approach, however, also requires adequate resources. Recent research suggests that schools, particularly in areas of disadvantage, are not able to provide the support required by some students due to resource constraints (Angus, Olney, & Ainley, 2007; Queensland Association of State School Principals, 2011).

The above discussion has drawn attention to the disjuncture between the context of policy text production (the state) and the context of practice (schools) (Ball, 1994). This disjuncture can be encapsulated by the notion of the simultaneous ‘hollowing-out’ and ‘filling-in’ of the state (Rönnerberg, 2008). The state decentralises authority and provides schools with autonomy, essentially ‘hollowing-out’. Realising that a problem exists (i.e. school mobility, low level of educational attainment of children in care) the state responds with various initiatives (educational advocate for children in care), a simultaneous ‘filling-in’. Responsibility is still executed at the local level, allowing flexibility in responding to differentiated needs (Ball, 1997; Hudson, 2007), yet the state has maintained control through output measurements (i.e. comparing state testing achievements of children in care to peers). Notably, the complex task issued to schools by the state comes at a time when only six percent of Principals state they have sufficient resources to meet the needs of their schools’ communities (Angus et al., 2007). Further, Singh and Taylor (2007) suggest that, through a focus on risk, devolved management and performativity, the current neoliberal policy orthodoxy may weaken the social justice agenda.

The contradictions of neoliberal governance in education and child protection create lacunae. An examination of the role of the state reveals that there is often a lack of resolution resulting in a ‘confused’ policy framework. Those charged with the implementation of policy, namely teachers and child protection workers (as relates to this thesis), must navigate this policy terrain. With this in mind, how the role of the state is conceptualised in the context of children in care who are mobile, and how this impacts upon the work of teachers is considered in the following section.

3.5 Conceptualising the role of the state in the context of mobile children in care

Neoliberalism, as the macro philosophy underpinning social policy, has resulted in a shift of the locus of power of the state. For education and child protection systems, this shift has meant a dominant rationality in the market, with minimal intervention from the state. As discussed previously, international educational policy has focused on various shifts and pressures due to new technologies, social movements and a changing global economy (S. Taylor et al., 1997). As Government departments are pressed to become more responsive, results-focused and accountable, such policy regimes are focussed on the tight and narrow, easily measured outputs (Lingard, 2009a). The child protection and education systems are steered towards different policy targets. To reach these targets the practices of both systems intersect and have real consequences for children in care. Performance measures in child protection appear to be centred on easily measurable outcomes of permanency and safety, rather than wellbeing (Barber & Delfabbro, 2003a). Within education, standardised literacy and numeracy tests (for example, NAPLAN) function as key accountability drivers. As children enter into or travel through the care system, some degree of residential movement is inevitably experienced. With the aforementioned in mind, the research presented in this thesis aims to explore the level of school mobility experienced by children in care, and how teachers navigate the ‘educational space’ in their work with these students.

Within the child protection system, to err in the task of protecting children has dire consequences for the Department of Child Safety as a whole and the immediate staff involved, and receives significant backlash from the media and community. Wulczyn, Smithgall and Chen (2009) suggest that, in practice, what occurs are concurrent attempts at family reunification and permanency placement planning. Thus,

children and families are assessed for their likelihood of reunification (or risk of failed reunification). In terms of worker-family relationships, it is suggested that the power dynamic has inherent tensions as workers investigate and support families (Pelton, 2001; Wulczyn et al., 2009). Habermas (1984a, 1987b) notes that only through communication and inter-subjective engagement can actors reach morally binding decisions, however, progress is significantly undermined by resource and managerial constraints that leave children at risk and many families without sufficient support (Burns & Lynch, 2008; Sammut & O'Brien, 2009).

The de-institutionalisation of care and a lack of foster carers has resulted in a high tolerance towards impermanency (Department of Child Safety, 2006a), despite research identifying such conditions as unfavourable. As the Department of Child Safety aims to resolve issues of safety and permanency it is not surprising that success within the care system is predominantly measured by indicators of permanency and safety (Altshuler & Gleeson, 1999). Such indicators are relatively effortless to self-assess and address critical issues in the child protection system (Altshuler & Gleeson, 1999) – that is, for example, the number of children protected and the number of children in a placement. Therefore, in terms of accountability and as a result of a preoccupation with risk, there is a focus on permanency and safety, rather than wellbeing.

Within the education system, there has been devolution of responsibility for the identification of and intervention for ‘at-risk’ students from the state to schools. Schools, then, variably implement individualised and/or target group approaches to assist students deemed as ‘at-risk’ – this can be viewed as schools’ attempts to meet neoliberal systems of standards and testing set by the state. Effectively, “the state has devised a system in which it can govern schools from afar through policies promoting

testing, accountability, and choice, what Ball (1994) describes as steering at a distance” (Hursh, 2005, p. 5). As an example of a ‘steering’ approach, Singh and Taylor (2007) argue that *Queensland State Education 2010* placed the responsibility of enactment and accountability on schools which resulted in a number of concerns regarding informed decision making by Principals (P. Singh & Taylor, 2007).

The absence of accountability with regard to children and young people in care’s education is arguably a worrying aspect which has been commented on by various researchers (Nixon & Clifford, 2006; Noble, 1997; M. O’Hara, Church, & Blatt, 1998). Many suggest that the lack of accountability stems from the changing adults in children and young people’s lives due to frequent placement transfers. A tension within the state then becomes apparent: Whose responsibility is the education of children in care? As guardians, does responsibility rest with the Department of Child Safety, or as the providers of education should it be the Department of Education? If it were the Department of Education, would such responsibility be devolved to schools in catering for individual students? Arguably, the notion of mobile children in care then complicates accountability.

In considering these two departments, there are a number of normalised assumptions written into policy. Within the education system, it is assumed that schools can and will identify student need, and are sufficiently resourced to do so. The child protection system meanwhile assumes an ease of enrolment. The role of the state in supporting the education of children in care who are mobile is further complicated when trying to determine who should receive funding for implementation. While there are overlaps in each department’s goals, “there are crucial differences between (and within) the political and administrative discourse” (Dale, 1989, p. 67) which result in

steering or rowing to different end points – neither of which are serving to assist children in care who a mobile.

Essentially, in these current neoliberal times, the education and child protection system are each framed by different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions, as highlighted by the summary table below.

Table 3.1. Frameworks of the education and child protection systems

Frame	Education System	Child Protection System
Philosophy	Dominant rationality in the market	Best interests of the child within a family preservation model
Policy	Underpinned by choice and accountability	Underpinned by permanency and safety
Practice	Disjuncture between policy and practice – complexity of teachers work; lack of resourcing	Residential movement is necessary to ensure safety but in a time of shortage of carers
Assumptions	Schools can and will identify student need; Schools are sufficiently resourced to support need and therefore reach performance targets	Schools are sufficiently resourced to educate those that enrol; Education Support Plans provide sufficient educational support

3.6 Conclusion

The current neoliberal paradigm has enabled the state to withdraw from direct responsibility of the education of children in care. Rather than being a funder or provider of social policy, the state becomes a co-ordinator. In this role, targets are set for both the child protection and education systems, while responsibility for reaching these targets rests with local sites. At the local level, the philosophy, policy, practice and assumptions that underpin both the education system and child protection system in neoliberal times creates lacunae that educators and child protection workers must navigate, and has real effects on the students that such policy is intended to support.

In light of the discussion undertaken here, the following chapter examines the state's policy response to the education of children in care. In doing so, it maps the tensions and contradictions that are written in to policy. So, too, it considers the impact of such tensions and contradictions – and teachers' work with children in care who are mobile more specifically. In doing so, the chapter examines the discourses evident and operating in policies, and the way in which the state, teachers and children in care are subsequently positioned.

Chapter 4: Contradictions within neoliberal frames of governance: Filling-in by and with policy

Focussing on the source and nature of control over education and schools entails focussing on the immediate provider of education, the State, and it is in the analysis of the State that we may begin to understand the assumptions, intentions and outcomes of various strategies of educational change. (Dale, 1989, p. 25)

4.1 Overview

The preceding chapter described the process of hollowing-out and filling-in, highlighting lacunae created by neoliberal governance. Such lacunae are created at the intersection of education and child protection policy as each system is underpinned by different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions. This chapter explores the response by government to the education of children in care in current neoliberal times, considering the consequences of these different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions. So, too, the chapter considers the work of teachers in navigating the resulting lacunae.

As highlighted by Dale above, understanding the role of the state is necessary for an understanding of policy, particularly in terms of the way that state formations frame policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Offe, 1985). Central to the policy analysis undertaken in this chapter, then, is an examination of the functions of policy through the role of the state, acknowledging the state as a terrain of policy ‘struggle’ (Jessop, 1990). An examination of the role of the state, its policy drivers and modes of governance can

reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions and perspectives that define institutional practices. Using critical theory as a lens for investigation, several documents from the education and child protection systems within Queensland are examined.

This chapter begins by describing the policy moment that led to the creation of the key documents constituting the data in focus. As outlined in Chapter 2, Table 2.2 (see p. 69), the key documents include governmental plans, for example: the *Government response to recommendations: Educating children and young people in the Care of the State* (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003); joint departmental guidelines, such as *Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004); guidelines for practice, *Child Safety Practice Manual* (Department of Child Safety, 2008c), *Education Support Funding Program: Implementation Guidelines 2011* (Department of Education and Training, 2011a), *Carer Handbook* (Department of Child Safety, 2009a); and performance frameworks, *Child Protection Performance Framework* (Department of Child Safety, 2007b).

As described in Chapter 2, Critical Discourse Analysis is drawn on to explore the ‘linguistic subtleties’ (Liasidou, 2011b) of a set of texts, moving from *description* through *interpretation* to *explanation*, as espoused by Fairclough (1992b). From this perspective, the documents in focus set out the ‘discursive contours’ (Liasidou, 2011b) within which the education and school mobility of children in care is both imagined and enacted. Given that government documents are often considered hybridised texts (Ozga, 2000) and that Critical Discourse Analysis is based on the assumption that all texts are ideological, policy texts are likely to be characterised by competing discourses that both constitute and are constituted by unequal power relations. Thus, the

deconstruction of texts uncovers the role of the state in negotiating different interests, within and across the education and child protection systems. As Ball (1994) notes: “We should not always expect to find policy coherence and should not be surprised to see struggle within the State over the definition and purpose of policy solutions” (p. 108). Throughout the chapter, sections of the documents outlined above are analysed to explore the conceptualisation of ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ as constructed within these texts.

The purpose of examining these documents is four-fold and the structure of the chapter represents these purposes. The first purpose (Section 4.3) is to explore how the state responds to the contradictions created by neoliberal governance, and analysis focuses on the construction of the policy problem and solutions. In this section the positioning of the state, schools and children in care is explored and current versions of inclusion that establish idiosyncratic educational failure are questioned. The second purpose (Section 4.4) is to examine the vehicle for supporting the education of children in care – the Education Support Plan. Analysis focuses on the ways in which the Education Support Plan is positioned as an outcome that the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training are ‘steered’ towards and the number of assumptions written into the process of developing an Education Support Plan. The third purpose (Section 4.5) is to investigate how the school mobility of children in care is conceptualised within documents aimed at a range of stakeholders. Analysis focuses on policy as both discourse and text, considering the various actors that may influence policy, how different needs are considered, how a settlement is reached and the possible effects of the settlement. The fourth and final purpose (Section 4.6) is to demonstrate how discursive structures embedded in the policies position teachers and teachers’ work. Analysis focuses on the discourses inherent in the

documents that shape the roles, identities and practices of teachers that educate children in care who are mobile. Within these documents, the temporary settlements that are reached by the state are explored with a view to consider the policy landscape in which child protection workers and educators work.

Prior to examining the specific documents as noted previously, Section 4.2 traces the policy moment in education and child protection that led to the creation of each document. This policy chronology focuses on the specific context of Queensland as it was within this State that the research was situated. Such an overview is important as a means to contextualise the analysis of documents that follows.

4.2 The policy moment

Drawing on Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) notion that the positionality of research should be considered, this section focuses on the temporal location of the policies under analysis. Positionality is important to understand the 'place' of policy/ies and whether, for example, such policy/ies are indicative of gradual or radical change (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The following, then, explores child protection in Queensland over a ten year period (2001-2011). The selection of this period was based on a significant 'policy moment' in child protection in Queensland – the establishment of the *Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Foster Care*, which led to the formation of the Department of Child Safety – and the time period during which this research was undertaken. In light of Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) notion of positionality, a period prior to the *Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Foster Care* is included within the review to understand the antecedents of the reforms, and the subsequent policies that are in focus. Table 4.1

below provides an overview of each policy moment alongside the government overseer of child protection, the focus of the education of children in care at that time and the documents that were created and are focussed upon in this chapter. This table provides a summary of the following discussion of the Queensland child protection system.

Table 4.1. Policy moments in the Queensland child protection system, 2001-2011

Timeframe	Policy moment		
	2001-2004	2004-2009	2009-present
Approach to child protection	A broad approach	An unambiguous approach	An approach to enable greater service delivery
Government overseer of child safety services	Department of Families	Department of Child Safety	Department of Communities
Focus in education of children in care	Growing concern, development of strategies and responses	Implementation of the <i>Partnership Agreement</i>	Continued implementation of the <i>Partnership Agreement</i>
Documents in focus in this analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Government response to recommendations: Educating children and young people in the Care of the State (2003)</i> • <i>Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State (2004)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Child Protection Performance Framework (2007)</i> • <i>Child Safety Practice Manual (2009)</i> • <i>Carer Handbook (2009)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education Support Funding Program: Implementation Guidelines (2011)*</i>

*Although the 2011 version of this document is examined, earlier versions were produced.

Historically, children have been in varying need of protection and, in recent years, a ‘moral panic’ has emerged (McWilliam & Sachs, 2004; Sachs & Mellor, 2003).

Inquiries such as the *Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (the

‘Forde Inquiry’) (1999) and *Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW* (2008) provide impetus for ‘moral panic’, reviews of legislation and the restructuring of child protection systems. Recent reports underline the continuing enormity of abuse and alert the national and global community to the prevalence of abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, 2009, 2010; International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2006; Pinheiro, 2006; World Health Organisation, 2002).

In Queensland, the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) report, *Protecting Children: An inquiry into abuse of children in foster care* (2004), highlighted systemic failures and led to a reform of the tertiary child protection system. Of most significance was the closure to the Queensland Department of Families (the government overseer of child abuse complaints) and the introduction of a government department solely focussed on the safety of children – the Department of Child Safety (see Table 4.1). The reasoning provided in the CMC report (2004) for such change was that an unambiguous approach directed at meeting the needs of at-risk children was required to enable positive outcomes and restore public confidence. The separation of child/family welfare and child protection activities of the state represents a deliberate move in response to complex problems (Dale, 1989).

Following the release of the Crime and Misconduct Commission report, *Protecting Children: An inquiry into abuse of children in foster care* (2004), there were significant changes in the Queensland child protection system. To draw on the current rhetoric in education, it might be said that a ‘revolution’ occurred. That is, if a standard definition of revolution – “fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualising something: a change of paradigm” (Reid, 2009, p. 1) – is accepted. Yet, the

political discourse did not reflect this. Rather, it seemed that in response to the ‘moral panic’ a ‘something must be done’ attitude was adopted (Sachs & Mellor, 2003).

‘Child panic’ increasingly became a form of social anxiety and surveillance (Sachs & Mellor, 2003). In response to the increasing realisation of a ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992), public policies included aspects of surveillance and control (Sachs & Mellor, 2003). In essence, to quell public fears, it was essential that the government be seen to be ‘doing something’ to address the prevalence of abuse. Within Queensland, there was investment and reform within the child protection system. The Department of Child Safety budget more than tripled (\$182.2 million in 2004-05 to \$592.4 million in 2008-09), services increased, and specialist teams and programs were implemented.

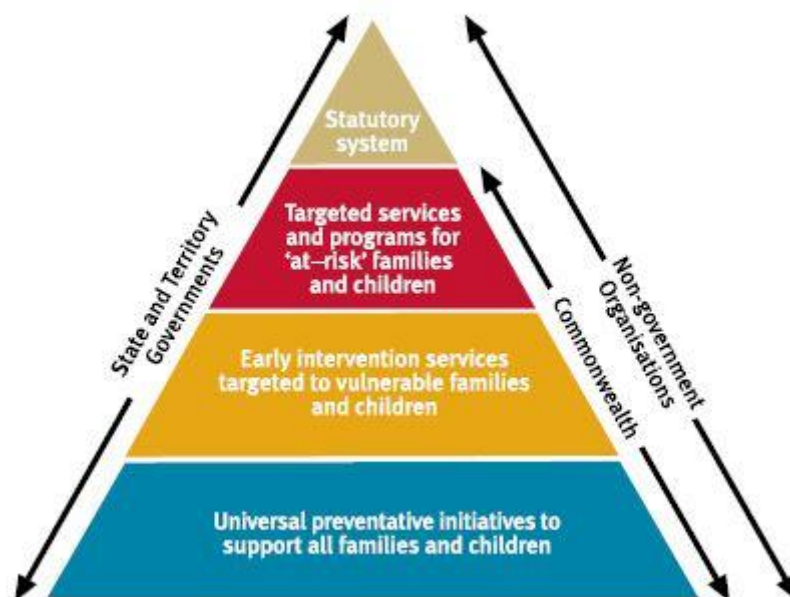
Alongside the increase in services there was also an increase in demand on the services (Department of Child Safety, 2009d). Unlike New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, in Queensland the ‘stock’ and ‘inflow’ of children in the child protection system increased over an eight-year period (2000-01–2007-08) (Tilbury, 2009).

In 2009, following a state election, the Department of Child Safety was abolished. Several government departments merged to form a new Department of Communities (see Table 4.1). According to the Department of Child Safety, the amalgamation of departments enables greater service delivery and meets COAG priorities (Department of Child Safety, 2009d). The formation of the Department of Communities, in 2009, is seen to represent an attempt to improve the effectiveness, and especially the coordination, of Federal responses to child safety ‘threats’ (Hague & Harrop, 2010). This cooperative federalism is based on the premise of cooperation between levels of government and a shared commitment to a unified society (Hague & Harrop, 2010). As former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (2005) stated, “If the government of Australia is to

properly engage in the large-scale, inter-governmental and inter-generational challenges which the nation now faces, ambition is what is required” (p. 13).

The Australian Government, determined to take a national leadership role in child protection, developed a National Child Protection Framework, *Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009). The framework proposes to address the number of children entering the care system and the over-representation of Indigenous children. This is to be achieved through a paradigm shift, moving from ‘protecting children’ to promoting safety and wellbeing through a public health model of service provision (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. A system for protecting children



Source: *Protecting children is everyone's business: National Framework for protecting Australia's children 2009-2020*, by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009. Canberra, Australia: Author. p. 8.

Underpinned by the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009) is closely aligned to the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda (Helyar et al., 2009). The framework is informed by a holistic approach to child protection and focussed on prevention and early intervention strategies, supports and services, with a view to prevent the involvement of families in the statutory system. Many of the strategies and indicators within *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009) fall under Commonwealth initiatives included in the 'education revolution'. Perhaps, since the abolishment of the Department of Child Safety, there is a revolution occurring in the child protection system. Indeed, it is noted that many English-speaking countries face similar issues within child protection systems, despite differences in structure and legislation (Helyar et al., 2009). *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009) represents, Helyar et al. (2009) suggest, a unique approach within western child protection systems.

Concurrent to concerns of prevalent abuse and systemic failures, there was an increasing focus on the educational outcomes of children in care in Queensland. In 2001, the CREATE Foundation released a report on the education of children in care, and has continued to release annual reports. Significantly, the 2001 CREATE Foundation report found that Queensland was the only state in Australia collating educational data on children in care (Kids in Care Education Committee Working Group, 2003). Not only does this point to an absence of data nationally, but also an absence of policy to call forth the data required.

In response to the 2001 CREATE Foundation report, the then Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, announced the creation of a working group to examine the education of children in care – the *Kids in Care Education Committee Working Group*. The report prepared by the *Kids in Care Education Committee Working Group* represented the first focused examination of the education of children in care in Queensland by government. The *Kids in Care Education Committee Working Group* report, *Educating children and young people in the Care of the State* (2003), made seven recommendations to which the government responded – *Government response to recommendations: Educating children and young people in the Care of the State* (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003) (here on referred to as the *Government Response to Recommendations*) – intending to implement each of the seven recommendations. The recommendations and subsequent responses were broadly focussed on collaboration, accountability and the definition of roles – each deemed necessary in the handling of wicked problems (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). Significantly, one recommendation was for the development of a joint Partnership Agreement between Education Queensland and the Department of Families. In January 2004, the *Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004) (here on referred to as the *Partnership Agreement*) was released, and has since been used by the Department of Families and its successors – Department of Child Safety and Department of Communities.

Raising public awareness of the ‘failings’ of the education and child protection systems has opened up a space in which the government can move into modes of ‘risk management’ and call for accountability in addressing problems. As Sachs and Mellor (2003) outline:

By its very nature risk is about power and control – who has the power to make decisions about what constitutes risk and what kind of strategies or regulatory frameworks are to be put in place to ensure compliance. The strong and sustained push for accountability required by governments, and various risk management and quality assurance methods developed within various education constituencies to ensure that this is done, has to be seen in this light. In practice, it ensures the external control of teachers’ work in schools and classrooms. (p. 2)

Within Queensland, the *Partnership Agreement* represents the key joint governmental response to the education of children in care. With regard to education, the *Partnership Agreement* is also the ‘working document’ for teachers and other staff who work with children in care. However, the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) suggest that “the agreement has not been nurtured over time, resulting in a major disconnect between policy and practice” (p. 6). The document analysis undertaken in this chapter, in part, explores the possibility of the suggested disjuncture between policy and practice.

4.3 Filling-in the gaps

For some time now, and as discussed in Chapter 3, the state has – rhetorically and practically – decommodified social support provided under the *Keynesian Welfare State* (Pierson, 2006; Robertson & Dale, 2002). The shifting governance arrangement associated with the neoliberal project creates contradictions for the role of the state (Robertson & Dale, 2002). The purpose of this section is to address the lacunae

surrounding the contradictions in neoliberal governance in education through a closer examination of the consequences and contradictions for the state in the education of children in care who are mobile.

As discussed earlier, the shift from government to governance has led to what some have termed, the hollowing-out of the state (Cope et al., 1997; Hudson, 2007; A. Taylor, 2000). Within the realm of education, other actors – ‘the market’ and ‘the community’ – are encouraged to take responsibility for solving societal problems (Hudson, 2007; Robertson & Dale, 2002). However, ‘local states of emergency’ (Robertson & Dale, 2002) arise when the market and the community fail, or are viewed to have failed. The failure of the market and society is particularly highlighted in contexts of disadvantage, where the ‘trickle-down’ of wealth generated through market-based modes of operation fails to materialise and resources available for community governance are ‘thinned’ (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage, then, are considered as fiscal and social risks to the state and its investment in education and the social infrastructure (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Conceptualised in this way, the ‘moral panic’ surrounding child protection and the education of children in care constitutes children in care as fiscal and social risks to the state. The discursive construction of children in care as ‘risks’ is apparent in the *Partnership Agreement*:

Nothing is more important in Queensland than the future of our children and young people. Children and young people in the care of the state are among the **most vulnerable** people in our community, and the state has a special responsibility and commitment to them. (emphasis added, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

Vulnerable to what or to whom is unclear, however, there is a “special responsibility” to ensure a positive future – that is, so that children in care do not become burdens on the state (as will be discussed). These ‘risks’ are then managed through service provision, as outlined in the *Partnership Agreement*: “ensuring that every possible effort is made to improve access to education and appropriate services for this group of children and young people” (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 5).

Social inclusion, in these terms, is defined in relation to an equality of opportunity to access education – seen as the ‘ladder of opportunity’ (MacIntyre, 1985, cited in S. Taylor et al., 1997, p. 130). By providing *access* to education, responsibility for achievement (or failure) in the market then rests with the individual or agency, rather than the state. In this instance, social justice has been widened to denote access to enter into the competition (Mulderrig, 2003) and ignores market conditions. Thus, whilst the state may have created the opportunity for children in care to enter into the market of education, Ainley (1999, cited in Mulderrig, 2003) suggests that what has actually been created is ‘opportunities to fail’. Furthering this argument, it is suggested that what needs to occur is *equality of condition* (Lynch, 1995; Lynch & Baker, 2005).

The rhetoric of social inclusion is a relatively new concept in Australia and is not untroubled or uncontested (de Haan, 1998). ‘Social inclusion’, as the lynchpin for social policy initiatives, does not automatically transform the experiences of the most disadvantaged in the community. As such, in discussing the rhetoric of social inclusion, there is a need to question its translation into practice.

In order to ensure that the state’s investment in education (fiscal risk) is protected, the state must intervene without appearing to do so – as intervening would signal a

failure of the neoliberal ideology to which the state has been so committed (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Additionally, the state must ensure the delivery of education as a citizen's right – thus securing the legitimisation function. Following the filling-in argument described in Chapter 3, the state can retain command through strengthening its capacity inwards. This is largely achieved by output and control oriented means (Cope et al., 1997; Rönnerberg, 2008, 2010; A. Taylor, 2000).

The extent of the problem of failure and the need for the state to intervene can be seen in the *Partnership Agreement*. The importance of education for the future of the individual and society is referenced several times throughout the *Partnership Agreement* and in the *Government Response to Recommendations*, as outlined below:

The Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State strengthens our commitment to provide every possible opportunity to children and young people in care to realise their potential. We know the importance of education to the development and wellbeing of children and young people: it is a gateway to their future success as individuals and as family and community members. (emphasis in original, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

Achieving improved educational and social outcomes is critical to redressing disadvantage and enabling these children and young people to confidently participate in the social, cultural and economic life of the community. (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003, p. 1)

School can provide a stable and safe environment that can positively contribute to their development and wellbeing. Education also provides an important pathway to employment and meaningful participation in community life. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 5)

Thus, it can be seen that there is a perceived need for the state to intervene – both for the good of the individual and for society. It is notable that within the *Partnership Agreement* various techniques are used to distance the state from the cause of the ‘problem’. This distancing is achieved through three techniques – through discursively masking the involvement of the state, ‘coding blame’ and discursively constructing social issues as personal pathology – each of which will be discussed in turn. Each technique further highlights the contradictions created by neoliberal governance.

Firstly, to explore how the state is discursively distanced from the ‘problem’, sections from the *Partnership Agreement* and the *Government Response to Recommendations* are examined, as outlined below:

Children and young people in the care of the state are among the most vulnerable people in our community, and the state has a special responsibility and commitment to them. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

Our departments acknowledge their responsibilities to these children and young people, and are committed to working together to support them. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

The Government acknowledges its special responsibility to look after the children and young people entrusted to the care of the state. (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003, p. 1)

In these examples, the state is discursively distanced from the ‘problem’ and of responsibility. Suggesting that children and young people are “entrusted” to the state discursively masks the coercive dimension through which children enter care – that is, children in care and entrusted to the state by the state. Thus, by acknowledging the “special responsibility” to those “entrusted” to the state, it would appear that the state is actively engaged to ensure the wellbeing of children in care, despite the notion that those “most vulnerable” are unable to take up the opportunities espoused through market-modes of operation. As Smyth (2010) states:

A problem with this ‘ladder of opportunity’ view of social inclusion, framed as a matter of inclusive ‘opportunity to achieve in the labour market’ (Alexiadou, 2005, p. 105), is that it fails to acknowledge the difficulty some groups have in getting even a toehold in the labour market, the size of the steps, the length of the ladder or the precariousness of staying on the ladder in wobbly times. (p. 120)

As discussed in Chapter 3, the ascendancy of neoliberal policy imperatives reshapes articulations of equity. Contradictory discourses of social inclusion and individual liberty are brought together in a “paradoxical discursive assemblage” (Liasidou, 2011b). In this respect, “an inclusive society, therefore, is not a society of equals in a principled way, but a society in which everyone has the qualities to meet their needs in an entrepreneurial way” (Masschelein and Simons, 2005, cited in

Liasidou, 2011a, p. 11). It is empirically documented that the educational needs of children in care are linked to possible exposure to multiple risk factors associated with disadvantage (Centre for Community Child Health, 2009; Dyson, 2008), and that these risk factors contribute to social exclusion (Bromfield et al., 2010). Thus, as Liasidou (2011a) suggests, there is a need to explore the extent to which societal structures and institutions create/perpetuate inequality for children in care. So, too, the role of schools in addressing social inequality should be “urgently acclaimed and materialised through relevant education policy and practice” (Liasidou, 2011a, p. 13).

Within the *Partnership Agreement*, the construction of the problem is located away from the state, as schools are positioned as the actors that fail to support children in care. This positioning is evidenced in the following: “However, schools can face challenges in meeting the particular needs of many children and young people in care” (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 5). This coding of blame is seen to be a result of schools failing to meet the needs of children in care, and suggests that the responsibility of meeting student needs rests with schools. Smyth (2010) highlights a similar technique employed by the Federal government through media outlets in Australia. Through ‘dog whistling’ techniques and highly polemical news headlines, Smyth (2010) suggests that there is an intent to “suture into the public imagination precisely where the problems of disadvantage *really* reside: which is to say, in schools and their staff, not in social systems” (emphasis in original, p. 116). Such an approach glosses over the complexity of the lived reality and excludes from the imaginative landscape the possibility that problems may arise from the structure of society – rather than schools failing to meet the needs of students (Robertson & Dale, 2002; J. Smyth, 2010).

Further to this, the *Partnership Agreement* implicitly suggests that the challenges schools face can be inherent in the child or young person – rather than as a result of social structures. Directly after stating that schools face challenges in meeting student needs, the *Partnership Agreement* goes on:

A number of significant groups may require additional educational support designed specifically for their needs – these include children and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those with a disability, those in rural and remote locations, and those who are in contact with the youth justice system. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 5)

This text discursively places “those” students as challenges for/to the education system. In other words, “social issues are constructed as a personal pathology or dysfunction, when in reality their ‘causation’ lies deep in the way social structures play out oppressively for some groups” (J. Smyth, 2010, p. 114). With regard to children in care, there is no space in the new political paradigm for the consideration of socio-economic disadvantage or to problematise students’ educational identities as culturally and socially mediated constructs (Liasidou, 2011a).

These discursive constructions have an important role to play when considering the conceptualisation of the ‘problem’ and possible ‘solutions’ at work in neoliberal education policy (Bacchi, 2000). The net result of the coding of blame described above is that schools require external advice and guidance to achieve the aim of supporting the education of children in care. The solution, as represented in the documents under study, is illustrated in the following sections from the *Partnership Agreement*.

Firstly, there is a focus on collaboration between departments:

We will jointly plan for their success through a proactive early intervention approach – an approach that is centred on children and young people that actively engages them in the planning process. Our departments will share information in ways that respect confidentiality and enable appropriate support to be provided. The actions undertaken will be responsive to the individual needs of each child and young person in care. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

A fundamental aspect of the Partnership Agreement is the acknowledgement that the needs of children and young people in care are best met through an integrated approach across government, also involving our non-government partners. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 1)

Coupled with collaboration is a focus on shared responsibility:

This Partnership Agreement represents a commitment by the Departments of Education and Families to work together to improve the life chances of children and young people in care. These departments acknowledge their shared responsibility in ensuring that every possible effort is made to improve access to education and appropriate services for this group of children and young people. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 5)

Finally, alongside collaboration and shared responsibility is the clarification of the role/s of each department:

The Partnership Agreement aims to foster increased inter-agency cooperation and collaboration by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each department. It is designed to promote good practice and assist staff of each department, particularly those working directly at the local level with children and young people in care, such as teachers and family services officers. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 6)

The broad roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education and Families and other government departments are described in Agreed Partnership Responsibilities (page 17), and Supporting Partners' Responsibilities (pages 19-20). (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 7)

There are distinctive neoliberal features within the state's construction of the solution – roles, responsibilities, collaboration (with neoliberal foundations). Through emphasis on roles, responsibilities and collaboration, the state's power is present, however, responsibility is located with the “staff of each department, particularly those working directly at the local level”. The purpose of the collaborative processes promoted above is explained in the *Partnership Agreement*:

Goal: To increase the educational participation, retention and attainment of children and young people in care through collaboration between the Departments of Education and Families. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 8)

To implement the Partnership Agreement, the Departments of Education and Families will share information and engage in a collaborative planning process to produce Education Support Plans for children and young people in care. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 7)

Participation, retention and attainment are easily quantifiable measures of performance and can be viewed as output control. Responsibility for ensuring children in care participate in, and achieve at, school is left for those “working directly at the local level”. This devolution in decision making and responsibility for enactment at the local level is a key aspect of the neoliberal policy orthodoxy (P. Singh & Taylor, 2007), and points to a ‘steering at a distance’ (Kickert, 1995) mode of governance. In the same way, the Education Support Plan, as the key initiative of the *Partnership Agreement*, is also a quantifiable measure of performance, focussed on managing the individual. Conceptualised by a market-individualistic approach to policy, the Education Support Plan encourages the management of ‘individual at-riskness’ (P. Singh & Taylor, 2004).

Taken together, the focus on roles and responsibilities to reach centrally-determined output measures contributes to the process of filling-in. Notably, the roles and responsibilities outlined in the *Partnership Agreement* play an important part when it comes to accountability – “the possibility to set up such arrangements holding different parties to account” (Rönnerberg, 2010, p. 6). Rönnerberg (2010) outlines that the state plays an important role “in both setting up and providing information to support and uphold these accountability systems by exercising different acts of inspection, evaluation and checking – and other means related to output control” (p. 6). In this way, as the first of its kind for Queensland, the *Partnership Agreement* represents the

process of filling-in by/with policy. In view of this, the key initiative of the *Partnership Agreement* – the Education Support Plan – is examined in the following section.

4.4 The Education Support Plan

The main vehicle for responding to and supporting the educational needs of children in care in Queensland is the Education Support Plan (ESP). All children in care are required to have an Education Support Plan and, in cases where the child has additional plans (e.g. Individual Education Plans, Individual Behaviour Management Plan, Senior Education and Training Plan, etc), the ESP should extend and compliment such plans (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004). This section explores how the ESP is positioned as a steering mechanism, as opposed to an ‘intelligent accountability’ (Lingard, 2009b), and examines the number of assumptions written in to the *Partnership Agreement* regarding the ESP process.

Within the *Partnership Agreement* it is proposed that the ‘problem’ of educating children in care is solvable through the current conceptualisation of the ‘problem/solution’ within policy. That is, children in care will attend and participate in school, supported by an Education Support Plan – a rational technical approach to policy that creates quantifiable measures of performance. For the state, the rationale for this approach is clear: it provides clarity of roles, focuses on political goals and introduces a “mechanism for gauging the success . . . and ultimately political achievements” (Devaney & Spratt, 2009, p. 637). Indeed, the *Child Protection Queensland Performance Reports* from 2004-2009 report on the number and percentage of students in care with an ESP and their performance on NAPLaN (another outcome measure that schools are steered toward that is not explored within this thesis cf.

Lingard, 2009b). This ‘steering at a distance’ through data leads to the notion that ‘what is counted is what ultimately counts’ (Lingard, 2009b, 2010b) and shapes how success and ‘good performance’ in educating children in care is conceptualised. The *Child Protection Performance Framework* (Department of Child Safety, 2007b) highlights this point:

Table 4.2. Conceptualising ‘good performance’

Aims	Key Performance Indicators	Evidence
Partnerships Children who are in need of protection receive high quality services facilitated through partnerships with the non-government sector and other government agencies	5.2 Responsiveness and capacity of services for children and young people provided in partnership with other government agencies	5.2.2 Proportion of children subject to Child Protection Orders granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive who have a current Education Support Plan

Source: Adapted from *Child Protection Performance Framework*, by the Department of Child Safety, 2007b, from <http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/performance/child-protection/framework.html>.

In this instance, ‘good performance’ and responsible and capable services are narrowly defined as ensuring children in care have an ESP. Whilst ESPs are seen as potentially an effective supporting device (Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011), the focus of measuring what is easy to measure (Lingard, 2009b) risks locating ‘good performance’ in the high, hard ground of technical practice. As Tilbury (2004) states, “ensuring high-quality processes is important, but good processes do not necessarily lead to good outcomes” (p. 232). To ensure that ESPs do in fact lead to positive outcomes for children in care there is a need to focus on the outcomes and accountability frameworks in a broader sense than espoused by neoliberalism. That is, measuring what is significant (Lingard, 2009b) – for example, the proportion of students who have or are reaching ESP goals and the effectiveness of ESPs in meeting the needs, and supporting the education, of children in care – or what Lingard (2009b) terms ‘intelligent accountabilities’. A focus

on measuring what is significant is likely to shift practice to the “swampy lowland where the situations are confusing ‘messes’ incapable of technical solution” (Schon, 1983, p. 42) – and have real results for children.

4.4.1 Talking back to policy

The above has outlined that there has been a shift in focus of policy from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes (Lingard, 2009b; Tilbury, 2005). Whilst the ESP can be considered an output measure, the *Partnership Agreement* also highlights the importance of the process of developing the ESP:

To implement the Partnership Agreement, the Departments of Education and Families will share information and engage in a collaborative planning process to produce Education Support Plans for children and young people in care. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 7)

This “collaborative planning process” is largely led by the Principal or his/her nominee, as outlined below in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3. The process of developing an Education Support Plan

Planning for success	Reaching potential
<p>Within one month of enrolment or of being advised that a child or young person is in care, the school principal will finalise an Education Support Plan (ESP) to help the child or young person reach their full potential.</p>	<p>Throughout their enrolment the school principal or nominee will monitor the child's or young person's progress toward the goals and targets specified in the ESP, and at regular intervals will instigate informal and formal review processes.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School principal or nominee to lead the development of the ESP and ensure plans are initiated on enrolment or on being advised that a child or young person is in care and finalised within one month. 2. School principal or nominee to collaborate with the Department of Families Area Office and others relevant to the individual case to gather data and information to inform the development of an ESP. 3. School principal or nominee to actively engage the child or young person in the ESP process and to ensure that their views and ideas are considered and integrated into the plan. 4. School principal or nominee to convene an ESP meeting to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the educational goals for the child or young person; • strategies for achieving these goals taking into account required and available resources; • who will be responsible for implementing the strategies or providing identified resources or support services; • the timelines for implementing the plan and monitoring strategies; and • when a formal review of the plan will occur. 5. School principal or nominee to ensure that the ESP extends and complements, rather than duplicates, any other education-related plans the child or young person may have, such as Individual Education Plan, Individual Behaviour Management Plan, Support Plan or Senior Education and Training Plan. 6. School principal, Department of Families Area Office, child or young person, carer, parent to sign finalised ESP. Copies of the ESP to be held by each contributing partner. 7. School principal or nominee to implement, monitor and organise periodic reviews of the ESP. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School principal or nominee to monitor the progress of the child or young person in care by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making informal contact at least once a fortnight with the child or young person and discussing their progress toward goals; • meeting regularly with teacher/s and key partners contributing to the ESP to discuss progress and any emerging issues; • being alert to circumstances that may lead to a review of the plan. 2. School principal or nominee to organise a formal review at least once a year or in response to any significant change in the child's or young person's circumstances. 3. School principal or nominee to organise a formal review of the ESP in response to any significant change in the child's or young person's circumstances including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement goals; • additional support required to achieve goals; • unexplained absences from school; • change in school enrolment; • change in care circumstances; • transition to senior schooling; • increased risk of suspension or exclusion. 4. Department of Families Area Office and school principal to notify each other and other agencies as needed, of changes in a child's or young person's care status or change in school enrolment as soon as practical.

Source: *Partnership agreement: Educating children and young people in the care of the state*, by Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, Brisbane, Australia: Author. p. 9.

There are – as detailed in Table 4.3 – a number of tasks written into the *Partnership Agreement* regarding what is required of the Principal or his/her nominee in the ESP process. Namely, determine who is relevant to the process, contact and engage those partners – including the child to whom the plan pertains, gather relevant data, convene an ESP meeting – ensuring relevant partners can and do attend, ensure alignment with any other plans the child may have and implement, monitor and organise periodic review of the ESP (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004; Department of Education and Training, 2011a). The monitoring of the ESP adds another list of tasks required by the Principal or his/her nominee – making informal contact with the child once a fortnight, meeting regularly with teachers and other key partners, being alert to circumstances affecting the ESP and ensuring a formal review at least once per year. As can be seen, there is a complexity of tasks hidden in the enactment of policy (Ball, 1997). As the ‘working document’ for Principals or their nominee, the *Partnership Agreement* is largely a readerly text (Bowe et al., 1992) – that is, there is little room for the reader to take ownership as the tasks outlined are generally non-negotiable.

The conceptualisation of creating an ESP within the *Partnership Agreement* fails to consider the set of demands placed on a school, especially in contexts of disadvantage, as it assumes that schools have the resources required to implement such a process. Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) suggest that schools are, in fact, not adequately resourced to carry out this labour intensive work. Indeed, research reports and evaluations within Queensland suggest that the ESP process, as conceptualised in the *Partnership Agreement* (2004), does not occur in practice (Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2009; Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011).

As has been discussed, responsibility for implementing ESPs is executed at the local level, allowing flexibility in responding to differentiated needs (Ball, 1997; Hudson, 2007). However, this market conception of devolution serves to position Principals as “individually responsible” (S. Taylor et al., 1997, p. 89) for the success of the ESP process and, subsequently, the educational attainment of children in care. Thus, the state maintains control through output measurements yet devolves responsibility to schools and Principals who are “managing more with less” (S. Taylor et al., 1997, p. 89).

The ESP process places an additional set of demands on schools working in contexts of high school mobility. Principals or their nominee are expected to engage in the ESP process as part of their core duties – that is, in the context of school mobility there is no funding to support the ESP process. The transactional pressure school mobility creates for schools is intensified when enrolling children in care as it is expected that the ESP process is undertaken for all new enrolments of children in care (Department of Child Safety, 2008c; Department of Communities, 2011b). Once an ESP is completed, schools are able to apply for funding to support the goals of the ESP through the Education Support Funding Program (ESFP). Not all students require funding from the ESFP, thus funding is allocated on a needs basis (Department of Education and Training, 2011a). Whilst such a model represents equitable allocation of funds (though this is questioned by some education stakeholders) (see Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2009), again several assumptions are written into the ESFP. That is, the ESFP assumes that schools are adequately resourced with staff that have the time and ability to complete funding applications, administer the funds and ensure that the outcomes of the ESP are reached. Several reports highlight concerns with the current model of funding and suggest that, particularly in areas of

disadvantage, schools are not adequately resourced to assist all students in reaching nationally acceptable educational standards (Angus et al., 2007; Queensland Association of State School Principals, 2011). Additionally, whilst there is support for the program from those stakeholders involved, there are also concerns regarding its implementation and equity (Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2009; Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011). The *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) summarises the situation as follows:

Overall, the funding allocation for ESPs falls well short of the demand and has not kept pace with need. Hours and hours of work may be required to develop the individualised plans which often result in a very small budget to support the plan (less than \$1000), or even non-approval of funds. In some cases, an assessment of the young person's needs is done, but without sufficient funding or resources to provide the necessary support, no further action is taken. (p. 11)

It can be seen that there are a number of systemic issues surrounding the development of ESPs and the delivery of the EFSP. As a centrally mandated social justice measure, the ESP has potential to be an effective support for children in care (Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011), however, as schools are steered to reach output measures, there is a lack of space for focus on inputs and processes.

Part of intelligent accountabilities entails “the system being held accountable to schools for making the desired outcomes possible” (Lingard, 2009b, p. 17). In the case

of the ESP, this would mean that schools are adequately resourced to support the process in creating an ESP and for reaching the determined goals.

The *Partnership Agreement* seeks to address the education of children in care through a rational technical approach which risks overlooking the “subtleties and complexities of the interplay between the many factors” (Devaney & Spratt, 2009, p. 639) that place children in care at risk of not attaining educational achievement akin to their peers. Thus, what is left unproblematised are the wider social structures that place children at risk. School mobility is a factor that can compound other risk factors which, in turn, can impact upon learning outcomes.

4.5 School mobility: Differential articulation

To explore school mobility in the context of the marketisation of education, there is a need to understand the ways in which marketisation articulates with a whole range of local associated factors. Chapter 3 discussed the contradictions of neoliberal governance, with a particular focus on the market-based modes of operation in the schooling sector. The following, then, considers the ‘policy dilemmas’ (S. Taylor et al., 1997) and practical implications that accompanies support for the neoliberal agenda with regard to the school mobility of children in care.

Given that a number of stakeholders – carers, parents, child protection workers, school staff, children – are involved in the education of children in care, it is assumed that any policy relating to education, and subsequently school mobility, is informed by different values and struggled over by competing interests. To understand power issues involved in the policy process, it is necessary to recognise the importance of the state (S. Taylor et al., 1997). Therefore, a number of texts are explored in this section, with

an understanding that each is informed by broader political processes. As Bowe et al. (1992) state:

Texts can often be contradictory . . . they use key terms differently . . . texts have to be read in relation to the time and the particular site of their production. They also have to be read with and against one another – intertextuality is important. Second, the texts themselves are the outcome of struggle and compromise. The control of the representation of policy is problematic. (p. 21)

4.5.1 Conceptualisation for some key stakeholders

Following on from the claims of Bowe et al. (1992), the first text examined here is the *Government Response to Recommendations: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State* (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003). As noted previously, this text set the foundations for the *Partnership Agreement*. Within the first of these documents, two references to school mobility are made:

It is intended that the agreement and protocols will support consistency of school placement and engagement in learning at an appropriate developmental level and age. (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003, p. 4)

The Government recognises the importance of keeping children or young people in care enrolled in their current school and connected with their school and community and the possible negative consequences of school

disciplinary absences on children or young people in care and their carers.

(Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003, p. 6)

The first reference represents an ‘intended action’ for the *Partnership Agreement* whilst the second, although related to schools expulsion, is presented as the Government’s position. Each draws on discourses that school stability is desirable and sought after. The subsequent *Partnership Agreement*, intended to “support consistency of school placement” also has several references to school mobility. As can be seen below, the principles of the *Partnership Agreement* suggest school stability is desirable: “The Partnership Agreement is founded on the principles of . . . maintaining stability and consistency of educational programs for children and young people in care” (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 6).

Within the *Partnership Agreement*, “stability and consistency of educational programs” could be seen to refer to a number of educational aspects – the ESP, programs within schools or programs outside of school. This ambiguity implicitly closes down the notion of undesirable school mobility and also opens up the possibility of accepted school mobility. The actual characteristics of policy, then, are very likely to be considerably influenced at the site of delivery (M. Hill, 2009). Yet, the *Partnership Agreement* later goes on to suggest that school mobility is both expected and accepted. Referring to the Education Support Plan, it is outlined in the *Partnership Agreement* that:

Changes in circumstances that may trigger a review

Change in school enrolment

- The transient nature of schooling for many children and young people in care means that a smooth transition into a new school is critical for

engaging with their school community. If children and young people re-enrol in school after being absent for a significant time, special consideration needs to be given to their placement in an appropriate year level and educational program. (emphasis in original, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 13)

The value in viewing policy as a process is evident in the above. Following the suggestion from Bowe et al. (1992), that texts should be read in relation to the time and site of production, the *Government Response to Recommendations: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State* (Department of Families and Education Queensland, 2003) can be seen to represent the intended. The *Partnership Agreement*, however, acknowledges what is intended – “maintaining stability” – but also concedes that policies “are always incomplete insofar as they relate to or map on to the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice” (Ball, 1994, p. 10) – that is, “the transient nature of schooling for many children and young people in care”.

These texts (documents) are not neutral. Rather, they prefigure and shape the ways that practice is thought about, enabled and constrained. Consequently, these texts constitute part of the metapractices that shape the sayings, doings and relatings that occur in practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Conceptualised in this way, the differential articulation could lead to the school mobility of a child in care being accepted unproblematically.

There are many stakeholders potentially involved in the school mobility of children in care, beyond school and child protection staff – namely carers. The texts examined above are largely aimed at Government departments and the staff within. The following then, examines texts aimed at carers. How school mobility is

conceptualised or presented to carers is important as – although the Department of Child Safety can retain the right to enrol children in care in a new school (Department of Child Safety, 2009a) – according the *Carer Handbook*, carers “are in the best position to provide advice on the education needs and encourage participation” (Department of Child Safety, 2009a, “Education” section, p. 4).

The *Carer Handbook* discusses school mobility in terms of enrolments and with regard to the carer allowance, as outlined below:

Enrolments

Wherever possible, we try to keep children at the schools they go to before they enter into care. That way, something is familiar – they have friends and teachers who know them. But if you live too far away from the school, that will not be practical. If a change in school is required, we recommend enrolling the child in your care at the same school as your own children.

This minimises a sense of being different. (emphasis in original, Department of Child Safety, 2009a, “Education” section, p. 2)

The child in our care went to a private school before entering out-of-home care. Our children go to the local high school. What should we do?

Continuity is important and attending the same school is something we try to support. If the Education Support Plan recommends this, the department will pay the fees, as an extra cost. (emphasis in original, Department of Child Safety, 2009a. “Education” section, p. 3)

What about costs that can not be met through the fortnightly caring allowance?

There are some costs that can not be met through the fortnightly caring allowance and Commonwealth and State Government benefits. In these situations the department may meet these costs through Child Related Costs (CRC). CRC may cover costs such as: clothing, in situations where you face extra clothing costs (for example, uniform costs when a child changes schools more than once in a year). (emphasis in original, Department of Child Safety, 2009a, “Money matters” section, p. 3)

Again, school mobility is differently articulated as both accepted and undesirable. Underlying this differential articulation may be the need to support carers in performing their roles amidst increasing numbers of children remaining in care (Gilbertson & Barber, 2003; McHugh et al., 2004; L. Thomson, McArthur, Layton-Thompson, & Evans, 2007). As noted in the *Carer Handbook*, sometimes maintaining school stability “will not be practical”.

In this way, the differential articulation of school mobility represents both the struggle over policy and the tensions between policy and local enactment. The emphasis on placement stability and permanency planning has meant that the number of children remaining in care continues to grow, thus limiting the capacity of existing carers to take on new children (Bromfield, Higgins, Osborn, Panozza, & Richardson, 2005). As fundamental to the operation of the child protection system, significant ‘voice’ is given to child protection workers and carers, with little space for schools, teachers or children in care. To acknowledge each stakeholder’s interests/priorities a settlement is reached where the school mobility of children in care is deemed

undesirable but generally accepted. The following section explores this settlement, both at the global and local level.

4.5.3 School mobility: A policy dilemma

In thinking about policy at the local level, Apple (2010) contends that there is a need to simultaneously think about the global. Chapter 3 highlighted that, in neoliberal times, the education and child protection systems are each framed by different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions. The above has highlighted that whilst each system perceives school mobility as undesirable, there is an acceptance of school mobility. This disjuncture within policy texts represents “the outcomes of struggle and compromise” (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 21) as the state seeks to balance irresolvable tensions (Dale, 1989; Offe, 1984).

The state balances these tensions through ‘settlements’ (Dale, 1989; Offe, 1984) and, currently, the post-Keynesian settlement has given precedence to the market and, with that, support for the ideology of ‘choice’ (S. Taylor et al., 1997). As has been discussed, the policy dilemma for the state is how to maintain a ‘hands off’ position espoused by neoliberal governance structures and practices, whilst ensuring the investment in education is protected and citizen’s rights are upheld (Robertson & Dale, 2002). The practical implication of this policy dilemma is that choice becomes the vehicle through which the school mobility of children in care is enabled. This ‘local state of emergency’ (Robertson & Dale, 2002) created by the contradictions in neoliberal governance requires settlements to be made at the policy level – in this instance, settlements in a narrowed conception.

To understand the differential articulation of school mobility, as highlighted in the previous sections, a narrower conception of settlement, as suggested by Kenway (1990), is useful. Policy, Kenway (1990) states, “represents the temporary settlements between diverse, competing and unequal forces within civil society, within the state itself and between associated discursive regimes” (p. 59). In this way, Kenway (1990) acknowledges the importance of the state in theorising policy, but also that policy brings together different interests. The differential articulation of school mobility is representative of the struggle to reach settlements. The documents analysed here acknowledge the difficulties in working within a system in ‘crisis’ (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009) and, given its importance, child safety is prioritised over education. Significant ‘voice’ is then given to child protection workers and carers.

What is achieved in this positioning – i.e. of child protection workers, carers and teachers – is a redistribution of voices (Ball, 1993a). An important aspect of policy analysis is the examination of who is enabled or entitled to speak (Ball, 1993a). Within the documents examined above, carers and child protection workers are both given voice regarding the school mobility, enabling the movement of children in care. In doing so, school mobility is glossed over – or normalised – and the voices of schools, teachers and children in care appears to be missing from the current settlement.

Whilst it has been argued above that the issue of school mobility is ‘glossed over’ within the documents examined, the Department of Child Safety has recently begun to focus on this issue. The *Child Protection Performance Framework* (Department of Child Safety, 2007b), for example, has a focus on the school mobility of children in care, as shown below:

Table 4.4. A framework for counting school mobility

Aims	Key Performance Indicators	Evidence
High Quality Services High quality services that are open and accountable are delivered to children and young people and are meaningful to their protection and wellbeing	4.7 Children and young people placed within their local community	4.7.1 Proportion of children and young people of school age placed away from home who continue to attend their same school

Source: Adapted from *Child Protection Performance Framework*, by the Department of Child Safety, 2007b, from <http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/performance/child-protection/framework.html>.

At the time of writing this thesis, there was no publicly available data on this performance measure. It therefore remains unseen as to whether the measure is used as a count or to inform and improve practice. Notably, the Department of Child Safety does have a focus on placement stability, that is, reporting on the number of placements for those children who have been in continuous care for a period of time. Department of Child Safety performance reports show that a higher number of placements are experienced by those children who are in care for longer periods of time (Department of Child Safety, 2005, 2007c, 2009c; Department of Communities, 2011e). Thus, as outlined in Chapter 1, the link between school mobility and placement movements needs to be further explored not only for those children who remain in care, but also for children on entry to care, upon exiting care and for those who re-enter care. Knowing the extent and nature of the school mobility of children in care is integral to developing a policy response.

4.6 Managing teachers' work

As has been discussed, the *Partnership Agreement* is the 'working document' for Department of Education and Department of Child Safety workers. In this way, the *Partnership Agreement* shapes how teachers' work with children in care is

conceptualised and practised. Here, drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis techniques, the representation of teachers in this document is analysed to understand, and consider the implications of, teacher roles and identities as constructed within the text.

Discourses in larger policy texts can work to control teachers and influence the identities (and consequently practices) that teachers are enabled to, or constrained from, taking up. Understanding policy as discourse focuses attention on the constraints of what can and cannot be said and thought (Ball, 1993b; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Ozga, 2000).

The *Partnership Agreement* is examined here for the various classificatory labels used to refer to teachers. Two possible classificatory labels emerge: *teacher/s* (4 instances) and *Principal or nominee* (28 instances). A duty of this nominee is to meet with teachers, as such the involvement of teachers is contingent upon the approach adopted by management – as will be discussed.

The first use of *teacher/s* highlights one of the aims of the *Partnership Agreement*:

The Partnership Agreement aims to foster increased inter-agency cooperation and collaboration by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each department. It is designed to promote good practice and assist staff of each department, particularly those working directly at the local level with children and young people in care, such as teachers and family services officers. (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 6)

That is, through a clarification of “roles and responsibilities”, there will be a promotion of “good practice” that supports “those working directly at the local level” –

teachers. The remaining three instances relate to the development and monitoring of ESPs, as shown below:

School principal or nominee to monitor the progress of the child or young person in care by meeting regularly with teacher/s and key partners contributing to the ESP to discuss progress and any emerging issues. (emphasis in original, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 9)

Who will participate in developing an Education Support Plan?

The school principal or nominee is responsible for creating the plan and ensuring that the child or young person is actively engaged in its development. Other key partners may include:

- the Department of Families Area Office representative;
- school or education program representatives (e.g. principal, deputy principal, class teacher);
- carer/s'. (emphasis in original, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 10)

Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the agreed Education Support Plan

The school principal or nominee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the plan. As a part of this monitoring role, the school principal or nominee will regularly meet teacher/s and key partners in the

plan to discuss progress and any emerging issues. (emphasis in original, Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004, p. 12)

It can be seen that teachers are discursively managed within the *Partnership Agreement*. Teachers' work has been marginalised to potentially contributing to ESPs, if invited by the Principal or his/her nominee. In this way, teachers are positioned to be managed by the Principal or his/her nominee. Such management is fundamental in the new form of governance. As Sachs (1999) argues: "Teachers are placed in a long line of authority in terms of their accountability for reaching measurable outcomes that stretches through the principal, to the district/regional office, to the central office" (p. 3). In relation to teachers' work, management, as a synonym for efficiency (Ball, 1994) and as mandated by the state, does powerful ideological work.

The encroachment of the discourse of management into the field of education effects the work of the manager and the managed (Ball, 1994). Of note is the idea that the role of the Principal shifts from senior to colleague to institutional manager (Sachs, 1999). Conceptualised in this way, the *Partnership Agreement* creates a space in which teachers can be managed by Principals to reach the centrally determined output – the creation of the ESP. However, teachers can also be left out as there is no prescription for teachers to be involved in the ESP process. For teachers, there is "little discursive space for anything except acquiescence or silent dissent" (Ball, 1993a, p. 108). In essence, teachers are required to follow 'the manager' and "management is key to the achievement of 'steering at a distance'" (Ball, 1993a, p. 111).

Given the shift in the role of the Principal and that involvement by teachers is contingent upon the approach adopted by management, the role of the teacher in working with children in care is unclear. As noted, teachers may either have no role or

be ascribed a role from above. To some extent roles enable and constrain practice and, as Sachs (2003) suggests, practice and identity “mirror each other” (p. 126).

Conceptualised in this way, there is little discursive space for teachers to theorise their work with children in care and, in the context of uncertainty, identity is not straightforward (Sachs, 2003).

As has been discussed, policy currently privileges the economic purposes of education to the detriment of the more social aspects (Ozga, 2000). Teachers’ work is increasingly being shaped by this economic agenda (Ball, 1993a; J. Smyth et al., 2000; J. Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). However, as Dale (1989) suggests: “Teachers are not merely ‘state functionaries’ but do have some degree of autonomy, and that this autonomy will not necessarily be used to further the proclaimed ends of the state apparatus” (p. 57).

How teachers navigate the “conflict of values” (Seddon, 1997, p. 236) between the marketisation of education and education as a public good becomes important to how teachers theorise their practices and identity/ies. Following on from this, as teachers wrestle with the “discourses of financial planning and economic rationalism [that] now operate in an antagonistic relation to the discourses of teaching and learning and pupil welfare” (Ball, 1994, p. 52), how teachers theorise their work then becomes important to the type of supports provided for children in care who are mobile.

4.7 Conclusion

The importance of education in building the knowledge economy means that the state will not willingly relinquish control (Hudson, 2007, Robertson & Dale, 2002). Through policy documents, such as those examined above, the state maintains presence in

governance. However, the infiltration of neoliberal modes of governance within policy has created a set of tensions and contradictions for the state. To address the emerging ‘crises’, the process of filling-in is engaged. The analysis presented above suggests that each of the documents analysed were created in response to a ‘crisis’ in child protection and education. The *Partnership Agreement* represents the process of filling-in by and with policy. As representative of filling-in, the *Partnership Agreement* draws on neoliberal strategies and managerial discourses in an attempt to ‘solve’ contradictions created by neoliberal governance.

The *Partnership Agreement* provides guidance in outlining the roles and responsibilities for schools in educating children in care – necessary for the ‘taming’ of wicked problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). Firstly, it sets out the formal arrangement necessary for effective collaboration (Black, 2008b) and represents a joining up of government to solve complex problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Black, 2008b). Secondly, it outlines the process of developing an effective tool to support children in care – the Education Support Plan. However, the number of assumptions written into the text, namely – that schools are enabled to undertake the Education Support Plan process, as outlined in the *Partnership Agreement* – has the potential to undermine its effectiveness. As Black (2008b) outlines, whilst schools are adequately placed to be central facilitators in supporting students with complex needs, the expectation that schools will provide supports needs to be matched with adequate resource and capacity from Government. There needs to be intelligent accountabilities (Lingard, 2009b) at the school and system level.

Whilst the Education Support Plan has the potential to be an effective support for the education of children in care, its effectiveness in the context of school mobility is

unknown. Given that key documents (such as the *Partnership Agreement* and the *Carer Handbook*) suggest a new Education Support Plan should be created when a child enrolls in a school, it would appear that there is a need to consider stability across a range of domains. Additionally, the differential articulation of school mobility in key documents (such as the *Government Response to Recommendations*, the *Partnership Agreement* and the *Carer Handbook*) suggests that the school mobility of children in care is positioned as undesirable but unavoidable – that is, school mobility becomes normalised. The school mobility of children in care, as enabled by the policy settlement represented in the policy ensemble discussed above, supports child protection workers and carers with their work – that is, enabling movement between schools as other aspects of a child’s life (such as protection) are prioritised over education. The practices of child protection workers and carers feed into the practices of teachers – this notion is taken up in the following chapter.

Finally, as the practices of teachers are dependent upon management’s enactment of policy there is in an ambiguity of the roles that teachers are enabled to take up. The managerialist discourses adopted in the *Partnership Agreement* can, potentially, shape how teachers construct their practice and identity (Sachs, 2003). Teacher identity, however, is also shaped by local context. As this project explores the policy/practice nexus, analysis of contextual data from schools and interview data from teachers involved in this study are presented in the following chapter. The following chapter, then, represents the third component of this doctoral research – a case study on *le quotidien* (the local or daily life).

Chapter 5: Navigating, creating and reclaiming spaces

The reality, of course, is that all people live in places, contribute to places and are affected by places. Poverty and disadvantage are mediated by place, and places are affected by the poverty or otherwise of their inhabitants.

Hence, it is reasonable to suspect that policies that dissociate people from places and vice versa may perform poorly. (Griggs, Whitworth, Walker, McLennan, & Noble, 2008, cited in Byron, 2010, p. 20)

5.1 Overview

In Chapter 4, contemporary policy issues regarding the education of children in care were explored in the context of the changing role of the state. Of particular significance was the general acceptance of school mobility as an aspect of the lives of children in care and the narrow conceptualisation within policy documents of the role of teachers. As discussed in Chapter 4, the contradictory discourses around social inclusion and neoliberalism create disjunctures in policy narratives, which teachers must then navigate. This chapter focuses on the enactment of policy in distinctive local contexts and the tensions and contradictions this generates for teachers.

In this study, a range of data sources are drawn on to develop an understanding of the extent of school mobility amongst children in care and the capacity of schools and teachers to support the education of children in care who are mobile. Data from 14 Queensland schools receiving funding as part of the government's *Smarter Schools National Partnership Program* is drawn on to gain an understanding of the school mobility of children in care. Additionally, interview data from teachers and Mobility

Support Teachers from five of the schools is examined to explore the perspectives, the enablers and challenges of working with a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009).

The chapter begins by presenting brief statistical profiles of the population and communities within which this research project is situated. Such profiles highlight the significant need to engage with ecological conceptions of school readiness in order to appreciate the complexity of factors and processes that foster a readiness to learn (Hilferty, Redmond, & Katz, 2010). The profile of the regions also provides a contextual frame in which to view the work of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers – and notes the relationship between people and place, as highlighted in the opening quotation.

The chapter then explores the school mobility of children in care in selected school sites. Enrolment data is used to carefully explore the extent and nature of school mobility of children involved in the child protection system. Additionally, enrolment data is examined to understand the information that schools typically receive when a child in care enrolls. Such information is important in enabling schools to support the student in an effective and timely manner, minimising the potential impact of school mobility on student learning (Wyatt, Carbines, & Robb, 2004). One critical case study is offered as a means to explore the nature and extent of school mobility of one child involved in the child protection system, and details the actions enabled by the Mobility Support Teacher.

Finally, teacher interview data is presented and analysed, presenting perceptions of working with a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009). The analysis focuses on teachers’ understandings of the child protection system, their place within it

and their work with children in care who are mobile. The partial erasure of teachers from policy documents (discussed in Chapter 4) results in teachers and Mobility Support Teachers constructing their roles as educators from sociological theory, mediated and lived experiences. As teachers and Mobility Support Teachers navigate their work, systemic structures and discursive practices work together to enable or constrain their perceived capacity support the education of children in care who are mobile.

5.2 Context: The concatenation of circumstances

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006a), the Collection Districts (CD) in which the schools involved in this study are located are at greater disadvantage than the rest of the Australian population across many demographic indicators – as shown in Table 5.1. For example, the unemployment rate for the majority of Collection Districts is higher than the national average, with the exception of Figbird SS and Grebe SS Collection Districts. A further complexity of particular relevance to education is the high proportion of rental accommodation – with all areas significantly higher than the national average, with the exception of Scrubwren SS Collection District.

Multidimensional and interlinked issues such as unemployment, low income, housing instability, poor health, crime and family breakdown are relevant to social exclusion (A. Hayes et al., 2008; Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). It is of note that many risk factors for child abuse and/or neglect parallel factors that contribute to social exclusion (Bromfield et al., 2010). Whilst Table 5.1 shows that some areas may experience relative advantage, these areas are typically characterised by pockets of disadvantage (Caniglia

et al., 2010). Thus, it is important to consider more general measures of socio-economic status.

Table 5.1. Descriptive statistics of Collection Districts, 2006

	One parent families	Unemployed*	Housing circumstance		Living in same address	
			Fully owned	Rented (including rent free)	One year ago	Five years ago
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
National average	15.8	5.2	32.6	27.2	78.3	52.9
Collection District of:						
Brolga SS	24.1	5.9	13.9	40.3	72.5	44.5
Scrubwren SS	18.3	5.7	19.4	26.3	73.3	45.0
Figbird SS	15.7	4.1	19.2	36.0	71.4	37.9
Sandpiper SS	26.4	6.4	19.0	44.6	58.9	36.2
Pelican SS	21.7	7.8	12.6	53.6	49.2	23.6
Kingfisher SS	32.3	7.3	19.1	46.4	61.7	34.0
Ibis SS	29.5	6.6	11.5	46.3	67.9	38.3
Magpie SS	24.1	6.2	27.8	36.2	74.5	44.3
Gebe SS	24.2	3.9	36.1	31.3	73.9	48.5
Kite SS	25.0	7.7	17.0	34.6	72.6	45.7
Tern SS	30.2	12.3	21.3	46.5	73.1	49.6
Swan SS	34.0	11.8	17.7	52.0	69.1	44.5
Raven SS	30.5	12.2	23.6	43.7	59.5	34.3
Gannet SS	24.0	7.4	28.0	38.0	71.5	45.1

*Population aged 15 years and over

Source: *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a, from <http://www.abs.gov.au>

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) offers a summary of the overall welfare of a community. For the purposes of this thesis, the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is examined for each Collection District. As can be seen in Table 5.2 following, the IRSD score for

each Collection District is lower than the national average, with the exception of Figbird SS. The IRSD and descriptive statistics presented in Table 5.1 above indicate that each of the schools are located within communities characterised by multilevel disadvantage. These statistics also suggest that, given the socio-economic status of the study area, children are more likely to be exposed to risk factors that are associated with abuse and/or neglect (Department of Child Safety, 2009b; Dyson, 2008; Senate Committee, 2004).

Table 5.2. IRSD score, 2006

Collection District of:	SEIFA - IRSD	Collection District of:	SEIFA – IRSD
Brolga SS	944	Sandpiper SS	893
Scrubwren SS	973	Pelican SS	930
Figbird SS	1030	Kingfisher SS	880
Ibis SS	910	Kite SS	913
Magpie SS	934	Tern SS	808
Grebe SS	967	Swan SS	826
Raven SS	843	Gannet SS	920

Source: *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a, from <http://www.abs.gov.au>

Next, to provide insight into the relationship between child development and ecological and environmental factors within communities, the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) and IRSD results are jointly examined. Table 5.3 following (see p. 200) displays the proportion of children who were assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains in each of the Collection Districts involved in this study. All areas have a higher proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains than the national average, with the exception of the Gannet SS CD which, as noted in Table 5.3, is to be interpreted with

caution. These children are considered to be at particularly high risk developmentally (Centre for Community Child Health & Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2011). It is of note that the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains is almost double the national average in five communities – Brolga SS CD, Scrubwren SS CD, Pelican SS CD, Tern SS CD and Kingfisher SS CD. In particular, Brolga SS and Tern SS CDs should be interpreted with caution, as the AEDI data collection is 60-80% of the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population. There also exists four communities in which the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains is more than double the national average – Magpie SS CD and Sandpiper SS CD – with Kite SS CD and Swan SS CD almost triple and quadruple respectively. Notably, six of these communities with a high proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains are clustered together in two locations. That is, within these areas there is a concentration of disadvantage.

Additionally, with the exception of Figbird SS and Grebe SS CDs, each school is located within one of the most disadvantaged Collection Districts in the larger community. While Figbird SS and Grebe SS CDs are not one of the most disadvantaged Collection Districts, each school is located in suburbs where there is a concentration of the most disadvantaged Collection Districts within their respective Statistical Divisions (Caniglia et al., 2010). In these Collection Districts there exist “multiple, interacting barriers to inclusion” (P. Smyth, 2008, p. 5), with certain conditions contributing to socio-spatial exclusion (Caniglia et al., 2010).

Overall, the AEDI and IRSD results suggest that the socio-economic conditions in each community are related to childhood development within that community. The

exception to this is the Gannet SS CD where, despite being socio-economically disadvantaged, the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains is half that of the national average. However, as indicated, the Gannet SS AEDI results must be interpreted with some caution as the AEDI results represent <60% of the Australian Bureau of Statistics population for that area.

Table 5.3. ABS and AEDI data to examine local contexts, 2009/2010

Spatial unit	AEDI results: Developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains		Proportion of children in Collection District who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains is higher than the national AEDI average	One of most disadvantaged Collection Districts in selected community
	Number of children surveyed	Proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains		
Australia	246 873	11.8%	-	-
Collection District of:				
Brolga SS [#]	60	23.3%	✓	✓
Scrubwren SS	148	22.3%	✓	✓
Figbird SS	366	15.8%	✓	✗
Ibis SS	53	18.9%	✓	✓
Magpie SS	63	28.6%	✓	✓
Grebe SS [#]	24	16.7%	✓	✗
Sandpiper SS	62	24.2%	✓	✓
Pelican SS	22	22.7%	✓	✓
Kingfisher SS	45	22.2%	✓	✓
Raven SS	94	14.9%	✓	✓
Gannet SS [*]	17	5.9%	✗	✓
Kite SS	173	34.7%	✓	✓
Tern SS [#]	58	22.4%	✓	✓
Swan SS	216	42.6%	✓	✓

[#] AEDI data collection is 60-80% of the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population; interpret with caution.

^{*}AEDI data collection is <60% of the Australian Bureau of Statistics resident population. The AEDI sample may not accurately reflect the population of children; interpret with caution

Source: *Australian Early Development Index*, by The Royal Children's Hospital, 2009, from <http://www.rch.org.au/aedi>

Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Early Development Index data were selected due to their relevance and usefulness in describing the local areas of schools. An examination of the student population provides further insight into the environment in which teachers' work occurs. As discussed in the methodology section (see Chapter 2), the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) facilitates an understanding of the level of education advantage (or disadvantage) that students bring to their education. For each of the 14 schools involved in this study, the ICSEA value is lower than the national average of 900-1000, as shown in Table 5.4 following. The socio-educational composition of the student population shows that for each school, with the exception of Kingfisher SS, Gannet SS and Raven SS, upwards of 80% of the student population are located in the bottom quartile. This suggests that the geographic and socio-economic characteristics of each school community are below the national average and, in educational terms, the children of the school are amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.

Table 5.4. Summary of student background, 2009

School	ICSEA	Quarter	%	School	ICSEA	Quarter	%
Brolga SS	776	Top	0	Pelican SS	765	Top	2
		Middle	1			Middle	4
		Bottom	4			Bottom	13
Srubwren SS	861	Top	96	Kingfisher SS	729	Top	Data below reporting threshold
		Middle	1			Middle	
		Bottom	9			Bottom	
Figbird SS	837	Top	0	Gannet SS	925	Top	6
		Middle	3			Middle	9
		Bottom	12			Bottom	26
Ibis SS	816	Top	85	Raven SS	910	Top	5
		Middle	2			Middle	17
		Bottom	4			Bottom	24
Grebe SS	896	Top	7	Kite SS	867	Top	0
		Middle	15			Middle	1
		Bottom	82			Bottom	4
Magpie SS	859	Top	0	Tern SS	877	Top	0
		Middle	2			Middle	0
		Bottom	14			Bottom	2
Sandpiper SS	689	Top	84	Swan SS	865	Top	0
		Middle	2			Middle	1
		Bottom	8			Bottom	3
		Bottom	89			Bottom	96

Source: *My School*, by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010, from <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

The unique educational and socio-economic contexts described above are important in order to understand the context of teachers' work with children in care who are mobile. Multiple, complex and often inter-related factors associated with social exclusion and disadvantage are evident in each of the schools and their respective Collection Districts involved in this research study. The concatenation of these factors can potentially impact on the developmental readiness of children when they begin school – with the exception of the Gannet SS Collection District. Additionally, many

factors that link to social exclusion are noted as common risk factors for child abuse and/or neglect. As such, it is more likely that “families with multiple and complex problems” (Bromfield et al., 2010, p. 1) reside within the study area, resulting in a heightened risk of abuse and/or neglect. While being in care or being mobile does not, in itself, necessarily render students – individually or collectively – at risk, the ‘constellation of inequalities’ (Darling-Hammond, 2010) present in the study communities and schools suggests that within the schools there are likely to be a significant proportion of students who are at risk of ‘educational disadvantage’. As such, to ensure that “demography is not destiny” (Gillard, 2010, "Asking the right questions" section, para. 21), it is important to have a policy program that is responsive to the contexts within which schooling occurs.

Framed within policy discourses of ‘social inclusion’ and ‘new equity’, the current policy landscape requires teachers and schools to identify ‘students at risk’ but places the responses required for these students firmly with school staff. Singh and Taylor (2007) suggest that policy responses aimed at the individual are preferred in meeting the needs of children who possess a complexity of needs. However, the complex task supporting ‘students at risk’ comes at a time when only six percent of Principals note they have sufficient resources to meet the needs of their schools’ communities (Angus et al., 2007). The following sections explore the extent and complexity of school mobility among a select group of children in care and the work of schools in supporting these students in contexts of disadvantage.

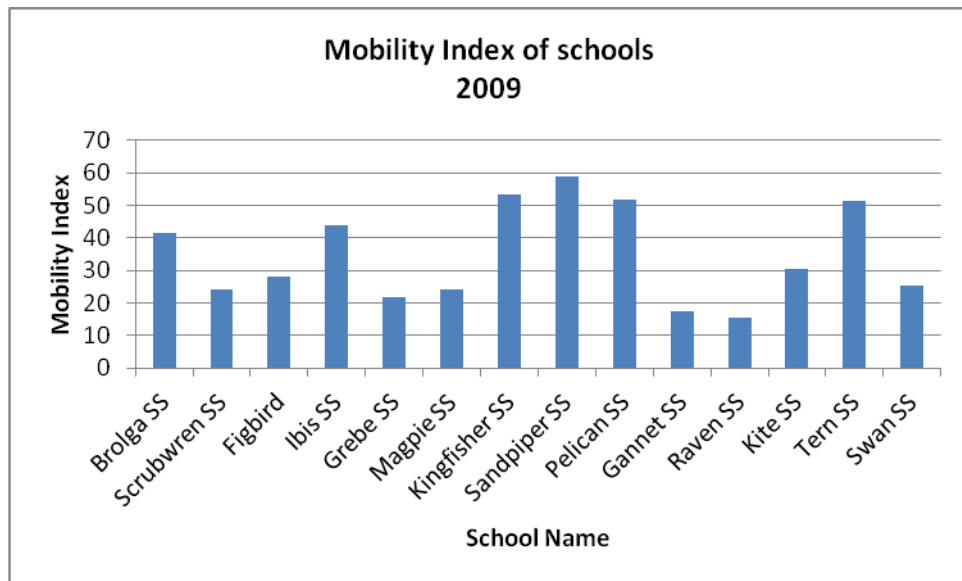
5.3 The extent of knowing (to enable doing)

The larger project, discussed in Chapter 1, used school enrolment data to carefully map the movements of students who enrol and exit a school – across the 14 schools –

thereby creating a more accurate and in-depth picture of school mobility. Within the larger study, enrolment and exit data from the 14 schools was used to identify rates of school mobility and to benchmark these against the established indicators developed in the United Kingdom by Dobson, Henthorne and Lynas (2000). While research conducted by the Office for Standards in Education (2002) using the JPL measure reports huge differences between schools in the extent of pupil mobility, ranging from 0 to 80 percent, their research (conducted across 3300 English primary schools) reports a median of 11.1 percent in primary schools. Figure 5.1 following displays the levels of mobility in each of the 14 schools involved in the larger project in 2009. The 14 primary schools in the larger study, then, have higher levels of mobility than average when compared to the United Kingdom study. The median for this sample of schools is 29, much higher than the median reported in the United Kingdom study.

The five schools from which teachers and Mobility Support Teachers were interviewed – Brolga SS, Ibis SS, Kingfisher SS, Sandpiper SS and Pelican SS – have recorded mobility indices (as measured by the JPL formula) as above 35, or high levels of mobility as measured by the British study. Kingfisher SS, Sandpiper SS and Pelican SS each have mobility indices over 50 – this level of mobility is in the exceptionally high range according to the Index. For example, in 2009 at Sandpiper SS the student population was 417 at Day 8. During the year, 136 students enrolled and 110 students left the school. While some of these students may move in and out of the school multiple times during the year (meaning that the student is counted as both a joiner and a leaver), effectively, approximately one half of the school population is mobile. Of the joining population at Sandpiper SS in 2009, 11% were identified as children involved in the child protection system.

Figure 5.1. Mobility Index of schools, 2009



The distinctive local context of each of the schools involved in the larger study provides some insight into the reasons for this high rate of movement. For example, multidimensional factors present in the communities, such as housing instability, high unemployment and single parent families. The intersection of these factors with risk of child abuse and/or neglect may also link to mobility as families move to avoid child protection services (Ferguson, 2009) or children are placed into or return home from care placements. Having explored the local contexts of schools and communities, the school mobility of children in care in the schools involved in the larger project is explored.

5.3.1 A select mobile cohort

The database created as part of the larger project is examined to determine the number of children in care who enrolled after Day 8 in each of the 14 schools. As discussed previously, the data from the database includes children who were in care at the time of

enrolment and those who had previously been in care and, upon enrolment, had returned to their parents' care. Hence, this section will use the term 'children involved in the child protection system' rather than 'children in care'.

Analysis of the database reveals that two schools involved in the larger project did not identify any children who were involved in the child protection system. This is not to say that no children involved in the child protection system enrolled in those schools, but rather that the Mobility Support Teacher did not receive that information or did not enter such information into the database. As such, data from 12 schools is examined here. Analysis reveals that during 2009, 50 students involved in the child protection system enrolled in 1 of the 12 schools involved in the larger project.

5.3.2 Multiplicity of movements

Information pertaining to each of the 50 students is examined in detail to identify the reason for movement into 1 of the 12 schools in 2009. A number of studies have reported that children in care experience higher rates of school mobility than their peers (CREATE Foundation, 2006; Creed, Tilbury, Buys, & Crawford, 2011), thus a key focus of this study is to understand the reasons why children involved in the child protection system move schools. Mobility Support Teacher notes, included as part of the database, reveal the reasons for school movement. From these notes, three broad motivations for movement are evident: movement as a result of placement movement; movement not as a result of placement movement; and unknown (incomplete/inconclusive Mobility Support Teacher notes). The broad category, 'movement as a result of placement movement', is informed by three narrow reasons for movement –

‘entry into care’, ‘change of carer’ and ‘exiting care’. The results from the analysis of reasons for movement are presented in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5. Reasons for mobility of enrolling children involved in the child protection system, 2009

Reason for school movement	Number of enrolling students (n=50)
Movement as a result of placement movement:	
<i>Entry into care</i>	12
<i>Change of carer</i>	5
<i>Exiting care</i>	6
Total	23
Movement not as a result of placement movement	24
Unknown	3

As shown in Table 5.5 above, just under half of the children involved in the child protection system, who enrolled in 1 of the 12 project schools in 2009, changed schools as a result of their involvement in the child protection system. That is, due to entering care, a change of carer whilst in care or exiting care and returning to their parent/s. Similar findings have been reported by Delfabbro, Barber and Cooper (2000) who found that of 182 cases of children in care in their study, 45% changed schools due to a new placement (Delfabbro, Barber & Cooper, 2000).

Within the schools involved in this doctoral study, some students experienced multiple school movements. Five of the fifty students enrolled and exited a school during 2009-10, with each move coinciding with a change in their care placement. For example, Matthew, a Year 2 student, was enrolled in Kingfisher SS when his care placement changed. He then exited the school when he was placed with a new carer.

Matthew’s total length of stay at Kingfisher SS in 2009 was seven months, just over half the school year. Similarly, Jessica, a Year 5 student, was enrolled in Sandpiper SS when her care placement changed. A year later, Jessica exited the school when she was returned to her mother’s care.

5.3.3 Responding to school mobility: What is enabled?

For schools to have a proactive role in supporting children in care who are mobile, it is important to receive past educational information. The collation of such information is important, otherwise information remains “everywhere and nowhere” (Tilbury, 2010, p. 13) and is of no benefit to the student. Recalling that within the schools involved in the larger project there exists a dedicated resource to gather background information of children entering the school – the Mobility Support Teacher. The information presented in Table 5.6 provides an overview of the type of educational information that Mobility Support Teachers were able to gather during the enrolment interview and by contacting students’ previous school/s.

Table 5.6. Information received upon enrolment of children involved in the child protection system, 2009

Information type	Number of enrolling children involved in the child protection system for which information was received n=50
Behaviour history	23
Academic history	12
Work samples	15
NAPLaN results*	7
Attendance history	30

*Excludes students in Years 1 and 2 who would not have previously completed any NAPLaN testing, as well as students in Year 3 who enrolled prior to the NAPLaN test date. n=37

It is apparent from the data above (see Table 5.6) that limited information travels with children involved in the child protection system when changing schools. Additionally, a dedicated resource has difficulty in sourcing a significant amount of information, although it is acknowledged that data systems and confidentiality protocols may compound the problem of information sharing (Christian, 2003). Notably, the majority of information that is received relates to behaviour and attendance, rather than academic learning or ability. The capacities of schools to activate appropriate supports for a student are consequently hampered by a lack of information. Whilst the amount and type of information used to support students may be highly variable, a national survey of teachers identified that the special needs of the child and specialised program/s the child has been involved in are the most helpful information received from previous schools (KPMG Consulting et al., 2002). At present, there is limited space for such information on the *Transfer Note* that a school receives when a child changes school (Department of Education and Training, 2006).

Despite the limited information that Mobility Support Teachers can access, in this study, it is clear that the Mobility Support Teachers organise relevant supports for children involved in the child protection system. As discussed in Chapter 1, the revised enrolment procedure undertaken by the Mobility Support Teacher includes learning assessments and linking the family/child/teacher with appropriate or potentially beneficial supports. Table 5.7 following (see p. 211) shows that supports were accessed for just over half (27) of the enrolling children involved in the child protection system. As can be seen, many of these supports involved linking with other professionals within and outside of the school. Mobility Support Teachers accessed these other professionals as the needs of children, identified as part of the enrolment process, are complex. The support provided often involved social skills development, individual or

small group tutoring and behaviour management. Of these supports, the majority were provided as part of the Education Queensland system (or internal supports – see Table 5.7 below). It is important to note that due to the labour intensive task of data entry, Mobility Support Teachers were asked to provide an *example* of the tasks they perform with an enrolling student, not *all* the tasks they perform. Thus the following table could under-represent the support enabled and undertaken by the Mobility Support Teacher.

For children in care, enabling comprehensive support is facilitated through the Education Support Plan process whereby key stakeholders meet and develop an individualised educational plan, preferably with the student. The database used in the larger project was not designed to capture whether children arrived with an Education Support Plan. Both the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004) suggest that a new Education Support Plan should be developed, or a review of a previous plan undertaken, each time a child enters a new school, as moving schools is deemed a significant change in circumstances (Department of Communities, 2011b).

Table 5.7. Support agencies and programs accessed for enrolling children involved in the child protection system

Internal Support Agency/ Program	Number of students accessing support (n=27)	External Support Agency/ Program	Number of students accessing support (n=27)
Guidance Officer	20	Housing Assistance Agency	3
Support Teacher – Learning Difficulties	9	Centacare	2
Head of Special Education Services	4	Speech Language Pathologist	2
Special Services Reference Group*	3	Education Support Plan Funding	1
Behaviour Support Teacher	3	Child Youth and Mental Health Services (CYMYS)	1
Special Education Program	2	Flexible Learning Centre	1
Advisory Visiting Teacher	2	Queensland Police	1
Positive Learning Centre	1	ACT for Kids	1
School-based Chaplain	1		

*School-specific support team including, for example, Head of Special Education Services, Guidance Officer, Principal/Deputy Principal

It is important to remember when reviewing the above data that such information has been generated by schools that have, for the life of the project, had an additional resource – the Mobility Support Teacher. Whilst the previous sections of this chapter have explored the complexity of the environment in which teachers work, with a particular focus on the school mobility of children involved in the child protection system, the following provides an example of the work of the Mobility Support Teacher with one student involved in the child protection system. In the context of disadvantage, this critical case study highlights the complexity of tasks required in supporting children in care who are mobile.

A picture of the student

Davin is in Year 5 and enrolled at Raven SS mid-Term 1, 2009 due to a change in his care placement. Davin's schooling history has been stable, attending two previous schools, the last of which he was enrolled in for four weeks. The Mobility Support Teacher was able to contact Davin's previous school to discuss his behaviour and attendance. PM Benchmark results, conducted by the Mobility Support Teacher, show that Davin is working one year level lower than would be expected.

Enabling supports and engaging in learning

In the weeks following Davin's enrolment the Mobility Support Teacher spoke to Davin, his teacher and his carer to check how he was settling in. While all stated that Davin had settled well, his teacher and carer expressed concern regarding his ability to focus on tasks and challenging behaviours that he was beginning to present with.

In response to these concerns the Mobility Support Teacher organised a meeting with the class teacher and Davin's carer. Together they developed school and home strategies to assist Davin focussing on the task required, as well as developing organisational skills. It was decided that the Mobility Support Teacher would continue working with Davin.

Over the following weeks the Mobility Support Teacher worked with Davin, individually and in small groups, to improve his literacy and numeracy skills. The Mobility Support Teacher also released the class teacher, enabling the teacher to work with Davin individually. PM benchmark results recorded seven months after Davin's enrolment show that he was working at year level.

School mobility (again)

At the end of the year, Davin's carers moved cities and Davin moved with them. In mid-Term 2, 2010, Davin re-enrolled at Raven SS. Again, Davin re-enrolled due to a change in care placements. There was a notable increase in the number of schools Davin had attended – this was now Davin's 6th school. After leaving Raven SS, Davin was enrolled in a new school by his carer. Davin's care placement then broke down and he was placed with a "short term carer" and enrolled in a new school. He was enrolled in this school for three days before being placed with another carer and re-enrolled in Raven SS.

Re-enabling supports

The Mobility Support Teacher again contacted Davin's previous schools requesting his student file and his medication, which had been left at the school Davin was in enrolled in after leaving Raven SS. The student file arrived 2 ½ months after Davin's re-enrolment at Raven SS.

In view of the case study presented here, it becomes apparent that the Mobility Support Teacher was enabled to support Davin given his previous re-enrolment. In the context of mobility, ensuring the complexity of student needs are met requires that adequate information about the enrolling student is received in a timely manner. With that noted, the information presented above and the work of the larger project (A. Hill et al., 2009) has shown this to be highly variable.

Through the work of and data collected by Mobility Support Teachers, it can be seen that an expanded notion of 'readiness to learn' is required in the context of school mobility. Ensuring readiness to learn can include addressing environmental factors (such as housing, transport and stable family circumstances), accessing resources required for schooling (such as uniforms and materials) and health status checks which include hearing and vision checks. By understanding the needs of children involved in the child protection system, Mobility Support Teachers are better able to ensure that support is focused in a systematic way through communication and collaboration with other services. Schools are particularly well-placed to integrate children's support services given the day-to-day contact with children, their families and other professionals (Atkins, 2008; Black, 2008a; Rutter & Jones, 1998). However, schools must be adequately resourced to enact supports (Lingard, 2009b), and current research into the resourcing of schools suggests that this is not the case for many Australian schools (Angus et al., 2007; Queensland Association of State School Principals, 2011). The systemic structures and discursive practices that enable and constrain teachers and schools in enacting support for children involved in the child protection system are discussed within the following sections (Sections 5.4-5.6).

5.4 Teachers positioning within a range of discourses

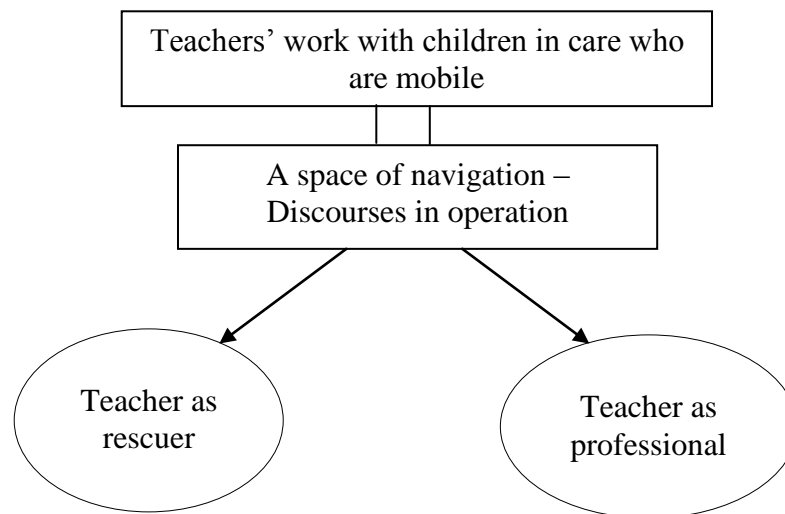
Chapter 3 highlighted that teachers are situated within a complex discourse network – mediating and mediated by lived experiences. Teachers’ constructions of themselves and their work are influenced by, and embedded within, a range of discourses pertaining to schooling, education and child safety. It is important to note that teaching is a work practice – teachers are workers, employed to teach within the institutional site of the school (Connell, 1985; Luke, 1998, 1999). Teachers, positioned in this way, are expected and required to comply with and fulfil the institutional – and broader social – demands placed upon them. Their practices and the discursive events they engage in are, as Fairclough (1992b) suggests, determined by “the particular social domain or institutional framework in which they are generated” (p. 64).

Essentially, in this study, teachers’ work can be seen to be framed by a number of competing paradigms and institutional demands. Primarily, teachers work within the institutional framework of the Department of Education and Training. However, their work with children in care as a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009) means that Department of Child Safety practice and policy impacts on teachers’ scope for action, particularly in the context of mobility. Additionally – and on a broader scale – the rolling back of the welfare state has meant that teachers and schools are increasingly seen to be an integral part of the welfare system and, as O’Neill (1999) suggests, there has been an expectation that teachers engage in “more of a welfare role” (p. 55) alongside teaching duties. At the same time, the current neoliberal schooling climate has had a number of effects on teachers’ work – including the narrowing of the focus of teaching (Lingard, 2010a; J. Smyth et al., 2000) and an increase in auditing and checking (Connell, 2009; Luke, 1999).

As previously discussed, there is a multiplicity of ways in which one can position oneself as a teacher subject – drawing upon varying discursive knowledges and embodied practices to take up different subject positions. It follows that subjects do not take up one subject position, but that different discourses give the subject different, and possibly contradictory, positions from which to speak and (en)act (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). For the purpose of this component of the analysis, Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis is used to explore the ways in which the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers act as both discursive products and producers. The discourses that teachers and Mobility Support teachers draw on are mapped against discourses that circulate in society and policy, with a view to understand how the discourses that teachers and Mobility Support Teachers draw on, and take up, effect their own actions.

As teachers navigate their work with children in care who are mobile, they draw on different discourses and take up varying subject positions – the two most prominent of these positions are shown in Figure 5.2 below. The take up of these positions varied among the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers, as influenced by their lived realities – specifically, their length of time teaching, experience with children in care and the Department of Child Safety, and position within the Education system (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.3). As Fairclough (1992b) argues, discourse production is constrained by both the “available members’ resources” and by the “specific nature of the social practice” (p. 80) of which they are a part.

Figure 5.2. Teacher subject positions



The following sub-sections explore each of these subject positions in detail, focussing on a key premise of critical discourse analysis, that is, the link between knowledge and action (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). As teachers adopt particular worldviews, linked to the above subject positions, some actions become ‘natural’ and others unthinkable. Teachers’ insights into their perceived capacity for action/inaction is explored in relation to the education of children in care who are mobile.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.3, four Mobility Support Teachers and five teachers participated in this study. The Mobility Support Teachers (Helen, Simone, Tamara and Ruth) possessed a range of experience as teachers, Mobility Support Teachers and of working with children in care (see p. 81). Similarly, the teachers (Gillian, Samantha, Jessica, Maria and Judy) also possessed a range of teaching experience and involvement with the child protection system (see p. 83). Judy, for example, had previously been a foster carer and Gillian stated that she often sought advice from her husband – a Child Safety Officer. So, too, Jessica worked in the unique context of the Early Childhood Development Centre and, as such, received

Professional Development related to emotional attachment and children in care, and emotional development in general.

5.4.1 Teacher as rescuer: *You want to make sure that in one place they feel safe and they feel secure*

A key premise of discourse analysis is that language use constructs representations of reality (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). As such, a starting point for this analysis is to explore how teachers and Mobility Support Teachers construct the ‘reality’ of their work with children in care who are mobile. Emerging from the data is an understanding and positioning of children in care who are mobile that informs teacher action. For teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study, an important aspect of the lives of children in care is movement as a result of involvement in the child protection system, as evidenced in the quotes from teachers and Mobility Support Teachers below:

It’s really sad for some of these kids, how often they get moved . . . In situations like that [a child moving school because of placement change] there is not much that you can do but I did feel sorry for her because she had just settled here. (Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

You think of yourself as an adult, facing that trauma. If you go home this afternoon, your stuff is packed up and you’re told to move. We can process it, and adjust to it at a much better level than what you would expect a child to do it. The trauma that they must take from that is mind-blowing really. People say, ‘Oh, they’re gutted’, well it’s not just that they’re gutted, you’ve traumatised them, possibly for life. (Ruth, MST 01/05/2009)

It's a bit like, put yourself in their shoes. I hate starting a new job, hate it. Because you don't know where anything is . . . that must be what a child goes through every time they start a new school . . . That's a terrible feeling. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

Constructions of 'what it must be like' to be in care are entwined in every interview in this study. Discussion of placement and school movement alludes to the loss of structure that could be experienced by a child in care. Here, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers position themselves as a child navigating the system or considering their own experiences of strategic mobility (i.e. new job). It is of note that the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study are unlike other teachers, generally. Those involved in this study are necessarily attuned to the issue of mobility due to the involvement of their school in the larger project focussing on school mobility, as noted in Chapter 1, Section 1.7. The specific focus on children in care, however, was not explored as part of the larger project.

The teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers – as evident in the data collected – bring with them a range of psychosocial conceptualisations of the affect of involvement in the child protection system. There exists a large body of research that focuses on factors that may impact the educational achievement of children in care (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004; Choice et al., 2001; Frederick & Goddard, 2010).

Research points to a wide array of risk factors that children in care can be exposed to, both prior to entering care and after entry – which is, in part, why the education of children in care who are mobile might be depicted as a 'wicked problem' (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). Comber (1998) draws attention to the importance of understanding risk factors that students may be exposed to, yet cautions against

stereotyping by urging consideration of what is *fore-grounded* when discussing background. Only one teacher in this study has been directly involved in the child protection system – Judy, as a foster carer – therefore, it is likely that conceptualisations of care are largely informed by mediated experiences.

The media, both Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue, plays a central role in creating an awareness of and sensitivity to distant events. Mainstream media reporting of child abuse and/or neglect often focuses on the more dramatic and sensational cases (Ayre, 2001; C. Goddard & Saunders, 2001; McMahon, 1998), with no sign of “social problem fatigue” (Finkelhor, 1994, p. 15). Furthermore, there is limited reporting of successes within the system (Gough, 1996), with the majority of reports focussing on the perpetrator of the abuse and the abusive context (Foster, 2005; C. Goddard, 1996b). The sensationalist reporting of child abuse and/or neglect have become what Kitzinger (2000) identifies as ‘media templates’ which are “instrumental in shaping narratives around particular social problems” (p. 61). The impact of the narratives of the media are important for, as Fairclough (1995) argues, “language is widely perceived as transparent, so that social and ideological ‘work’ that language does in producing, reproducing or transforming social structures, relations and identities is routinely ‘overlooked’” (p. 203). The ‘subtle’ influence of media narratives is evident in the way that teachers and Mobility Support Teachers within this study position children in care who are mobile – children are seen as victims rather than survivors.

The effects of this positioning are important for a number of reasons. Specifically, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers draw on the positioning of children as victims and develop understandings of how to work with children in care (Hartley, 1982). Positioned in this way, children are seen to lack agency within their

own lives; teachers, then, see themselves as educational advocates for children in care – this notion will be expanded later in the chapter. However, for teachers and Mobility Support Teachers, the victim status extends beyond a lack of agency and becomes all pervasive. As evidenced in the preceding quotations drawn from interview data, the experiences of entering or being in care are pictured as negative and, furthermore, that mobility, school or placement, is seen as an additional stressor.

While limited, the Australian research that does explore experiences of school and placement mobility of children in care suggests that, in some cases, mobility is not necessarily negative. Barber and Delfabbro (2004) indicate that a placement move can be beneficial for a child if the placement is not working. This is also supported by Townsend (2006) who found that perspectives on school movements differed between children and key stakeholders (carers, case workers, school principals, out-of-home care program teachers). Key stakeholders viewed school movements in a negative light, however, for many children, after the initial transition into a new school, the change was perceived as positive.

The general assumption by teachers and Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study is that placement and school movements are a negative aspect of the lives of children in care, as highlighted by Helen and Tamara below:

I feel that they [the Department of Child Safety] are not aware of how it affects a child when they have to move. So not only are they being effected by going into a new placement but they are also being effected in the fact that they are leaving a school where they know how things happen, they know the support people in the school, they've got their friends, they know the routines and suddenly they might find out in the afternoon, so they

haven't even got to have closure, to say their goodbyes, to exchange email addresses or get the goodbye card from the class. You know, just to have that bit of closure and I suppose prepare them for the next school. So talk about that things are going to be tough but this is what you can do to help you prepare to start your new school. So that's just not taken into consideration. (Helen, MST, 17/03/2009)

We notice that with a lot of our children, the one stable thing in their lives is school . . . for children in care who aren't even with anybody that's known, if they could keep with the one school it would have to be beneficial. (Ruth, MST, 01/05/2009)

I don't know if DoCs are aware of the importance of staying at the one school. If these kids are in and out of care and they are changing schools because of that, then it is having a big impact on their learning. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Helen and Tamara suggest links between school and placement movement and social-emotional wellbeing and academic learning. Indeed, many of the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study discuss the importance of social-emotional wellbeing and the role that schools and teachers can play in supporting students. Below, Samantha suggests that for children in care who are mobile, school is a refuge from a negative background:

If the child is having a very difficult home life, you want to make sure that you are one of those extra supporting people at school so they don't feel like they are hated in the whole entire world. You want to make sure that in one place they feel safe and they feel secure enough to actually do what you ask them to do, instead of doing all the other stuff. (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

To counter the assumed negative impact of mobility, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers adopt a rescuer role, consistent with Scott and O'Neil's (2003) 'deficit' approach to child protection. The 'teacher as rescuer' role places emphasis on the social and emotional environment, and academic learning is positioned as a secondary concern (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). The interrelationship of the teacher as 'rescuer' and student background is apparent, for example, in Samantha's comment above. Moreover, it is from prior experiences that many of the teachers and the Mobility Support teachers feel that the students needed to be rescued. For teachers and Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study, there is a strong need to socially and emotionally 'rescue the victim'. This is evidenced in Samantha's reference to the child's emotional wellbeing – "make sure that in one place they feel safe and secure".

Samantha, as a beginning teacher, is particularly focussed on the social-emotional wellbeing of the students in her class. She admits that, "Because I'm new, I don't see everything yet. I might still be focussed on one area" (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009). At this point in her teaching career, the social-emotional 'readiness' of her students is paramount.

Whilst Samantha suggests that her lived experience as a teacher influences her focus on aspects of schooling, more experienced teachers involved in this study also

highlight the importance of social-emotional readiness. For these teachers, however, the reason for drawing on theories of social-emotional readiness is linked to academic learning, as evidenced below:

I would look at their fractured schooling and their emotional needs because students will not learn unless you have that sorted. There is no point in standing up there teaching because those children have a wall and you can't get through. You need to be able to fix that or help with that, then you can teach. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

I think the most important thing first is making them feel safe and secure in their environment so you can then start concentrating on the academic need. (Maria, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

Children cannot be expected to sit, listen, learn and stay in class if they have a range of other needs that are not being addressed. (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

For these teachers, providing emotional support for children in care who are mobile is particularly important, both for the child's general wellbeing and her/his academic learning. In view of this, it is to be noted that there are a number of social and behavioural childhood development theories (i.e. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Behaviourism) that propose links between social-emotional wellbeing and learning. Additionally, given the media portrayal of child abuse/neglect, teachers may feel a certain moral responsibility to 'rescue' children in care. As Beck (1992)

suggests, the awareness of social problems garnered through mass media encourages a sense of personal responsibility.

The social-emotional support provided by teachers, as Luke (1999) argues, is “not in and of itself able to ‘bootstrap’ up the achievement of our most at risk students. It may be necessary but not sufficient” (p. 10). Further to this, Wynes (1996) suggests that when teachers associate issues that students experience in school to a child’s ‘problem’ background, they often overcompensate for those students. This is not to suggest that teachers abdicate from pedagogic duties, but that ensuring a student’s social and emotional wellbeing becomes a consuming task. Given Comber’s (1998) cautions against over-stating or under-representing ‘background’, the child as victim/teacher as rescuer role could be seen a problematic if teachers adopt deficit discourses.

The macro discursive practices that constitute children as victims and create a ‘moral panic’ around child protection also position teachers to take up a ‘traditional’ welfare practitioner role – that is, as ‘rescuer’. The ‘traditional’ welfare practitioner role is at odds with the current construction of teachers within the economic purposes of schooling – that is, as ‘technicians’. Comments from teachers and Mobility Teachers in this study suggest that they struggle to make sense of – and hence place in practice – “the interrelationships, contradictions and profound differences between the authoritative discourse (government policy) and their own internally persuasive discourse” (J. Smyth et al., 2000, p. 180). That is, teachers struggle with their own particular sayings, doings and relatings and the particular practice architectures in which they work – such which are constituted within more comprehensive metapractices (Kemmis, 2008). Given that teachers’ practices are influenced by the

particular social circumstances in which they are undertaken (Edward-Groves, Brennan Kemmis, Hardy, & Ponte, 2010), the construction of children in care frames and informs the teachers' possible practices – with a focus on social-emotional 'rescuing'.

5.4.2 Teacher as professional: *I begged them not to move him*

Focussing on the 'teacher as professional' identity/identities, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study feel that their specialised knowledge of education positions them as a professional with regard to children in care who are mobile. Jessica highlights this point:

If the child is awarded to the state then they are the ones that should be listening to us to make decisions on education for the student. (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

Yet, in the context of the school mobility of children in care, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers feel that their professional knowledge is undervalued or overlooked. Discussing a child in care who had moved from Kingfisher SS to Pelican SS, both schools that Simone works at, Simone states:

I just thought it was disappointing that he could not keep attending and we were kind of powerless you know, 'Could you please take him back to that school because we've done a lot for him? Nope? Ok, right then'. (Simone, MST, 16/09/2009)

However, there are many factors to consider when discussing teacher professional identity. For example, the significant educational reform currently being pursued within many countries, including Australia, has an impact on teachers' professional identity. It is important to note that teacher professional identity is not a fixed 'thing'

(Sachs, 1999) but rather there are “professionalisms in the plural, as constantly shifting social constructions that ebb and flow as the currents of educational change challenge their meaning and purpose” (Danaher, Gale, & Erben, 2000, p. 56). This section of the chapter explores the multiplicity of ways in which teachers see themselves as professionals.

The current ideology of the freedom of the market has created neoliberalism as a “politically imposed discourse” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 314), constituting the hegemonic discourse of education in western nation states today. As such, dominant discourses of accountability and performativity may potentially permeate or displace teachers’ professional knowledges (Comber & Nixon, 2009). The permeation of such discourses can be seen through Gillian’s construction of her work with children in care who are mobile. For Gillian, the discursive construction of the ‘teacher as professional’ focuses on managerial aspects such as accountability. She describes her work below:

That would be my argument, we were doing these plans [Education Support Plans] and we brought up [a student’s] old plan and she [the child protection worker] hadn’t even seen it or have a copy. We are accountable for tracking every student but how is the Department of Child Safety doing this? You would think that they would want their own data on how a child is progressing. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

For Gillian, the academic focus of her work with children in care is on a measure of accountability. In this way, Gillian’s understanding of ‘teacher as professional’ is consistent with the current neoliberal rhetoric within education. Such a focus may stem from Gillian’s previous teaching experiences in the United Kingdom, where New Right

policies in education have been pursued for a number of years (Whitty, 2006), as no other teachers involved in this study discussed accountabilities specifically.

Whilst Gillian discusses her work in terms of accountability, the reason for this focus is to show “*how a child is progressing*” (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009) rather than as a simple quantifiable output (i.e. whether the child has an ESP). In this way, Gillian adopts a broader understanding of accountability than that of neoliberalism. In this instance, accountability refers to intelligent accountabilities, rather than ‘narrow’ frames often highlighted within dominant paradigms (Lingard, 2009a). Sophisticated forms of accountability at both the school and system level are, Lingard (2009a) argues, what is required in the new social imaginary to underpin educational policy.

Gillian outlines that intelligent accountabilities are desirable but problematic in the context of school mobility. The successfulness of implementation “depends on the stability” (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009) of the child. Ruth also highlights that stability is an important precursor for the successfulness of Education Support Plans: “It [Education Support Planning] works very well for the ones that are in stable care” (Ruth, MST, 01/05/2009). As a MST, Helen, outlines: “Sometimes children arrive with an ESP. Otherwise they are given time to settle, then an ESP is completed” (Helen, MST, 17/03/2009). Whilst the main vehicle for supporting the education of children in care is perceived by these teachers to be a form of intelligent accountability, in the context of school mobility, the effectiveness of Education Support Plans to actually support education is questionable. Positioned in this way, Gillian sees that teachers’ work with children in care who are mobile needs to be a balance between informed prescription and informed professionalism (Lingard, 2009a) but that both prescription and professional capacities are compromised in the context of school mobility.

The acknowledgement of, and space for, informed teacher professionalism is seen as particularly important by Jessica. Ideally, teachers draw on their professional knowledge to make informed decisions regarding the education of students (Schleicher, 2008), however, Jessica perceives that her professional knowledge is undervalued by other stakeholders involved with children in care – namely carers and/or child protection workers. She explains:

If the child is a ward of the state then the Department of Child Safety should value the education system's input on making decisions regarding education of a child rather than the carer, who may only have the child for a period of time. Occasionally it seems that the Department of Child Safety listens more to the opinions of carers rather than an educator's professional judgement with regards to what is appropriate for a particular child . . . As schools or teachers have no legal right over a child they can only make recommendations to carers and caseworkers. If a program is recommended and the carer or caseworker opt not to follow this advice then that is their choice. (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

For Jessica, there is an ambiguity surrounding who is responsible for the education of children in care – the carer, the child protection worker or the teacher. Given her own “professional judgement” as an educator, Jessica seeks to take up this responsibility.

Judy, an experienced teacher and previously a foster carer, also feels that her knowledge of education and of the child in her class is undervalued by child protection workers, and she seeks to take up more active notions of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 1999). Judy describes the case of a child in care who had attended numerous schools in a short period of time, returning to Ibis SS on several occasions. Upon

hearing of the child's imminent second removal from Ibis SS, Judy explains that she contacted the Department of Child Safety:

I begged them not to move him. I said to the Department of Child Safety at the time, 'I've got him settled, he's working really well', and then they pulled him out and took him over to the other school. I was horrified.

(Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

First and foremost, Jessica and Judy are concerned with the 'best interests' of the child, they are seeking to reduce or eliminate inequality. For Jessica, this involves voicing and acting on her "professional judgement" as an educational advocate. Judy is concerned with the educational and social-emotional wellbeing of the child, and highlights the difficulty of 'being heard' in the context of school mobility – "I begged them not to move him".

For Jessica and Judy, the discursive construction of the 'teacher as professional' is focussed on educational matters, concerned with equality, social justice, and the improvement of children's life chances (J. Smyth, 2001). As Jessica highlights, "There are educational reasons as to why they [the student] are here and why we're doing what we're doing" (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009). Drawing upon democratic discourses, Jessica and Judy seek to take up an activist identity that has clear emancipatory aims (Sachs, 1999). The perceived "downplay of professional knowledge" (Comber & Nixon, 2009, p. 338) by carers and child protection workers is at odds with the notion of intelligent accountabilities (Lingard, 2010b) and democratic professionalism (Whitty, 2006).

Democratic professionalism and the associated 'activist' identity requires and encourages collegial and collaborative practices. However, Jessica, Judy and Gillian

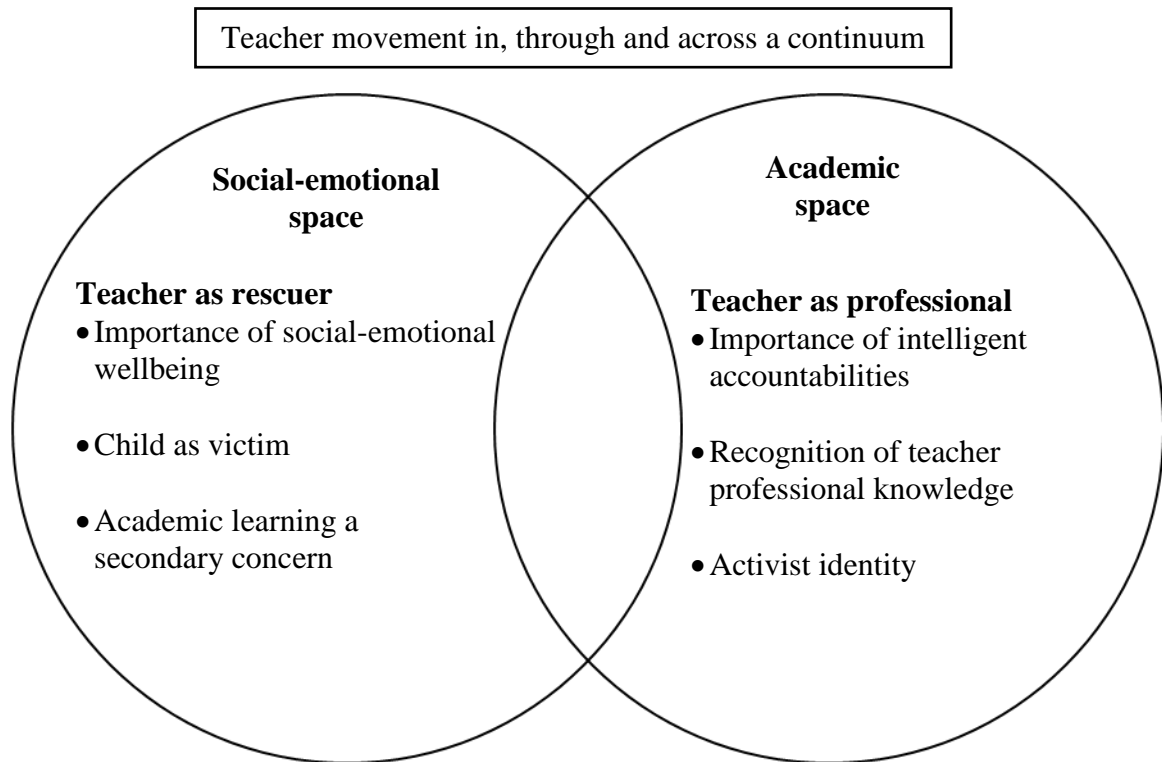
each perceive that there is a lack of space to work in open and meaningful ways with the range of stakeholders involved with children in care – specifically, in this instance, carers and child protection workers. The space is further reduced in the context of school mobility as teachers perceive that children in care are moved without consideration given to education.

The teachers in this study see that their own practices and the practices of the Department of Child Safety/child protection workers are connected, mutually interdependent, each influencing the other – forming *ecologies of practice* (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hardy, & Edward-Groves, 2009). However, they perceive that teacher agency is diminished as insufficient attention is given to teacher professional knowledge. As teachers seek to take up an activist identity, practice architectures constrain the scope for action.

5.4.3 Teachers' multiple identities

The teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study draw on two key discourses to discursively construct subject positions. As has been discussed above, these subject positions are 'teacher as rescuer' and 'teacher as professional'. Positioned in these ways, there is a level of interdiscursivity. Different sociological discourses are articulated together with educational discourses, creating two key spaces of operation. That is, a social-emotional space and an academic space. These two spaces are discursively constructed and are not necessarily discrete, but have points of intersection and overlap (see Figure 5.3 below). Teachers and Mobility Support Teachers move in, out and through both spaces – they are shifting subjects. Movement in and through these discursive spaces, furthermore, is highly dependent on context.

Figure 5.3. Teacher subjects within discursive spaces



Contexts are neither pre-existent nor static. Rather, they are always in the process of production – constructed and reconstructed by and through participant interactions. Specifically, school contexts are discursive sites that come to be constituted by, and constitutive of, the performed practices played out by teachers, students and other subjects involved – such as child protection workers and carers. Specific situations, for example, the circumstances whereby a child arrives at a school, can influence the identities which an individual assumes (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). At some points, the interaction of these different subject positions may well cause discursive struggle. That is, the social-emotional discourses sit side by side with academic discourses creating a conflictual picture of teachers’ work with children in care who are mobile. Whilst teachers place importance on their professional knowledge as educators and seek to take up an activist identity, they are entangled in discourses that constitute children

as victims that need rescuing. How teachers navigate this entanglement is partly based on the context of the situation. At each point, the context of children in care either adds to or constrains the position teachers take up. As Fairclough (1992b) advocates, discursive practices can only be understood in relation to the social context of which they are a part.

The concept of children in care as a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009) is useful in thinking through the context of teachers’ work. Teachers are part of the institutional framework of the Department of Education and Training, as it is this framework that largely shapes their work. However, teacher practices “are *situated* in the particular circumstances and conditions of particular *sites* – in what Schatzki (2003, 2005, 2006) calls *site ontologies*” (Kemmis et al., 2009, p. 7). Teachers, then, are *co-habitants* of sites along with other people – particularly child protection workers. Thus, in and through their identities and practices, teachers are connected to others within the site, and others are connected to teachers. The teachers’ perceptions of the institutional framework of the Department of Child Safety influences the practices and discursive events that teachers engage in. Specifically, teachers’ understandings of the metapractices and practice architectures of the Department of Child Safety feeds into the ways in which teachers come to understand and frame their own practices.

For the following section of analysis, Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis is drawn on to explore the ways in which teachers and Mobility Support Teachers frame their work with children in care who are mobile, given their own understandings of the practices of the Department of Child Safety. What emerges from the data is a perception from teachers and Mobility Support Teachers that the

metapractices of Child Safety and Education largely obstructs their work with children in care who are mobile.

5.5 Barriers to different professional positionings

Given that teaching occurs under intense social and political circumstances, Fullan (2007) attests that teaching needs to be a highly intellectual, emotionally intelligent and caring profession. The previous sections have explored how teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study navigate each of these spaces – that is, the social-emotional space and academic space. It is the perception of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers that there are several interconnected influences that impact on their capacity to work effectively with children in care who are mobile – that is, the practice architectures of child protection workers and the metapractices of education and child protection. A key concern that emerged for teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study was the intersecting, and sometimes contradictory, influences of the Department of Child Safety in the education of children in care who are mobile. An examination of how the practice architectures of the current education and child protection systems constrain the kinds of relations that can be formed and the perceived scope for action in the situated contexts of education is focussed upon in the following sub-sections.

5.5.1 Navigating the system: *It feels like this secret society*

In the public arena, alarmist and populist discourses surrounding child protection systems suggests a state of ‘crisis’ (Habermas, 1976) in policy domains. Chapter 4 discussed the ‘moral panic’ and a ‘something must be done about it’ attitude pertaining

to the child protection system (Sachs & Mellor, 2003). The sensitivity of child abuse and neglect, and the resultant urgency, is reflected in teacher comments as presented in this thesis.

The data demonstrates that many aspects of the child protection system are a mystery to teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Tamara encapsulates the view of a number of teachers with her comment: “It feels like this secret society that we’re not allowed to be a part of” (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009). Tamara’s notion of a “secret society” links to the historical secrecy of child abuse – that is, concealment of abuse/neglect by perpetrators (Ferguson, 2004), hidden forms of abuse/neglect (Tomison, 2001), suppression of agency failures (Ferguson, 2004) and ‘official secrecy’ (Overington, 2008; Stewart, 2009). According to Goddard (2009), a notion of secrecy still surrounds the child protection system. In a recent review of the Australian child protection system, Goddard (2009) notes, “It is ironic that just as child abuse requires secrecy, Australian child protection services appear to require it too” (p. x).

As teachers and Mobility Support Teachers navigate the discourses around child protection, they encounter difficulties in finding and taking up – that which they deem to be ‘appropriate’ – subject positions. Jessica discusses this navigation from the teacher perspective:

Teachers are addressing what they can but sometimes this is difficult due to the priorities of the Department of Child Safety. The Department of Child Safety places emphasis on placement stability and family reunification so it is difficult for teachers to be advocates when told that placement is more important than schooling, when really it should be about what is best for the child. (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

For Jessica, her work with children in care who are mobile is democratically based, holding “what is best for the child” at heart. The alignment with Sachs’ activist professional is clear – a practitioner recognises that “needs vary, are contextualised, and require careful and thoughtful decision making” (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, p. 352). The capacity of teachers to reach “careful and thoughtful decisions” is, in Jessica’s view, “difficult due to the priorities of the Department of Child Safety” – or what Kemmis (2008) would term metapractices. This suggests that there is a disjuncture between what Jessica sees as the priorities of the Department of Child Safety and the priorities of the Department of Education and Training. Yet, within the space created by this disjuncture “teachers are addressing what they can”. Thus, rather than contributing to enabling or emancipatory practice architectures (Smith, Edward-Groves, & Brennan Kemmis, 2010), Jessica views the metapractices of the Department of Child Safety as constraining her own practices.

Alongside Jessica, Tamara expresses the difficulty in addressing the needs of children in care who are mobile. Tamara suggests that difficulty stems from not being part of the “secret society”. Part of her role as a Mobility Support Teacher requires Tamara to source information on a student so that appropriate supports can actively be put in place. She explains that gathering this information, from both education and child safety workers, is difficult:

We have to work extremely hard to try and chip down. It’s ridiculous. The teachers, the GOs [Guidance Officers], the admin, it’s everyone. It is hard for us, the context of that child and all the people involved, a lot of the time we are on the outside. We have this little icepick trying to chip in to get this information. It’s hard . . . I don’t know if it’s just me and I’m learning and I

should be a bit more up to date with it all, but to me it's a bit of a mystery, a closed door so to speak. I guess I find that, in lots of circumstances, it's really hard to draw the information out, whether it's a parent or a carer. Even with the carer or the caseworker, it's very hard to get that whole picture of what's going on. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Tamara's use of the metaphorical "little icepick" and "closed door" can be seen as more than stylistic flourish, they are discursive dimensions of how Tamara understands her positioning and practice. Metaphors structure the way individuals think and act. As Fairclough (1992b) argues, "how a particular domain of experience is metaphorised is one of the stakes in the struggle within and over discourse practices" (p. 195). In this instance, Tamara suggests that getting the "the whole picture of what's going on" is an arduous task, that information is entombed into a structure that she is finding difficulty entering. Additionally, the effort that she has to put in to acquire this information is making her job (cf. doings) difficult – she feels that she has to "work extremely hard to try and chip down. It's ridiculous". Tamara understands where to obtain information – previous teachers, Guidance Officers, carers, parents, child protection workers – yet feels 'frozen out' due to the secrecy surrounding child protection. However, she acknowledges that her own knowledge (cf. sayings) may be constraining her ability to access this information (and her relationships with others).

The effect of secrecy suggested by Tamara is also felt by Simone, a fellow Mobility Support Teacher. Simone expresses the difficulty and uncertainty that arises when working with children in care who are mobile:

I am not even sure if I am allowed to ring the caseworker and talk to them because that might be breaching some sort of confidentiality protocol . . .

And even when you ring a previous school, if there is a whole lot of confidentiality stuff going on or there has been domestic violence. I remember ringing a school and then thinking, ‘Maybe I shouldn’t have done that because now that person at that school knows where that child is’, and I was quite stressed but no one has told me not to do this. (Simone, MST, 16/09/2009)

Simone’s uncertainty regarding the role of educators within the child protection system is clear as she continuously questions what is “allowed” – “I am not even sure if I am allowed to . . .”, “Maybe I shouldn’t have done that . . .” and “. . . no one has told me not to do this”. In part, Simone’s concerns are related to school mobility – she is contacting previous schools to gather information on a student but the sensitivity around child protection causes her to become “quite stressed” whilst performing her work. The pressure felt by Simone impinges upon her “*living practices* (moment-by-moment social interactions)” (Edward-Groves et al., 2010, p. 44). Simone is not enabled as a Mobility Support Teacher, as the system world encroaches on her living practices. For both Tamara and Simone, the practice architectures of child protection evidently feeds into their practices as Mobility Support Teachers.

Navigating the role of educators within the child protection system is an uncertain and precarious task for these teachers and Mobility Support Teachers. Whilst they attempt to take up different subject positions, there is always some uncertainty regarding what is “allowed” within the “secret society”. This uncertainty stems from a lack of clarity of their role as well as a lack of clarity regarding the work of the Department of Child Safety. The *living practices* that relate different people to one another are, Edward-Groves et al. (2010) suggest, the *sine qua non* of education. Thus,

to better understand practices in education, attention needs be given to social interactions and relationships between *co-habitants* of a site. Simone and Tamara highlight that they are unsure of the role of teachers within child safety and thus unsure of the relationship between themselves and child protection workers:

We don't really have any information on DoCS as an organisation . . . I don't really know where I fit in there with DoCS and what we are allowed and not allowed to do. (Simone, MST 16/09/2009)

When I have rung DoCs to talk to who I know is the caseworker, I don't always get to talk to that person. So there is a lot of people involved and it is very hard to get a relationship going when you are talking to a different person every time . . . I am very upfront, 'Hi I am [Tamara], this is my role, this is how the role fits in' right from the get go. But when there is a caseworker or a youth worker from DoCs they don't give you any information, they don't even tell you who they are. A lot of time I have had to go, 'So, who are you?' and it is really awkward to say that but there has been opportunity for them to be upfront. I find them a bit passive. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

I have one child in care at the moment, and the CSO [Child Safety Officer] did contact me to see them next week. This was probably my first contact so I was a bit, 'hmmm, how come you're talking to me?' (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

Not knowing where educators “fit in there with DoCs” and the perceived passivity of child protection workers constrains the type of ‘relatings’ that can occur. These relationships (or lack of) are experienced relationally as “very hard”, continuing the notion of a “secret society” that educators feel frozen out of. However, Gillian suggests that there is a need to (re)consider the positioning of educators from the perspective of child protection workers:

I think Department of Child Safety are a bit the same, thinking where are you on the continuum? Is it a need to know basis? Are we breaching confidentiality? (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

Thus, teachers are unsure of their own role within child protection and, similarly, perceive that child protection workers are equally unsure. This view is supported by Calder and Barratt (1997) who suggest that the role of teachers within the child protection system is not clearly defined and therefore under-utilised.

It can be seen that political and institutional structures impact on the interpersonal face of education (Edward-Groves et al., 2010). Drawing on the concept of ‘relational architectures’ (Edward-Groves et al., 2010), educators and child protection workers are linked in a web of connectedness between the practice architectures that impact upon their *living practice*. At the level of the interpersonal, educators act in particular kinds of ways illustrating an instance of how the social/political context prefigures the identities they take up and the scope for action. For these educators, what is lacking in their relationships with child protection workers is a sense of unity that places the best interests of children in care who are mobile at heart. As Tamara states:

But it frustrates me because, to me, the child is at the centre of it all and I think that lack of communication and sharing of knowledge is detrimental to the child. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Effectively, educators perceive that the systemworlds of the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Child Safety are colliding. This collision creates a fragmented field that has several effects – educators are unsure of their positioning which restricts their capacity to take up an activist identity and form meaningful relationships; collective input into the education of children in care who are mobile is constrained through the social/political context; and educators perceive that the lifeworld of children in care and of teachers fails to be considered. Of this systemworld/lifeworld disconnection, Edward-Groves et al. (2010) suggest that “if our aim is to recover and then sustain agency and solidarity as *living practices* which *enables* its participants, unites the field and advances education, the systemworld needs to connect with the *lifeworld* in ways which are genuine” (emphasis in original, p. 53).

Teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study suggest that there is a lack of genuine connection between the systemworld and lifeworld, as they feel ‘frozen out’ of important processes aimed at supporting children in care – specifically, the Education Support Plan process. There appears to be variable involvement in the Education Support Plan process by both teachers and child protection workers, as evidenced in the following:

I have not been involved in the meetings, I don’t know if I have to be. The Principal will probably just ask, ‘How is this student going?’ . . . We’re not really involved in that much at all, we go in there to teach. (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

The sad thing is that when it comes to meetings, it's always the Principal that sits in on those. I've never attended one of those meetings. It's always the Principal and in some ways I think it would be better if the teacher could sit in because they could answer the questions there and then whereas the Principal can't . . . The Principal will speak to me before the meeting and ask what I think, what I would like to see happen. So you're not left out completely, you do give an opinion. (Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

If you realise in which area and why they need extra scaffolding then the teacher is definitely involved in the ESP . . . I think, depending on what it is in the child's circumstances. Sometimes the CSOs [Child Safety Officers] are very involved and other times there is less of a need, I suppose, for them to be so heavily involved. (Maria, 14/08/2009)

It is mainly the carer involved in the development. In the ones I have done, I've never had a CSO [Child Safety Officer] involved. (Ruth, MST, 01/05/2009)

The variability of involvement, and responses to involvement, of teachers in the ESP process again highlights that teachers are unsure of their role when working with children in care. While Samantha suggests that teachers "go in there to teach", Judy laments the fact that her professional knowledge is not given a direct voice within the meetings. Additionally, according to teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study, there appears to be variable involvement by child protection workers. Of this, Maria suggests that it depends "in which area and why they need scaffolding" – thus,

the goals of the ESP relate to the need for the teacher and/or child protection worker to be involved.

5.5.2 Barriers to basic professional requirements: *That would have been a good thing for me to know*

The difficulty in navigating the system presents numerous challenges to the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study. Teachers, as shifting subjects moving in, through and across discursive spaces, struggle to take up an activist identity. Teachers perceive that, within the space that they are working, there is little room for the democratic and participative principles on which the activist identity is based. There is a perception that respect, mutuality and communication do not occur due to the sensitivity surrounding children in care and the priorities of the Department of Child Safety. In the absence of respect, mutuality and communication, the capacity of teachers to meet the demands that the work requires is compromised (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Within the social-emotional space of teachers' work, Samantha stresses the importance of background information to ensure that she is able to effectively manage the classroom environment. She explains that not knowing "where the child has been and what they know already" can, in some cases, lead to "escalated behaviours" (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009). As a beginning teacher, Samantha indicates that she has not had a lot of experience with children in care who are mobile. However, she draws on her experience with other mobile students, particularly mobile students who have had "a difficult home life" to state: "From that, I can see that being mobile and also being in care, because some of those students would also be mobile within care . . . so their behaviour would be escalated" (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009). Samantha

goes on to explain that when working with students who may express “escalated behaviours”: “You can only give them what they can take. Really, you can’t overload them because they are already overloaded” (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009). In this way, background information can be seen as essential to ensuring the child’s social-emotional wellbeing.

Similarly, Gillian discusses how her ability to be an ‘effective educator’ (Darling-Hammond, 2011) is affected by the absence of communication, respect and mutuality:

One of the children I had, who was relatively new to the school, actually attacked me with a garbage bin and bit me . . . That was worrying because I had no idea that was a tendency of his at all . . . I had no idea that was in his history. I was not ever told to be careful, to be wary, to go about him in a certain way, not to confront him over issues, nothing like that . . . When the child’s caseworker did come up he said, ‘Oh yeah, he is really violent with female workers, that’s why I’m his caseworker because he can’t ever have females working with him’. I thought, ‘That would have been a good thing for me to know’. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

In this instance, as the student was “relatively new to the school”, Gillian explains that she had not received any information that “this [behaviour] was a tendency of his at all”. Yet, upon speaking to the child protection worker, it became apparent to Gillian that such behaviour was an aspect of the child’s behavioural history. Gillian justifies that, “That would have been a good thing for me to know”, due to her concern for both the child in question and the other students in the class – “they were really let down by that situation because they were frightened. Really frightened” (Gillian, Teacher,

14/08/2009). Gillian explains that had she received background information on the student she would have “gone about that incident in a completely different way . . . there would be a different way to approach him” (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009).

The concerns raised by Gillian and Samantha above are situated within the social-emotional space of teachers’ work. The perception that their capacity is compromised is not limited to this space but extends to the academic space. In the same way that Gillian highlighted that a child protection worker had knowledge of a student that could have assisted her in her work, Tamara and Simone reason that if a child has attended a school, someone must possess educational knowledge on that student. They explain below:

If they [the student] have been to school somewhere then there is knowledge. There is stuff that has been happening to support that child so why doesn’t some of that get passed on? (Simone, MST, 16/09/2009)

I want to know the background of the situation, the behaviours that have been a result of that experience and the strategies that have been trialled and failed or succeeded. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Essentially, the Education Support Plan and student file should contain the information that Simone and Tamara view as necessary to actively and promptly support a child with his/her education – the “. . . stuff that has been happening to support that child”, “. . . the strategies that have been trialled and failed or succeeded”. As has been outlined in Sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.2, the information that a child in care arrives with at a new school is highly variable. Thus, the variability of the information received by

teachers affects their capacity to make ‘good decisions’ (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005) that support students to progress academically.

Maria suggests that in the context of mobility it is difficult to maintain a sense of progress and achievement with students. This sense of progress, Maria feels, is interrupted by school movements. She provides an example of this feeling below:

One of the students has come and gone about three times in the one year.

You feel like you’re just starting to get some momentum with their learning and you start to see that they’re achieving and then you get a notification that they are leaving. It’s always a feeling like, ‘Oh no, we were just . . .’ and then sometimes they come back and you need to start that process all over again because where they have been, they’ve been on their own journey and they don’t really pick up where they left off. (Maria, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

In essence, Maria sees the experiences of children in care who are mobile as a “journey” – both physically and metaphorically. Within the academic space, Maria suggests that she is able to “get some momentum with their learning and you start to see that they’re achieving” until school mobility suspends the momentum. If the child returns to the school, Maria suggests that she must work to gain momentum again as “they don’t really pick up where they left off”. For Maria, knowing the academic journey that a child has been on would enhance her ability to seamlessly continue that journey when a child returns.

In view of Maria’s insights, it follows that the capacity of other teachers to support children in care who are mobile would be enhanced if they also knew the child’s journey to date. Thus, to ensure that the best educational outcomes for children

in care who are mobile are attained, there is a need for collaboration and information sharing within schools, between schools and between schools and the Department of Child Safety. While such collaboration and sharing can be seen as most desirable, the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study indicate that, at present, collaboration and information sharing is variable within each of these spheres – within schools, between schools, between schools and Department of Child Safety.

Gillian suggests that information sharing within schools does occur but that greater relationships could be forged with child protection workers:

Within the school it has, but I think it could even work a little bit better if we had interviews with Child Safety Officers right up front. Front end those interviews before we even receive the child so that we know, together, right away, what do we need to employ. It's not a bit of stabbing around in the dark. We know where this child is coming from, what kind of needs they have, if any. Sometimes it might even be the case that we over compensate, that this child is actually really quite settled and quite happy to just slot on in. We need to know all that and I think we can by having a relationship with the CSO [Child Safety Officer]. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

However, Judy suggests that information sharing “really depends on your school” (Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009). Judy explains, at her previous school, teachers were actively encouraged by the school leader to access student records. However, at her current school, she describes difficulty in accessing information about students: “There is basically nowhere that I could access that information. You only get told what they choose to tell you” (Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009). This variability in information sharing

suggests that effective communication depends on the commitment of individual staff or schools rather than organisational arrangements or systemic structures that support such practice. Simone reinforces Judy's comment in stating that the level of information sharing, particularly between schools, "depends on the willingness of the Deputy [Principal]" (Simone, MST, 16/09/2009).

Tamara suggests that in the context of school mobility ensuring communication between schools is particularly difficult:

I hate to say it, even amongst the three schools [in the cluster], when difficult children are leaving there is a bit of a mentality of, 'Phew, we survived that' and I can understand that, but there is not a mentality of, 'Oh, let's reflect on everything that happened here and everything that worked and what didn't work, and pass that on to the next school' . . . I don't blame them for not doing that. Everyone knows how busy they [teachers] are and I can understand the relief they're feeling. As of the last week I have begun to say, 'That's great for you but [Simone] and I are continuing so you need to. It's not about us, it's about the child. That child is continuing so you need to be doing all that you can to help that transition'. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Here, Tamara sees education as a shared endeavour and suggests that there must be mutual connectivity and solidarity between educational sites to ensure that teachers are "doing all that you [sic] can to help that transition" and the child. Tamara suggests that teachers must consider the future influence that the knowledge garnered whilst a child is in the school can have on the *living practices* in other educational sites – for the child and for other teachers. Thus, Tamara seeks to, and urges other teachers to, take up

a more activist identity – one which is collaborative, future oriented, strategic and tactical (Sachs, 1999). Given the complexity of teachers’ work in the context of school mobility, Tamara’s comments can be seen to reflect the sense that teacher’s *living practices* are largely concerned with the here-and-now and fails to consider the larger web of connectedness that works with and supports children in care who are mobile (Edward-Groves et al., 2010).

The focus on the here-and-now has several identified effects on the work of teachers in this study. It impacts on the teacher’s own sense of achievement, which Maria and Gillian describe through their experiences of working with children in care who are mobile below:

Putting in the time and the effort, it’s worth it for yourself anyway. I know we get a lot of mobility and they’re in care as well . . . Each time you give them books, you give them pencils, you give them hats and all this, you put in all this time getting them resettled, then they’re off again. It is frustrating, but then if you don’t put the effort in, you are just going to end up with a dysfunctional child in your class which can actually affect the whole feeling in the classroom. You need everyone to be working together. (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

[The sense of achievement is] not the same as when you have a student for the year. When you saw where they started and where they’ve finished, you can naturally see a big growth. Whereas a student that has come and gone, I don’t think that you develop that same rapport with them, and you don’t develop that same sense of, ‘We’ve been on this journey together’ because

obviously it might be that they are here for a couple of weeks and then gone for a couple of months and then another couple of months are back. (Maria, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

For Maria and Gillian, working in the context of school mobility means that their experience of the “psychic reward” (J. Smyth, 2001, p. 150) of teaching – that is, seeing students benefit directly from teaching – is “not the same as when you [sic] have a student for the year”. Their comments also highlight the importance of teachers knowing and being able to continue the momentum of the child’s academic journey, as discussed previously. Additionally, teachers’ focus on the immediate demands of the job – the here-and-now – education as a shared endeavour and teaching as working towards a shared vision, as suggested by Tamara, is lost. For teachers, mutual connectivity and solidarity can be developed through communication. Without such communication, teachers will continue to be “stabbing around in the dark” each time a student who is mobile enrolls.

5.6 Enablers: *You’re not starting on the backfoot*

The self-narratives of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers presented so far have largely focussed on the varied positionings of teachers and constructions of their work with children in care who are mobile. It is the view of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study that multiple metapractices and practice architectures influence their work. Whilst much of the interview data presented thus far has focussed on what teachers perceive as barriers to taking up a more activist identity, there exist numerous enablers to educating children in care who are mobile. What emerged as a significant

enabler was the expertise of other staff members, located both within and outside of the school.

Whilst teachers stressed the importance of their professional judgement, all conceded that they did not possess the range of skills and knowledge to support all children in care who are mobile, and that there were often a range of professionals involved in working with children in care. For some teachers, support for educating children in care came from within the school, such as Special Education Teachers, Guidance Officers and Student Support Teams. For example, Samantha explains that she felt it unnecessary for teachers to receive professional development on the needs of children in care as she has access to numerous sources of information and support:

I could go to my Specialist Education Teacher, for anything I needed to know I went and asked her. It was fantastic having her in the classroom. I learnt so much. Otherwise I could approach [the Head of Student Support Services] for further information if I required it. (Samantha, Teacher, 14/08/2009)

Similarly, Maria suggests that “you could get information if you required it. You could see your Deputy or Principal” (Maria, Teacher, 14/08/2009).

Significantly, each of the teachers involved in the study outline that the Mobility Support Teacher is also an invaluable support. After listing the numerous tasks undertaken by the Mobility Support Teacher Maria, for example, states: “In a way, we’re enabled more with time and with knowledge about the student’s background and circumstances . . . you’re not starting on the back foot now” (Maria, Teacher, 14/08/2009). Speaking about the Student Support Services Team and the Mobility

Support Teacher, Gillian contends: “Those two services are just crucial. If we lost either of them we’d really feel it” (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009).

Teachers and Mobility Support Teachers highlight that it is imperative for professionals to combine their specialised knowledge to support the teacher, the student and the other children in the class. For example, within the context of the school community, Tamara feels that the work of the Guidance Officer and Mobility Support Teacher are essential for supporting teachers and students. She explains below:

I think they [Guidance Officers] have great skills and strategies, more skills and strategies than me in lots of ways, but MSTs have that **classroom** experience and knows what the teachers need to know. (Tamara’s emphasis, Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009).

Tamara highlights that each professional – Guidance Officer and Mobility Support Teacher – brings various “skills and strategies” to assist teachers in educating children in care who are mobile.

The democratic discourse of collegiality gives rise to the development of communities of practice (Sachs, 1999). Yet, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers see that the community of practice must extend beyond the school to fully support children in care who are mobile. Noting this, Judy outlines that some of these supports are in place:

Schools are not equipped to meet the needs of children in care. We have outside support that will take the children and do some counselling. (Judy, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

Similarly, Jessica explains why such supports are necessary:

Some children in care may need counselling, psychological help or assistance with emotional attachment which schools are not equipped to provide, or teachers require PD to understand where the students are coming from. For those who have not had the training it is very difficult, teachers may think the child is being naughty when a whole lot of emotional factors are affecting their behaviour. All children, regardless of their needs, should be looked at as a whole and, whatever their needs are, then that's our job to provide as best we can with what we've got. However, there are some students in care who do require extra support because of their emotional needs that we as teachers cannot provide. It is not in teacher training to learn how to support such emotional/psychological needs. (Jessica, Teacher, 22/06/2009)

As discussed in Chapter 1, collaboration is a useful tool for addressing wicked problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Cutler, 2009), particularly in overcoming the 'uncertainties' that arise as a result of the numerous stakeholders involved in the education of children in care. For the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study, school mobility adds further complexity to these 'uncertainties' as the stakeholders involved change as children move schools and/or placements.

The complexity of mobility is particularly pronounced in "schools that are serving students with the greatest educational needs" (Keating, 2009, p. 31), such as those involved in this study. Whilst Tamara acknowledges and values the work of other professionals in supporting children in care who are mobile, she suggests that the current funding system that enables schools to access such resources is problematic.

In terms of resources within the school, I mean schools are such complex places and there are already so many demands. Initially I think Teacher Aides could be really powerful to work with children in care and to build up a relationship but if a child comes into the school requiring Teacher Aide time, it is on top of what is already allocated. Same as with the GO [Guidance Officer]. That time is not topped up. I have found that children coming at this time of year are more needy than children coming at other times of the year. So the kids are coming but the resources aren't. (Tamara, MST, 16/09/2009)

Tamara discusses the complex and multifaceted nature of funding schools, particularly in contexts of disadvantage – an issue highlighted in a recent assessment of school funding in disadvantaged contexts (see Rorris et al., 2011). Although Tamara and other teachers and Mobility Support Teachers acknowledge the resourcing that enables support for children in care who are mobile, when working in the context of disadvantage and school mobility it is noted that “the kids are coming but the resources aren't”.

In line with Tamara, Gillian suggests that the Mobility Support Teacher is an essential resource for supporting children in care who are mobile but that “it comes a lot higher than the school. What needs to be addressed is housing, care, schools, all together, working” (Gillian, Teacher, 14/08/2009). For Gillian, cooperation between institutions and systems is essential for addressing the school mobility of children in care. As has been discussed, such an approach is currently being pursued by the Federal government.

5.7 Conclusion: Navigating teachers' work

Each of the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study understand their work with children in care who are mobile in particular ways. Whilst they recognise the limitations of their own skills and knowledge, there is a strong sense that they see themselves as largely responsible for the education of children in care. However, there are many dimensions that construct, enable and constrain a teacher's perceived capacity to function as an 'effective teacher' (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

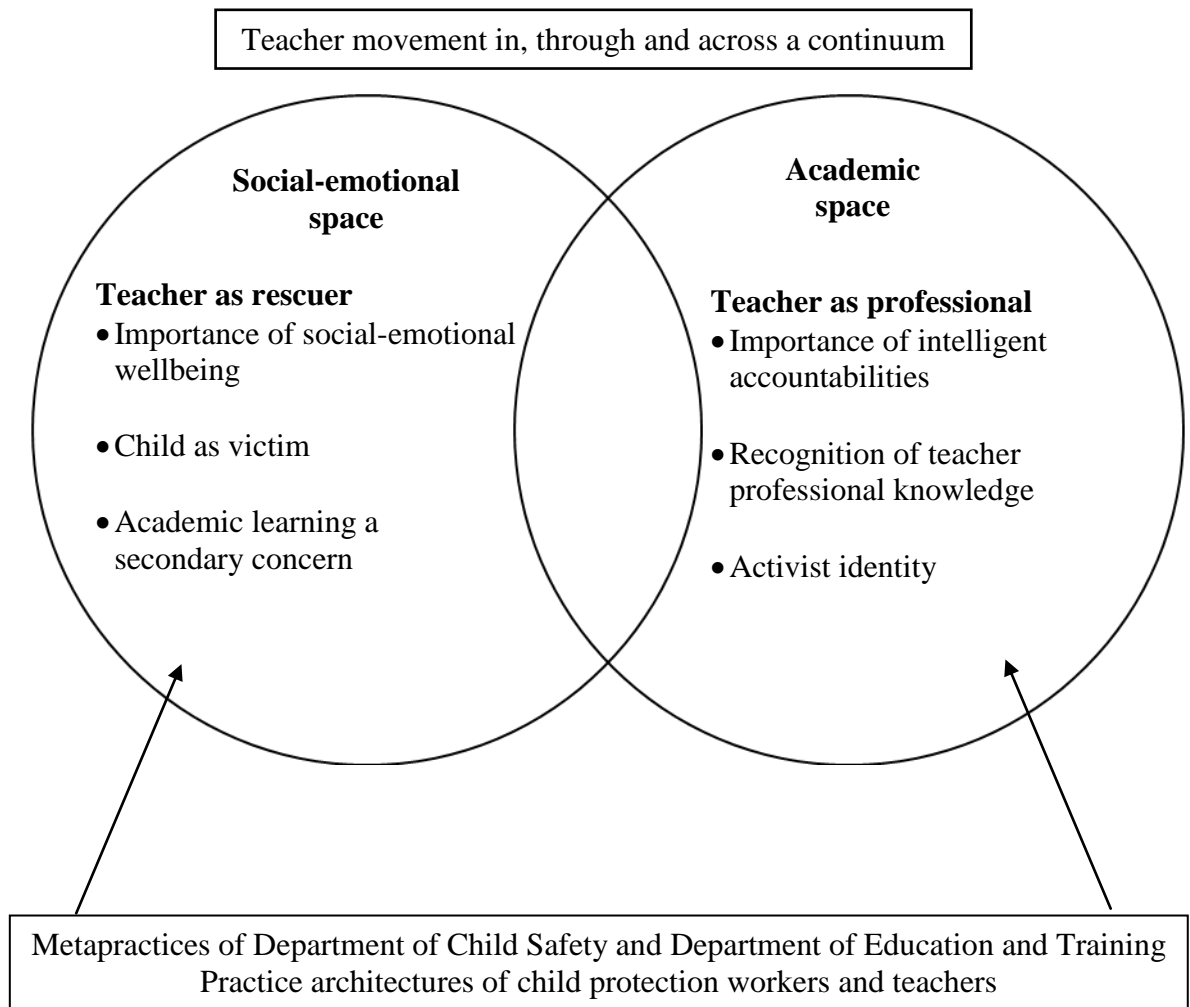
This chapter began by exploring the complexity of the environment in which teachers' work occurs. The schools involved in this study are located in areas contextualised by multi-level disadvantage, with AEDI results suggesting that socio-economic conditions are related to children's development and readiness to learn. Additionally, most of the schools in which the study takes place are characterised by high to exceptionally high levels of school mobility. Though representing only a small proportion of the mobile population in the 12 study schools, for children involved in the child protection system – school mobility is, at times, a consequence of their involvement in the child protection system.

The analysis of teacher and Mobility Support Teacher interview data revealed that teachers take up varying subject positions, moving in and through two key discursive spaces – the social-emotional space and the academic space. There are a number of factors and processes that influence the subject positions teachers adopt – for example, wider macro-discursive practices. Teachers and Mobility Support Teachers perceive that the metapractices of the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training, as well as the practice architectures of child protection workers and other teachers, enable and constrain the particular kinds of sayings, doings and relatings that can and do take place (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Figure 5.4 (see p.

256) following draws together the varying influences on teachers' work to visually represent the spaces in which teachers' perceive themselves as working, as well as the perceived systemic structures and discursive practices that enable and constrain their work. As teachers navigate their work with children in care who are mobile they continue to 'bump against' the practice architectures and broader metapractices that shape their work.

Drawing on the positions established in previous chapters, the following chapter considers policy to support children in care. As the concluding chapter, each of the threads of analysis presented in the preceding chapters are drawn together to answer the overarching research question – What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile? In light of the findings from this study, practical ways forward for policy and practice are also presented.

Figure 5.4. Conceptualising teachers' work



Chapter 6: Innovating ‘ideal’ spaces through collaboration: ‘Taming’ a wicked problem

One of the most obvious and immediate policy solutions to address the issue of educational inequality in Australia is the creation of new school ties between schools and a wider set of agencies and organisations. These entities working together to meet the educational needs of local communities would provide the foundation for a real education revolution. “The ambitious scale of reform, the changing role of schools and the complex needs of children and families means that no one organisation can achieve its aims alone” (West-Burnham, Farrar & Otero, 2007). (Keating, 2008, p. 80)

6.1 Overview

This thesis has presented an investigation into the school mobility of children in care, with a particular focus on the role of the state. The research presented in the preceding chapters has explored the tensions created by neoliberal governance and examined the response of the state – through the process of filling-in by/with policy. In addition to considering the effect of marketisation on schools, the work of four Mobility Support Teachers and five teachers working with children in care who are mobile revealed their experiences of supporting a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009).

Through an analysis of the social and discursive construction of teachers’ work, this thesis has opened a space to consider, from the perspectives of teachers, what type of policy might support children in care. Additionally, a focus on the characteristics of the

school mobility of children in care in 14 schools across Queensland provided a deeper understanding of the nature and extent of school mobility, and served to contextualise the perceptions of teachers and Mobility Support Teachers.

All public policies in liberal democracies are framed by discourses of equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community (Lingard, 2009a). This thesis has explored the neoliberal articulation of these discourses, highlighting the tensions of an equity agenda within this frame. Whilst the 2010 re-election of the Australian Labour Party, albeit as a minority government, renewed a focus on equity for schools in low socio-economic contexts, the current Australian educational policy landscape remains characterised by steering mechanisms, such as the Education Support Plan for children in care. As Smyth (2010) notes, a key missing link in the Australian government's approach to social inclusion is the lack of any genuine attempt to understand the complexities of disadvantage.

Throughout this thesis, the aim has been to shed light on some of the complex intersections between the school mobility of children in care and teachers' work in the context of disadvantage within the current neoliberal macro framing of social policy. This chapter, then, revisits key components of the research before going on to consider how a different macro framing might inform policy to support children in care who are mobile. In doing so, it also acknowledges Keating's notion that a "real education revolution" might be underpinned by collaborative partnerships. The necessity of collaborative partnerships is noted by West-Burnham, Farrar and Otero and, as outlined in Chapter 1, is essential for addressing wicked problems.

The research began with the premise that an understanding of the role of the state is necessary for an understanding of policy – particularly in terms of the way that state

formations frame policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Offe, 1985). Policy analysis, Garrick (2011) notes, ‘brings to the surface’ the role of state activity and relationship between citizens and the state – an important aspect to consider within a democratic society. An examination of the role of the state, its policy drivers and its modes of governance can reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions and perspectives that define institutional practices. Using critical theory as a lens for investigation, the education and child protection systems within Queensland were examined.

The study involved three distinct components. The first explored the role of the state in navigating and responding to the various shifts and pressures created by neoliberalism within a globalised policy field. The second component examined the current response to the education of children in care in neoliberal times through document analysis. The third component explored *le quotidien* (the local or daily life) through a case study drawing on several data sources to consider the enactment of policy in contexts of disadvantage.

6.2 Reviewing key findings

Employing a theoretical and analytical framework that drew upon critical theory, policy analysis and critical discourse theories, the study focussed on how the role of the state is conceptualised and plays out in the context of the school mobility of children in care. With this in mind, each component of the study sought to answer a different enabling research question and ultimately contribute to developing an understanding of what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

The first component of the study suggested that several developments (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) put the role of the state into question, contributing to a shift

from government to governance – or a ‘hollowing-out’ of the state. However, the notion of a hollowed-out state has been questioned by some governance theorists (Cope et al., 1997; Hudson, 2007; Rönnberg, 2008; A. Taylor, 2000). These theorists suggest that, through the process of centralisation, the state strengthens its capacity inwards, resulting in a simultaneous hollowing-out and filling-in of the state by, and with, policy.

In this new form of governance, the child protection and education systems are steered towards different accountability targets. Essentially, in neoliberal times, the education and child protection systems are each framed by different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions. These different framings create lacunae that educators and child protection workers must navigate, and have real effects on the students that such policy is intended to support. The normalised assumptions written into policy, and that contribute to the creation of lacunae, complicate the work of educators and child protection workers, accentuating the ‘substantive’, ‘strategic’ and ‘institutional’ uncertainties characteristic of wicked problems (Head & Alford, 2008).

In light of the changing role of the state, the second component of the study explored the contradictions in neoliberal modes of governance. Drawing on Fairclough’s (1992b) model of Critical Discourse Analysis, several documents from the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training were examined. It was suggested that the *Partnership Agreement* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004) was an enactment of filling-in by, and with, policy. Whilst the *Partnership Agreement* provides clarity of roles and responsibilities, a fundamental aspect of ‘taming’ wicked problems, there are a number of assumptions and a complexity of tasks hidden in the enactment of policy (Ball, 1997), namely, that principals (or their nominee) are enabled to undertake the process involved in

developing the Education Support Plan, as outlined in the *Partnership Agreement*. As highlighted in Chapter 4, research (see Angus et al. 2007; Queensland Association of State School Principals, 2011) suggests that this is not the case, and a recent report from the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) points to a disjuncture between policy and practice.

Additionally, the document analysis revealed that the differential articulation of school mobility within several documents aimed at child protection and education staff and carers represents both the struggle over policy and the tensions between policy and local enactment. The net result is a settlement whereby the school mobility of children in care is deemed undesirable but generally accepted – in this way, school mobility becomes normalised.

Finally, the permeation of managerialist discourses within policy documents was highlighted through a focus on the positioning of teachers and the conceptualisation of teachers' work. The involvement of teachers in the processes of developing an Education Support Plan for children in care was found to be contingent upon the approach adopted by management. In this way, the economic agenda that shapes teachers' work, coupled with managerialist discourses, positions teachers to be managed – the key to 'steering at a distance' (Ball, 1993a). However, education framed as an economic purpose does not sit easily with discourses of teaching, learning and student welfare (Ball, 1994). Given that teachers are not 'state functionaries' but do have some degree of autonomy (Dale, 1989), how teachers view their work becomes important to teachers conceptualisation of their practice and identity. Teachers, then, must navigate their 'ideal' of practice and the space which they are given to practise.

The third component, in part, sought to explore how teachers and Mobility Support Teachers conceptualise their work with children in care who are mobile. The teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study worked within contexts of disadvantage and high levels of school mobility. Significantly, it was suggested that the socio-economic conditions in each study community are related to measures of childhood development within that community, as assessed by the Australian Early Development Index.

From this study, the reasons for school mobility of children involved in the child protection systems were consistent with other national (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004; Townsend, 2011) and international (Choice et al., 2001; Fletcher-Campbell, 1990) studies. That is, the school mobility of children involved in the child protection system can be related to involvement in the child protection system – for example, when changing placements or upon entering care. However, at other times, school mobility may not be linked to involvement in the child protection system – for example, when a carer moves residence. This research study also found that minimal information travels with a child involved in the child protection system and information that is received by schools generally relates to behaviour and school absences, rather than academic progress or learning. To support the learning needs of this cohort of children, the Mobility Support Teachers reported accessing a range of internal and external supports. It was argued that an expanded notion of ‘readiness to learn’ is required in the context of mobility and that the role of the Mobility Support Teachers – a dedicated resource for case management funded through a specific project – ensures that support is focussed in a systematic way through communication and collaboration with a range of other services.

Finally, this study identified that teachers and Mobility Support Teachers draw on various discourses and take up different subject positions when navigating their work with children in care who are mobile. The two most prominent of these positions were ‘teacher as rescuer’ and ‘teacher as professional’. Teachers take up these varying subject positions, moving in and through two key discursive spaces – the social-emotional space and the academic space. For teachers involved in this study, there were a number of factors that influenced the subject positions taken up, for example, their perception of children in care (largely seen as victims requiring ‘rescuing’), the practice architectures of other professionals involved with children in care who are mobile or the metapractices of education and child protection. For these teachers, a range of systemic structures and discursive practices worked both to enable and to constrain their perceived capacity to support actively children in care who are mobile.

6.3 Returning to the research questions

This study was structured with a view to answer one overarching question: *What type of policy might support children in care who are mobile?* This overarching question was supported by three enabling questions, which each of the components of the study, as described above, sought to answer. The three enabling questions were:

What support exists in current policy and how was such policy formed?

From the perspective of teachers, what might policy for children in care who are mobile need to look like and why?

What are the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care?

In this study, the school mobility of children in care was conceptualised as a ‘wicked problem’ – and each of the enabling questions were approached with this understanding in mind. Chapter 1 outlined that a feature of wicked problems is that there is no clear or correct solution; thus the literature discusses solutions in terms of ‘taming’, ‘tackling’ or ‘coping with’ (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Head & Alford, 2008; Roberts, 2000). Three main coping strategies are, as suggested by Roberts (2000), authoritative, competitive and collaborative, with collaborative approaches generally accepted as the most useful (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Roberts, 2000). In addition to the collaborative approach, the range of techniques used to ‘tame’ wicked problems put forward by the Australian Public Service Commission (2007) was drawn on to consider what type of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

At the outset it is important to acknowledge that the Australian Public Service Commission (2007) cautions the need to tolerate uncertainty and accept the need for a long term focus when addressing wicked problems. In answering the overarching research question this research does not represent ‘the response’ to the school mobility of children in care, nor does it purport to do so. It explores the type of policy that might help, particularly from the perspective of teachers. Rittel and Webber (1973) suggest that there are “no immediate and no ultimate” (p. 163) criteria to ascertain the success of potential ‘solutions’, and that “there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error” (p. 163). This thesis, however, adopts a more pragmatic and cautiously optimistic view (Head & Alford, 2008). Whilst possible ‘solutions’ may impact on or cause unforeseen circumstances, learning from these ‘solutions’ can improve the ability to ‘tame problems’ and “some strategy choices are likely to be shown to be more viable in specific contexts than others” (Head & Alford, 2008, p. 7). Throughout this thesis, the

role of the state has been considered central; thus, possible ‘solutions’ must acknowledge the role of the state and the possibility of a post-neoliberal settlement.

6.4 An alternative role of the state

As the macro philosophy underpinning current social policy, neoliberalism has resulted in a shift of the locus of power of the state. Under the existing neoliberal paradigm the state has shifted to co-ordinator of social policy. The dominant rationality, then, is in the market, with minimal intervention from the state. Robertson and Dale (2002) note that there are contradictions created by a shifting governance arrangement associated with the neoliberal project, suggesting that ‘local states of emergency’ have been created which present a particular problem for the state – that is, how to intervene, yet not undermine the commitment to neoliberalism.

Lingard (2009a), O’Hara (2005) and Rudd (2009) suggest that it is possible to critique neoliberal policy. O’Hara (2005), for example, notes that the critical governance lesson from the past three decades is that neither the distributive statist nor the fundamentalist free market approach to governance is appropriate. With a view to moving beyond the post-war welfare effort and neoliberalism, many have called for a re-casting of the role of the state (Giddens, 1998; Latham, 2001; Lingard, 2009a; Pierson, 2006; Rudd, 2009). To achieve a new role for the state, academics (Lingard, 2009a; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Robertson & Dale, 2002) and politicians alike (Blair, 1994; Rudd, 2009) argue that a new macro policy frame, or what Lingard (2009a) refers to as a ‘new social imaginary’, is required. As Rudd (2009) points out:

The great neoliberal experiment of the past 30 years has failed . . . the emperor has no clothes. Neoliberalism, and the free-market fundamentalism

it has produced, has been revealed as little more than personal greed dressed up as an economic philosophy. (p. 23)

In essence, what Rudd (2009) and Blair (1994) (see the opening quotation of Chapter 3) call for is a social democratic approach to policy, with the adoption of a ‘flexible repertoire’ (Ball, 2008) of state roles – generally, as provider, funder and regulator of public goods. Giddens (1998) outlines that this ‘third way’ seeks to find “a new relationship between the individual and the community, a redefinition of rights and obligations” (p. 65). In this way, the welfare state becomes the social investment state and the ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992) is “elevated to a new good” (S. Taylor & Henry, 2000, p. 8) as welfare becomes ‘positive welfare’.

The third way approach, of course, is not without its critics, who view the third way as “warmed over neoliberalism” (Giddens, 1998, p. 25). However, Giddens (1998) argues that the third way “is an attempt to transcend both old-style democracy and neoliberalism” (p. 26). As such, whilst being market-oriented, the third way maintains “social justice and emancipatory politics . . . at its core” (Giddens, 1998, p. 45). However, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) caution that the third way approach adopted by Blair in the United Kingdom and Clinton in the United States is not sufficient to tame the excesses of neoliberal globalisation as policy remains “trapped within the neoliberal social imaginary” (p. 191). They go on to state that there is a need to reimagine globalisation through a lens other than that of neoliberalism (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

As outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.2, all public policies in liberal democracies are framed by discourses of equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community. However, policies are framed by particular articulations, definitions and emphases of each, depending on the macro frame. What Rudd (2009) and others (see Blair, 1994;

Lingard, 2009a; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) call for is a stronger emphasis on community and equity than is currently framed within the neoliberal paradigm. Rudd (2009) states that the current, and continuing, challenge is “harnessing the power of the market to increase innovation, investment and productivity growth – while combining this with an effective regulatory framework which manages risk, corrects market failures, funds and provides public goods, and pursues social equity” (p. 24).

Whilst criticisms of the neoliberal social imaginary of globalisation have been noted, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that there has been little consideration of what moving beyond neoliberalism means for social policy, including educational policy. For Rudd, and as continued by Gillard, expenditure on education is important because of the “self-evident values of equality” (Rudd, 2009, p. 25), but also because such expenditure leads to a growth in productivity. In this way, equity and economic prosperity are harmonious (Lingard, 2009a; Savage, 2011). Whilst there is evidence to suggest that expenditure on education provides both public and private benefits (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), the neoliberal ideological push towards privatisation and education framed as an economic purpose does not improve the spatio-temporalities of students in disadvantaged contexts (see Ball, 2008; Hursh, 2008).

Taylor and Henry (2000) argue that the conjoining of equity and efficiency has implications for the framing of educational policy, particularly in terms of reconciling individualised or target group policy responses (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4). Establishing the ‘right’ type of approach to adopt is a perennial policy problem (Henry, 2001). The challenge, as Taylor and Singh (2005) argue, is “how to balance two key aspects of social justice – *redistribution* and *recognition of difference*” (p. 725).

The findings from this doctoral study suggest, along with others (see S. Taylor & Henry, 2000; S. Taylor & Singh, 2005), that *redistribution* and *recognition of difference* approaches should be pursued simultaneously. For children in care, experiences of abuse and/or neglect may affect learning and, as such, necessitate a redistributive approach. However, children in care are not a homogeneous group and various strategies may be required to differentiate within the group. For example, different types of abuse and/or neglect are associated with a range of possible effects or consequences, which may manifest in the short- or long-term (Delfabbro, 2008; Tilbury et al., 2007). Similarly, there is a high proportion of Indigenous children in care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011a). As such, a recognition of difference approach is also necessary to meet the diverse needs of individuals within the group.

An additional factor to consider when addressing social justice issues is the increasing focus on place-based responses to disadvantage. As outlined by Griggs, Whitworth, Walker, McLennan and Noble (2008, cited in Byron, 2010) in the opening quotation of Chapter 5, policies that dissociate people and place are likely to perform poorly. Over the last few decades there has been an increasing socio-spatial division caused, in part, by economic globalisation and economic rationalism in social policy (Lawson, 2005). The concentration of multiple and inter-related forms of disadvantage reported in the study areas within this research project point to the need for focussed place-based disadvantage policies. However, as Byron (2010) notes, effective policy approaches are integrated and mutually informing. Given that place-based approaches to address disadvantage often ‘cut across’ portfolio, professional and institutional boundaries (Byron, 2010; Lawson, 2005), there is an imperative to ensure co-ordination

and integration. Currently, the role of the Mobility Support Teacher aids in this coordination and integration for children in care who are mobile.

Thus, policy to support the education of children in care needs to adopt a *redistributive* and *recognition of difference* approach to equity. So, too, there needs to be collaboration and co-ordination across several policy spheres, particularly in contexts where multiple forms of disadvantage are evident. There is a role for the state as funder, provider and regulator of public goods – but a ‘new social imaginary’ is needed to underpin policy. A shift in the role of the state still underpinned by neoliberalism is unlikely to improve social policies, or the circumstances of those whom such policy is intended to support.

6.5 Framing what type of policy might help

In light of Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010) call for a new social imaginary, whilst also recognising that a neoliberal framing of policy currently continues, this section discusses what kind of policy might support children in care who are mobile.

Underpinned by the notion of ‘wicked problems’, and suggestions for taming such problems, the type of policy that might help is based on a collaborative model, and simultaneously pursues a *redistributive* and *recognition of difference* approach to equity. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2009) suggests four key elements of a collaborative model for protecting children while noting that the elements are not discrete but rather intersect and overlap. The four key elements of a collaborative model are: integrated governance arrangements, a collaborative culture, a shared vision and legislative support (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). Each of these elements will be discussed in turn.

6.5.1 Integrated governance arrangements

The notion of children in care as a ‘dually involved population’ (Wulczyn et al., 2009) brings together two departments that, theoretically, should possess effective strategies for working with children. However, the traditional bureaucracy of vertical silos (with vertical accountabilities) creates tensions in providing support for children in care who are mobile. The ‘messiness’ of the school mobility of children in care means that traditional bureaucracy is “not well-adapted to support the kinds of processes necessary for addressing complexity” (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007, p. 13), particularly in the context of neoliberalism where departments are ‘steered’ toward different outputs and outcomes. In this way, bureaucratic structures create inherent tensions for horizontal accountability.

Outcomes have been an important aspect of education reform over the last few decades and it is suggested that ‘steering at a distance’ has made vertical accountability clearer (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). However, there is concern that performance measures become the focus, rather than the provision of services, as was highlighted in Chapter 4. The notion of ‘intelligent accountabilities’ is useful in reviewing the accountability framework. Ideally, the type of policy that might help would be underpinned by this notion. As has been discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, intelligent accountabilities are required at the school and system levels. Of accountabilities, Darling-Hammond (2010) states:

In addition to *standards of learning* for students, which focus the system’s efforts on meaningful goals, this will require *standards of practice* that can guide professional training, development, teaching, and management at the classroom, school, and system levels, and *opportunity to learn standards*

that ensure appropriate resources to achieve the desired outcomes. (cited in Lingard, 2010a, p. 144)

That is, systems are accountable to schools in ensuring that goals are attainable. In line with Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) articulation of a 'new social imaginary', such accountability will work in a system that considers both horizontal and vertical accountabilities, and are also systemically reciprocal.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Department of Human Services partnership agreement – *Partnering Agreement: School attendance and engagement of children and young people in out of home care* (2003) – is discussed here so as to provide an example of horizontal and vertical accountabilities. The Victorian partnership agreement clearly sets out:

Where a child or young person enters out of home care or changes placement, Department of Human Services, the school and the parent or guardian will make all efforts to support the child or young person to continue to attend their current school. (Department of Education and Training and Department of Human Services, 2003, p. 6)

The Victorian *Partnering Agreement* (Department of Education and Training and Department of Human Services, 2003) provides guidance and accountability beyond the school level (to education regions, case managers and parents/guardians/caregivers), and focuses on assisting a student to remain at the school she/he is attending upon entering or changing placements within care. Such a comprehensive focus, premised on cooperative, collective and collaborative action, is fundamental to ensuring a shared focus among the multiple stakeholders involved in the education of children in care – and is key to 'taming' wicked problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007;

Cutler, 2009). However, as was outlined in Chapter 4, ensuring a comprehensive focus cannot be left to the individual or agency – a comprehensive focus needs to be underpinned by a collaborative culture.

6.5.2 A collaborative culture

As mentioned above, the traditional structure of departmental silos constrains collaboration and is, in part, what makes ‘taming’ wicked problems particularly difficult (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). The recent shift towards to cooperative federalism, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), represents positive steps at the Federal and State governmental levels to addressing wicked problems. This said, presently barriers are perceived at the systems level by Australia Public Service staff (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007).

Whilst it is suggested that devolution enables flexibility in possible responses at the local level, in neoliberal times each department is framed by different philosophies, policies, practices and assumptions, and steered toward different outcomes which thus compromise the ability to work across agency boundaries. The findings of this thesis suggest that, at the departmental level, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers perceive barriers in working both across and within organisational boundaries – that is, between the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education and Training, and between and within schools. Thus, there is a need to develop a shared understanding of the problem and to develop possible solutions collaboratively – as will be discussed.

Through the interview data, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers suggested that behavioural change on the part of child protection workers and other teachers could, potentially, better enable each stakeholder to support children in care who are

mobile. Regarding behavioural change, the Australian Public Service Commission (2007) states:

Because wicked problems are often imperfectly understood it is important that they are widely discussed by all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a full understanding of their complexity. If a resolution of a wicked issue requires changes in the way people behave, these changes cannot readily be imposed on people. Behaviours are more conducive to change if issues are widely understood, discussed and owned by the people whose behaviour is being targeted for change. (p. 27)

In this study, the Mobility Support Teacher played a key role in both increasing the understanding of school mobility generally and attempting to support behavioural change on the part of teachers. Tamara (MST), for example, explained how she attempted to instigate behavioural change – reminding teachers that, when children left the school, their educational journey continued and teachers “need to be doing all that [they] can to help that transition” to a new learning environment, both for the child and for the new teacher/school. Teachers involved in this study, and as part of the larger project, also espoused the value of the role of the Mobility Support Teacher and were therefore more willing to engage with issues concerning school mobility (A. Hill et al., 2011).

Offe (1975, 1985) suggests that policy is mediated by state structures – that is, the organisation of departments. Similarly, Taylor et al. (1997) advocate that the organisational structure of departments can influence policy. Of this they state that social justice issues are more likely to be taken up if there is a social justice division within a department of education. Similarly, research discussed in Chapter 1

highlighted that education was more likely to be considered if there was a staff member with a dedicated role focussing on the education of children in care (see Jackson, 1988; Zetlin, Weinberg & Kimm, 2004, 2005; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006). Thus, the type of policy that might support children in care who are mobile would include the role of an ‘educational advocate’ for children in care. Depending on the context of the school/district/region/departmental area, this ‘educational advocate’ could be located within schools, within a district or region or within the child protection department. Such a position would be charged with working across organisational boundaries, engaging stakeholders and influencing behaviour (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007).

The Australian Public Service Commission (2007) suggests that “how people behave is determined by many factors and is deeply embedded in social situations, institutional contexts and cultural norms” (p. 32). The teacher perspectives presented in this research suggest that teachers have minimal understanding of the child protection system and, as such, base their understandings of children in care on media sources. In this way, it is suggested that an ‘educational advocate’ should aim to develop additional core skills of teachers. Without a shared understanding of the problem (and shared visions for solutions), behavioural change is unlikely to occur.

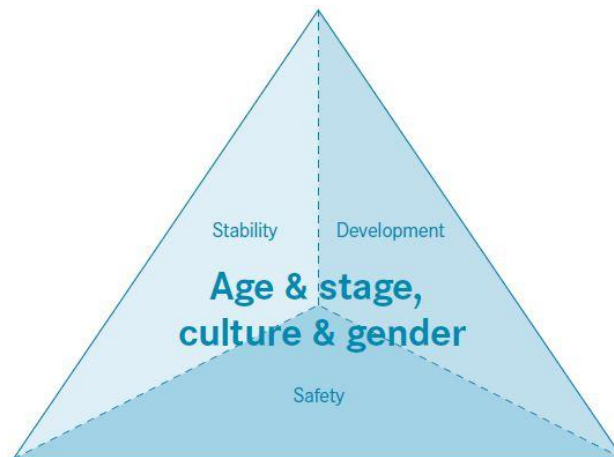
6.5.3 A shared vision

As has already been outlined, the bureaucratic structure and methods of ‘steering at a distance’ (Kickert, 1995) create inherent tensions for developing a shared vision. From the perspective of the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study, when considering ‘what might policy need to look like and why’ there was a clear focus on

emotional wellbeing and the building of relationships. Encouraging students to take risks in an environment of safety is known to optimise learning (Bellhouse, Johnston, Fuller, & Deed, 2004), and the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers discussed herein appear to make this link when focussing on children's sense of safety and security prior to a focus on academic learning. Notably, these teachers and Mobility Support Teachers conceptualised mobility, in either placement or school, as a negative aspect of the lives of children in care – or akin to that of a refugee (as presented in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3). That is, movement was constructed as unplanned, traumatic and possibly recurrent. However, as outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3, it is important to consider more holistic understandings of stability, with a focus on both the *physical* and the *relational* aspects (Tilbury & Osmond, 2006).

The Victorian Department of Human Services '*Best Interests Framework*' puts forward a holistic understanding of stability. The framework encourages a consistent focus on three dimensions of a child's experience – safety, stability, and development – viewed through the lens of the age and stage of life, the child's culture and gender (as shown in Figure 6.1 below) (Department of Human Services, 2008). Here a broad concept of stability is applied, including components such as care arrangement, education, social connections, culture, religion, identity and family connections. This '*Best Interests Framework*' acknowledges that many decisions requiring action will have an impact on a child's stability in one or more of these areas (Papageorgiou, 2008)

Figure 6.1. The ‘Best Interests Framework’



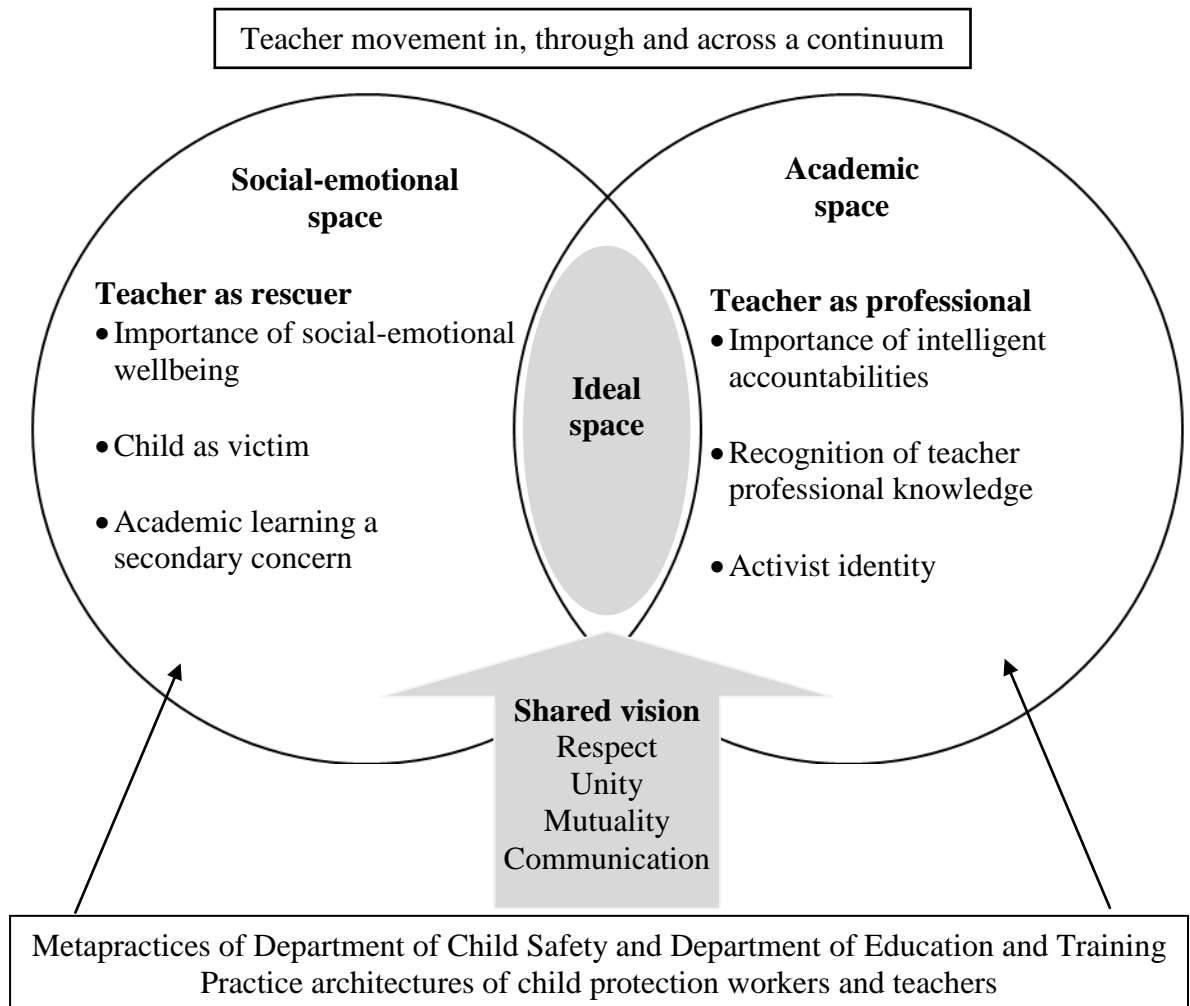
Source: *Best interests case practice model: Summary guide*, by Department of Human Services, 2008. Melbourne, Australia: Author. p. 2.

Many of the teachers and the Mobility Support teachers highlighted the *relational* importance of school for children in care who are mobile. However, this was underpinned by a presumption that children are generally placed in care with people who are strangers – Department of Child Safety data from 2007-2010 show that approximately 31% of children in care were placed with a kinship carer, foster carer or provisionally approved carer with whom a family relationship exists between the carer and the child (Department of Communities, 2011d). Whilst teachers’ and Mobility Support Teachers’ concern for *relational* stability may be legitimately informed, there is a need for teachers to engage with child protection workers to understand what other aspects of stability/permanency may be in place for a child in care. With increased knowledge of the child protection system teachers may not be as focussed on ‘rescuing the victim’, thus enabling more sustained focus on the academic space.

As highlighted in Chapter 5, the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study constructed their work in two key spaces – the social-emotional space and the academic space. Throughout Chapter 5 it was suggested that systemic

structures and discursive practices work together to enable or constrain teachers' perceived capacity to work in an 'ideal' space with children in care who are mobile, as represented in Figure 6.2 below.

Figure 6.2. Working towards an 'ideal' space



Given that teaching needs to be a highly intellectual, emotionally intelligent and caring profession (Fullan, 2007), the 'ideal' space for working with children in care who are mobile combines aspects of the social-emotional and academic space. Comber's (1998) suggestions are taken onboard – that is, understanding risk factors that students are exposed to but cautioning against over-stating or under-representing

‘background’. Whilst children in care are not a homogeneous group, the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study developed understandings of how to work with children in care by drawing on their own personal lived experiences and broader discourses – such as the media portrayal of children as victims. Whilst many children in care are exposed to a number of risk factors that can affect their education (Barber & Delfabbro, 2004; Choice et al., 2001; Dyson, 2008), there may also be a number of protective factors at play (Smart et al., 2008).

Teachers and Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study perceived that they are working towards ‘the best interests of the child’. Within child protection, ‘the best interests of the child’ is the norm that lies at the heart of practice (T. Sinclair, 2005). However, as Sinclair (2005) attests, “this is open to interpretation. What, for instance, is the child’s ‘best interest’? Who decides?” (p. 229). According to some teachers and Mobility Support Teachers, there appears to be disjuncture between the views of child protection workers and/or carers and teachers with regards to the education of children in care – or in Habermas’ (1984a) terms, distorted communication. As a result, teachers feel that child protection workers and/or carers are not justified in their actions owing to a lack of professional knowledge regarding education.

The perceived disjuncture between the prioritisation of education by teachers and child protection workers is symptomatic of the nature of this type of problem – that is, a wicked problem (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007). One feature of wicked problems is that “wicked problems hardly ever sit conveniently within the responsibility of any one organisation” (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007, p. 4). As such, approaches to ‘tame’ wicked problems often involve breaking the

problem into sub-problems that can be solved within a particular organisations domain of control (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). What is useful in such an approach is developing collaborative practice with a shared understanding of the problem to ensure a holistic approach to solving the problem (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). However, interview data suggest that there is a lack of shared understanding and vision – between teachers and between teachers and child protection workers and carers – with regards to the education of children in care in the context of school mobility. The benefit of effectively engaging stakeholders in understanding the problem from one another’s perspective can be seen through the interview data. However, to ensure engagement and collaboration does not rest upon individual practices, legislative structures may be required.

6.5.4 Legislative support

To some degree, legislative structures may support the formation of a collaborative culture (Black, 2008b). Collaborative strategies, as an integral approach to tackling wicked problems, may require formal structures to support the formation of collaborative relationships (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). It is important to note that there is some disagreement regarding whether legislation assists or impedes the formation of collaborative relationships (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). What is clear from the research conducted by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2009) is the need for a clear policy framework that outlines each stakeholder’s responsibilities. Uncertainty in responsibilities is likely to constrain collaboration, in turn, constraining the ability of stakeholders collaboratively to develop and work towards a

comprehensive focus and/or strategy. As such, legislative support may be required to ensure that all stakeholders involved in the education of children in care – i.e. government departments and non-government organisations – are included in a unified system (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009).

Alongside a clear policy framework that encourages a collaborative culture is the need to ensure that policies are created and modified through feedback from those who are ‘on-the-ground’. This circular process to policy ensures that there is not a disjuncture between policy and practice, and that policy represents ‘what works’. In this way, the value of tolerating uncertainty and accepting the need for a long-term focus can be seen. In the words of Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008): “We need informed and enlightened educational policy makers, administrators, curriculum developers and teacher educators . . . They, too, must be held to account for their work in the construction of the practice architectures of schools” (p. 60). With regard to the *Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004), the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) suggests that such policy learning has not occurred. Legislative support, then, is required to ensure this circular process to policy occurs and that all relevant stakeholders are involved.

As was outlined at the beginning of this section, and highlighted throughout, the four key elements of a collaborative model are integrated and overlap. Whilst a collaborative model is integral to supporting the education of children in care who are mobile, it will not, in and of itself, be sufficient. The following section, then, draws together the notion of a ‘new social imaginary’, practice architectures and a

collaborative model to develop five principles that should inform policy to support children in care who are mobile.

6.5.5 Re-imagining policy to support children in care who are mobile

Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that there have been sets of social policy that have been framed by neoliberalism, which is framed by macro economic policy.

Within a neoliberal paradigm the role of the state is (re)structured as co-ordinator of social policy. However, there are now calls for a ‘flexible repertoire’ (Ball, 2008) of state roles – namely provider, funder and regulator. This section presents a set of principles to underpin policy aimed at supporting the education of children in care, framed by restructured state roles. These principles are drawn together from the different components of the research presented in this study, and highlight that for any policy response there needs to be consideration of/from the macro to the micro. Such consideration is important as macro political and economic structures can, and do, influence what occurs at the micro level (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). As Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hardy and Edward-Groves (2009) suggest: “To change education involves also changing the practice architectures, that is, the mediating preconditions which prefigure educational practice” (p. 5). In this way, these principles are based on the idea that a change in the macro framing will support a change in the sayings, doings and relatings that occur in practice (Kemmis et al., 2009).

The type of policy response that might support children in care who are mobile consists of:

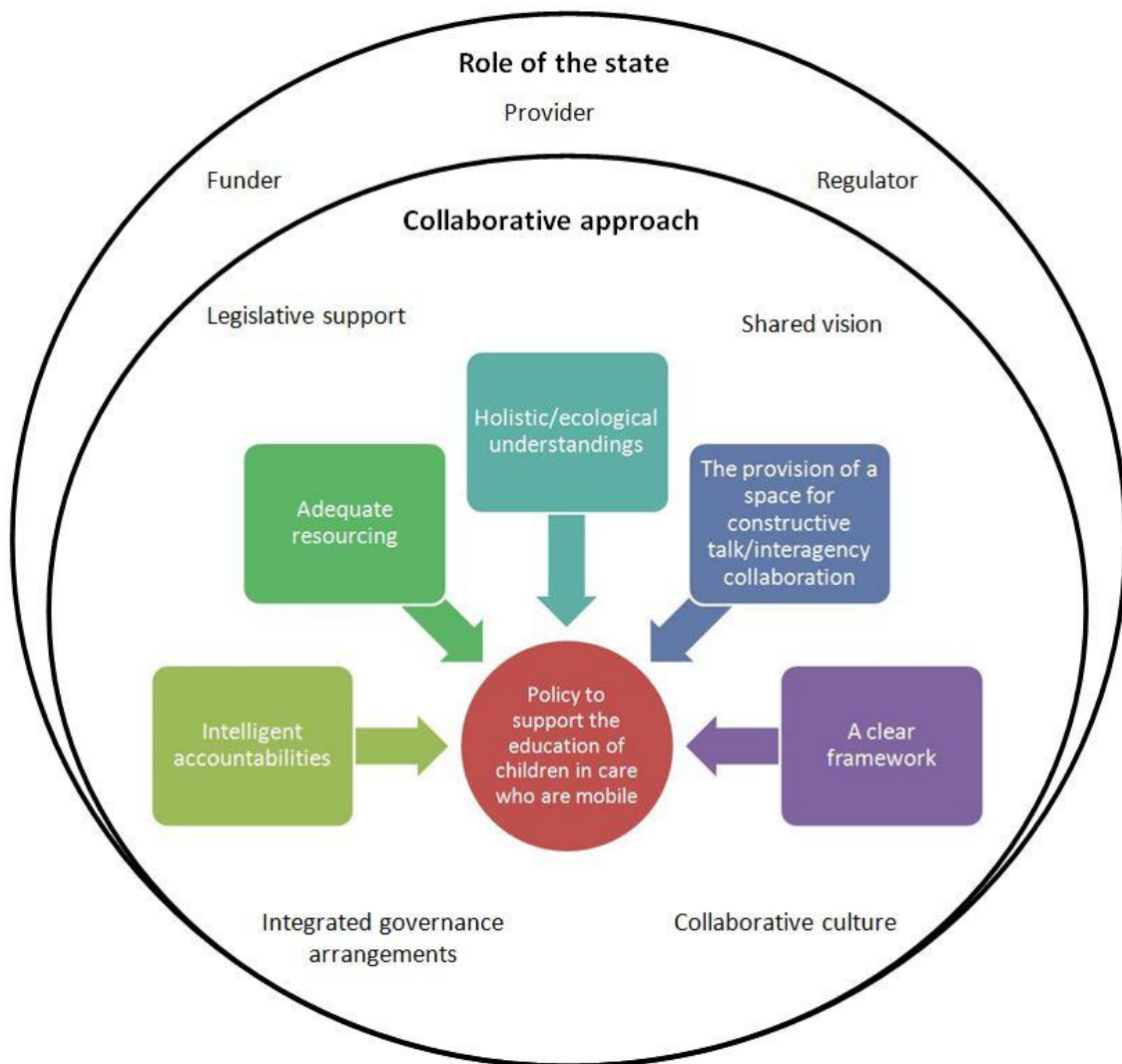
1. *Intelligent accountabilities* that consider the micro level of schools, including the transactional pressure created by school mobility, the experiences of children

and the complexity of teachers' work. Intelligent accountabilities are required at both the school and the system levels.

2. *Adequate resourcing* that considers the resources required to support schools in meeting the educational – and other – needs of children in care who are mobile, particularly in contexts of disadvantage. Similarly, *distributive* and *recognition of difference* approaches should be considered and simultaneously pursued.
3. *Holistic/ecological understandings* of the range of factors that influence educational engagement and achievement.
4. *The provision of a space for constructive talk/interagency collaboration* so that all stakeholders involved develop a shared understanding of the 'problem' and collaboratively develop solutions. Space for constructive talk will facilitate the building of a 'learning community' based on respect, mutuality, unity and communication – supporting the development of a shared vision.
5. *A clear framework* that describes the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved but enables those stakeholders to take up activist identities. For educators, this includes a recognition of the centrality of informed teacher judgement.

Figure 6.3 diagrammatically displays this conceptual model.

Figure 6.3. A conceptual model of policy to support children in care who are mobile



The five principles listed above bring forth practical implications. In view of the critical theoretical frame that underpinned this study, these practical implications are examined in the following section. The practical ways forward provided below are structured around the five principles that could ideally underpin a policy response for the education of children in care who are mobile.

6.6 Providing practical ways forward

There are a number of policy and practice implications arising from the findings of the research presented in this thesis. In line with the recommendations made by the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011), this thesis acknowledges that improving the educational outcomes of children in care will require time, resources and commitment at all levels. It is important to note that there are reforms and campaigns occurring outside the scope of this thesis that impact upon its findings. One such example is the ‘*Foster a Child. Foster a Future*’ campaign which aims to increase the number of foster carers (Department of Communities, 2011c). Such an increase in carer numbers could potentially enable greater opportunities for carer-child matches, reducing the rate of placement breakdown and, consequently, placement and school mobility.

Some of the practical ways forward outlined below are likely to be resource-intensive but, as highlighted by the Australian Public Service Commission (2007), tackling wicked problems involves sustained effort and resourcing, and accepting the need for a long-term focus. Currently, the estimated financial cost of assisting children in care calls into question the most efficient use of funds. A report estimating the cost of child abuse to the Australian economy and society states that:

The additional educational expenditure required to assist children suffering chronic harm from abuse is:

- (prevalence cost) Australian, State and Territory government expenditure on additional educational assistance for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect was estimated as between \$24 million and \$332 million, with a best estimate of \$93 million in 2007.

- (incidence cost) Over their lifetime, the costs for children experiencing child abuse for the first time in 2007 were estimated as \$88 million to \$1,608 million, with a best estimate of \$428 million. (P. Taylor et al., 2008, p. 87)

In discussing the findings of this aforementioned report, Professor Chris Goddard stated: “It clearly demonstrates the importance of accountability and transparency. To spend so much and know so little defies belief. There also needs to be greater investment in research and evaluation” (“The cost of child abuse,” 2009, p. 5). Beyond the immediate economic costs that can be associated with child abuse and/or neglect are issues such as the potential for future drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, poor health, homelessness, juvenile offending, criminality, and incarceration (Bromfield, Holzer, & Lamont, 2011; P. Taylor et al., 2008) that are likely to affect outcomes for children in care.

Several reports point to the limited Australian research on the education of children in care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011b; P. Taylor et al., 2008). The research presented within this thesis adds to the current body of knowledge – with a particular focus on school mobility. Arising from the research are a number of implications and recommendations that are presented to provide practical ways forward for the education of children in care who are mobile. These suggestions for practical ways forward are organised around the five principles to underpin policy to support the education of children in care who are mobile, as outlined above.

6.6.1 Intelligent accountabilities and adequate resourcing

Intelligent accountabilities and adequate resourcing are tightly linked and, therefore, considered simultaneously here. As an accountability measure and necessary for funding applications, the Education Support Plan was considered by the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers in this study to be a useful tool in supporting the educational outcomes of children in care. However, the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers suggested that the implementation and usefulness of the Education Support Plan were problematic in the context of school mobility. Additionally, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers suggested that, in practice, there was variable involvement by child protection workers and teachers in the development of the Education Support Plan. Generally, teachers felt their role as professionals was undervalued in the Education Support Plan process. In light of these findings, the critical importance of all stakeholders contributing to the development of the Education Support Plan should be understood and prioritised by each stakeholder. If teachers are not involved in the Education Support Plan process, they should be supported to understand the goal/s of the Education Support Plan and their role in supporting the child and other stakeholders in achieving the goal/s.

Additionally, the complexity of tasks written into the enactment of policy (as discussed in Chapter 4) and the suggestion that Education Support Plans often focus on behaviour management (Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011) highlights the need to refocus the reporting of outcomes of Education Support Plans. The types of outcomes stated in the Educational Support Plan should consider a feedback process so that the effectiveness of the plan in reaching goal/s may be tracked, reassessed and tailored to assist reaching *educational* goals. Additionally, the Education Support Plan should be focussed on

educational goals and supported by, and supportive of, other plans (e.g. Individual Education Plans, Individual Behaviour Management Plan, Senior Education and Training Plan, etc).

As noted above, several reports have highlighted the limited Australian research on the education of children in care (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011b; P. Taylor et al., 2008). Taylor et al. (2008), in particular, point to the difficulty separating factors that may affect educational achievement – such as school mobility. Stone (2007) highlights that the sub-population of children in care who are likely to require additional educational support are those who have experienced a history of placement movements. Given the possible link between placement movement and school movement, a focus on school mobility (or rather stability) is pertinent. In light of the research presented in this thesis and cited above, a policy similar to the Department of Education and Training (2010b) *SMS-PR-009: School transport assistance programs for students with disabilities* may be effective in minimising school movement at non-standard times. Additionally, research (Department of Child Safety, 2006b; McIntosh, 1999) and conceptual frameworks, such as Baker's (see Chapter 1), would suggest that funding to support maintaining enrolment at the same school would be particularly advantageous for those children who move in crisis situations. As such, adequate resourcing is required to ensure appropriate supports can be put in place in a timely manner.

6.6.2 Holistic/ecological understandings

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) Ecological Systems Theory encourages a holistic view, highlighting the various systems that can impact on the individual. With regard to the

education of children in care, the education and child protection systems are in focus. With the exception of one teacher, those involved in this study outlined that they possessed limited knowledge of the child protection system. Whilst it is acknowledged that schools are primarily educational institutions (Helyar et al., 2009), teachers' work with children in care as a 'dually involved population' (Wulczyn et al., 2009) requires awareness of the child protection system and of the effects that previous abuse and/or neglect might have on learning. Building awareness and understanding will enhance the capacity of teachers to support children in care who are mobile.

The findings from this study suggest that Professional Development/Training for educators to develop awareness of the child protection system and to understand the effect of abuse and/or neglect on learning would enhance their capacity to support children in care. The effect of abuse and/or neglect on learning should also be included in undergraduate education degrees. It is to be noted here that recent research into the education of children in care has also come to this same conclusion – see Wise, Pollock, Mitchell, Argus and Farquhar (2010) in Victoria and Townsend (2011) in New South Wales. It is also notable that in Victoria the Child Safety Commissioner has produced a number of handbooks covering the effect of abuse and/or neglect on learning and ways that teachers and schools can support the education of children in care:

- *Great expectations: Supporting children and young people in out-of-home care to achieve at school* (Seal, 2007)
- *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatised children* (Downey, 2007)
- *Yarning up on trauma: Healing ourselves, healing our children and families, healing our communities* (Coade, Downey, & MacClung, 2008)

- *From isolation to connection: A guide to understanding and working with traumatised children and young people* (Downey, 2009)
- *Caring classrooms: A guide to understanding traumatised children and young people – for parents and the school community* (Downey, 2010)

6.6.3 Providing space for constructive talk/interagency collaboration

A fundamental aspect of ‘taming’ wicked problems is interagency collaboration, as has been discussed previously. Chapter 4 outlined that the *Partnership Agreement* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004) highlights the importance of communication and collaboration between departments working with children in care. However, teachers and Mobility Support Teachers in this study were unsure of their role/s, and the role/s of others, when working with children in care who are mobile. For the teachers and the Mobility Support Teachers, the ‘secrecy’ surrounding children in care resulted in an uncertainty around roles and responsibilities, and hindered communication and collaboration. A collaborative culture, then, is required to support children in care through the transition of changing schools. This support will be enabled by more constructive collaboration among schools, and between schools and the Department of Child Safety. It is, therefore, necessary that the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Child Safety emphasise the importance of partnerships and collaboration, supported by comprehensive practice guidance for workers. These ‘best practice principles’ regarding collaboration should describe:

- The role of child protection workers in proactively maintaining contact with educators, informing educators/schools of any changing circumstances of the child, where possible, prior to the child’s change in circumstance.

- The role of educators in seeking advice from child protection workers and other professionals (such as Guidance Officers) to understand the educational needs of the child in care, and of proactively communicating with child protection workers.

Additionally, more precise guidelines are required when a child in care is likely to require a change in school. When a child changes placement or enters care, child protection workers should advise the school prior to the child changing schools. Carers, the child, educators and child protection workers can then collaboratively establish whether a change of school is necessary and what supports could assist the carer in maintaining the child's enrolment at the current school until a standard transition time is reached – for example, end of term or end of school year.

To support the education of children in care who experience school mobility, a formal 'handover' is required so that knowledge of the child's educational progress is not lost. When a child in care moves schools, a meeting (which includes all relevant child protection and education stakeholders) should be held to discuss the child's needs, based around a structured 'handover' format. If a meeting is impossible or impractical, a structured format for cross-communication should be constructed and distributed so that all parties are suitably informed as to the educational needs of the child.

The structured 'handover' could be supported by the development of an 'Education Passport' for children in care. Similar to the 'Child Health Passport' currently in use by the Department of Child Safety (see Appendix B for information on a Child Health Passport.), the 'Education Passport' would record the child's educational information, providing educators and carers with the information they require to meet

the child's educational needs. The passport would be updated throughout a child's time in care and would include:

- Current year of school
- Name and address of previous school/s
- Contact/s at the school who has/have worked directly with the child
- Number of previous schools attended and reasons for movement
- Academic achievement – work samples, diagnostic tests and, where applicable, NAPLAN results
- Educational needs/support programs provided
- Attendance levels
- Number, timeframe and reasons for suspensions
- A copy of the Education Support Plan and any other plans the child may have, with a summary of progress-to-date for each plan.

Along with the 'Child Health Passport', the 'Education Passport' would accompany the child when she/he changes placement and/or school. A copy of the passport would be provided to carers, educators, parents (if the child returns home) and the child if she/he transitions from care. If the Department of Communities statement for the 'Child Health Passport' were to be adapted for an educational perspective, the amended model would read: "This comprehensive record of the child's *educational* history will *help address educational concerns*, ensure they receive appropriate *educational instruction* and *support* throughout their time in out-of-home care and improve their *education* and wellbeing".

It is important to note that, at the time of writing this thesis, OneSchool (an information management system for Queensland State Schools) was in the process of being ‘rolled out’ (Department of Education and Training, 2011b). OneSchool has been designed to enable a holistic view of a student’s educational history in ‘real time’ – that is, when a student changes school, the student’s record will be available to the new school on enrolment. As such, the ‘Education Passport’ as described above could be an adapted version of the data available within OneSchool.

This acknowledged, it is important to note that OneSchool resides within the education system. For children in care, information contained within the child protection system also affects their education. Information sharing between these two systems is necessary as such, OneSchool may not provide an appropriate platform for information sharing. This research has suggested that information sharing is hindered by bureaucratic structure and the ‘steering’ of departments to different outputs and outcomes. With bureaucratic structures in mind, there is a need for a system of coordination across the education and child protection systems. The *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011) put forward a recommendation for an ‘education champion’ to be located within the Department of Communities to “drive policy and program development” (p. 17) and, whilst this is acknowledged as a useful and innovative position, the (in)effectiveness of personnel ‘on the ground’ to co-ordinate and prioritise education for children in care has been highlighted by a number of studies (Jackson, 1988; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2004, 2005; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006). A practical way forward, then, is the appointment of an ‘Educational Advocate’ who is able to work across systems.

Within Queensland, the educational advocacy of children in care rests with individual Principals, teachers or child protection workers. The formalised appointment of an ‘Educational Advocate’ would prioritise the education of children in care, particularly those who are mobile. While further research is required to determine the most appropriate positioning of this ‘Educational Advocate’ – school/district/region or within the child protection system – this staff member would be the key contact for educational matters of children in care, would facilitate the communication and collaborative partnerships outlined in the above recommendations and implement Professional Development/Training for teachers. Ideally, the ‘Educational Advocate’ would be a qualified teacher and have training or experience in child protection/welfare, particularly on how abuse and/or neglect affects learning. This recommendation is based on findings from this study and the larger study highlighting the importance of the Mobility Support Teacher as a trained teacher, enabling the Mobility Support Teacher to provide the classroom teacher with practical learning strategies and release time in order for the teacher to work individually with the student or to coordinate with other stakeholders involved.

As mentioned above, the recommendation of an ‘Educational Advocate’ is based on the successful implementation of similar roles (Jackson, 1988; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2004, 2005; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006). Internationally, similar positions have been appointed. For example, the Department for Education in the United Kingdom has specified that each school must appoint a designated teacher to act as a ‘resource and a champion’ for children in care. The role is tasked with, among other duties, coordinating with Local Authorities, collaboratively developing Personal Education Plans for children in care and being, or organising, a central point of contact for all stakeholders working with children in care (Department for Children, Schools

and Families, 2009). Although the designated teacher position varies depending on the number of children in care in a school, the role is allocated time to enable the designated teacher to undertake these tasks. In some schools, the role of the designated teacher is a full-time dedicated post.

6.6.4 Creating a clear framework

As outlined in Chapter 4, the *Partnership Agreement* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004), as the ‘working document’ for child protection and education staff, has not been “nurtured over time, resulting in a major disconnect between policy and practice” (Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011, p. 6). As such, there is a need to ensure a circular policy process, informed by practitioners ‘on the ground’. A comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders involved in the education of children in care is necessary to revise the complexity of tasks currently written into the *Partnership Agreement*. It may be the case that some of the tasks currently ascribed to the Principal or her/his nominee could be transferred to the ‘Educational Advocate’, as described above. It is also to be noted here that a review of the process and outcomes of Education Support Plans – described in the *Partnership Agreement* – has also been recommended by the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011).

A clear policy framework is also required to ‘unmask’ the, at times, unhelpful ‘secrecy’ surrounding child protection. The uncertainty of confidentiality protocols expressed by teachers and Mobility Support Teachers involved in this study suggests a need for clearer guidelines around information sharing and decision making – ensuring

all stakeholders view education as part of their responsibilities. In light of this uncertainty, stakeholders involved in making educational decisions related to children in care who are mobile might consider using or adapting already established guidelines – for example:

- the Technical Assistance Brief – *Asking the Right Questions II: Judicial Checklists to Meet the Educational Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care* (Gatowski, Medina, & Warren, 2008) in the United States of America, or
- *Who does what: How social workers and carers can support the education of children in care* in the United Kingdom (Department for Education and Skills, 2004).

The recommendation for information sharing protocols is based on the successful implementation of the ‘*Asking the Right Questions*’ checklists within the United States of America (Weiss, Staub, Campbell, Gatowski, & Litchfield, 2006). The initial checklist, released in 2005, was later revised – *Asking the Right Questions II* – in light of insights from judges, child welfare experts, educational advocates and others who had been using the checklist for a period of time. Findings show that the checklist can be used as a reminder, accountability mechanism and collaborative tool (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005) and, as has been highlighted above, collaboration is an important aspect between multi-professional teams. A checklist, such as ‘*Asking the Right Questions*’, may instigate collaboration between stakeholders involved in the education of children in care.

In the same vein, information sharing protocols should be developed and made publicly available. The information protocols should address issues of confidentiality and decision making in the context of supporting children in care with their education.

Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care (McNaught, 2005) is an example of one such information sharing protocols – as developed within the United States of America. This publication – which could serve as a useful exemplar – explores myths and misunderstandings related to those involved with the education of children in care, links to relevant laws, provides examples of promising practice and strategies to address issues, and provides additional resources and links to policy. The publication’s contents are aimed at, and organised to meet, the array of stakeholders involved – including parents, children, carers, educators, judges, children’s attorneys, guardians ad litem and court appointed special advocates.

6.7 Next steps for research

While this study has signalled and unravelled some of the complexities pertaining to the school mobility of children in care, further examination in several areas would enhance current understandings. In particular, additional and longitudinal analysis of teachers’ work, the work of other stakeholders, the experiences of children in care and further exploration of policy would be beneficial in better understanding and enhancing the education of children in care. Each of these areas is considered in turn below.

Firstly, to expand the present study’s findings, there is a need to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers from a range of contexts. Teachers’ perceptions may vary in different contexts, leading to the take up of different subject positions from the two that were prominent within this study. Alongside further exploration of teachers’ work is the need to understand what teachers ‘need to know’ to support children in care who are mobile. Whilst teachers in this study emphatically

stated that it was important to know that the child in their class was in care, research on the perspectives of children suggests that children's opinions vary as to whether or not they want this information known. As such, research that examines in whose 'best interests' and in what circumstances certain information is, or should/need be, known/unknown would prove fruitful.

Secondly, there are many stakeholders involved in the education of children in care. This research has explored the perspective of two such stakeholders – teachers and Mobility Support Teachers (noting that the role of the Mobility Support Teacher was confined to 14 schools in Queensland). Ideally, research should engage with numerous stakeholders – including carers, child protection workers, parents, children and other educational staff. Whilst this study examined the *Partnership Agreement* (Department of Education and Department of Families, 2004) from the perspective of schools and educators, there is space to critique and review further the *Partnership Agreement* from the view of other stakeholders. Drawing on the notion that research should 'enlighten' policy responses, research exploring the perceptions and work of other stakeholders should be used to inform a review of the *Partnership Agreement* and the Education Support Plan process – as also recommended by the *Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland* (2011).

A third aspect for future research consideration concerns the measurement and understanding of the school mobility of children in care. This study highlights that examination of local data sets can reveal the particular characteristics of school mobility for children in care; however, it is apparent that further research is required to understand the nature and extent of this mobility. Alongside such research is the need for an exploration of strategies to minimise the number of school movements,

particularly in light of Townsend's assertion that school movements are more likely than placement movements to affect children's academic learning and behaviour (Townsend, 2011). Having noted this, Townsend (2011) acknowledges that placement moves often require/result in a school move. Strategies developed from research, then, should focus on supporting carers and, where the child returns home, parents to reduce school mobility.

Finally, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of current policy and programs aimed at supporting the education children in care. Wise et al. (2010) highlight that improvements in planning across systems are required and that these go beyond individualised plans and partnership agreements. They note that, whilst there is a commitment to improve the education of children in care, there has been minimal progress. Of this Wise et al. (2010) state:

Whether this is because programs are too narrow, disproportionately focussed towards crisis-end treatment, not grounded in firm evidence, inadequate in scale or with inadequate sustainability and reach, or whether there is a lack of a shared strategic vision and effective co-ordination, is unclear (p. 11).

As such, there is a need for a comprehensive review of current policy within the intersection of education and child protection systems.

6.8 Final remarks

This research has explored one under acknowledged, yet significant, aspect that may affect the education of children in care – school mobility. In exploring the complex spaces within which the current policy for educating children in care resides, this thesis

has opened up a space to consider, from the perspectives of teachers, what type of policy might support children in care. In this way, this research makes several significant contributions to the field. Firstly, it offers a conceptual framework to underpin policy to support children in care who are mobile. Secondly, where research regarding the education of children in care has largely been “teacher blind” (Seddon & Connell, 1989, cited in J. Smyth, 2001, p. 6), this study has provided a better understanding of the systemic structures and discursive practices that teachers perceive as enabling and constraining their work with children in care who are mobile. Thirdly, the study has contributed to understanding better the characteristics of the school mobility of children in care. Fourthly, in applying the findings of the study, practical implications for policy makers and practitioners were posited as recommendations under five principles that should underpin policy responses – such that are likely to support children in care who are mobile.

Policy situated within a complex socio-political field, such as child protection, presents particular challenges for the policy-practice nexus. A focus on education adds additional complexity and makes addressing the school mobility of children in care a wicked policy problem (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Devaney & Spratt, 2009). To address complex, or ‘wicked’, problems, collaborative, cooperative and collective action is required (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007; Cutler, 2009). Whilst the education and child protection systems are both focussed on supporting children presently, such action is unlikely to occur given the neoliberal underpinning of social policy. Practitioners in this study – teachers and Mobility Support Teachers – individually navigate the lacunae created by the intersection of the education and child protection systems, negating the likelihood of collaborative, cooperative and/or collective action. These practitioners work in complex spaces,

involving multiple and inherent contradictions. The research presented in this thesis has acknowledged the challenges that exist in the policy-practice dimension yet draws attention to the possibilities for action when working in such spaces. As Keating (2008) notes in the opening quotation: “One of the most obvious and immediate policy solutions to address the issue of educational inequality in Australia is the creation of new school ties between schools and a wider set of agencies and organisations”. This doctoral study draws attention to the need to rethink the spaces between policy and practice and to reimagine how ‘new school ties’ could be created between organisations. To explore and rethink such spaces presents an opportunity for growth, innovation and change (Hendrick & Young, 2012) – such that is required to ‘tame’ wicked problems.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Position description of Mobility Support Teacher

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Position Title:	Mobility Support Teacher
Closing date:	xxxxx
Mandatory Requirements:	Full Registration or eligibility for full registration as a teacher in Queensland. Information on registration requirements is available at enquiries@qct.edu.au or on toll free 1300 720 944.
Position:	Location: xxxx
Description:	<p>The role of the Mobility Support Teacher is to work with a wide range of stakeholders, under the direction of the school principal, to improve learning outcomes for students by implementing innovative practices and strategies that REDUCE student mobility and RESPOND to the needs of highly mobile students and their families, with a particular focus on Indigenous students and their families.</p> <p>The role requires a highly motivated, experienced and adaptable teacher able to build and sustain professional and community networks that support mobile students and their families.</p> <p>To ensure the successful applicant is able to undertake the role in an appropriate manner, respectful of the privacy of students and families, a private workspace will be provided (including computer and secure document storage).</p>
Salary:	As per teaching award
Key Duties:	<p>Professional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enrol, induct and integrate new arrivals and manage any associated administrative tasks.• Conduct holistic learning needs assessment as part of enrolment process.• Liaise with Learning Support staff, and other specialist staff (eg Advisory Visiting Teachers) to ensure timely intervention if required.• Advise teachers on specific academic, social and emotional needs of new arrivals

- Work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ensure effective integration of additional enrolling students, including providing release for initial meeting of classroom teacher and student/family.
- Monitor progress (social and academic) of additional enrolments; ensuring on-going liaison with class teachers.
- Lead staff professional development and training.
- Work collaboratively with JCU researchers to:
 - collect data required to comprehensively evaluate effectiveness of the initiative at key stages,
 - provide reports as required by the project manager, and
 - actively participate in the action research process.

Partnerships

- Work with students in innovative and positive ways to ensure a smooth transition to a new learning environment.
- Meet with parents/carers of additional enrolments prior to and during enrolment procedure.
- Establish trusting, respectful partnerships through meeting with parents/carers as required, with a particular focus on building educational partnerships with Indigenous families.
- Meet with parents/carers of exiting students prior to and during exit procedure.
- Liaise with external agencies (particularly Indigenous support agencies) to support new arrivals and their families integrating into the new environment.
- Actively promote the ‘Let’s Stay Put’ message with students, parent/carers and members of the wider community.

Selection Criteria:

Professional

- Demonstrated successful teaching experience with range of learners and in a variety of school contexts, particularly the prompt identification of holistic learner needs and establishment of priority learning goals.
- Demonstrated ability to positively influence peers and progress change in educational settings.
- Demonstrated cross-cultural understanding, especially related to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.

Personal

- Demonstrated high level negotiation, consultation and communication skills and the demonstrated ability to liaise with a wide range of stakeholders (including students and families from diverse backgrounds, colleagues, community agencies, management etc).
- Demonstrated high level problem solving skills with a demonstrated ability to generate and implement innovative solutions.

Partnerships

- Demonstrated ability to work in a variety of professional teams in both formal and informal settings.
- Demonstrated understanding of Education Queensland's privacy policy (in relation to the likely demands of this position).

**Application
Process:**

Written application addressing the criteria.

1 x A4 page.

font must be Times New Roman no less than 10pt.

Application should be emailed to xxxx using the subject heading:
Mobility Support Teacher - Application

**Further
Information:**

Please email xxxx using the subject heading: Mobility Support
Teacher - Inquiry

Appendix B: Child Health Passport

Child Health Passport

The child health passport records a child's or young person's health information and provides carers with the information they need to meet the child's day-to-day health needs.

The passport will be updated throughout a child's or young person's time in out-of-home care and will include:

- 'Child information form' with immunisation details (not including parental information)
- a photocopy of their Medicare card
- details of their baseline health assessment or annual health check details
- their health plan
- records from follow-up appointments required by the health plan
- outcomes of any referrals to specialists
- pertinent health alerts (for example allergies, asthma, medications)
- information relating to the specific health needs of the child or young person
- 'Letter regarding custody (medical)' or 'Letter regarding custody and guardianship (medical)'
- blank copies of the health plan follow-up form to be completed by health professionals during follow-up appointments
- other health related information that would help a carer meet their health needs.

The passport accompanies the child or young person if they change placement.

A copy of the passport will be provided to parents if the child or young person returns home, or to the young person when they transition from care.

This comprehensive record of the child's medical history will aid diagnosis, ensure they receive appropriate health care and treatment throughout their time in out-of-home care and improve their health and wellbeing.

A guide for general practitioners completing health assessments and appraisals for children in out-of-home care

Many children who come into out-of-home care have health problems. This may be due to their experiences of neglect and abuse, or disability, genetic, developmental or general health issues.

The department requires that a health assessment or appraisal is completed for these children when they have stayed in out-of-home care for 30 days.

A checklist for completing these assessments or appraisals has been developed as a guide to aid health professionals to conduct health assessments and appraisals for children in out-of-home care.

For more information, download the resource A guide for general practitioners completing health assessments and appraisals for children in out-of-home care (PDF, 815 KB) A guide for general practitioners completing health assessments and appraisals for children in out-of-home care (RTF, 63 KB) or contact Child Safety Services' General Enquiries Unit on 1800 811 810 (Queensland only) or 3224 8045.

Source: *Child Health Passport*, by Department of Communities, 2011 from <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/foster-care/case-planning-for-a-child-in-care/child-health-passport>