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Understanding primary school teachers' professional development

needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus

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by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to develop an understanding about primary school teachers' professional development needs, for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. The study focused on teachers' experiences and the meanings that they hold about them. In particular, an exploration of teachers' views about inclusion was made, along with an investigation of the factors that enable or prevent them from promoting inclusion. Also, teachers' views about their professional development needs and their responses towards available professional development opportunities were explored.

The research involved a collective type of case study in two primary schools of Cyprus, over a period of six months. The first school shared similar characteristics with other primary schools of Cyprus and was the main school of the study. The second school was part of a new government initiative and was used as complementary, in order to enhance the understandings gained from the main school. All of the methods that were used in this study had a qualitative nature: participant observations, critical incidents, informal conversational interviews, semi-structured interviews and document collection.

Through the process of analysing and interpreting the data, the overall understanding gained was that teachers' professional development needs are related to three areas of need. These areas relate to the dominant value systems, pedagogy, and the unique contexts. It is argued that they are influencing one another and are interacting with each other. Thus, by addressing these areas of need, in a number of ways suggested by the findings of this study, this is likely to enable teachers in Cyprus to foster inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on inclusive education. Defining inclusive education or inclusion is difficult, given that various notions are attached to these terms. The notion of inclusion that this study adopts can be summarised under the following definition provided by UNESCO (2009):

> "Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children" (pp.8-9).

The reasons for adopting this definition in my study over others that exist in the literature are mainly the parameters, which it covers, in order to define inclusion. These parameters, and the uncertainties, disputes, and contradictions related to inclusive education will be explored in the following chapter.

Despite the complexities related to inclusive education, the international concern for including all children in schools is one of the reasons for orienting my focus in this direction. Over the past 15 years there has been a growing effort worldwide to include all children in schools, through the establishment of many official documents and stated intentions moving towards its achievement. A characteristic example is "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education" (UNESCO, 1994, p.i). The Salamanca Statement suggests moving towards the creation of inclusive schools, which ensure the education for all (Booth and Ainscow, 1998). Further, in the USA from 1997 there has been an effort to promote a 'whole-school' approach to inclusion (Evans and Lunt, 2002), while in the UK one of the most important initiatives may be considered the distribution of the Index for Inclusion in 2000 in all schools, as part of the then UK government's initiative, in an effort to enhance inclusion at the school level. The Index for Inclusion (Booth and

Ainscow, 2002), provides a framework for school review and development on three dimensions: inclusive cultures, policies, and practices, and each dimension involves key indicators to clarify its meaning. According to Vaughan (2002), the Index is one of the most essential 'tools' to support the inclusive development of schools. It was revised in 2002 and it is now translated and/or adapted internationally (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2010). More specifically, versions of the Index have been prepared in thirty-two languages while there is currently an effort to be translated in another seven languages. Also, it was used in almost thirty countries in Europe (CSIE, 2010). Ainscow and Sandill (2010) state, that the Index for Inclusion was applied in both developed and developing countries all over the world. However, as yet, the Index has not been used in Cyprus. The increased interest therefore, and the international effort for the achievement of inclusive education, was one of the reasons for the focus of this study.

My emphasis however, was on the efforts that were carried out within Europe, because my country, which is Cyprus, has always been inextricably bound to Europe and has always had European orientations (Angelides and Leigh, 2004). Thus, it could not remain indifferent to the challenge of inclusive education. Cyprus' relatively recent efforts towards inclusion were another reason for the focus of this study. The situation of Cyprus in relation to inclusive education is particularly interesting and this also justifies partly the decision to carry out the study in Cyprus. Although in Cyprus there is not an explicit agenda regarding the inclusion of all children, the first attempt towards inclusive education may be considered the Cypriot Law 113(1)/1999 for the 'Training and Education of Children with Special Needs', which aimed at the integration of children with special educational needs in regular schools (113(1)/1999 Law). Details of the Law will be given in the following chapter. More interesting nevertheless, in my view, is what may be considered as a second attempt of Cyprus towards inclusion, which are the education measures taken related to multicultural education. The interest rests on the fact that Cypriot schools up to recently, used to be mainly homogeneous, however, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus (2009), from 2005 there has been a growing number of children coming from other countries enrolled in Cypriot schools, as part of a large number of economic immigrants coming in Cyprus. It is worth noting that

Cyprus is a Mediterranean island, geographically situated between three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa and accepts immigrant people from all three continents. Cypriot schools therefore, are becoming multicultural, and the government has taken measures in education for the 'smooth integration' of children from ethnic minorities (MOEC, 2009). From the policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, there seems to be an effort towards inclusive education and an attempt to respond to children's diversity, even if there is a particular focus on children with SEN and on children from ethnic minorities.

Given these changes in Cypriot schools, primary school teachers, like in other European and international countries are facing the challenge of responding to a large diversity of children. The question is, 'what do teachers in Cyprus need, in order to be in a position to respond to the increasing diversity of children in schools?' It is at this stage that teachers' professional development needs were considered, since as supported by many international and Cypriot studies, which will be explored in the following chapter, the professional development of teachers can support them in fostering inclusion. Professional development in this study means firstly the in-service training which is about structured pre-determined training activities offered to teachers by an external organisation (Conlon, 2004). Secondly, and most importantly, it refers to the forms of teachers' professional learning that illustrate a wider range of actions, which involve personal study, reflection, in or out of the school setting, initiated and organised by teachers themselves or externally prearranged (Conlon, 2004; OECD, 1998).

This study, nevertheless, focuses particularly on the professional development needs of teachers in relation to the dimension of inclusive school cultures, as these were presented within the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Aiscow, 2002). The reasons for this focus are firstly, the important role of inclusive school cultures in fostering inclusion, and secondly, the growing number of international studies which call for the need of school cultures to become more inclusive. Further, the importance of this focus to the culturally unique context of Cyprus, and the explicitly stated need and effort through Cypriot literature, for a culturally oriented teachers' professional development, are the reasons which directed my study towards the dimension of

inclusive school cultures. These reasons are explained in the following chapter in more depth.

In the light of these considerations, and the emphasis in Cyprus on professional development in relation to the cultural dimension of inclusion, the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' was used, in order to guide further, the focus of the study and the development of the study's research sub-questions. The way that this framework emerged from my earlier work, its content and its role in this study are provided in the following chapter. What is important to say here is that 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' I am arguing are a subset of inclusive school cultures as these are described in the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002), and have a particular focus on pedagogy.

This study therefore, focused on teachers' experiences, and on the meanings that teachers make of them. It aimed at developing an in depth understanding about teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. In particular, the main research question of the study was:

"What are teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus?"

For exploring the broader literature relating to the main research question, the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' was used, as a way of identifying potential areas for further exploration in the context of Cyprus. Based on this exploration, the following research sub-questions emerged:

- What are teachers' views about inclusion in Cyprus?

- Which aspects of the schools' context enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion?

- What are teachers' views about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children?

- What professional development opportunities did teachers attend and how do they respond to these opportunities?

In order to explore the main research question and research sub-questions, a collective type of case study was used in two primary schools of Cyprus for six months. The first school which was similar in key characteristics with other primary schools of Cyprus was the main focus of the study. The second school which belonged to the Zones of Education Priority (ZEP), a new government initiative in Cyprus, was used as complementary, in order to enhance the understandings gained from the first school.

This thesis is separated into eight chapters, without the introduction and conclusion as follows:

Chapter one explores the literature. Firstly, the concept of the terms inclusion and professional development are explored in more depth. Then, the rationale to support why teachers' professional development is central for inclusion is provided with particular emphasis to the context of Cyprus. The key issues that emerged from international and Cypriot literature in relation to teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion are then presented. Also, concepts of culture are introduced and the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' is presented. Finally, the key issues that emerged from international and Cypriot literature are analysed, based on the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. Through this analysis, the research sub-questions of the study are formulated and stated.

Chapter two presents the methodology used in order to address the research question and research sub-questions of the study. Firstly, the choice of a research approach is presented and justified, followed by the choice of a case study research design, and the choice of methods for data collection. Finally, processes for data analysis are presented.

Chapter three makes a reflective presentation of the procedures followed and of the fieldwork. Firstly, it sets the scene where the fieldwork was carried out. The highlighting is on the education context of primary education with an emphasis on the nature of the teaching profession in Cyprus. Then, the management of study before entering the field is presented, followed by the implementation of the research design. Finally, the processes undertaken to 'establish trustworthiness' in the case study are discussed.

Chapter four, five, six and seven are the findings of the study. Chapter four describes the understandings gained in relation to teachers' views about inclusion in Cyprus. Chapter five analyses the aspects of the schools' context that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. Chapter six illustrates teachers' views about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children. In chapter seven, the professional development opportunities that teachers attended are presented, along with their responses towards them.

Chapter eight addresses the main research question and makes a discussion on the overall understanding gained. It presents three areas of need that emerged as important, along with suggested ways for addressing them.

Finally, the thesis concludes with a reflection on the overall study and with a summary of the aims and understandings gained through this study.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the broader literature related to the main research question of the study is explored. Firstly, the terms inclusive education and teachers' professional development are defined. Then, the rationale to support why teachers' professional development is central for inclusion is provided, followed by key issues emerging from literature about teachers' needs for fostering inclusion. Later on, the notion of inclusive school cultures is explored, and the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' is presented. Finally, the key issues that emerged from the literature are analysed in relation to this framework. Based on this analysis, the research sub-questions of the study are formulated and stated.

Defining inclusive education and teachers' professional development

Defining and understanding the concept of inclusion or inclusive education involves many complexities. Part of these complexities according to Acedo, Ferrer and Pamies (2009), is the broad definition of inclusion. As Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006a) argues, inclusion is defined in many and diverse ways, and they present a typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion: "Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as having 'special educational needs', inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion, inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion, inclusion as 'Education for All', inclusion as developing the school for all, and inclusion as a principled approach to education and society" (p.15). This diversity of definitions creates a confusion of what inclusion is. Florian (2008) suggests that the meanings attached to inclusion are so many, that some of them are themselves contested.

In addition to the complexities created by the broad definition of inclusion, which allows many interpretations, the way that it is considered along with human rights, seems also another difficulty. As Evans and Lunt (2002) explain, some of the proponents of inclusive education are supporting the inclusion of all children as a

matter only of human rights. Given this, it has been argued that the way that human rights are being used seems problematic, mainly because of the creation of a gap between the rhetoric of the official statements and actual practice (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). As Farrell (2000) denotes, if inclusive education is promoted only based on human rights, then serious difficulties can emerge in its achievement. However, as Acedo *et al.,* (2009) argue, education for all must be seen as a human right and must become the principle on which inclusive education is based. It is worth noting nevertheless, that in the field of inclusive education, although there is an acceptance of the right of all children to education, Evans and Lunt (2002) claim that some authors support, that children with severe or complex needs are difficult to be included in the mainstream schools. For example, as Hornby (1999) suggests, if the right to education for all children, and their right to be fully integrated into the community, in which they will belong when they grow up, are better facilitated by special classrooms, then segregated settings for children with SEN may be defensible. This is part of the arguments related to 'responsible inclusion' (Hornby, 1999; Vaughn and Schumm, 1995). This view, although it is understandable, in terms of being responsible, in order not to fall into the trap of rhetoric and of idealised situations that do not reflect reality, I personally believe that it reflects the deficit model of viewing disability, which is another issue related to inclusive education, as I explain below.

The shift from the medical (deficit) model of disability to a social model, in explaining educational difficulties, underpins the efforts towards inclusion. The deficit model of thinking, according to Ainscow (1999), seeks to explain educational difficulties, in terms of the characteristics of the individual pupil, as these result from particular disabilities, social background and psychological attributes and not from the school process. These deficit views of differences according to Trent, Artiles and Englert (1998) define certain types of pupils as lacking something. Further, according to Ainscow (1999), the deficit model reflects "the existence among a group of staff, of norms that take for granted that certain children because of their personal characteristics or their home background, cannot be expected to learn successfully" (p.97-98). The beliefs that reflect a 'within the child model' (Dyson, 1990) are in contrast to the social model of disability, which considers that "the

problems of disability are societal rather than individual, and that these problems stem from oppression by society rather than the limitations of individuals" (Oliver, 1996, p.31). Therefore, according to Mittler (2000), in education, the restructuring of the schools to accommodate all children is in line with an inclusive philosophy and the social model of disability.

However, Frederickson and Cline (2002), in relation to the social-environmental way of thinking about disability, they suggest that individual differences matter. As Mittler (2000) points out, although a deficit model is different to a social model and is rejected as the only way to explain problems, the two models are not mutually exclusive or incompatible rather, their co-operation might be for the best interest of children. Similarly, Florian (2008) suggests that a rejection of the existence of important educational differences does not mean that they will stop exist, but it is possible to respect these differences, in ways that include rather than exclude the learners. In relation to that, Todd (2007) denotes that we should not fall into the trap of dichotomy and suggests that we should still be paying attention to the individual, without blaming or believing that problems rest within the children or their families.

Given the contested nature of inclusive education as presented above, and most importantly given that there is not a consensus about what inclusion means, it is important to clarify the way that the notion of inclusion is defined in this study. As I mentioned in the introduction, the notion of inclusion which is adopted in this study can be summarised under the definition provided by UNESCO (2009), mainly because it covers three parameters. First of all, through this definition it is suggested that inclusion is a process. In other words, inclusion is not just a change, a key stage or a product. Rather, it is an ongoing and continuous process (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996; UNESCO, 2009). Further, inclusion as understood in this study and as supported by the definition of UNESCO (2009) is about addressing and responding to the diversity of all children (Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton, 2000; Barton, 1997; Booth and Ainscow, 1998, 2002; Mittler, 2000). This means that inclusion is not concerned only for pupils with impairments, or for those who are categorised as having special educational needs (SEN), but for all pupils. Therefore, all children should have their needs met within the ordinary school/education system, in order to participate in schools' learning, cultures and

communities. Finally, the third parameter of the definition of UNESCO (2009), which coincides with the view of this study, is that inclusion is seen as different from the notion of the term integration. Integration, according to Ainscow (1995), is defined internationally as the additional arrangements that are made in educational systems, in order for exceptional pupils to be accommodated within a school system that remains largely unchanged. Inclusion implies the introduction of a radical set of changes, through which schools restructure themselves, in order to reduce the barriers to learning and participation, so as to be able to embrace diversity and respond to the needs of all children (Ainscow, 1995; Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Thomazet, 2009; UNESCO, 2009).

Florian (2008) rightly posed the question "What does this mean for teachers in practice?" (p.207). Teachers, as Florian (2008) points out, are not in a position to change the structures of their schools, in order to facilitate inclusive education. However, as indicated by many studies that will be presented in this chapter, through professional development teachers can make a difference. It is important, therefore, to refer to these studies and to provide the reasons to support why teachers' professional development is central for fostering inclusion. Before doing that, however, it is necessary to define teachers' professional development, and the meaning that it has particularly for this study. The reason why it needs to be clarified is because several terms are found in the literature, like the terms "teacher development, in-service education, in-service training, staff development, human resource development" (Bolam and McMahon, 2004, p.33), and these terms have overlapping meanings with professional development.

The way that teachers' professional development is defined in this study was already presented within the introduction. This definition was chosen firstly because it moves beyond the term in-service training, to include a broader range of activities, that critically engage all teachers and the people around them, at all levels of the school, with their own professional practice. Professional development, in this respect, is a process by which teachers alone or with others, "review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents, and by which they develop critically the knowledge and skills essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children and colleagues" (Day, 1997, p.4). This way of viewing professional

development may be connected to the notion of inclusion adopted in this study, because inclusion, as a process, involves various stakeholders and the interactions among them cannot be isolated from an effort towards its achievement. Through such a wider view of professional development, an involvement of all key stakeholders and a consideration of the wider context in which all these people work, may be viewed along with teachers' professional development, and this may provide a holistic understanding of teachers' needs. Also, similar ways of viewing professional development is used in the Cypriot literature (Angelides, 2005a; Karagiorgi and Symeou, 2006) and this makes it relevant to the education context of Cyprus, in which my study was carried out.

The following section will provide reasons why teachers' professional development is of critical importance for fostering inclusion in schools, with an emphasis given on the importance of these reasons to the context of Cyprus. In this way, the reasons for carrying out this study in Cyprus are also provided.

The central role of teachers' professional development for fostering inclusion

Three thematic areas are provided below, in order to support the central role of teachers' professional development for fostering inclusion. These thematic areas have derived from the international and Cypriot literature. These are: professional development is fundamental, for the creation of teachers' positive attitudes and for the enhancement of their self-efficacy towards inclusion; for enabling teachers to foster inclusive values, and; for engaging them in 'reflective practice', in order to promote inclusion in schools. For each thematic area, international and Cypriot studies will be presented, while their importance to the context of Cyprus will be explained, under each of these areas.

Professional development is fundamental, for the creation of teachers' positive attitudes and for the enhancement of their self-efficacy towards inclusion

It sounds unrealistic to expect teachers to foster inclusion, if they do not have positive attitudes towards inclusion, and if they do not have positive feelings of their self-efficacy in teaching inclusively. These are elements that might increase their commitment to the inclusion of all children in schools.

First, it is argued that engaging teachers in the process of including all children, involves positive teachers' attitudes to inclusion and this is something that teachers' professional development can facilitate. According to Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000), the professional development of teachers plays a very important role in the formation of positive teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. This was one of the main findings of their survey carried out in one Local Education Authority in England, which aimed at identifying the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of children, who were considered to have SEN. Similar findings arose from other studies, which focused on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and factors influencing their attitudes (Leatherman and Niemeyer, 2005; Levins, Bornhold and Lennon, 2005).

Carrington (1999) presented an analysis of international studies, which illustrated the way that professional development was associated with the development of an inclusive school. As she suggested, if teachers' attitudes are positive towards the notion of inclusion, this influences their perceptions and judgments and, therefore, their behaviour in school (Carrington, 1999). It was emphasised through this study, that professional development can influence teachers' attitudes so as to be positive towards the inclusion of all children (Carrington, 1999). It is worth noting that the findings of this analytical study came from a wide range of international literature, including European countries, which are highly relevant to the context of Cyprus, suggesting the importance of attitudes in a variety of other cultural contexts.

Likewise, one of the main findings of a more recent study conducted in Greece by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) was that teachers' professional development enhances the creation of positive teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The study also demonstrated the importance of substantive long term-training in the formation of positive teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, and concluded that by developing professional development courses, attitudinal change can be achieved (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007).

In Cyprus, a study carried out by Koutrouba, Vamvakari and Steliou (2006) in secondary schools, supports the idea that teachers' professional development affects the level of special knowledge, and self-confidence required in implementation of

teaching methods that could be related to inclusion. Their study aimed at recording teachers' perceptions and determining the factors that influence Cypriot teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, through a questionnaire survey. One of the findings of their research was that, in addition to the need for special education training, teachers perform better when strong professional development incentives and facilities are provided. The provision of professional development incentives, therefore, according to Koutrouba *et al.,* (2006), must form a central part of the objectives in any legislative changes to promote inclusion. From this study, the concept of confidence and perceived special knowledge emerged additionally, as aspects which could influence teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of all children. Nevertheless, in relation to the aspect of specialist knowledge, Lewis and Norwich (2001), based on their review of researches related to the extent that pupils with learning difficulties need different teaching approaches than the other children, they argued that specialist knowledge refers to high-level adaptations in common class teaching. As they explain, there is a continuum of teaching approaches. These approaches are different, based on the degrees of difficulties in learning of pupils, so as Lewis and Norwich (2001) conclude, pupils with learning difficulties do not need different kind of teaching approaches, but teaching approaches that are different, in terms of degree of teaching adaptations, in order to have their needs met. Therefore, this may contradict that specialist knowledge is required for teachers to feel more confident as suggested by Koutrouva *et al.,* (2006).

Feelings related to teachers' perceived confidence in their perceived specialised knowledge as indicated in Koutrouva's *et al.,* (2006) study, could link to the sense of self-efficacy. According to Pajares (2003), self- efficacy is one of the most important elements, which relates to teachers' behaviour and motivation. The concept of self-efficacy describes firstly, the faith that an action will result to an outcome, and that someone has the capability to carry out that action (Bandura, 1977). It is an element that might increase teachers' commitment to inclusive process (Carrington, 1999).

As Nind and Cochrane (2002) state, teachers' confidence about their own competence can be reinforced through professional development, and through a greater sharing of existing expertise. This was one of their findings within an action research project carried out in UK, where they aimed at identifying the dynamics that

create difficulty in classroom contexts. The focus of their project was on pupils who provide the greatest challenge to the confidence and competence of teachers. Within their project, they made use of Intensive Interaction, an interactive approach that places strong emphasis on the quality of the interaction between teacher and learner, as a way "for reviewing and transforming practice" (Nind and Cochrane, 2002, p.185). This study is important in showing that teachers' professional development, even in the most challenging situations, can enable teachers' positive feelings and confidence towards inclusion.

This finding of Nind and Cochrane's (2002) study is in line with the findings of Forlin's (2001) study that aimed at identifying the potential stressors of teachers during inclusion. It was a questionnaire survey carried out in Queensland, Australia, with primary school teachers who were involved in the inclusion of a child with a moderate or severe intellectual disability in their regular classrooms (Forlin, 2001). The study found that the issues that related firstly, to teachers' professional competence and secondly, to the behaviour of the child with intellectual disability were the most stressful for teachers. Another finding of that study was that stress was reduced when teachers were involved for many years with inclusion and participation in formal training. The study concluded with the urgent need for professional development of teachers, in order to feel confident, and that the possible stressors which act as a barrier to the development of inclusion will be reduced. This is an interesting study, which although is limited to the education context of Australia, it is important in showing that teachers' professional development can reduce possible stressors, which may reduce teachers' confidence and commitment in teaching inclusively.

The creation of positive teachers' attitudes and the enhancement of their self-efficacy in the process of including all children in schools are of particular importance to the context of Cyprus; there seems to be a need for teachers in Cyprus to create positive attitudes and to commit, not only in theory but also in the practice of inclusion. Studies carried out in Cyprus, which refer to teachers' attitudes and commitment towards integration/inclusion, (Angelides, 2004, 2007; Nicolaides, 1987; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009) suggest that although teachers agree on a theoretical level with integration/inclusion, they are not willing enough as far as its

implementation is concerned. For example, a study contacted by Angelides (2004), denotes that teachers appeared negatively oriented towards the inclusion of pupils who do not "serve their interests which are a quiet class, coverage of curriculum and high outcomes" (Angelides, 2004, p.412). The above researches on teachers' engagement in inclusive education in Cyprus, suggest that there is a need for teachers' engagement in this process. I have argued that professional development is fundamental for engaging teachers in the process of including all children in schools. Therefore, it is hoped that a study which focuses on understanding teachers' professional development needs in the context of Cyprus in some depth, will be of value in efforts in Cyprus towards the development of inclusive schools, through the engagement of teachers in inclusive processes.

Professional development is fundamental for enabling teachers to foster inclusive values in schools

Within the literature which follows, it is argued that teachers, through professional development, can be facilitated in fostering inclusive values in their schools. Such inclusive values are related to equity, entitlement, the sense of community, and respect for diversity. They may be considered as characteristics of the inclusive process, since the way that inclusion was defined in this study, suggested that all children, irrespective of their personal characteristics, should be given equal opportunities for learning and participation in their school. Therefore, these values appear to support the inclusion of all children.

An important study which highlights the central role of teachers' professional development in fostering inclusive values in schools is the overview study carried out by Booth, Nes and Stromstad (2003). The study aimed at identifying the extent to which teacher education is inclusive, barriers to its inclusive development, how these can be overcome and how teachers can be enabled to meet the challenge of inclusion in their daily work. Booth *et al.,* (2003), in order to address their aim, they drew together the results of empirical studies carried out in England, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland and United States. Although their work involved studies on both initial teacher education and in-service teacher development, the role of teachers' professional development was seen as fundamental in enabling teachers to promote

inclusive values such as equity, sense of community, participation and respect for diversity, which are significant aspects of inclusive schools. This study is particularly important, due to the international dimension that it has, since it uses a wide geographically range of studies and, therefore, it is not limited to a particular education context.

Moreover, as Mitchell (1995) explains, teachers' professional development is important for the promotion of inclusive values. This conclusion resulted from his study, which aimed at the construction of a model for preparing staff to work with students with SEN. The model as Mitchell (1995) points out, was based on the main outcomes of a project carried out in New Zealand that "focused on students who were expected to have SEN, requiring adaptation of curricula and teaching in the context of inclusive education" (Mitchell, 1995, p.26). Therefore the model, according to Mitchell (1995), was useful for designing and evaluating secondary school programs for students with SEN. The findings of this study are particularly interesting, since it was found that seven core values can be promoted through teacher development. Such values are: the right to education for all students; respect for students with SEN; community coherence; sensitivity to the diversity among students; family integrity; professional standards and accountability (Mitchell, 1995). Despite the importance of this study, in making the argument that teachers' professional development is central in fostering inclusive values, it has to be noted that it focuses only on the inclusion of children with SEN.

In addition to the above, one of the main findings of Carrington and Robinsons' (2004) study supports the rationale that teachers' professional development is central to the process of inclusion, since it was found that professional development helps staff in schools to reflect on inclusive values. Their statement was based on a collaborative research project between a University and one primary school in Queensland, Australia. This project aimed at identifying ways, in order to enable schools to address professional development. For these reasons, the researchers used the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) as a framework to guide their study. The first researcher worked as a critical friend, peer mentor and researcher in the school, and the second researcher worked as the learning support teacher in the school and as a peer mentor. Through an action research approach, which included

focus group interviews, surveys and reflective journals, they managed to find the ways in which teachers' professional development can promote the 'reculturing' of the school, to reflect inclusive values (Carrington and Robinson, 2004). Despite the fact that the study is limited to the context of Australia, its importance lies in its link with the Index for Inclusion and this makes it quite interesting, since the Index for Inclusion influenced my study as well as I will indicate later.

Within the Cypriot literature, an important study, which reinforces the argument that teachers' professional development is important for promoting inclusive values in schools, was carried out by Angelides, Stylianou and Leigh (2003). The focus of their study was on multiculturalism and on the ways that teachers in Cyprus are dealing with that. They address their research questions through an ethnographic study in one primary school of Cyprus, involving participant observations, particularly for one classroom, and interviews with the teacher and some of the children. One of the main findings and conclusions of Angelides *et al.*, (2003), was that teachers face a difficultly in developing a multicultural approach to their teaching and this is mainly due to the lack of professional development in Cyprus. This does not enable teachers to foster the notion of 'multiculturalism' within their classrooms, which is a notion that reflects the equal valuing of pupils' cultural diversity. This study is particularly important, since it addresses issues about cultures, in relation to teachers' professional development, particularly in Cyprus. It is informative and highlights aspects of multicultural education in Cyprus, which are in line with inclusive values, related to equity in diverse ethnic cultures. The findings of this study are also similar to the findings of another study carried out by the same authors. Teachers' professional development was found in both studies to be central for fostering multicultural education. As the authors argue, if teachers were engaged in professional development, children's multiple cultures could have been celebrated which it could be argued relates to the value of respecting diversity (Angelides *et al.*, 2003, 2004).

The argument that teachers' professional development can help teachers to foster inclusive values is highly relevant to the Cypriot context, since particular values embedded within the Cypriot society act as barriers to inclusion and seem to influence key stakeholders within the Cypriot education context. More specifically,

teachers of Cyprus, as argued by Angelides *et al.,* (2003), adhere to values embedded within the Cypriot society. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Culture within the Analytics Programs which constitute the curriculum (2002a), states that one of the factors which influence the education aims of the government are the national, religious, and cultural tradition of Cyprus. Therefore, given the great influence on education of the values embedded within the national religious and cultural tradition of Cyprus, it is important these values to be inclusive. Symeonidou (2002a) outlines the Cypriot values characterising, the society, in relation to the education of children with disabilities. Although the study is not empirical and focuses particularly on children with disabilities, it can provide a general view of the values that prevail in Cypriot society. According to Symeonidou (2002a), Cypriot society is not exclusive and can be characterised by two words: 'sympathy' and 'prejudice'. It expresses sympathy towards children with disabilities in the form of charity. Charitable values were, and still are promoted by disabled organisations, the State and Church (Symeonidou, 2009). The most striking example is that of the 'Radiomarathon', the most widely known in Cyprus fundraising campaign, for children with disabilities that runs every year. However, the charities that often take place in Cyprus promote a pitiable and pathetic image of these children in their effort to make people express 'sympathy' towards them.

Moreover, 'prejudice', as Symeonidou (2002a) explains, is encountered in the Cypriot society in the form of some inappropriate people's attitude toward some children, as a result of their ignorance, which may lead to the fear of the impairment and the disability. In relation to this, more recently, Symeonidou (2009) suggested that the values embedded in the Cypriot culture, in relation to people with disabilities, are characterised by a segregated philosophy. As she explains, segregated services for people with disabilities, including adults and children, were considered historically as necessary, and a professional rehabilitation centre in which people with disabilities can be trained and live, along with a boarding school, still function up to the present.

In terms of the way that special education historically functioned in Cyprus, from 1929 until 1979, a gradual establishment of separate, independent and charity run special schools, catering for different disabilities and needs, was developed (Phtiaka,

2000; Eyrudice, 2009). The 1979 Law still held a separatist philosophy, which suggested that the special school is the most appropriate place for the education of children who were considered to have special needs (Phtiaka, 2000; Symeonidou, 2005, 2009). In 1988, the Ministry of Education and Culture in an official declaration (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 1988) used for the first time the term integration, and suggested the use of integration practices. Finally the 1999 Law which suggested the integration of children with SEN in mainstream schools replaced the 1979 legislation.

Finally, the 'cure' effect is another characteristic of the Cypriot society's values, which implies that that these people need to be 'treated' (Symeonidou, 2009). As she argues, this was based especially on the idea of a 'cure' for the well being of children and adults with disabilities. The Church encouraged the power of religion to heal these people through miracles, while the government emphasised a focus on medical treatment. In both ways, the view that the problems only emerge from within the people with disabilities is endorsed. These characteristics of Cypriot values, in my opinion, may also be related to a pattern which is considered to be the 'norm' and which attempts to make an individual fit into that specific pattern. This 'norm', according to Messiou's (2008) study, which aimed at exploring the factors that influence the way children construct meanings about other children and especially the children that experience marginalisation in a primary school in Cyprus, was found to be a white Greek-Cypriot who has Greek as his/her first language. Any exception from this, as argued by Messiou (2008), is considered as being different from the 'norm' and, therefore, under scrutiny by other children. Moreover, the norm for children in Cyprus who are attending school, relates to the child's academic response, the ethnicity, the language the child speaks, whether a child was considered as having SEN and a child's appearance (Messiou, 2008). This study asserts that the norm which prevails within the wider context of Cyprus, is similar to the norm that was described through children's voices, since the wider context's norm was one of the factors which influences the creation of children's 'norm'. Similar characteristics of the Cypriot 'norm' were also found by the study of Angelides *et al.*, (2004), where they also add the characteristic of the Christian orthodox religion as another aspect of that norm.

Therefore, the writings of these researchers on inclusive education, which refer to the Cypriot cultural context, suggest that there are unique values in that culture. These values, although they are not exclusive, do not seem to reflect the notion of inclusion. I have argued that teachers' professional development is fundamental for enabling teachers to foster inclusive values in schools. Thus, an understanding of teachers' professional development needs in this unique Cypriot culture, with its unique values as illustrated above, is part of the focus of this study. By identifying the kind of values that teachers adhere to, will be useful in thinking about teachers' professional development for promoting inclusion.

Moreover, the argument that teachers' professional development is fundamental for facilitating teachers to promote inclusive values in schools is even more important, when we think of the notion of inclusion which prevails within Cypriot schools. In order to explain that in greater detail, I need to refer to the education policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus (MOEC). The education system of Cyprus is highly centralised and schools follow the curriculum, policies and textbooks, which are planned by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Pashiardis, 2004). Therefore, it can be assumed that the Cypriot school contexts and the notion of inclusion that prevails in them, to a large extent, reflect the overall education context.

Although in some aspects of the policies and the curriculum of MOEC there are some linkages with the notion of inclusion, they reflect a categorical separation of children, based on their characteristics, which may be considered as being in contrast with inclusion. Firstly, the government passed the Law for the 'Training and Education of Children with Special Needs 113(1)/1999. The aim of the Law was to promote the integration of children with Special Needs in mainstream schools as a matter of principle, with view to their academic, social, moral and emotional development (Law113(1)/1999). However, within the framework of the legislation on integration, there is still the possibility for the running of special schools for children who are considered 'exceptional'. This is considered to contradict what was mentioned in the same 1999 Law earlier, about the restructuring of school processes and of the analytical program, in order to facilitate the children's integration in the school. Also, the separation of 'exceptional' children is in contrast with the notion of

inclusion, where mainstream schools should restructure themselves, in order to be able to accommodate the needs of all children.

In addition to the above, the 'Analytics programs of primary education' (MOEC, 2002) which constitute the curriculum state that: "The curriculum respects the uniqueness of every child and responds to any inborn or acquired individual differences, the early intervention of which constitute a need for appropriate planning, right implementation and full exploitation of the time provided" (p.21) . The overall aim seems very close to the creation of a context which respects and responds to the diversity of all children. However, in relation to that aim, what is actually done in the curriculum is the addition of a separate chapter titled as: "The education of children with Special Needs" (MOEC, 2002, p.161). Within this chapter, the general instructions concerned with the learning and teaching of each 'category' of children with 'special needs' are provided. The objectives and suggested material are specifically for mentally handicapped children, children with emotional and behavioural problems, blind children, deaf children, and autistic children (MOEC, 2002). The teacher can choose from the above material, the elements that he/she believes that will facilitate the creation of an appropriate personalised program and respond to the needs of each child. Nonetheless, as it is explained in this chapter, due to the lack of means and staff of the current educational system special schools will still exist for: a) mild mentally handicapped children, b) deaf and blind children, c) paralyzed children, d) children with severe emotional and behavioural problems. In other situations, children with special needs can follow the current program of mainstream schools and, whenever it is necessary, an 'Individual Educational Program' (I.E.P.) should be constructed, in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted and additional material may be provided for the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools. A 'special education teacher' is needed as well, in order to achieve an I.E.P. for each child. The I.E.P. will be setup by the Special Education Coordinators (SENCOs), in cooperation with the teachers and parents of the child.

Moreover, the government promoted educational measures for children coming from other countries, which were divided into two measures for language, and measures which will enable the smooth integration of groups with different cultural identities

(MOEC, 2009). Furthermore, as the MOEC (2009) reports, children coming from other countries can take part in mainstream classes, along with native children, an element which reflects the notion of inclusion. In addition to the measures taken for the children whose first language is not Greek, the MOEC developed the Zones of Education Priority (ZEP), which were first applied in 2001. According to the MOEC (2009) the ZEP is a government initiative, which aims to combat school failure and illiteracy. A school is considered to belong to the ZEP, if within a school, there is a significant number of children from ethnic minorities, so requiring additional support. For these schools, additional measures are taken, in order to achieve aims, such as a smaller number of pupils in class, free breakfast for all children, and other measures, related to the needs of each school unit (MOEC, 2009). Ten primary schools from the 345 primary schools of Cyprus were considered to belong to the ZEP in the academic year 2008/9 (MOEC, 2009).

In reviewing the policies of MOEC, we can understand the ways that the notion of inclusion is present in schools. It seems to be largely connected with children with SEN and with children coming from other countries. The policies for children coming from other countries are to an important extent in line with the notion of inclusion in schools. However, the MOEC policy for children with SEN seems to contradict this notion, given that some children are excluded from mainstream schools. Also, in relation to how teachers perceive these policies in their schools, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) through a questionnaire survey, attempted to identify teachers' beliefs, prior knowledge and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools. Based on that study, one of the points that they emphasised is that teachers have a superficial view about inclusion and are not in a position to respond to their new role, by doing what is required for creating an inclusive school that responds to children with SEN. They considered the policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture as one of the reasons for teachers' non-responsiveness, since as they argue, the policies of the Ministry imitated international trends, in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN. Earlier, Phtiaka (2001a) has criticised that this is partly the reason why "Changes in Cypriot special education have often remained in rhetoric rather than in policy and practice" (p.141).

Given the unique ways through which inclusion is understood in Cypriot schools and the effect that this has on teachers, it seems to me that an exploration of teachers' needs for promoting inclusive values in schools is necessary.

Teachers' professional development is fundamental for engaging teachers in collaborative reflective practice for promoting inclusion in schools

A collaborative reflective practice in my study refers to the creation of team-work and partnerships among teachers, the creation of dialogue among them, which aim at teachers' critical reflection on their own thinking on practices (Ainscow, 2003; Peter and Walter, 2010). It is particularly important, since it enables teachers to identify ways that facilitate them to reach the needs of all children and enhance their inclusion (Ainscow, 2003).

Ainscow (1993; 1994; 1995; 1998) suggests that teachers' professional development promotes team-work and partnerships among teachers and creates a common inclusive language, which facilitates teachers' communication. His argument was initially based on an action research project, organised by UNESCO, known as 'Special Needs in the Classroom', which was carried out in over 50 countries (Ainscow, 1994). Strong evidence was provided that specific teacher education approaches developed within the project were significant in making schools and classrooms more responsive to the needs of all pupils, regardless of their levels of attainment (Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). More recent studies by Ainscow and his colleagues (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Ainscow and Kaplan, 2005) support and reinforce the argument of the importance of professional development through the engagement of teachers' in reflective practices for including all children in schools. Based on the results of the same UNESCO's project, carried out particularly in developing countries, Ahuja (2003) argues that, for the development of mainstream classroom practices that can take account of the needs of all children as individuals, teacher development is fundamental. Although the UNESCO project was focusing only on children with special needs, now the project is updated (UNESCO, 2004) and it refers to the inclusion of all children.

The study carried out by Howes, Davies and Fox (2009) could enhance the argument that teachers' professional development is important for engaging teachers in

collaborative reflective practice. One of the aims of their study was to understand the factors which influence teachers to be engaged in reflective practice for a more inclusive pupils' learning. Through an action research project carried out in six secondary schools in England and Wales, Howes *et al.* (2009) found that collaborative action research, as part of teachers' professional development, can engage teachers in reflective practice and enable the development of a more inclusive context in schools.

The argument that teachers' professional development can engage teachers in collaborative reflective practice is fundamental for the development of inclusion in schools and it is of particular importance for Cyprus. In Cyprus, the professional development of primary school teachers is mainly carried out by the 'Cyprus Pedagogical Institute' and particularly by the department of Teacher Education (MOEC, 2009). All primary school teachers are encouraged to attend seminars through a booklet of optional seminars, which is sent by the Pedagogical Institute every year in all schools, and these optional seminars are carried out in the afternoon (Karagiorgi and Symeou, 2006). Moreover, as stated by the Pedagogical Institute (2010) one-day workshops and conferences are also provided. Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) in their study, argued that substantive in-service teachers' professional development, hardly exist in Cyprus. Moreover, teachers' professional development for inclusion in Cyprus has been criticised, in terms of its content and of the way that it is carried out. It is suggested by the Cypriot literature that professional development in Cyprus fails to promote team-work and partnerships among teachers, and reflection on their own practices that could enable the creation of inclusion in schools (Angelides, 2002; Angelides, 2004; Angelides, Stylianou and Leigh, 2003, 2004; Angelides, Charalambous and Vrasidas, 2004; Angelides, 2005a; Phtiaka, 2003; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). Angelides (2002) more specifically suggests that the traditional pattern of staff development, where teachers attend external courses, is not what teachers need for fostering inclusion, since it promotes individual learning (Angelides, 2002). A theoretical approach carried out within external sessions by the Pedagogical Institute, reflects a categorical approach which focuses on problems within children, such as dyslexia, ADHD, and language difficulties, which are covered as part of teachers' professional development in

Cyprus, under the topics related to education psychology (Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). Therefore, it could be argued that in Cyprus there is a need for more collaborative reflective practice, which will support teachers in the process of including all children. As such, it is hoped that an in depth understanding of teachers' professional development needs will be of value in understanding the kind of professional development opportunities that teachers feel they need, in order to promote inclusion.

The three thematic areas presented above constitute the rationale and provide the reasons to support why teachers' professional development is central for fostering the process of inclusion in schools. The importance of these thematic areas, particularly to the context of Cyprus, was stressed out. This importance provides also the reasons to support why Cyprus was chosen as the context in which the study was carried out. Of course, another factor of choosing Cyprus is my profession. I am a primary school teacher in Cyprus. Therefore, given that primary schools of Cyprus are my workplace, this was an important reason for carrying out the study in Cyprus. Further, as a teacher I feel that it is my duty to aim at the education of all children, and by undertaking this research, I can also identify my own needs for fostering inclusion in the schools that I am/will be working in Cyprus. Finally, I strongly believe that teachers should aim at the education of all children, not only as a matter of human rights, but as a requirement which contributes to the quality of education.

The following section presents key issues emerging from available literature, in relation to teachers' professional development needs for promoting inclusion.

Key issues emerging from literature, in relation to teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion

The way that professional development was defined in this study, determined also the way that professional development needs were viewed. As with the definition of professional development, needs relate not only to pre-determined training activities offered to teachers by an external organisation, such as the in-service training. Rather, they take a broader notion, in order to involve also, the needs, which may be related to all teachers and the people around them, at all levels of the school, including the broader context of the school environment. Based on this, teachers

themselves and their interactions with all the people involved in children's education within the wider school context and the community, form part of teachers' professional practice and could also be seen as part of their professional development needs.

This section presents teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion as key issues under two broad thematic areas which are: professional development needs related to the wider school context; and professional development needs related to teachers' ways thinking about inclusion. I have decided to focus on these two thematic areas, since these needs have emerged as important for inclusion.

Teachers' professional development needs, related to the wider school context

This thematic area is about the professional development needs of teachers, as these result from aspects beyond teachers themselves. These are education policy aspects, and the people who are involved in inclusive education in schools. It is suggested in the literature, that teachers need a shared commitment and support by all involved in inclusive education, as well as collaboration with other people involved in inclusion. Finally, it is suggested that teachers need a coherent professional development policy. These are presented below:

Teachers need a shared commitment and support by all involved in inclusive education

Within international literature it is argued that teachers need the development of a shared commitment and future development towards inclusive schooling, among all who are involved in education (Carrington, 1999). Such commitment might be indicated by supporting teachers in resources such as "class size, in-service training opportunities, and time to meet families" (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-Mccormick and Scheer, 1999, p.153), which are all components for inclusive classrooms and a necessity for the development of inclusion. That was one of the findings of Buell *et al.,* (1999) study, which aimed through a questionnaire survey given to special and general education teachers, at identifying training and support teachers' needs, in order to be successful with students with SEN in inclusive programme settings in

United States. The importance of this need is pointed out by what was found in Buell *et al.* (1999) study, who suggested that teachers' perceived level of support was an important component that affected teachers and could also influence their commitment towards inclusion (Buell *et al.*, 1999).

In Cyprus, a teachers' professional development need related to shared commitment and support by all involved in inclusion, is their need to feel that they are supported adequately in the schools, by government policy, in order to be able to foster inclusive education in their classrooms (Angelides, 2004). Such support, according to Angelides (2004) could be the modification of the curriculum, assistance of professionals, supplementary aids and services, in order to treat all children equally and avoid marginalisation.

Teachers need collaboration with other people involved in inclusive education

The professional development need of teachers for collaboration emerged strongly from international and Cypriot literature. First of all, it emerged that teachers need to collaborate with other teachers. As Booth and Smith (2002) support, all members of staff, irrespective of roles, whether they are managers, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors or supervisors, should feel that they are supported by each other and that it is their duty to support others. Also, based on Carrington's (1999) study, teachers need to see other successful teachers working in inclusive settings and be convinced by them in trying new practices. Therefore, teachers need the collaboration of their colleagues. Moreover, teachers' need for collaboration is important, since as Ainscow (2003) argues, when teachers collaborate with each other, a common language of practice is developed and according to Howes *et al.* (2009), this language emerges from teachers' theniselves and enables them to frame the issue in ways that is more meaningful to them. In addition to the above, a common language of practice can help teachers share ideas, and reflect upon their own styles of working (Ainscow, 2003; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). Corbett (2001) states that interaction, communication, and openness among teachers, for example within 'regular meetings,' enhance their collaboration, something which is very important for the sharing of inclusive philosophy.

Beyond collaboration among teachers, it was suggested by international literature that teachers need collaboration with special education teachers. Staff of special schools in Mittlers' (1995) view should collaborate with teachers in ordinary schools, since they have much to contribute, with regard to "curriculum planning and modification, devising a small-steps approach to helping student access the program of study and attainment targets of the curriculum, assessment and record keeping, individual educational planning, behavioural methods and management, aspects of microtechnology and working with parents" (p.133).

In Cyprus, Angelides (2004) carried out a case study, which aimed at looking at existing arrangements in Cyprus, regarding special education, in order to consider ways of improving schools' progress towards inclusive education. Different methods and techniques, such as participant observations, collection of critical incidents, field notes and reflective journals were used and had a qualitative nature. The sample, as the author also notes was very limited. Although the aim of the study was not related directly to teachers' professional development needs, the study pointed out some of the issues regarding teachers' development in Cyprus. It was suggested by Angelides' (2004) study that teachers need to have enough time for collaboration with other teachers and special teachers. This may allow the effective inclusion of all children in the classroom and the creation of the kind of climate that can foster inclusion (Angelides, 2004). This is a particularly important issue, since, as the study indicated, lack of time for teachers to co-operate, prevented the development of partnerships, collaboration and a shared language, which are of major importance for the development of the philosophy of inclusion in schools. Moreover, according to Angelides (2004), teachers need time for collaboration in their timetable, in order to have time to get involved with parents as well. Further, as Angelides (2007) states, teachers' collaborations with other people in the school is the key to success in inclusive education, since teachers are complementary to each other, they help each other to interact with other people, and can get a better knowledge of the needs of their pupils.

In addition to the above, teachers need to have good relationships with parents. The relationships between parents and teachers are very important for the inclusion of all children. Ainscow (1999; 2000b; 2003) supports the idea that inclusion must support

the partnership between staff and parents. Home-school relationships, collaboration, and partnership, are important for student learning, so the positive ways in which schools relate to parents must be reinforced (Mittler, 1999, 2000). "Partnership with parents' is one of the agreed hallmarks of an effective school" (Mittler, 2002, p.5). Home-school relationships, collaboration, and partnership, are important for student learning, so the positive ways in which schools relate to parents must be reinforced. According to Mittler (1999, 2000), there is strong evidence also, to suggest that the active involvement and collaboration of parents with schools is highly beneficial for their children. The goal of this partnership does not easily lend itself to definition or analysis, but as Mittler (1990) denotes, it can be thought of as including some of the following elements: "(a) a relationship of equality and mutual respect; (b) professionals understanding and respecting the individuality of each family and each member of the family; (c) professionals being accountable to parents as consumers; (d) a sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences and decision-making" (Mittler, 1990, p.9). It is important, therefore, for partnership to be though in such ways, especially in the last way, mentioned by Mittler (1990). Finally, 'participation' of children's parents in decision making and in defining and naming the context in which their children are involved, according to Todd (2007), is one of the elements that will allow paying attention to the diversity of individuals, without blaming and thinking in deficit ways.

Within Cypriot literature, teachers' need to have good relationships and collaborate with parents was considered important, because parents emerged as the co-educators of their children (Phtiaka, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Symeonidou, 2002b). According to Phtiaka (1997), efficient communication between parents and teachers should not be lacking but they should co-operate properly. As Phtiaka (2001a) denotes, sharing of expectations, cooperation and communication among parents and staff are the main key ingredients for a good partnership between parents and school. Based on that, it can be said that teachers need to collaborate with parents.

Teachers need a coherent professional development policy

Part of a shared commitment and support from the wider context may be considered the need of teachers to have a coherent professional development policy. One of the

most important teachers' professional development need that Mittler (1995) raises, is the need for a coherent professional development policy for teachers, particularly for their inclusive development. This was based on the results of the study, where it was found that in UK long courses have been replaced by a large number of short one-day training events, and that a large number of these training days focus on the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements. Similarly, Balbas' (1995) study, aimed at identifying in-service training needs of teachers in primary education for integration in Spain, through the use of questionnaires given to primary school teachers and interviews with key informants like regular teachers, support teachers, principals and officials of local authorities. One of the main findings was that teachers need a coherent policy about the skills and competencies that they should develop and about the nature of their training; whether the training should be provided by mainstream teachers, support teachers or specialists. Moreover, for this issue, Mittler (2000) argued that although the government of UK was committed to a programme of high quality and school-based professional development, there are some issues not yet solved, which are vital for the success of the programme. Such issues/limitations of current policy for teachers' professional development, according to Mittler (2000), are the people who will carry out teachers' training the way that it is going to be carried out, and necessary funds.

So, a coherent professional development policy is one of the most important needs of teachers. In Cyprus, as I have already presented within the rationale, there is not a coherent professional development policy for inclusion (Angelides, 2004; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). However, there is currently an effort to develop a training course, in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN (Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). There is a large body of international literature and some Cypriot literature to suggest the kind of professional development opportunities that teachers need, in order to foster inclusion. The main elements of such opportunities are that professional development opportunities should be school-based, should promote reflection and experimentation, and should take into consideration teachers' voices about their needs. Each of these is presented below.

As Ainscow (2003) supports, teachers' professional development should be school-based, in order to enhance teachers' inclusive development. This is one of the most

important teachers' professional development need that other international writers also raise (Ainscow, 1999; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006a; Booth, 2000; Booth, Nes and Stromstad, 2003; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; O'Gorman and Drudy, 2010; Mittler, 2000; Hopkins, Ainscow, and West, 1994). Cypriot writers also emphasise the need for teachers' professional development to be school-based (Angelides, 2002; 2004). When teacher development is school-based, according to Ainscow (2003), it provides appropriate support and opportunities for teacher reflection and experimentation. Further, it enables teachers' development to start with existing practices and knowledge, due to the fact that when teachers' professional development is school-based, it makes better use of existing expertise and creativity (Ainscow, 2003).

In addition to the above, according to Angelides (2002), teachers need to be involved in development programs, which include practice. This means that teachers, in addition to the theoretical approach which is provided mainly by seminars, need to have practical experiences specifically focused and based on schools and classrooms with students with learning difficulties (Angelides, 2002). Their practical involvement with such situations enables teachers to reflect on their own practices, in a way that enables them to understand teaching situations, evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and think different approaches or strategies to improve practice (Angelides, 2002). This links to the following aspect of reflection and experimentation that professional development opportunities need to promote.

Many studies in international literature suggest that reflection and experimentation are important elements that should be involved in professional development opportunities (Ainscow, 1994, 1995, 2003; Carrington, 1999; O'Gorman and Drudy 2010; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). A characteristic example is the argument of Sebba and Ainscow (1996), based on the UNESCO project (1994; 2004), as presented within the rationale. It is argued that one of teachers' professional development needs that this project raises is the need for experimentation and reflection. Within the project, it was found that when teachers were supported for experimentation in the classroom, in forms that encourage reflection on these activities (Ainscow, 1995; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996), inclusive pedagogy was facilitated in school. Within this strategy, emphasis was given to learning through experience. In other words, as

Sebba and Ainscow (1996) explain, during workshop sessions participants had opportunities to experience a variety of active learning approaches. In this way, "they are encouraged to consider life in the classroom through the eyes of learners and, at the same time, to relate these experiences to their own practice in school" (Sebba and Ainscow, 1996, p.13). The forms of in-class support have proved, according to Ainscow (1995), to be a highly effective means of facilitating the development of inclusive classroom.

Interaction with evidence is another reflective practice, and involves teachers taking feedback from their pupils and mutual observations with their colleagues (Howes *et al.* 2009). According to Howes *et al.* (2009) interaction with evidence enables teachers to know what their pupils understood and adjust their teaching practice respectively.

In Cyprus, Angelides (2002) carried out a study in one primary school in Cyprus and he put into effect a collaborative research programme, in order to find factors that prevented teachers from including all pupils in teaching. He observed teachers' practice and collected examples of critical incidents, so as to discuss them with the teacher involved, and then bring the accounts of these incidents and the interpretations to staff meetings, in order to discuss them with the rest of the teachers. After three months, he interviewed the teachers again, in an attempt to find how the collaboration influenced their practice (Angelides, 2002). Based on the findings of this study, Angelides (2002) suggested that teachers need to be involved to collaborative models of inquiry, which are part of an action research that encourages teachers to scrutinise their own practice in collaboration with an outsider (e.g. an inspector or an academic). However, although inspector's and academics' views can support teachers, it is argued that teachers' voices should be taken into consideration. This is presented below.

Teachers are the critical actors of inclusion. Nevertheless, their voices are not involved in decisions that will affect their classrooms and this is a need of teachers, regarding their professional development (Buell *et al.*, 1999). Similarly, Carrington and Robinson (2004) argue that teachers need to have an active role in their development process, while Mittler (2000) suggests that teachers need their

professional development to be in line with what they actually perceive as needed for their inclusive development. Based on the findings of Howes *et al.* (2009) study, the issue of 'ownership', in relation to teachers' professional development was raised. As the authors denote, when teachers 'owned' the focus and the issues of what they were going to learn, this made the issue meaningful. This engaged teachers in the processes involved within their professional development, because teachers had the opportunity to decide about the focus of the actions, which means that the processes involved came from what they considered as being important for them (Howes *et al.*, 2009). However, as the same authors denote, difficulties emerge when teachers have the ownership of project without guidance, such as too long time to decide the issues, and the loss of focus and impetus.

Teachers' professional development needs related to teachers' ways of thinking about inclusion

This thematic area focuses on teachers themselves and their ways of thinking about inclusion. It suggests that teachers need to develop beliefs and attitudes that aim at inclusive schooling, to develop an inclusive thinking about teaching and learning and to feel confident in their own competence (knowledge and skills) in teaching inclusively. Each of them is presented below:

Teachers need to develop beliefs and attitudes that aim at inclusive schooling

One of the most important professional development needs mentioned by international literature is that teachers need to change attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about education, in order to be able to work successful in inclusive schools. Carrington (1999) suggested that the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and others who deal with diverse range of students in the school community should be known and understood. So, as Carrington (1999) supports, professional development programmes need to produce teachers' attitudes and beliefs change towards inclusive schooling. This is a particularly important issue raised in the study, because it suggested that teachers have a central role in fostering inclusion, and that their attitudes, assumptions and beliefs affect their behaviour towards inclusion (Carrington, 1999). Similarly, Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006), who are Greek writers, presented teachers' assumptions as a belief system about education, about

ability and success, about special education and segregated provision by key international writers for such issues (Astuto, 1995; McDonnell, 2003; Skrtic, 1991; Barton and Tomlinson, 1984). Indicative are the main assumptions about education, such as that the individual student is mainly responsible for school achievement (Astuto, 1995), the assumptions about ability and success, for example when success in education is seen as depending on the individual's ability and effort, and lack of success is the result of the inability of the pupil (McDonnell, 2003). Those are only the most indicative assumptions of the belief system as presented by Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006). Such beliefs, according to Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006), are restrictive and prevent the development of different and more inclusive practices. Similarly, as they suggested in their study, one of teachers' main beliefs is that specialists, rather than teachers, are responsible for the implementation of inclusive practices and that segregated schools are necessary for the support of children with disabilities. Moreover, teachers' assumptions that doctors or experts are the most knowledgeable (Skrtic, 1991) and that special units are staffed by more qualified teachers (Barton and Tomlinson, 1984) were presented as the belief system by Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) in relation to assumptions about special education and special-segregated provision.

In Cyprus, one of the main findings of Angelides' (2004) study is that teachers need to change their attitude for moving towards inclusive education, since it was found that the teachers, who participated in his study, appeared negatively oriented towards inclusive education and pupils who face difficulties in learning. Therefore, the study which covers to some extent teachers' attitudes, considers that they should be given attention, when exploring ways of moving towards inclusive schooling. A more recent study by Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) in Cyprus, aimed at identifying teachers' beliefs, attitudes and prior knowledge in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN. One of their findings was that the teachers who participated in their study had beliefs that relate to the medical model of viewing disability, since 'problems' were seen to arise from children. Also, teachers in their study supported that some 'categories' of children with SEN, and children with behavioural and learning difficulties should be educated in special schools. Moreover, according to Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), in Cyprus there is the belief of teachers that

specialists who are involved in the education of children with SEN know better, and the special teacher is considered to be primarily responsible for educating children with SEN. This links to some extent to teachers' thinking about teaching of all children, a need which is addressed below.

Teachers need to develop an inclusive thinking about teaching and learning

This professional development need is focusing specifically on teaching and learning in relation to inclusion. As Florian (2008) suggests, teachers need to understand that inclusive practice involves an interaction of socio-cultural factors, which produce individual differences and, therefore, appropriate responses are developed towards all children. Moreover, it is argued by Florian (2008) that although pupils' differences must be taken into consideration within teacher education, 'determinist' beliefs about ability must be rejected, something that was clearly argued in Hart's (1996; 2003) work. Hart (2003) suggests that ability-based pedagogy results in labelling of pupils, which can influence their life chances.

An important finding of Buell's *et al.,* (1999) study is that teachers need to be involved in in-service opportunities that validate their abilities to reach all students and to build on students' strengths. Moreover, according to the study, teachers need to alter their way of thinking about what teaching, learning and their role in the classroom is. In that way, a child-centred pedagogy that will be successful to educate all children can emerge.

Moreover, Ainscow (2003) suggests that teachers need to become able to understand differences as opportunities for learning and as offering surprises that invite further improvisation. This implies a positive view of difference and teachers should be supported at this stage so as not to feel threatened. Further, according to Ainscow (2003), teachers need to scrutinise their existing ways of working, in order to identify barriers experienced by some learners and address these in a supportive way.

Also, the study of O'Gorman and Drudy (2010) aimed at identifying the professional development needs of teachers working in special/inclusive education in Ireland. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, which suggested that teachers need to develop teaching and learning strategies that take into consideration the

theoretical and sociological underpinnings of inclusion, in order to respond to the diversity of children (O'Gorman and Drudy, 2010). According to their views, the theoretical and sociological underpinnings of inclusion are components which contribute to the cultivation of positive thinking about inclusion. How teachers think about teaching and learning is important and seems also to link to their need to feel confident about their competence to teach inclusively as follows:

Teachers need to feel confident in their own competence (knowledge and skills) in teaching inclusively

It is suggested mainly by international literature related to teachers' professional development needs in relation to inclusion that teachers need to feel confident about their competence to teach inclusively. Based on the study of Buell *et al.* (1999), the need of teachers for more confidence was evident, since in their study it was found that teachers do not feel confident in their ability to fulfil tasks needed to support inclusive education; they "lack confidence in adapting materials and curriculum, managing behavioural problems, and giving individual assistance" (Buell *et al.,* 1999, p.153). This study, therefore, is interesting in providing the relationship between the concepts of self-efficacy with the confidence of teachers, about their competence on inclusive teaching and learning. Related to that, was the need of teachers to have a clear understanding of what inclusion is, in order to believe that they can actually influence students' learning (Buell *et al.*, 1999). As Buell *et al.* (1999) denote, efforts to increase understanding of inclusion and issues surrounding inclusion are likely to provide more confidence in their ability to positively affect students. This is an important aspect, which refers to the concept of self-efficiency.

Likewise, as Florian (2008) suggests, teachers need to understand and feel that they are qualified to teach children with 'additional needs', since they have much of the knowledge and skills required. However as she argues, what teachers need is confidence, in order to put in practice what they know.

Finally, for helping teachers to develop more inclusive teaching, according to Ainscow (1994; 1995), they need to be given opportunities to consider new possibilities, so as to extent their repertoires. This enhances their confidence and supports a degree of risk taking, which is important for developing inclusive

teaching and learning (Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). Therefore, Sebba and Ainscow's (1996) arguments bring into the fore the relationship between confidence and competence as this involves teachers participating in experiences that illustrate and stimulate a consideration of new possibilities for action.

Summing up, the professional development needs of teachers for fostering inclusion, as these emerged from literature, were presented as key issues, under two broad thematic areas. Given the important role of teachers' professional development in fostering inclusion, this study has a particular focus on inclusive school cultures. Therefore, at this stage, it is critical to introduce the way that inclusive school cultures are defined in the study and the reasons for this focus.

The focus on inclusive school cultures

The term inclusive school cultures, refers to first dimension of the Index for Inclusion. The Index provides a framework for school review and development on three dimensions: 'cultures', 'policies' and 'practices' and each dimension involves key indicators to clarify its meaning. The first dimension of the Index suggests that inclusive school cultures are characterised firstly, by a "secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating, community in which everyone is valued as the foundation for the highest achievements of all" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.8). Their first characteristic is further clarified by the indicators: that "everyone is made to feel welcome; students help each other; staff collaborate with each other; staff and students treat one other with respect; there is partnership between staff and parents; staff and governors work well together and; all local communities are involved in the school" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.39).

The second characteristic of inclusive school cultures, according to the Index is "the establishment of shared inclusive values that are conveyed to all new staff, students, governors and parents/carers" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.8). The indicators within this characteristic are: that "there are high expectations for all students; staff governors, students and parents carers share a philosophy of inclusion; students are equally valued; staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a role; staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all

aspects of the school and; the school strives to minimise all forms of discrimination" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.39).

Inclusive school cultures, as presented above, may link to the concept of school cultures, which is a concept that is difficult to define, given the problematic nature of the notion of culture (Berger, 1995; Kugelmass 2004, 2006; Kugelmass and Ainscow, 2004; Zollers, Ramanathan and Yu, 1999). However, its main characteristics have been conceptualised by a framework of Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988), who portrayed an 'onion skin' model of culture. According to their model, the central element of culture is the belief system. The belief system according to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) constitutes the deepest level of culture, and is characterised by people's assumptions and understandings. Outside the belief system is the value system, then the norms and standards and finally, the patterns of behaviour (Segriovanni and Starratt, 1988). The value systems as they denote are influenced by the belief systems and similarly, the value systems influence the norms and standards, which in turn influence patterns of behaviour.

Moreover, according to Lawton (1997), school culture can be analysed at three different levels. He sets behaviour as being part of the surface culture, beliefs as being part of the deep structure of culture and attitudes and values existing somewhere in the middle of behaviour and of beliefs (Lawton, 1997). This definition adds the concept of attitudes within the notion of school culture but it conceptualises beliefs, values and behaviour in a similar way to Sergiovanni and Starratt's (1988) model.

The reasons for focusing on inclusive school cultures for this study are, firstly, their important role in fostering inclusion. The principles and values involved in school cultures guide decisions about policies and practices and in this sense, the school culture is essential for the achievement of inclusion (Corbett, 1999). Moreover, the development of inclusion requires processes of social learning, therefore. school cultures are significant in developing inclusion in schools (Ainscow, 2007; Ainscow and Sandill, 2010; Carrington, 1999; Carrington and Elkins, 2002). Thus, as Angelides and Ainscow (2000) state, workplace cultures influence school practices

in many ways and failure to identify and recognise their existence will affect any improvement efforts.

Within the Index, it is stated that "it is through inclusive schools cultures, that changes in policies and practices can be sustained by staff and students" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.8). Further, the way that the three dimensions of the Index (creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies, evolving inclusive practices) are interconnected, emphasise the value and the role of inclusive school cultures, and the necessity to explore issues related to inclusion, starting from the broadest level of culture, the macrolevel, and then moving to the more focused level. As Booth and Ainscow (2002) denote "barriers to learning and participation arise through an interaction between students and their contexts; the people, policies, institutions, cultures, and social and economic circumstances that affect their lives" (p.14). For this reason, the Index provides a figure, where the three dimensions shape a triangle. The dimension of cultures is placed deliberately along the base of the triangle, because cultures can support or undermine developments in inclusive teaching and learning and lead to changes in policy and practice (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). In other words, this dimension represents the overarching culture of school and wider community and constitutes the wider context that affects the policies and practices dimensions.

The way that the Index conceptualises the role of inclusive school cultures in relation to the dimensions of policies and practices, may link to Bronfenbrenner's 'Ecological Systems Theory.' Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1992) model is useful in examining issues for inclusion, since it takes into account both the characteristics of the learner and the learner's educational environment including the broader social and cultural contexts. Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1992) model consists of four levels – 'niches'- of environment and these are the macrosystem (overarching culture,) the exosystem (national and local policy, school-curriculum,) the mesosystem (relationships between microsystems) and finally the microsystem (e.g.classroom, family). The position and role that the macrosystem plays in Bronfenbrenner's theory could be related to the dimension of cultures of the Index, because the macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context

(Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Hence, this level consists of cultural or social values and beliefs, that are embedded explicitly or implicitly in the wider society and affects the exosystem, the mesosystem and the microsystem.

Given the important role that inclusive school cultures have in the development of inclusion in schools, a second reason for focusing particularly on inclusive school cultures, is the growing number of international studies which call for the need of school cultures to become more inclusive. More specifically, according to Carrington (1999), inclusion needs a shift in culture in order to be effective, since the way that it functions does not meet the learning needs of all students. In addition, Howes *et al.,* (2009), conclude their study by suggesting that inclusion requires an alteration in culture, given that inclusion is not "a quick fix" (p.179) but an educational mission that schools should adopt. Also, it was pointed out by Corbett (1999), that inclusive education cannot be achieved if there is not a culture that involves inclusive values, while Carrington and Robinson (2004) suggest that school cultures, which are traditional, do not take into consideration the diversity of learning needs.

Further, the importance for a focus on inclusive cultures becomes more essential when we think of the powerful Greek-Cypriot cultural context as presented earlier, and the impact that it has on inclusion in schools. Moreover, the assertion that school cultures can impact on practice and therefore on school practices, is relevant to the education context of Cyprus. This is actually the central idea of Angelides' work (Angelides and Ainscow, 2000; Angelides, 2003, 2006, 2007) in Cyprus. More specifically, within his work it is argued that cultures can impact on practice and that by understanding them, and their role in the school context, improvements in schools can be achieved towards inclusion.

Also, the necessity for focusing on inclusive school cultures in Cyprus is that very recently the issue of inclusive cultures in schools in relation to teachers' professional development attracted an increased interest (e.g. Symeonidou, 2009; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). Symeonidou (2009) pointed out the need for research in Cyprus that will focus on the cultural features that relate to inclusion, and will explore how these might impact on the efforts towards inclusion. Further, as she suggests, teacher training should aim at a cultural change and therefore, research should aim to explore

how teachers' training will become more culturally oriented. More importantly, however, is the current attempt in Cyprus for the development of an in-service teachers' training course for inclusion, with a focus on children with SEN (Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009), which emphasises the need for a contextualised design of such course, in order to enable teachers to move towards and promote an inclusive culture (Symeonidou, 2009). This is a significant innovation in Cyprus, which was funded by Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation and was supported by the University of Cyprus. Even though it focuses particularly on children with SEN, in my view, it emphasises teachers' professional development towards the cultural dimension of inclusion which is, especially for the Cypriot cultural context with its unique values, very important.

Having presented the concept of inclusive school cultures and the way that this is used in this study, along with the reasons for a focus on teachers' professional development in relation to inclusive cultures, it is important to introduce the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. As mentioned in the introduction, 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' derived from a previous analytical study (Gerosimou, 2007, 2008, 2010). This framework was drawn from the cultural dimension of the Index, and more specifically, from its indicators which appeared to link with pedagogy. Thus, 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' are considered to be a subset of inclusive school cultures as these are described in the Index, and have a particular focus on pedagogy of all children.

Pedagogy has a wide spectrum of definitions, "from the societally broad to the procedurally narrow" (Alexander, 2008, p.45). The word comes from the Ancient Greek παιδαγωγέω [paidagōgeō: from pais, (παις), which is the ancient Greek word which means child, and ago (αγω) which is the ancient Greek world for the verb lead]. It is defined in Greek, as the science which is concerned with the 'teaching' as a process, including both teaching principles and methods (Mpampiniotis, 1998). This study adopts the definition of pedagogy as presented by Alexander (2004; 2005; 2008). Alexander (2005) suggests that "pedagogy is not a mere matter of teaching technique. It is a purposive cultural intervention in individual human development which is deeply saturated with the values and history of the society and community in which it is located" (p.2). Alexander's definition (2005) is based on his conceptual

model for pedagogy which is constructed of three dimensions: the dimension of 'Locating pedagogy', the dimension of 'Formalising and Legitimating pedagogy', and the dimension of 'Enabling pedagogy'. The 'Enabling pedagogy' dimension in Alexander's (2008) model is concerned with the act of teaching and learning, the children who receive them and the ways that these are carried out, as suggested in the curriculum. So, as Alexander (2008) argues, this dimension explains "what is to be taught to whom and how" (Alexander, 2008, p. 48). The 'Formalising and Legitimating pedagogy' dimension of Alexander's model (2008) consists of the school and the policy, which represent the institutional and legal contexts respectively. This dimension according to Alexander (2008) comprises the requirements and expectations of a context. The 'Locating pedagogy' dimension of Alexander's model (2008) consists of the ideas and values of culture, self, and history. This dimension as Alexander (2008) explains is a group that constitutes the broader and larger contexts that provide requirements and expectations for the two previously mentioned dimensions.

The reasons for adopting this view of pedagogy in my study, is because Alexander's (2004; 2008) conceptual model of pedagogy, although being a model for pedagogy in general, can be considered as relevant for a pedagogy for inclusion, as presented in the Index, which does not only sees pedagogy as a mere matter of teaching and learning practices. Rather, the ideas and values concerned with the culture and policy contexts are considered along with these practices.

Having presented the concept of inclusive school cultures as this is presented within the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) and the notion of pedagogy, the following section presents how these concepts are used, within the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'.

The development of the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'

The basis for the development of the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' was an analytical study, which was conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (MEd), at the University of Hull (Gerosimou, 2007). The aim of the study was to address the research question: "What are the significant pedagogical (learning and teaching) issues for the inclusion

of all children, for primary school teachers in Cyprus?" The study, as an analytical one did not attempt to look at actual practice through a field study, but used the Index, as the main analytical framework, in order to analyse relevant international and Cypriot literature for addressing the research question.

In the study, the three dimensions of the Index, inclusive school cultures, policies and practices, and only the key indicators within them that seemed to be relevant to inclusive pedagogy, had been used, in order to analyse the body of international and Cypriot literature, which was concerned with inclusive pedagogical issues. The Index was chosen because of its comprehensiveness and organisation, its international recognition and its suitability in looking at inclusion in Cyprus; the Index is a document which involves for each indicator open ended questions and these questions can be applicable in different contexts (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010; CSIE, 2010).

The work of international and Cypriot writers was analysed according to this framework, and was organised thematically, based on the three dimensions and indicators, which I felt related to pedagogy. In other words, through an analysis of the authors' work, I identified pedagogical issues and organised these under the most relevant pedagogical indicators, for each of the three dimensions (cultures, policies, practices). Any pedagogical issues, which emerged from the work the writers and could not be placed under any of these pedagogical indicators from the Index, were added by me as 'new issues', under what seemed as the most relevant dimension, such as the issue of addressing marginalisation, which was identified by Messiou's (2006a; 2006b) work.

After that, for each indicator the issues that were raised by international and Cypriot writers' work were brought together. So, for example, under the indicator 'there are high expectations for all students', all the relevant issues, that were raised by the work international and Cypriot writers, were placed under that indicator. This happened for all the indicators. Based on this systematic integrative analysis, the indicators were organised from the most supported, to the less supported by writers. Appendix I (Table 1, p.296), shows the final organisation of indicators under each dimension. The indicators marked with 'III' on the right, means that they were

strongly supported, those marked with 'II' means supported and those marked with 'I' means a new issue added to the initial framework of the Index. The indicators which have additional asterisk (*) involve issues which need further exploration, since more researches/writings were needed, especially from Cyprus. Table 1 (Appendix I, p.296), summarised the significant pedagogical learning and teaching issues for the inclusion of all children in Cyprus as these emerged from international and Cypriot writers.

As a first phase of the Ph.D work, a further conceptual analysis was carried out on the results of the above study, as part also, of a paper presented at the 10th International Conference in Education, Athens, 2008 (Gerosimou, 2008). More specifically, the indicators which represented the significant pedagogical issues for the inclusion of all children, for primary school teachers in Cyprus, were re-analysed in a more conceptual way. This means that conceptual links were explored among the indicators of each dimension. Then, the indicators were grouped under conceptual areas developed by me, based on the common issues and links that the indicators seemed to have, the extent of their support by the Cypriot writers, and their significance that they appeared to have in terms of the overall dimension, particularly for Cyprus. This conceptual work and analysis resulted in the creation of a framework which is separated into four conceptual areas which involve pedagogical indicators from all three dimensions, the culture, policies and practices of the Index. The framework illustrates the inclusive pedagogical issues which are considered by Cypriot writers as important for Cypriot primary school teachers, as shown in Appendix I (Table 2, p.297). The first part of this framework is isolated and more clearly indicated in Table 1 below (p.45), and is what in this study will be referred to as 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'(Gerosimou, 2010).

It is important to clarify here, that the role of this framework in my study was to guide the focus of the study and to enable the development of the research sub-questions as I will indicate later. A further understanding of the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' and the reasons to support why it was particularly chosen for guiding the focus of this study follow.

Table 1: *The framework of 'Inclusive Pedagogical Cultures'*

'Inclusive Pedagogical Cultures'			
Conceptual areas			
Conceptual area A	**Conceptual area B**	**Conceptual area C**	**Conceptual area D**
Sharing a Philosophy of inclusion partnership and collaboration by all involved with inclusion	**Equal valuing of all children**	**Elimination of discrimination**	**Removal of barriers to learning and participation**
Staff, education officers, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion	Students are equally valued	The school strives to minimise all forms of discrimination	Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school
There is partnership between staff and parents/carers	There are high expectations for all students	**New issue** Marginalisation is identified and reduced	
Students help each other			
Staff collaborate with each other			
Staff and students treat one another with respect			

The framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' (Table 1) is separated into four conceptual areas within inclusive school cultures. These are: a) Sharing a philosophy of inclusion, partnership, and collaboration by all involved with inclusion; b) Equal valuing of all students; c) Elimination of discrimination; d) Removal of barriers to learning and participation.

a) *Sharing a philosophy of inclusion, partnership, and collaboration by all involved with inclusion*

This is the first conceptual area of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures', which focuses on the elements of sharing, partnership and of collaboration among all stakeholders, of the inclusive philosophy. It has five important key aspects related to its focus. These are described below:

The first aspect is about staff, education officers, students and parents/carers, who should share an inclusive philosophy. In the Cypriot literature this aspect is considered as very important, since it emphasises the need for the notion of inclusion not to be limited to certain groups of students but all voices related to inclusion, children's, staffs', decision makers' and parents' should be considered, if a school is going to move towards inclusion (Angelides, 2007; Nikolaidou, Sophocleous and Phtiaka, 2006; Messiou, 2006a).

The second aspect is about the importance of partnership between staff and parents/carers. In terms of the Cypriot literature, Phtiaka (2001a; 2001b) suggests that parents should feel that their children are valued in the school and that their concerns are considered as important by the school. School and staff need to inform parents about the needs of their child, and parents should insist on being informed about all the issues concerning their child (Phtiaka, 2001a, 2001b). Therefore, according to Phtiaka (2001a) cooperation and communication among parents and staff are the main key ingredients for a good partnership between parents and school, something that helps the philosophy of inclusion to be shared among them.

Students help each other, is another important aspect. From the Cypriot writers' point of view, this aspect holds great potential for fostering inclusion. Nikolaidou *et al.*, (2006) denote that the establishment of positive and effective peer relationships is important. In their view, peers are a group which influences the success of inclusion, and it is important for children to help each other since this creates positive attitudes among them towards classmates. Also, as Phtiaka (2003) explains, peer pressure and lack of socialising among peer groups can have a negative impact on the inclusive process.

Staff collaborate with each other is another significant aspect for the sharing of an inclusive philosophy and collaboration. It is about the creation of strong relationships among staff, which is fundamental, so as to achieve an inclusive community. In the Cypriot literature, the issue of collaboration between staff is of particular interest as Angelides (2004) suggests, since collaboration between staff is necessary for better functioning of schools and more effective learning. Moreover, Angelides (2007) emphasises the issue of 'developing collaborations' in broader

terms and points out that collaboration among all staff is important; teachers, as he explains, should collaborate with the head teachers of schools and with the other teachers, as well as with special teachers for the development of inclusion and of inclusive pedagogy. The development of collaboration in schools can foster inclusion and the creation of collaborative cultures (Angelides, 2006).

Staff and students treat one other with respect is the last aspect of the first conceptual area of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. This aspect is about the relationship between staff and students. In terms of the Cypriot literature, Angelides (2005a; 2005b) suggests that respect among staff and students, is of particular importance and a factor, which contributes to the inclusion of all children. This, according to Angelides (2005a; 2005b), includes teachers paying attention even to little details about their students. For example, by calling their students' names the way they wished to be called, as Angelides (2005a; 2005b) explains, is a detail which although little, can be an indication of respect. If teachers fail to spot and pay attention to certain issues within their classrooms regarding respect, this has a negative impact on their efforts to provide equal participation in teaching and learning for all students (Angelides, 2005a, 2005b).

b) *Equal valuing of all students*

This is a second key conceptual area which characterises 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' and is about placing equal value on all students, so that all of them, irrespective of their personal characteristics and background, will feel that they are valued as learners. It has two key aspects, which are presented below.

Students are equally valued is an important aspect of this particular conceptual area. In terms of the Cypriot literature, placing equal value on all students is emphasised by Angelides (2004) who suggests that all teachers, should "appreciate the diversity of the human family, recognise that all pupils have strengths, and recognise that everyone has unique abilities and characteristics" (p.413). Moreover, the Cypriot writers raise the concern that when charitable/humanistic actions take place towards a particular group of children (Phtiaka, 1999; Symeonidou, 2002a) this is in contrast to the equal valuing of all children.

There are high expectations for all students is the second aspect of this conceptual area. Specifically, for the Cypriot education context, Phtiaka (2001c) states that when there are low teacher expectations, these are usually fulfilled, because either staff cannot see any further abilities because of the low expectations, or students understand these and may stop their efforts.

c) *Elimination of discrimination*

This is the third key conceptual area which characterises 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' and is about eliminating all forms of discrimination. It looks in particular at the negative aspects of not valuing all children, seeing these as discrimination in schools. It has two key aspects as follows:

The school strives to minimise all forms of discrimination, is about the recognition of the existence of any institutional discrimination and the need to minimise all forms of it. In terms of the Cypriot literature, according to Phtiaka (2001a), the school experience can enable or not help a child move forward according to the way that school interacts with the child. She further suggests that if the child's school experience is negative, then it takes the child backwards in terms that it has a negative impact upon his/her skills, self-confidence, and happiness. Therefore, the way that the school functions is important in order to be able to accept and accommodate the need and abilities of all children.

Marginalisation is identified and reduced is the second aspect of the conceptual area 'schools strive to minimise all forms of discrimination'. It is about marginalisation in schools which is a complex process, nevertheless, educators should take this understanding into account in order to successfully include all children (Messiou, 2006a, 2006b). The importance of this aspect lies in the fact that it is an aspect that is added as a new issue, in addition to the indicators of the Index, and it is raised by a Cypriot writer, based on the context of Cyprus. Emphasis according to Messiou (2006a) is given to the idea of listening to children's voices in order to better understand notions of marginalisation, and therefore of inclusive education.

Marginalisation, as Messiou (2006a) argues, can be conceptualised in four different ways: "when a child is experiencing some kind of marginalisation and this is

recognised by almost everybody including himself/herself; when a child is feeling that he/she is experiencing marginalisation, while most others do not recognise this; when a child is found in what appears to be marginalised situations but does not feel it, or does not view it as marginalisation; and, finally, when a child is experiencing marginalisation but does not admit it" (p.46). It is suggested by Messiou (2006a) that in order to effectively include all children educators should attend to all children who may experience marginalisation.

d) *Removal of barriers to learning and participation.*

The fourth and final key conceptual area, which characterises 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' is about removing barriers to learning and participation. Although it may seem similar to the conceptual area related to discrimination, this area is unique because it has particular focus on teaching and learning. It is about full participation and inclusion in learning of all children and the removal of anything that may act as a barrier in relation to that. It has only one but a very important aspect: Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.

In the Cypriot literature it is suggested by Phtiaka, (2001a; 2001b) that the school culture should help staff avoid seeing barriers to learning and participation as produced by deficiencies or impairments in students themselves, but those barriers should be identified between students and their teaching and learning environment. Hence, increasing participation, decreasing exclusive practices and providing the same opportunities for teaching and learning to all children should be the goal that staff in each school should have (Angelides, 2007).

The framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' as presented above, was used in this study, in order to guide its focus and to enable the development of its research sub-questions. The reasons for using this framework follow:

The first main reason is because it takes the Cypriot context into consideration; the four conceptual areas of the framework emerged based on their extent of Cypriot writers' support and their significance, particularly for Cyprus. In other words, although initially both international and Cypriot literature was used within the development of the first framework Appendix I (Table 1, p.296), the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' was based on the Cypriot writers' work. This is an

important reason, because this study was carried out in the Cypriot education context. The framework provided by the Index for Inclusion, although important in conceptualising inclusive school cultures and although it is recognised and used internationally, is not actually in use in Cyprus and it is still not translated in Greek. Nevertheless, it is well known to the Cypriot researchers who suggest it as a way forward to inclusion (Symeonidou, 2009). Therefore, since the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' relates to the unique education culture and context of the country in which the study was carried out, was an important reason for using it. Heung (2006) suggests that the indicators of the Index for Inclusion need to take into consideration the unique education culture and the particular context of the country that is using it, and refers to the adapted Hong Kong Indicators for Inclusion to show the impact of cultural differences in shaping the indicators.

Secondly, the framework has a helpful organisation, which makes it clear and comprehensive. It is separated into four key conceptual areas within inclusive cultures, and each area has sub-aspects. This is particularly important if we take into consideration the complexity and difficulty in defining the term 'culture'. The term 'culture' as seen above sometimes is used as plural and this is often, but not always, the use of the term in the inclusive school development literature. The assumption behind this is that even in one place like a school there are more than one culture (Angelides and Ainscow, 2000). However, there is an inconsistency in literature about this. This study refers to the notion of pedagogical cultures in plural, because it coincides with the view that there is not only one kind of culture within a school but there are several cultures (cultures relating to class, ethnicity, gender and attainment, staff's culture including teaching staff teaching assistants professionals and the head teachers and the children's culture). Moreover, the concept of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' is a subset of inclusive school cultures, which are presented in the Index in plural.

Analysis of teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion, in relation to the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'

Teachers' professional development needs were presented earlier as relating to two thematic areas. This section makes an analysis of these areas in relation to the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'.

Conceptual area A: Sharing a philosophy of inclusion, partnership and collaboration by all involved with inclusion

The first conceptual area focuses on the elements of sharing the inclusive philosophy, partnership and of collaboration among staff, education officers, parents/carers and students. As suggested earlier, in relation to the wider school context, teachers need: a shared commitment and support by all involved in inclusive education; collaboration with other people involved in inclusive education and; a coherent professional development policy. All these professional development needs may link to this first conceptual area. The reasons are provided below:

A shared commitment and support by all involved in inclusive education was raised by international literature as part of teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion (Balbas, 1995; Buell *et al.*, 1999; Carrington, 1999; Mitler, 2000). It may link to conceptual area A of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' because it points to elements related to the wider context and policy, which should create the conditions that, will enable teachers in promoting inclusion. In Cypriot literature, the professional development need related to the wider context was raised by Angelides' (2004) study, which referred mainly to aspects which act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. However, it would be interesting to see a study in Cyprus that will identify the aspects of the wider context that not only act as barriers but also enable teachers to foster inclusion.

Teachers' professional development need for collaboration, may link to conceptual area A, because it has a strong focus on collaboration and partnerships among key stakeholders which is a key characteristic of this conceptual area. It was raised especially in relation with other teachers (Ainscow 2003; Ainscow Booth and Dyson, 2004; Carrington, 1999; Mittler, 1995, 2000), with special teachers (Mittler,

1995) and with parents (Ainscow 1999, 2000b, 2003; Ainscow *et al.*, 2006b; Mittler, 1999, 2000). In Cyprus, the need of collaboration emerged as a particularly important issue as part of the needs of teachers for fostering inclusion (Angelides, 2005a) and as an important issue for inclusion in general (Phtiaka, 1997, 2001a, 2001b). Collaboration with the people involved in inclusive education is a need that could get further attention in Cypriot research specifically in relation to teachers' professional development needs.

The need of teachers to be provided with a coherent professional development policy could also link to conceptual area A. Although strong evidence was provided by international literature about the ways that teachers' professional development should be (e.g. Ainscow, 1999; Ainscow Booth and Dyson, 2006b; Booth, 2000; Booth, Nes and Stromstad, 2003; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; O'Gorman and Drudy, 2010; Howes *et al.*, 2009; Mittler 2000; Hopkins, Ainscow, and West, 1994), in Cyprus, only very few studies searched in depth this issue (Angelides, 2002; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). It can be suggested therefore, that the ways that teachers' professional development should be developed needs more evidence from the Cypriot context. Further, an element related to the professional development opportunities is that teachers need to have their voices being heard as of what they think that might work best for them. This is a need that although raised by international literature, (Buell *et al.*, 1999; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; Howes *et al.*, 2009) it did not appear in the Cypriot context and it will be interesting to see a study on teachers' own views about their professional development needs and opportunities.

Conceptual area B: Equal valuing of all children

Conceptual area B of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' is about the equal valuing of all children, including also high expectations for all of them. As described earlier, the second thematic area of teachers' professional development needs is about teachers' ways of thinking about inclusion. Under the professional development need of teachers to develop inclusive thinking about teaching and learning, it was suggested by international literature that teachers need to understand the socio-cultural factors which underpin inclusive practice (Florian, 2008) and avoid determinist beliefs about

ability (Hart, 1996, 2003). Further, Buell *et al.,* (1999) suggested that teachers need to learn how to build on their students' abilities. Therefore, such ways of thinking, may allow teachers value all children. It is of note however, that in Cyprus such issue did not emerge in relation to teachers' professional development needs. This may indicate the need for further research in Cyprus on teachers' professional development with a focus on equal valuing of children.

Conceptual area C: Elimination of discrimination

This conceptual area is about eliminating all forms of discrimination. The professional development need of teachers to develop beliefs and attitudes that aim at inclusive schooling seems to link with this conceptual area, which looks in particular at the negative aspects of not valuing all children, seeing these as discrimination in schools.

The development of positive attitudes towards inclusion and of inclusive beliefs is a professional development need of teachers argued clearly through international literature (Astuto, 1995; Carrington, 1999; Barton and Tomlinson, 1984; McDonnell, 2003; Skrtic, 1991; Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006). In Cyprus, there is research related to teachers' attitudes and beliefs which although being directed towards inclusive education there is some focus on children with SEN (Angelides, 2004; Koutrouva *et al.,* 2006; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). Given the definition of inclusion that this study adopts and the emphasis on all children, it seems useful for a study that will focus on teachers' professional development needs in relation to teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the inclusion of all children in schools.

Conceptual area D: Removal of barriers to learning and participation

This conceptual area which is about removal of barriers to learning and participation has a particular focus on teaching and learning. The professional development needs of teachers to develop inclusive thinking about teaching and learning and their professional development need to feel confident about their own competence (knowledge and skills) to teach inclusively, may link to this conceptual area, given their emphasis on teaching and learning issues.

Teachers' need to develop inclusive thinking about teaching and learning, emerged from the international literature (Ainscow 2003; Buell *et al.,* 1999; Florian, 2008; Gordman and Drudy, 2010). However, in the context of Cyprus, teachers' professional development needs with a focus on ways of thinking particularly for the teaching and learning all children in relation to inclusion, appears as an area which needs more focused exploration. The need of teachers to feel confident about their own competence to teach inclusively was raised by international literature (e.g. Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). In the Cypriot literature, this need was related particularly to teachers' attitudes (Koutrouva *et al.,* 2006), while in relation to how teachers feel about their knowledge and skills for teaching all the children was indicated within Angelides' (2004) assumptions, as a need of teachers, who require more professional development in order to feel confident. This may indicate that there is a need for further exploration about this issue in Cyprus.

The need for further research in Cyprus

In order to formulate the research sub-questions of the study, this section brings together the aspects under each conceptual area of the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures', which seemed to need further exploration in Cyprus. The research sub-questions are stated, and under each of them, the aspects of each conceptual area from which each research sub-question emerged, are presented.

- What are teachers' views about inclusion in Cyprus?

This is a research sub-question which aims to explore teachers' professional development needs in relation to the views of teachers in Cyprus about inclusion. It emerged from conceptual area C, based on the need for further exploration of teachers' attitudes and beliefs, in relation to all children, in order to add to researches already carried out with a focus on children with SEN. Further, this research sub-question may add to the conceptual area B which is about the equal valuing of all children, since views about the inclusion of all children, may reveal ways of valuing children's diversity, which was another need for further research in Cyprus.

- Which aspects of the schools' context enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion?

This is a research sub-question which aims to explore the professional development needs of teachers in relation to the wider context of the school. It emerged from the conceptual area A and the need for a study in Cyprus that will explore in more depth aspects of the wider school context, which do not only act as barriers but also enable teachers to foster inclusion. Further, from the same conceptual area, this research sub-question emerged based on the need for a research in Cyprus, which will focus on collaboration between teachers and other people who are involved in inclusive education, along with their professional development needs.

- What are teachers' views about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children?

This is a research sub-question which emerged from the conceptual area A, and the need to see a study in Cyprus about teachers' own views, in relation to their professional development needs, in combination with the need that emerged from conceptual area B for further research in Cyprus, about teachers' professional development needs for valuing all children equally. Further, by bringing into the fore teachers' views about what they consider as their professional development needs, this may cover the need in Cyprus for a focus on teachers' views about how they feel in relation to what they need, which is a need that emerged from the conceptual area D. In particular, teachers explaining their professional development needs may illustrate issues related to how confident they feel about their knowledge and skills as well as their feelings about their own competence in teaching inclusively.

- What professional development opportunities did teachers attend and how do they respond to these opportunities?

This is another research question, which emerged based on the suggestion under the conceptual area A that teachers' voices should be listened to in terms of the kind of opportunities that they are offered. In particular, teachers' views about the kind of professional development opportunities that they need, or they feel that they need appeared to require further research in Cyprus.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter key terms related to the study were explained, such as inclusive education, teachers' professional development, inclusive school cultures, pedagogy, and 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. The reasons also to support why focus on teachers' professional development in relation to inclusion, why carry out the study in Cyprus and why focus on inclusive school cultures were also provided. Finally, international and Cypriot literature was explored and two thematic areas emerged in relation to teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion. These thematic areas involved key issues which were analysed through the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. Based on this analysis, some areas in the Cypriot context that needed further exploration were identified and the research sub-questions of the study were formulated and stated.

The following chapter involves methodological considerations, and presents the methodology adopted in this study, in order to address its main research question and the research sub-questions.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Taking decisions about the most appropriate approaches and techniques that could best address the research question and sub-questions of the study required a careful reasoning. This chapter discusses that reasoning and presents the rationale to justify: the choice of a research approach, the choice of a case study research design, the choice of methods for data collection, and the process of data analysis.

Choosing a research approach

Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research approaches are being widely used in education research. Quantitative research approach is deductive, and is characterised by the conceptualisation of reality in terms of variables, the measurement of those variables, and the relationships between them (Bryman, 2008; Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2009; Wellington, 2000). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) quantitative research examines or measures an issue under study in terms of "quantity amount, intensity, or frequency" (p. 10). In other words, quantitative research emphasises relationships between variables.

Qualitative research approach on the other hand, is inductive, and is concerned with meanings (Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 1988). The "holistic overview of the context under study" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.6) is important, and so are the cases under study (Kvale, 2007). In other words, qualitative research approach, studies things "in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3).

Beyond the widely cited quantitative and qualitative research approaches, a mixed methods research approach combines both. It is defined as: "The class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study"(Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.17). The integration of the two types of data may occur at

several stages in the process of research: data collection, data analysis, interpretation, or some combination of places (Greene and Caracelli, 1997; Newman and Benz, 1998; Reichartd and Rallis, 1994; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

It is beyond the aims of this study to compare these approaches to research, since I believe that quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research are "all superior under different circumstances" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.22). Given the main characteristics of each of the above research approaches, qualitative research was chosen as the approach that can better respond to the needs of this study. The reasons are provided below:

The overall aim of the study, as this is implied by the research question and research sub-questions is the main reason for using a qualitative research approach. Its purpose is to develop an in depth, rich and detailed understanding about teachers' professional development needs, for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. The aim is not to measure those needs in order to formulate predictions across people and settings, but rather, this study is interested in people's experiences, and the meanings that people make of them in terms of their professional development needs. According to Creswell (2007), in a qualitative research approach, a research question often begins with 'how' or 'what', meaning that the focus is on 'what is going on'. Qualitative research focuses more on processes rather than outcomes or products, and the researcher also is interested in understanding those processes, and in describing experiences (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, Punch, 2009). Therefore, the openness of a qualitative research which suggests "approaching a fieldwork without being constrained by pre-determined categories of analysis" (Patton, 2002, p.14), allows an in depth, detailed and better understanding.

Similarly, it lends itself to addressing the research sub-questions which are about teachers' views about inclusion, about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children, and about their responses to the kind of professional development opportunities, which they made use of. A key characteristic of qualitative research approach is that it focuses on participant perspectives and their meanings (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988). It is important, therefore, for addressing these research sub-questions to use a

qualitative approach, since it can provide an understanding about the meanings teachers make about inclusion, their professional development needs and opportunities.

Finally, as implied by the research sub-question about aspects within the school that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster an inclusive context, studying teachers in the context of their social interpersonal environment, is also an important aim. A qualitative research approach can enable this research sub-question to be addressed, since one of its main characteristics is that it takes context seriously for understanding an issue under study (Kvale, 2007). Qualitative research is carried out in the natural settings or context, having the researcher as the key instrument to collect data (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Wellington, 2000). Therefore, the use of a qualitative approach responds also to the requirements of the particular research sub-question concerning context.

Also, the decision to use a qualitative research approach was influenced by my ontological and epistemological assumptions. These fall under the naturalist paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Merriam, 1988). The naturalist paradigm in ontological terms argues that the nature of reality is constructed, and that there are multiple realities. In epistemological terms the relationship of the knower to the known is interactive and inseparable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In other words, the naturalist paradigm argues that there is not a single reality, and researchers are not independent from the knowledge created, about an issue under study. Those assumptions have implications on how the research is carried out, for example: the research being carried out in the natural setting, the instruments to collect data are the researchers and other humans, qualitative methods are being used, data analysis is inductive, special criteria for trustworthiness are being set (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A qualitative research approach can be viewed as the research strategy that responds to the naturalist paradigm, since its main characteristics coincide with the implications that this paradigm has for research.

Choosing a case study research design

A research design is "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions" (Yin, 2003a, p.20). The research design that was selected to address the research question and sub-questions of the study is a case study. It is difficult to define case study, because despite the fact that the literature has many times referred to case studies there seems to be different arguments about what they are (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and what types exist. Due to that variation, it is important to present the different notions of case studies and their types, in order to be clear of the kind of case study that is used in this study. A case study "is an umbrella term for a family of research methods, having in common the decision to focus on enquiry around an instance" (Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis, 1980, p. 48). Moreover, a case study is "a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle" (Nibset and Watt, 1984, p. 72). This single instance is of a bounded system, for example a school (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Denscombe, 1998). In addition, Bassey (1999) suggests that a case study "is a study of a singularity conducted in depth in natural settings" (p.47), while Yin (2003a) argues that a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon or issue within its real life context. However, Creswell (2007) views case study as a methodology and suggests that a case study is a qualitative approach in which "the investigator explores a bounded system (case) or systems (cases) over time, through detail, in-depth data collection" (p.73). Nevertheless, according to Adelman *et al.*, (1980), a case study is neither the name of a standard methodological package nor a method of data collection. Therefore, based on the different ways that case study is defined, one could argue that a case study is a research design, which through multiple methods, highlights one or few cases related to the issue under study. It takes place in natural settings or a real life context and aims at presenting an in-depth account of the various aspects, processes, experiences and relationships occurring in the case(s), and which can illuminate as much as possible the issue under study.

My rationale for using a case study research design is that first it enables the study of relationships and processes, since case studies tend to be holistic (Denscombe, 1998; Punch, 1998). This means that they do not only deal with isolated factors, but they

can capture relationships and processes in order to understand and explain a situation. This is because a case study offers the chance of going into sufficient detail, to reveal the complexities of a given situation (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Yin, 2003a). This is in line with the focus and the aims of my study, which is interested in exploring the relationship between the aspects of the school context, and the relationships between the professional development needs with professional development opportunities available to teachers, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children.

Second, it is carried out in the natural setting. An important characteristic of a case study, which was also one of the main reasons for selecting this research design, is the fact that it allows for studying a situation in its natural setting (Denscombe, 1998) and not in an artificial situation. By using a case study research design, the research question and sub-questions could be addressed within the natural school setting, as they naturally occur without introducing artificial changes or control, and with minimal impact from the researcher.

Moreover, one of the most important characteristics of a case study is that it takes the context into account. The context should not be ignored in the study because each context is unique and performs as an "integrating function" (Nisbet and Watt, 1984, p.78). This was also one of the main reasons for selecting a case study to address my research question; because it looks at the "whole scene" (Nibset and Watt, 1984, p.78) and this was in line particularly with the research sub-question, which is about the aspects of the schools' context that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion.

Third, it allows for insights and depth. One of the most important reasons for choosing a case study research design is because it provides the opportunity for insights to be gained (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Creswell, 2007; Denscombe, 1998; Punch, 1998, 2009; Stake, 1995). In this respect, the key aspects of each research sub-question could be studied in depth, in order to explore all the aspects that could be related to them and thus gain a better understanding about them.

Fourth, it enables the use of multiple sources and methods (Adelman *et al.*, Denscombe, 1998; Punch, 1998; Yin, 2003a). The methods that were used

particularly for my study within the case study research design will be discussed later in the section 'the choice of methods for data collection'. Nevertheless, it is important here to mention that the use of multiple sources and methods are particularly important, since they allow the process of 'triangulation of sources' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003a) and triangulation of methods (Cohen et al., 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003a) which according to Yin (2003a), make the findings or conclusions more convincing and accurate. The use of the triangulation technique for establishing the trustworthiness of my study will be presented in the next chapter, under the section 'Establishing Trustworthiness'.

There are many types of case studies presented by different writers (Bassey, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Stenhouse, 1988; Yin, 2003a). Stake (1995) argues that there are three types of case studies, "intrinsic case study, single instrumental case study and collective case study" (pp.3-4). According to Stake (1995; 2005) within an intrinsic case study, the researcher is interested in the particular case which is intrinsically interesting, and wants a better understanding about it. It is the case itself that is of interest. The purpose is not to develop an understanding of an abstract idea or a concept, but the researcher is intrinsically interested in that particular case or in an issue or in a situation within that case (Stake, 1995). An intrinsic case study is useful for an understanding, for example, of a particular pupil or for studying a member of staff. According to the single instrumental case study as presented by Stake (1995), the researcher is interested in a particular case or cases to provide an insight into an issue. The actual case itself, in his view, is of secondary importance and only provides the opportunity to develop an understanding of the issue under study. Finally, the multiple case study or a collective case study is an instrumental case study which uses a number of different, but related cases (Stake, 1995; 2005).

The type of case study which was thought to be the most appropriate to address my research questions was a "collective case study", or else a "multiple case study". As Stake (2005) suggests when the case itself is of secondary importance and the researcher is interested more to provide an insight into an issue, such as in the instrumental case study, "a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to

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investigate a phenomenon, population or a general condition" (p.445). Therefore, since my aim was to gain an insight into teachers' professional development needs it was thought that studying two schools would be more appropriate. The first school was chosen because it was thought to be similar in key aspects to other Cypriot primary schools, and the second school was thought to be an example of a new government initiative that relates to aspects of inclusive education. This is why the second school has been additionally chosen and why a smaller case study was conducted in that school. The rationale to justify the choice of the two schools, which from now on I will call with the pseudonyms "Aristotelio" and "Socratio" primary schools are given within the next chapter. What is important to clarify here, is that the collective case study is a type, a variant, of a case study research design, having all of its characteristics and should by no means be considered as a distinct research design. The use of the second school was for complementary reasons only, due to the characteristics of the second school, in order to lead to a better understanding. It was not used for comparison such as in comparative case studies nor for replication of the study. Further, the use of two schools could facilitate to some extent generalisation issues, but without this being its main reason for selection.

The strengths of a case study research design were presented under the rationale for choosing it. However, this design also involves limitations. According to Merriam (1988) the qualitative case study research design is time consuming. Although it can produce thick and rich description, it requires the researcher to devote considerable amount of time in the field, something that is not feasible for all researchers. However, as I was the researcher as a full time PhD student, that limitation had no effect in undertaking such a study.

Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest that since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the results of a case study can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation. In addition, according to Riley (1963) the results largely depend on the integrity and sensitivity of the researcher. Moreover, in case studies, researchers' biases can affect the final product (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Researchers' integrity and biases are elements that could also be related to other research designs too. However, those issues were addressed in this study by

using strategies that ensure the trustworthiness of the study. These are: triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, audit trail, thick and rich description, peer debriefing, researcher reflexivity and the use of a reflexive journal. They will be discussed in the next chapter under the section "Establishing trustworthiness".

Although case studies are often used with small-scale research (Denscombe, 1998), they have been criticised, particularly in relation to the generalisations made from their outcomes. It is important therefore, to clarify what generalisation means for my study. Firestone (1993) illustrates three levels of generalisation, first, from a sample to a population, second, analytic or theory connected generalisation, and third, generalisation as a case to case transfer. Likewise, Stake (1995) differentiates scientific generalisation from naturalistic generalisation. In the case of my study, the purpose was not to achieve a statistical generalisation about teachers' professional development needs, in the sense of selecting a representative sample and generalise to the population it represents. Rather, the purpose was to develop a richer and a better understanding from the two chosen schools, about teachers' professional development needs.

The results of my study may generalise to other Cypriot primary schools settings, which are similar in key aspects with the primary schools chosen for this study, since the chosen schools, although they are in some respects unique, they share similar characteristics with other public primary schools of Cyprus. This kind of generalisation from case studies, whereby generalisations can be made from the instance studied, to the class that it is sharing similar characteristics with, is supported by Adelman *et al.*, (1980), Denscombe (1998), Nibset and Watt, (1984) and Ragin and Becker (1992).

The choice of methods for data collection

Case study researchers, as mentioned above, use multiple methods and multiple data sources. Most case studies usually use qualitative methods but they can also use quantitative methods (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Punch, 1998). According to Patton (2002) because quantitative and qualitative methods involve contradictory strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative but not mutually exclusive strategies for research. However, due to the fact that qualitative methods facilitate studying issues

in depth and in detail (Patton, 2002), all of the methods that were used in this study have a qualitative nature.

The methods that were considered as the most appropriate for the present study were open participant observations, critical incidents, informal conversational interviews and semi-structured interviews. In addition to the above methods, document collection and keeping a reflective journal throughout the research were also used for my study. The following section presents the key characteristics of each method, providing also the justifications for their choice.

a. Participant Observations

A definition which illustrates the key characteristics of the participant observation method which is similar to the definitions suggested by Bell (2005), Cohen *et al.*, (2007), and Denscombe, (1998) was provided by Becker and Geer (1957). According to them, participant observation "is the method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher, or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time" (p.28). Moreover, according to Merriam (1988) the participant observer sees things firsthand and therefore observation is the best technique to use when "an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand" (p.89). Likewise, participant observations are direct and therefore provide direct evidence (Yin, 2003a; Denscombe, 1998).

One of the aims of the study, as described earlier, was to gain in-depth understandings. Therefore, close observation within settings was necessary, and participant observations seemed more appropriate for this purpose, rather than non-participant observations. As Simpson and Tuson (2003) argue, participant observations allow researchers to observe patterns of behaviours in specific situations. Likewise, according to Bailey (1978), through participant observations, researchers are able to identify ongoing behaviour, as it occurs, and to make notes about its important features. So, participant observations seemed appropriate since I wished to observe ongoing patterns of behaviour, for example, teachers' ways of valuing pupils.

Moreover, the participant observation method could enable my involvement in the natural settings of the schools, as supported by Cohen *et al.,* (2007). This included settings such as the classroom, playground, staffroom, during lessons, breaks or staff meetings. This involvement in key schools' settings was particularly important for the study since it would allow me to understand teachers' professional development needs, as these emerge in their natural settings and real life.

Another reason for using the participant observation method was because it takes place over an extended period of time, which allows researchers to develop more intimate relationships with the participants in the study (Denscombe, 1998). Through such relationships, a better chance of retaining the naturalness of the setting exists (Bailey, 1978; Denscombe, 1998). This is in line with the aims of my study where the research question and sub-questions should be addressed in the natural settings, with minimal impact from the researcher.

Moreover, through participant observations, the researcher can capture the participant's meanings, perceptions and views (Denscombe, 1998). This was an aspect of particular importance, in order to address the research sub-questions related to teachers' views about inclusion and about their professional development needs. Moreover, the choice of participant observations was based on the fact that they enable the researcher to gain rich insights into complex realities, and they also offer holistic explanations, since they cover the context of an event (Denscombe, 1998; Yin, 2003a). All these were particularly important for my research question and sub-questions.

However, limitations of this particular method include that it demands a lot of time, and researchers' perceptions of what they observe can be influenced by familiarity, their past experiences, and their current states (Denscombe, 1998). Moreover, according to Simpson and Tuson (2003), observing someone is the most "intrusive of all techniques for gathering data" (p.55). The ways that these issues were addressed are explained in the next chapter. Also, other methods were used in combination with the participant observations, in order to triangulate methods of data collection and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. These are the following:

b. Critical incidents

While carrying out participant observations, incidents occur that can be considered critical and therefore, further exploration of those incidents can offer important insights. There are different arguments about what makes an incident critical in educational settings. Critical incidents, according to Cohen *et al.,* (2007), are the events which are non-routine but they are very revealing and offer the researcher an insight into the issue under study. Therefore, according to them, critical incidents are frequently unusual events that when they occur, can illuminate important insights about particular situations or persons (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). In addition Sikes, Measor, and Woods (1985) argue that critical incidents are more likely to happen within critical periods, for example during the beginning of teachers' careers and are "highly charged with moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development" (Sikes *et al.,* 1985, p.230). Measor (1985) suggests that critical events can motivate an individual into selecting particular actions that guides them to particular directions, and which in the end can influence a person's identity.

However, as Wragg (1999) points out, critical events do not necessarily have to be striking or unusual. They can be simple routine things that happen but seem to the researcher to be of more interest rather than other events happening the same time. Likewise, Tripp (1993) suggests that incidents, in order to be critical, do not always have to be atypical. According to Tripp (1993) atypical incidents are unique, non-routine, or exceptions to the rules and their study can often reveal much about the rule. Typical incidents are usual events that occur in routine professional practice and may often be unnoticed, but can also be considered critical as long as a more general meaning and classification can be attached to the incident (Tripp, 1993). More specifically, according to Tripp (1993) "the critical incident is created by seeing the incident as an example of a category in a wider, usually social, context" (p.25). In this sense, every incident is potentially a critical incident and its criticality depends on the meaning that a researcher attaches to it.

So, a researcher after identifying a critical incident should try to explore this more fully. This requires a particular technique, called the critical events approach

(Wragg, 1999), or the critical incidents technique (Flanagan, 1949), or the reflection in critical incidents technique (Angelides, 2003) and it will be explained in the next chapter.

The main reason for using this technique for my study was based on the fact that it allows exploring in depth the meaning attached to what appears to be an important incident. Those meanings could provide depth to the issues under study and this was important for the overall aim of the study. Further, as Angelides (2003) suggests, critical incidents facilitate an understanding of the school context and the way that it shapes teachers' practice. This is a particularly important reason for using this technique, since understanding the context and the way that it influences teachers for fostering inclusion was a research sub-question of the study. Finally, the fact that this technique had been used successfully within the Cypriot education context for exploring the schools' cultures, by Angelides (1999), a Cypriot researcher, is another reason for using it, since this shows that it can be used in the Cypriot context, in which my study was carried out.

c. *Interviews*

Interviews were used as an additional complementary method to participant observation and a critical incidents technique. Interviewing is "conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.2). Kvale (1996) argues that interviews differ in the openness of their purpose, their degree of structure, the extent to which they are exploratory or hypothesis - testing, whether they seek description or interpretation and whether they are cognitive or emotion-focused. However, according to Cohen *et al.,* (2007), the degree of structure in an interview, also shows its purpose. In a qualitative study according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the interviews may be used in conjunction with other methods such as participant observations or may be the dominant research strategy. Interviews have been employed in my study in conjunction with other research methods.

The study made use of informal conversational interviews. Informal conversation or discussion interviews, according to Patton (1980), involve the questions that "emerge from the immediate context and are asked in their natural course of things;

there is no predetermination of questions topics or wording" (p.206). Informal discussions with the participants emerge like a conversation between friends. In such an informal interview the researcher, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), just makes the situation itself an interview.

One of the most important strengths of this kind of interview is that it increases the relevance of the questions, since the questions are based on observations, including the observation of critical incidents. Also, the interview "can be matched to individuals and circumstances" (Patton, 1980, p.206). In other words, the questions are flexible, based on real life events, and can enable an in depth understanding of a person's actions, thinking and general behaviour. In the present study such conversations were very important, in order to clarify certain issues emerging from the field and further, to identify and allow issues to emerge. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), this kind of interview is used in order to provide insights into the ways the participants interpret issues related to the study. Moreover, informal interviews with the participants help increase the understandings of teachers' meanings concerning their professional development needs since they were used as complementary of participant observations. This is a partnership process of reflection and was particularly important in order to provide the appropriate depth to the study.

However, one of the disadvantages of informal conversational interviews was that different information is collected from different people with different questions and this creates an inconsistency in the data gathering that could make organisation and analysis of the data difficult. Therefore, more semi-structured interviews were carried out later with all participants, to complement the informal conversational interviews and participant observations.

Semi- structured interviews are the second kind of interview chosen for the study. They are considered a qualitative method (Bryman, 2008) which lies between the two extremes of structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Drever, 2003). The structured interview is also known as a standardized interview and is a quantitative research method (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003). According to Lincoln and Cuba (1985) the structured interview is useful when the researcher is aware of what

she does not know and, therefore, is in a position to frame questions that will supply the knowledge required. Moreover, Kane (1985) adds that a standardised schedule interview is best used when you are interviewing a large number of people and when the people being interviewed are homogeneous or according to May (1993) share a similar culture. However, an unstructured interview can be considered to be a qualitative research method, (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). It involves a very low degree of structure and the questions are open (Creswell, 2009). As Gilbert (2001) reports, the unstructured interview is also called a non-standardized interview and like other qualitative methods is valuable as a strategy for discovery. As Lincoln and Cuba (1985) report, the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not aware of what she does not know and therefore relies on the respondents to inform him/her. As Gillham (2005) also adds an unstructured interview is useful as an exploratory technique since it is good for achieving narrative and there is minimum interference from the interviewer.

According to Drever (2003), the use of the term semi-structured means that "the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance what ground is to be covered and what main questions are to be asked. This leaves the detailed structure to be worked out during the interview" (p.1). The semi-structured interviews seemed more appropriate for this study instead of structured or unstructured interviews, because they could facilitate my purpose which was to explore in-depth the themes that were emerging in the field, across all participants. With semi-structured interviews, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the researcher is ensuring that similar aspects are explored across all participants, and this deals also in some way with the disadvantages of inconsistencies in informal conversational interviews. Likewise, according to Denscombe (1998), in semi-structured interviews, the answers are open-ended and therefore, there is more emphasis on the respondent expanding on the issues of interest. So, this is the main reason for selecting the semi-structured interview for this study, as although issues of interest could be identified from participant observations and informal conversations, more depth of information of these issues was required across all participants. However, there was also the need to maintain at the same time the openness of the study so that new issues could emerge.

Based on that, another advantage of semi-structured interviews which made it suitable for the purpose of my study was that they are flexible (Bryman, 2008). This means that questions may not follow exactly the way that they have been prepared by the researcher, and questions that have not been included, can be asked (Bryman, 2008). Likewise, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue that the semi-structured interview is flexible and the most favourable in educational settings, since it allows depth to be achieved by giving the opportunity to the researcher to probe and expand on participants' responses.

It is acknowledged that peoples' perspectives on particular issues can also be explored through questionnaires. However, semi-structured interviews were thought to be more suitable for the purposes of my study, since they provide the unique advantage to probe the questions face to face and to capture also along with participants' views, expressions that could give more precision to their answers. Further, with semi-structured interviews, rich data can be collected in contrast to the questionnaires, and this is something that relates to the aims of my study which was to provide a rich and detail understanding about teachers' professional development needs. Therefore, semi-structured interviews which allow participants to express how they consider particular situations, from their own point of view (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), were thought to be more appropriate than questionnaires for the purpose of my study.

d. Documents

The above-mentioned methods were combined with the collection of documents. According to Yin (2009) "documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic" (p.101), while as Punch (1998) suggests, in case studies, documents are usually collected in combination with interviews and observations. Likewise, Merriam (1988) argues, that documents are the third source of data in case study research. Finally, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) documents and records are non-human sources of data collection that have often been ignored, despite the fact that they are useful sources of information. Relevant documents are important according to Yin (2009), and therefore, they should not be disregarded by data collection in case studies; rather systematic searches prior and after entering the

field should be scheduled. The activity of collecting documents in case study is flexible, therefore, it can be easily combined with other methods of data collection (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) separates documentation from archival records. Within documentation, he considers: the personal documents, the written reports of events, the internal records, the formal studies of the same case that a researcher is studying and finally the news articles within newspapers or mass media. Archival records, according to Yin (2009), are public use files, service records, organisation records, maps or charts and survey data.

Documents of all types in a case study according to Merriam (1988) can "help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p.118). The use of documents in case studies also according to Yin (2009) can "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p.103). Therefore, the reason for using documents was twofold; firstly, to enable me to get to know the settings in terms of the way they were organised and functioned, and, secondly, in order to facilitate understandings related to the issues under study.

e. Reflective journal

Finally, in addition to the above methods throughout the study I also kept a diary, the "reflective journal" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.327). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) a reflective journal is a technique which involves the kind of diary in which the researcher on a daily basis or when needed, records a variety of information about self and method. It may consist of "the daily schedule and logistics of the study; a personal diary and methodological log" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.327).

Such a diary was developed during the study, particularly to reflect on my role as researcher. In a qualitative study the human is the instrument of data collection, therefore self-reflection through a reflective journal could develop an understanding about my own values and interests and the way that these might impact on the research. After leaving the field and when needed, I used this diary to record my thoughts or concerns at various stages of my study, as well as issues related to the

practicalities of the methods that I was using. For example, what went well with the semi-structured interviews and what kind of difficulties emerged? It was used also as a way to set my thoughts into an order and to develop possible plans for moving on.

Data analysis

Data analysis was an on-going process with data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). This means that, while collecting data, I was reading the fieldnotes and later the transcripts, and I was writing comments within the margins of the pages. An example of fieldnotes along with the comments in the margin is in Appendix III (p.306). These comments guided the process of data collection as to what could be more important for focusing on within the next stages of the fieldwork, and they also established the initial thoughts, which could help in the analysis. However, the process of the detailed analysis of data was carried out towards the end of the research. It is important to note that in relation to qualitative data analysis, there is not a standard way or universal rules about what should be done (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Litchman, 2006; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Rather, each researcher develops his/her own way of doing it. The way that I followed is presented below:

Organisation of data

The first step of data analysis was that of the organisation of data. Organisation is considered a particularly important action for data analysis in qualitative research. Therefore, researchers need to organise and make the data manageable, because this can direct the work after fieldwork, by enabling the researcher to read and to retrieve data (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Cresswell, 1998; Denscombe, 1998). Drever (2003), by referring to the analysis of interviews, suggested that data preparation enables the researcher to become easily familiar with the whole data, and to locate the material that they want whenever they want it.

At the end of the field research, and due to the large amount of data, the data was organised chronologically. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), most researchers arrange their files chronologically, which can enable having a filing system that is not confusing. Another decision that needed to be taken was whether I

should translate all the data in English prior to commencing the data analysis. I decided not to do this for two important reasons. Firstly, this does not involve a simple Greek-English translation, because of the idiosyncrasy of the Greek language, so that the explicit and implied meanings that each Greek word or sentence entails cannot be easily captured through equivalent English words. Moreover, these writings were undertaken in the Greek-Cypriot cultural context, and, therefore, needed to be handled with great caution when transferred into another language within another cultural context, in order not to lose the precise meaning and strength that they had in the Greek-Cypriot context. This was a challenge that I had to face when coding, as I will explain later, which was carried out in the English language, since the thesis was going to be written in English. I was very careful when placing a code next to a segment of a data, so as to secure all the details entailed within the meaning of each word or sentence. There were times that a single word could not represent the actual meaning, and, therefore, small phrases were placed. Similar challenges had to be addressed for the quotations that I chose to use in the later chapters.

A second reason for not translating all the data into English prior to commencing the data analysis was because it was considered to be an immense time consuming task, as a large amount of data was gathered, so, a lot of time would have been required to translate all the data. Therefore, keeping the raw data in Greek and having the codes and the interpretation in English was the best way to stay closer to the Greek-Cypriot meaning, but also maintain the English style required for this study, an approach which was also recommended by Messiou (2003).

In relation to organisation a decision that had also to be taken was whether I was going to use computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The fact that I decided to keep the data in Greek ruled out decisions about using computer software packages such as ATLAS, ETHNOGRAPH, and NUDIST, which accept inputs in English only. However, with the launch of NVIVO 8 (March-April, 2008) all languages can be entered for analysis (QSR, 2009) including Greek. After undertaking an introductory course on how to use NVIVO 8 for analysing qualitative data, I realised the capacities of that software. However, as software, it has advantages as well as disadvantages.

There are great advantages with computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), depending of course on the software programme (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Such advantages will help "automate and thus speed up and liven up the coding process; provide a more complex way of looking at relationships in the data; provide a formal structure for writing and storing memos to develop the analysis; and aid more conceptual and theoretical thinking about the data" (Barry,1998, p.2). The most prominent advantages of such software programmes are that of coding and retrieving the data. This means that data can be easily coded, in the sense of indexing the data and categorising chunks of the data, and easily retrieved, in terms of locating the data after being coded, since such programs indicate on each segment exactly where it came from (Cresswell, 1998; Denscombe, 1998; Taylor and Bilken, 2007). Nevertheless, it needs to be clarified here, that all these advantages relate to the management of data and to more organisational or mechanical tasks (Tesch, 1990). This means that it can save time in the task of indexing, categorising and retrieving different codes attached to segments of data and, hence, helps the researcher in terms of organisation and time. However, it cannot actually analyse qualitative data. According to Kelle (1995), researchers as humans build categories of information, while computer programs 'fix' those categories and researchers label the categories. Further, according to Denscombe (1998), the "intuitive art of analysis in qualitative research" (p.276) is reduced by mechanical procedures, which may result in decontextualising the data and leaving the researcher to work on the literal or superficial content of the text. Also, Denscombe (1998) argues that they may distance the researcher from the data. As Kelle (1995) points out, a researcher may very reluctantly change a code, re-label categories, or organise differently categories, after these have been fixed by the computers, because of the shift in thinking and work involved.

Taking all these advantages and disadvantages into consideration, my decision was to work with the more traditional manual techniques of Microsoft Word. I think that even the time spent on storing and retrieval, although sometimes tiring, is not strictly mechanical when done by the researcher, because other conceptual operations are done simultaneously. This time provides another chance for the researcher to have a

very close understanding of the data, and the meanings which are communicated, and even challenge the understandings and meanings that have been developed.

Coding, categorising and identifying themes

Before commencing the coding, I reviewed the research question and sub-questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that research questions can help dealing with overload. Then, I read the data in order to get a sense of the totality of the data (Bogdan and Bilken, 2007; Cresswell, 2009). After that, I used descriptive coding as a way of initially analysing the data, which involved giving descriptive codes to it, meaning that they entailed little or no interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding is analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Rossman and Rallis (1998) suggest that coding is the process of organising the material into "chunks" before bringing meaning into those "chunks" (p.192). As Miles and Huberman (1994) also point out, chunks "are of varying size-words phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs" (p.56) which have a code attached. According to them, codes are used to retrieve and organise those chunks. This process, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) denote, aims at setting and organising the data, rather than reducing the data and this is the way that it was used in my study.

After the initial descriptive coding, categorising was the next process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) "the process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain the same phenomena is called categorising" (p.65). Connections between the codes were searched, in order to create properties/sub-categories. Properties, or what I call sub-categories, are the attributes that a category has. Therefore, connections between the properties/ sub-categories may indicate the creation of categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In order to take decisions about the final categories, which could address each research sub-question, a set of criteria were applied. The first criterion was the importance of each category to the research focus of the study. The categories along with their sub-categories which seemed important for the main research question and the research sub-questions were isolated. Then, a rough estimation of the number of occurrences of the issues involved within the sub-categories was the second criterion. According to Bryman (2008), limited quantification can be helpful in seeing an overall picture of the data, since numbers

are easier handled than words and could help in keeping track on the extent that something happens. Nevertheless, this number of occurrences did not determine the importance of the issues involved within a sub-category. Rather, they were used more, as part of the formation of a judgment of confidence about the extent of these issues. In extreme cases, when an issue occurred on an individual basis, for instance, a statement made by one participant only and there was not enough evidence by other sources or methods to support it, they were dropped out, except in the case where an issue was showing a change in the direction of a viewpoint. That was also the last criterion that was used, since the unique examples which showed a change in direction, made a unique contribution.

As Litchman (2006) argues, when the relations between the categories are searched, then, this is likely to enable the researcher to create the themes or concepts of the study. The themes of my study emerged only after all the categories of each research sub-question were developed, and were the basis for addressing the main research question and the overall aim of this study.

The analytic approach followed was inductive, which means that although there was guidance by the research question and sub-questions, the actual codes and categories were not predetermined, but emerged during and after the fieldwork, and that enabled the meanings to be grounded in the data. This approach has some elements of grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in terms that insights were grounded in and developed from the data themselves as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Similar to my study was the step of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory, which is about the "generation of conceptual categories and their properties" (p.23). This is the process that I followed through 'categorisation' as presented above. However, the final categories and their sub-categories emerged, based on the analytic approach described above, after leaving the field.

Presentation of findings

The findings in my study within the four chapters of findings are presented in a qualitative way, which involves a description and interpretation of data in a verbal way, under categories and sub-categories, through illustrative examples. However, it was decided to report frequencies mainly from the semi-structured interview

responses, for the first aspect of the fourth research sub-question which is: 'what professional development opportunities did teachers attend?' For this aspect, it seemed useful to obtain some quantitative information, so as to have an overview of the range of opportunities that teachers attended. The rationale for presenting the findings of my study, merely in a qualitative way follows:

The overall aim of the study as this is implied by the main research question and research sub-questions, involves an exploration into meanings teachers make of their experiences. The guidance from the literature on the use of a qualitative approach, suggests that meanings can be presented without needing to be quantified as frequencies, given that the "hallmark of qualitative research is that it goes beyond *how much* there is of something to tell us about its essential *qualities*" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.253 italics by them). Further, qualitative studies in the wider field of inclusion have generally only used qualitative analysis to present their findings (Angelides, 1999; Carringhton and Robinson, 2004; Messiou, 2003). However, there are examples of studies which clearly focused on meaning making which provide also frequencies to present their categories, for example, the work of Heshusius (1981). These are quite exceptional though.

Therefore, the argument is made for a largely qualitative approach to present the findings of this study, based on its overall aim.

Conclusion

Summing up, in this chapter I presented the rationale which underpins all the methodological decisions undertaken for this study, including the research approach, the research design, the methods for data collection, and ways of data analysis. The most important decision was that of carrying out a collective type of case study with a qualitative nature. The main challenges methodologically seemed to be the use of participant observations over a significant period of time and the way that the two schools could be combined, in order to allow for the understanding around teachers professional development needs for fostering inclusion to emerge. Another challenge was that the development of the study and the research time plan could not be organised in its final form before the beginning of the fieldwork, and that was a difficulty that needed to be arranged within the field.

The next chapter, which is about the procedures followed in the field, will present and discuss how these methodological decisions were put into practice and all the aspects and challenges related to the overall methodology undertaken in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES AND THE FIELDWORK

Introduction

This chapter presents the fieldwork and other procedures, related to that. It is separated into four sections. The first section sets the scene where the study was carried out, by describing the primary education provision in Cyprus. The second section is about the management of the study before entering the field, and the third section is about the implementation of the research design. Finally, the last section discusses the strategies used for "establishing trustworthiness" in the case study.

Setting the scene: the primary education context of Cyprus

This section sets the scene of the fieldwork, by presenting elements of the Cypriot education context which will help the reader to understand better the context, in which the fieldwork was carried out. A presentation of the education context of primary education is made with an emphasis on the teaching profession in Cyprus.

Pupils enter primary education when they reach the age of five years and eight months. Attendance is compulsory and free of charge in public schools for six years (Eurydice, 2009). Public schools function in every town and village where more than fifteen children live. Classes are not organised by level of competence, because teaching in mixed-ability classrooms is supported by the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), and this is what actually happens in practice. The pupils are divided into homogeneous year groups. Grade 1, involves children of five years and eight months; Grade 2, involves children of six years and eight months; Grade 3, involves children of seven years and eight months; Grade 4, involves children of eight years and eight months; Grade 5, involves children of nine years and eight months; and Grade 6, involves children of ten years and eight months (Eurydice, 2009).

Teachers are allocated in schools in such a way so as to ensure that the total class size does not exceed the maximum number, which is 25 pupils per classroom, as

regulated by the Council of Ministers in 2007. However, this is not the case in all schools at the moment, since the reduction of the maximum class size to 25 in all primary schools is expected to be completed, according to plan, by the end of the school year 2010/11 (Eurydice, 2009). The education staff of each school is constituted by the teachers, the deputy heads and the head teachers. Moreover, if children who are considered to have SEN are registered in a school, then special teachers and 'teaching assistants' are also employed according to the needs of each school, for individual children. The term 'school escorts' is used by Messiou (2008), as the exact translation for 'teaching assistants' who are employed to work with particular children defined as having SEN.

Due to the fact that the education system of Cyprus is highly centralised, the schools follow the policies of MOEC, which are sent to schools mainly through circulars. Therefore, all the public primary schools of Cyprus follow the same policies, rules and regulations, the curriculum and textbooks as organised and presented by MOEC. The schools work from 7:45a.m. to 1:05p.m. The school day is divided into four sessions. The first three sessions are constituted by two forty-minute periods, while the fourth session is constituted by one-forty minute period. Among the sessions there are three breaks. Therefore there are seven forty-minute periods organised within four sessions; from 7:45a.m.-9:05a.m., break from 9:25a.m.-10:45a.m.,break, from 10:55a.m.-12:15p.m., break and from 12:25p.m.- 1:05p.m. Teachers with less than fourteen years of experience work 29 hours per week, so they are allowed to have one forty-minute period free every day, while teachers with more than fourteen years of experience, have two forty-minute period free every school day.

The direct supervision and co-ordination of the schools and the teachers' evaluation is carried out by the inspectors, who are divided into 'Inspectors for General Education', 'Inspectors for Special Subjects', and 'Inspectors for Special Education'. The inspector of general education and the inspector of special subjects (English, Science, Music, Art, Gymnastic), supervise and guide schools and teachers, collaborate with the schools' head teacher for administrative or any other educational issues, and evaluate mainstream school teachers (MOEC, 2009). The inspector of special education is responsible for issues regarding the education of children with SEN in mainstream and special schools, and his/her duties and responsibilities are

the same as the other two inspectors (MOEC, 2009). This inspector is responsible only for special education teachers.

Teachers are centrally appointed, transferred and promoted by the Education Service Commission, which is an independent body appointed by the president of Republic. Primary school teachers should be graduates of a four-year programme offered by the University of Cyprus, private Universities of Cyprus, and by Universities in Greece. Graduates from Universities from other countries are also eligible for the teaching profession, as long as their degree is acknowledged by the national evaluative body called KYSATS. They also have to pass some exams at the University of Cyprus. Entrance in the University of Cyprus and Universities in Greece for teacher education, requires passing very competitive national entrance examinations.

After graduation from universities, teachers apply for appointment and they are listed according to the year they graduated, the mark of the degree, and extra qualifications (PhD, Master, Postgraduate Diploma). From personal experience, these days, after graduation a teacher has to wait at least four to six years to be appointed. When teachers are appointed, their nomination is not permanent but with conventions for two to four years, and it requires four evaluations from the inspector, one each semester for two years, in order to be given a permanent placement.

Teachers are promoted to deputy heads and then to head teachers based on the years of experience which is the most important factor, high evaluations from the inspectors and extra qualifications. Mainstream teachers are inspected and evaluated by the general inspector twice a year, through two forty-minute visits for observation in the classroom. The inspector is obliged to inform a day before the inspection the head teacher of the school about his/her visit but the inspector does not reveal the teacher who is going to be observed. Teachers are evaluated in four points; a. professional development, b. sufficiency in working (teaching skills, consciousness, performance), c. organisation-management-human relations and d. general behaviour and action (PA.D.E.D, 2008). The head teacher also, at the end of each year, writes a report about each teacher. Teachers also, complete a form about the above mentioned points, which are kept in their personal folder, which is

stored in the Ministry. However, according to Pashiardis (2004), the most important factor for promotions are the years of experience, therefore, usually a teacher will become a deputy head after 17 to 20 years of experience, and a head teacher after about 25 years of experience depending on the availability of positions and retirement, which is at the age of 60.

Having presented the primary education context where the study was carried out, the following section presents the strategic decisions undertaken, prior entering the field.

Management of the study before entering the field

Within this part, the strategic decisions and arrangements that were made before entering the field, will be presented and discussed. It involves the pilot studies, the choice of schools, and finally, gaining access and research ethics.

However, moving on to discuss the decisions and arrangements that were made for the study, it is important to refer to the fact that prior to the implementation of the case study research design, which is of a qualitative nature, my own framework was developed as outlined in chapter one, and to consider how this influenced the decisions related to my study. It needs to be emphasised that the role of theory development prior to the conduct of any data collection is essential and an important strategy for completing successful case studies (Yin, 2003a; 2003b). Merriam (1988) suggests that qualitative case studies, as with all the other research designs, should take into consideration previous work in the same area, in order to inform the study and provide the foundation for the investigation of an issue. That previous work can be either data-based, which means that it entails empirical studies that involve data collection and analysis, or non-data-based work, which involves mostly theoretical work and presents writers' opinions and experiences (Merriam, 1988). The framework as presented in this study was guided by the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002), and analysed empirical and non-empirical studies from international and Cypriot writers based on its conceptual areas and aspects. It was used as guidance for the literature review and informed the next steps of the study; it revealed some areas in the Cypriot context that needed further attention, and helped in creating the research sub-questions. According to Yin (2003a), theory can enable the researcher to have "sufficient guidance, and preliminary concepts for the study"

(Yin, 2003a, p.29). In other words, theory development can guide the researcher to identify the most suitable literature, so that the case study will be able to "advance knowledge and understanding of a given topic" (Yin, 2003b, p.3). Stake (1995) suggests that designing research questions for case studies is difficult, because they need to guide the researcher enough but not too much. Therefore, a conceptual organisation of what is already known guides data collection and shows the kind of understandings which are necessary. Thus, the role of the framework presented in chapter one was important, but it needs to be clear that it was restricted only to the role of guiding the focus of the study, and did not dictate my decisions as time proceeded.

The pilot studies

The first pilot study took place in a primary school of UK and lasted for approximately two months. The aim was firstly, to help me develop a research time plan for my study. A second aim was to practise the different methods that I chose for my study. Regarding the first aim, during this pilot study some initial ideas for the creation of the research time plan were explored. Those were based on Nisbet and Watt's (1984) suggestions regarding how to undertake a case study in combination with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) three phases. These phases are: a. orientation and overview, which is an open phase with a wide focus, b. focused exploration, which is about focusing more on the issues that emerge from the first phase, and c. member check, which is about draft and check with the participants the first interpretations of findings. These were thought to be suitable for the study, because they could help me "catch the dynamics of unfolding situations" (Nisbet and Watt, 1984 p.78) because they were likely to identify first what is needed, then to find out more about them in-depth, and finally to check the results with the participants. Therefore, based on literature and on this pilot study, the research time plan was created. It was acknowledged however, that the plan was not final, since later phases could emerge in a somewhat different manner, after the first stage in the field, according to the issues and exploratory needs which could emerge from it. Besides, in a qualitative research the actual research plan is developed in the field (Merriam, 1988).

Regarding the second aim, during the first pilot study I was practising the use of participant observations and how to take field notes, studying critical incidents, and developing the informal conversational interviews, in order to develop my skills. By doing that it helped me realise some of the practicalities and difficulties of these methods, and it also helped me to find possible ways for addressing these difficulties. For example, regarding the practice of taking field notes, it is suggested in literature that fieldnotes should be written mainly by memory, after leaving the field (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). However, when I tried to make field notes in such a way, it was impossible for me to remember the verbatim of what was said in all the classrooms, and all the discussions that I had with teachers in schools. Since these were important for the purposes of my study, new ways of taking field notes needed to be searched, in order deal with this difficulty. These are described later under the sections 'taking field notes'.

The second pilot study was carried out in Cyprus and involved only the piloting of the semi-structured interviews. I chose to pilot the interviews in Cyprus, because, Cyprus is a different context from UK, and the kind of questions that I was going to use, had to be contextually bound. The aim of piloting the semi-structured interviews in Cyprus was firstly, to enable me understand whether my questions were understandable to teachers in relation to the Cypriot context, and also feasible in terms of the time frame. The time that each interview could have, could be no longer than fifty minutes. This is because, as explained above, a teacher has only forty minutes free each school day which may also be needed to use for his/her work. However, ten minutes from their break could also be devoted to interview. A second aim was to practise and improve my interview skills.

So, piloting the semi-structured interviews was carried out in the Cypriot context, after I spent two and a half months in the field, before commencing the semi-structured interviews with all the teachers. A pilot interview with a teacher from the Aristotelio primary school was firstly carried out. Feedback about this pilot interview which had been transcribed was given by my supervisors. Further, eight pilot interviews were carried out with other teachers not working in the chosen schools, until I phrased the issues right, within the correct timeframe. All the pilot interviews had been recorded, including teachers' comments, in order to listen to

myself as an interviewer and also improve my interviewing skills by reflecting back on what was said. The piloting of semi-structured interviews helped me to avoid leading questions, to ask open ended questions, to follow up without interrupting, and to use probes as appropriate which are important elements of the interview (Kvale, 2007; Merriam, 1988, Seidman, 2006). Further, issues related to the content of the questions were explored.

After the pilot study in the UK school was completed, it was necessary to choose the schools for carrying out the study in Cyprus. Next I will explain how I chose the two schools.

Choosing schools

The primary schools that were selected were situated in the city of Paphos. Paphos is in the southwest of Cyprus and is a coastal city. Its population towards the end of 2009 was 77.800 (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2010). The city of Paphos belongs in the UNESCO's official catalogue as part of world's cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 2010). Paphos was chosen instead of any other city in Cyprus, because it is my home town and accessibility of the schools was a factor that determined my decision. The primary schools of Paphos that were chosen for my study were the Aristotelio School and the Socratio School. For each school the rationale for its choice is discussed as follows:

Aristotelio primary school

The Aristotelio School is a public urban school, similar in important characteristics to other primary schools of Cyprus. It had six grades and it was constituted of seventeen classrooms. All classrooms of the Aristotelio like in all Cypriot classrooms were of mixed-ability. The number of teachers and pupils was not notably smaller or larger than usual primary schools of Cyprus. It involved twenty-five teachers, two special teachers and one speech therapist, who were responsible for carrying out individual lessons with children with SEN. Also, it involved a 'school escort' who was responsible to escort two children with physical disabilities around the school when needed. There was also the head teacher and two of the teachers were deputy heads. Three hundred and seventy two pupils were enrolled in

this school. The school was supervised by the three inspectors (for general education, for special subjects and for special education) of Paphos, who collaborated with the school and evaluated the teaching staff. The Aristotelio primary school, as with every other public primary school of Cyprus, was compulsory, free of charge and followed the policies, the rules, the regulations, the curriculum and the textbooks of the MOEC. Therefore, the school chosen was similar in key aspects to other primary schools of Cyprus.

Another reason for choosing the Aristotelio primary school was because it involved a wide range of pupils from Cyprus, pupils coming from other countries (children from ethnic minorities) as well as pupils who were considered to have SEN. This also happens in other primary schools in Cyprus but there are schools which may not involve, for example, children with SEN. This is because according to the policies of the MOEC (2009), all children in mainstream schools have to register in their neighbourhood school. Thus, the Aristotelio primary school of Paphos, provided education to some children whose first language is not Greek, and accommodated some children with SEN, and this made the case of the school interesting and also suitable for the purposes of the research. In this respect, the professional development needs of primary school teachers could be understood while they were trying to respond to a diversity of pupils, in mixed-ability classrooms.

Socratio Primary school

The Socratio School was selected because it belonged to the Zones of Education Priority (ZEP), and was thought to be an example of this new government initiative. This, made the case of that school interesting, and thus worthy of further studying for my research purposes. During the school year 2008/09, when the study was carried out, according to MOEC (2009), ten primary schools out of three hundred and forty five, belonged within the Zones of Education Priority, and the Socratio School was one of them. Actually, the Socratio primary school has belonged to ZEP since 2005. The reason why the school belonged to the Zones of Education Priority was mainly due to the fact that it involved a significant number of children from ethnic minorities. In particular, its student population consisted of, 51% from Georgia, 21% from Russia, 13% from Cyprus, 8% from Romania, 3% from

Bulgaria, 3% from UK, and 1% from Ukraine. Moreover, due to the fact that the school belonged to the ZEP, there were additional measures for supporting this school, therefore, it could be useful to see how these actually helped teachers to respond to diversity and to meet their professional development needs. However, the school was still similar in key aspects to other primary schools of Cyprus; Two hundred and forty four pupils were enrolled and it had twenty teachers, including the head teacher. Moreover, it involved a special teacher, a speech therapist, and a 'school escort'. The school was constituted of thirteen classrooms. Two of the teachers were also deputy heads. It had six grades and it was supervised and evaluated by the three inspectors of Paphos. Moreover the responsible general inspector for the Aristotelio School was also responsible for the Socratio School. The Socratio School was free of charge and followed the policies, the rules, the regulations, the curriculum and the textbooks of the MOEC.

One could question if more than two schools should have been involved in the study. When an individual researcher decides to conduct a collective case study, then issues of time and of resources should also be considered (Yin, 2009). In conducting more than two case studies, the researcher is running the risk of not providing the adequate depth required to all of them, which according to Johnson and Christensen (2008) is a disadvantage when studying multiple cases. Johnson and Christensen (2008) call this the "classic depth versus breadth trade off" (p.409). Since the aim of this study was to achieve depth rather than breadth no more than two cases could be chosen. Both single and multiple case studies, according to Yin (2009), can lead to successful case studies, but if the researcher "has the choice (and resources), multiple case studies may be preferred over single-case designs" (p.60). The data collected from various cases according to Yin (2009), results in a more robust study even if this is a "two-case" case study. So, there is a back up support for a two case study research design in the literature. In addition to that the second school chosen had an inherent interest, the unique characteristic of belonging to ZEP, and therefore had some additional characteristics compared to the majority of the other Cypriot primary schools. Exploring these additional characteristics as well could enrich the understanding about the issues under study.

Gaining access and Research Ethics

The 'Ethical Procedures for Research and Teaching in the Institute for Learning' (Institute for Learning, 2007) were followed. A proforma for students beginning a research project was completed and all the necessary documentation was attached to it and was sent to the Research Ethics Committee, where it was approved (Appendix II, p.299). Particular emphasis was given to the eighth ethical principle: "The researcher must inform all participants, in ways that can be understood by them of all the aspects that might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate, as well as explain all other aspects about which the participants enquire" (Institute for Learning, 2007, p.6).

As required, a letter was sent to the MOEC, explaining the purpose of my study, and the methodology. Additionally, a summary was attached to explain some of the theoretical aspects of my study (Appendix II, p.300). Having done this, the permission was given to me as a researcher, to work in both schools in the two premises, providing that the head teacher of each school would agree to the study, and that my research was to be carried out in such a way so as not to disturb teachers' work.

After gaining access from the MOEC, I had to get the informed consent of participants prior to commencing the case study. Going back to Cyprus after Christmas in January (2009), a preliminary visit took place at the Aristotelio School, and a meeting was held with the head teacher in order to explain my research aims and methodology. After that, the head teacher agreed to participate and allowed for the research to be carried out in the school. An initial introduction of me to the teachers was done during a staff meeting where I explained the general aims of my research including the topic and methodology, but without stating the exact research questions. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), it is wise not to report the exact research questions, because this may increase issues of self-consciousness and of threat. Moreover, when participants know exactly what the researcher studies, they may hide or state and stage events for their own benefit. An issue that I had to deal during the staff meeting was when a teacher asked me to explain further the notion of inclusion. That was a dilemma that I had, because how teachers understand the

notion of inclusion was central for my research, and I did not want to influence their understanding around inclusion. On the other hand, according to the IFL (2007) Research Ethics document, a researcher needs to explain further when enquired. So, what I did was to give a further general explanation of inclusion, without getting into detail that could possibly influence their understanding. According to Creswell (1998), when the researcher does not want to share information that may influence participants, this should be handled by the researcher by "presenting general information, not specific information about the study" (p.133). Another ethical issue that I needed to deal with at this stage was about the fact that I had to choose classrooms and participants that I should spend more time with, in order to allow a more in depth exploration. So, in order to deal with that, from the beginning, I made clear that for research purposes I had to be in some classrooms for more time than others. As I explained to the teachers, my decisions would be made known to them, after spending some time to get to know the school setting, and all the classrooms, and this decision would be mainly based on pupils' diversity.

After the presentation, I shared a letter to all the staff (Appendix II, p.301) and I asked for their participation, ensuring them for their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Every participant was given the right not to participate if he/ she did not wish to or to withdraw at any time of the research, as this was the recommended procedure according to the Research Ethics. All teachers including other staff of the Aristotelio School (the head teacher, twenty five teachers, two special teachers, one speech therapist, and one school escort) agreed to participate and signed the IFL Ethics Committee consent form (Appendix II, p.302). We decided together that before the beginning of each week, I would give them my timetable with the day, time, and the classroom that I was going to be in (Appendix III, p.308). Similar procedures were followed for the Socratio School, but more details will be presented later, under stage 3, when the study in this school began.

After getting the informed consent by all participants in the Aristotelio School, I could then implement my research design which is described in the following section.

Implementing the research design

The field study lasted for six months, from the 7th of January 2009 which was the first day after the Christmas holidays, to 19th of June 2009 which was the official closing date of schools for summer vacations (certificates for my presence in the schools are in the Appendix II, p.303/4). In total, approximately 292 hours spread over 74 visits in both schools were spent in the field. In addition, almost 42 hours of interviewing with all the participants were carried out. The research was conducted in three main stages: Stage one: getting to know the setting; Stage two: allowing issues to emerge; Stage three: focused exploration of the issues that emerged. This is presented in Table 2 (p.92).

Each of the stages is discussed along with reflections on the process of implementation of the research design as follows:

Stage one: Getting to know the setting

This was the first stage of my study, which started immediately after my entrance in the field and lasted for three weeks. The aim of this stage was to get to know the setting and this entailed first, immersing naturally into the school setting, taking a role, establishing trust and rapport, and choosing participants and classrooms.

Immersing naturally into the school setting

After getting the informed consent by all participants, my first aim was to immerse naturally into the school setting. In other words, familiarising themselves with my presence in their school was of major importance. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest that when researchers enter the field they should "conduct themselves in such a way that they become an unobtrusive part of the scene, people whom participants take for granted" (p.32). For this reason, I was in the school every day during the first week from the beginning until the end. I visited all the classrooms and I talked to all the teachers after I observed their lesson. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), one should not stay in the field within the first days for a long time because of the overwhelming information that one gets, but it is reasonable if someone wants to do so, for the sake of having enough time with the participants.

Table 2: *The research time plan for the 'Collective type of Case study'*

STAGE A
<u>School: Aristotelio Primary School</u>
Aim: Getting to know the setting
Duration: 3 weeks
Methods:
• Participant Observations
• Critical Incidents
• Informal Conversational Interviews
• Document collection

STAGE B
<u>School: Aristotelio Primary School</u>
Aim: Allowing issues to emerge
Duration: 7 weeks
Methods:
• Participant Observations
• Critical Incidents
• Informal Conversational Interviews
• Document collection

STAGE C	
<u>School: Aristotelio Primary School</u>	<u>School: Socratio Primary School</u>
Sub-stage:C1	**Sub-stage:C1**
Aim: Focused exploration	**Aim:** Getting to know the setting/Focused exploration
Duration: 4 weeks	**Duration:** 4 weeks
Methods:	**Methods:**
• Semi-structured interviews with teachers	• Participant Observations
• Semi-structured interviews with special teachers, speech therapist and school escort	• Critical Incidents
	• Informal Conversational interviews
	• Document collection
Easter break	**Easter break**
Sub-stage:C2	**Sub-stage:C2**
Aim: Organisation of data	**Aim:** Organisation of data
Duration: 2 weeks	**Duration:** 2 weeks
Sub-stage:C3	**Sub-stage:C3**
Aim: More focused exploration	**Aim:** More focused exploration
Duration: 8 weeks	**Duration:** 8 weeks
Methods:	**Methods:**
• Semi-structured interviews with the head teacher, the inspector of both schools and the Senior Education Officer	• Semi-structured interviews with teachers and special teacher, speech therapist, school escort, and the ZEP co-ordinator
• Participant Observations	• Participant Observations
• Critical Incidents	• Critical Incidents
• Informal Conversational interviews	• Informal Conversational interviews

I felt that becoming an 'unobtrusive part of the scene' required a couple of weeks, until the participants used my presence in their school environment. Nevertheless, feeling uncomfortable especially within the first days of the research, when I was in the classrooms or in the staffroom was unavoidable, but something that changed as time progressed.

Taking a role

The role which I chose to take in the school was an important issue firstly, in relation to the kind of information that I was going to get, and secondly, in relation to the extent that I would be involved in the school processes. Taking these into consideration, I presented myself to both children and teachers as a student-teacher undertaking research.

The head teacher introduced me to the children of the school in the second day of the fieldwork. We visited briefly all the classrooms during the first school hour. I introduced myself to the eldest children, as a student-teacher that was doing research, and I explained that I would observe their teacher when they were doing their lessons. To the youngest children, I used similar expressions as with the eldest children to introduce myself, although I did not use the word 'research'. Nevertheless, I felt that children were viewing me as a teacher that was not carrying out lessons, and I realised that, when they sometimes asked for my permission to do something. I had to explain each time that they should ask their teacher, since I was not working as a teacher in their school.

In regards to teachers, my role as a student-teacher seemed to imply a young person, with limited teaching experience. Viewing me in this way, I felt that it made teachers not to feel threatened by my presence. This could possibly happen if they were viewing me as a person external to the school who holds information in confidence, such as an inspector, or as an experienced teacher as researcher, who implies a person who makes independent judgements. The role of a student-teacher aimed to allow teachers to act naturally and to give me a natural picture of what was going on. Also, it aimed to allow reducing issues of self-consciousness and feelings of being uncomfortable for the teachers. According to Simpson and Tuson (2003), observing

someone is an intrusive technique of data collection, so it was important throughout the study to keep my role as student-teacher undertaking research.

Further, the emphasis on research, made them respect the fact that I was doing a research, and prevented attempts to alter my research plans, either by telling me to which classroom they would prefer me to see them teaching, or by asking me to do supply teaching when a teacher was absent. It also seemed to prevent participants from taking control of my research, and allowed me to keep a balance between carrying out my research and being involved in school processes, in order to establish trust and rapport. Taylor and Bogdan, (1984) suggest that a researcher should keep a balance between conducting the research and going along with participants "for the sake of rapport" (p.34).

Overall, the role that I kept, could be characterised as a researcher participant role as this was described by Gans (1982). As Gans (1982) suggests, the researcher participant "participates in a social situation but is personally only partially involved, so that he can function as a researcher" (p.54). There had been times where I was involved in maximum, like when there was a school preparation for a ceremony, in physical education lessons, in music lessons, in school excursions, and within the staff meetings. There had been times however, when more traditional lessons, which involved limited interaction, were carried out in the classrooms, where I was not involved at all. Nevertheless, there was a balance between the extent that I was involved and I was always careful not to disturb the natural settings, and to keep the observer effect to a minimum. However, having a natural picture of what was going on was also part of the creation of rapport and trust between the teachers and me as I will explain in the next section.

Building trust and establishing rapport

Another aim that I had within this stage was to build trust and establish rapport between the participants and me, or at least to set the foundations for them. Building trust and rapport according to Bogdan and Biklen, (2007) encourages the participants to take the researcher for granted, and not to worry when talking around him/her. Assurances were given when presenting my study about issues of confidentiality and of anonymity, but trust and rapport are not created immediately and for all at the

same time (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Rather, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) trust needs to be created but also be maintained with each participant because trust is not a matter of the personal characteristics of the researcher, but is a developmental process with which a researcher needs to be engaged with daily. Several techniques are suggested in the literature about that (e.g Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Lincoln and Guba; 1985; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). The strategies that I followed were a natural result of the role that I was keeping over the whole research in the fieldwork: Keeping a low profile; being very discreet; avoiding conversations about teachers when they were not present; being involved in general conversations with them, not only when I wanted to ask them something, for research purposes; assuring at every opportunity of confidentiality; participating in all their activities, such as special ceremonies or excursions; and helping them in simple things, such as decoration of the ceremony room, whenever that was possible, even when I was not asked, especially during very stressful situations for them, such as the organisation of an afternoon school ceremony. As Johnson (1975) suggests, true rapport may never be developed with some participants, nevertheless, at least in relation to my study, it seems that it was developed. So, when it came to have more personal interviews with the teachers either within conversations, or critical incidents, or even at the semi-structured interviews, I heard statements such as:

> *'I am telling you this, because I know that you will not tell it to other people in the school'* or
>
> *'I was not feeling nervous during the interview because I know you'.*

Choosing Classrooms and Participants

Towards the end of the first stage, I had to choose classrooms and participants for the Aristotelio School. For choosing them, two main criteria were taken into consideration as follows:

a. This was a 'whole school' study.

It was important, therefore, to focus on all teachers of the school. Further, their interactions and relationships with other key staff, like, special teachers, 'school escorts', deputy heads, the head teacher and the inspector, needed to be studied as well. Thus, those people were also important to the study. Moreover, the Senior Education Officer for the district of Paphos could be involved, since he was visiting the school and was interacting with teachers.

As a whole school study, it needed also to take into account different kinds of settings in the school, so as to have an adequate coverage. Teachers and other key staff needed to be studied during teaching in the classroom, during staff meetings, within the playground, and generally within their natural school environment of their everyday routine.

b. There should be a realistic time plan

A second criterion relates to time. A realistic time plan was necessary, because having thirty participants in the Aristotelio School (twenty-five teachers, two special teachers, the speech therapist, the school escort and the head teacher) as part of the key staff, in the school setting, meant that it was impossible to devote the same time to all of them. Therefore, it was decided that more time should be devoted to those teachers which worked with a larger diversity of children, and children that needed more support, since these classrooms seemed to be more demanding in terms of including all children. Moreover, there should be coverage of classrooms of all children's ages, in order to have a comprehensive coverage of all age groupings.

The classrooms which seemed to meet the above criteria towards the end of the first stage were chosen. This determined also the teachers who were going to be given priority of time who where those that were spending most of their time teaching in the chosen classrooms. The selected classrooms had been from year one to year six. Therefore, the criterion for coverage of all children ages was met. It did arose however, that year two and year three classrooms needed more of my time, since the teachers teaching in these classrooms were themselves admitting having many difficulties in relation to responding to the diversity of pupils in these year groups.

So, in total eight classrooms from year one to year six received primarily my attention. In these classrooms ten teachers were teaching between twenty and twenty-five, forty-minute teaching periods, per week. However, the rest of the school teachers were also teaching in these classrooms, between one to four forty-minute teaching periods per week. The remaining staff was observed during staff meetings, at the playground, and when they were in the classrooms chosen. Finally, all of them, teachers, head teacher, special teachers, school escort, the school inspector, and the Senior Education officer were interviewed.

The methods used in this stage were used more systematically in stage two, so they will be presented within the next stage.

Stage two: Allowing issues to emerge

This stage lasted for seven weeks and aimed at allowing issues to emerge. Within this stage, it was crucial to obtain adequate data, in order to identify the issues that were important enough, so as to follow up in detail for addressing my research questions.

The methods used in this stage were the same as the methods used in the previous stage; participant observations, critical incidents, informal conversational interviews and collection of documents. The three first methods were overlapping and had one communal action, the action of taking field notes. Each of these methods required a special technique of taking field notes, therefore, they will be described as they were put into practice, followed by the way that field notes had been taken for each instance.

Participant observations

Participant observations were carried out in the classrooms, in the staffrooms, at the playground, during lessons, staff meetings, breaks and special events. Teachers knew beforehand when I was about to visit them, and I found it helpful never to enter the classroom prior to the teacher, at the beginning of the school day, after breaks or after another lesson. That is because I felt, that this was giving them a feeling of control of what was about to follow and was lessening the issue of threat, as supported by Bogdan and Biklen (2007).

In addition to the above, it was also helpful, especially within the first days, to ask them where they would prefer me to sit for participant observation in the classroom. Some of them were telling me their preferred place, while when I was given the chance to choose, I always placed my chair either left or right trying not to be very distant from the groups of children, but never at the back, opposite of the teacher, something that the inspectors usually do. There had been also times when I was sitting with a group of children. This was done mainly to avoid obvious correlation with the inspector's role and also in order to avoid eye contact (Simpson and Tuson, 2003), which I felt could influence the teachers. In other words, I was trying to give the teachers the feeling that I was not 'inspecting' them.

Finally, I was always acting in a natural way, dressed casually, holding the note pad in a way that did not implied that I was hiding something (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1988 Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). I tried to show a positive attitude, by following the flow of the classroom, and I stopped taking field notes when the whole classroom's climate was becoming inappropriate, or when the teacher was upset and uncomfortable with pupils. These notes were completed later, when that was appropriate in the classroom.

Taking field notes for participant observations

The classroom was the only place where I took field notes in a public view. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) field notes should be written after the researcher leaves the field, mainly by memory. However, this is not the exact path that I followed, mainly due to the fact that I had to be in the field for more than five hours, observing three or even four different classrooms every time that I visited the school. Moreover, even small details of what was happening regarding behaviour, people's expressions in the classroom and the exact teacher's and children's verbatim, were central for my study, and could only be remembered and recorded by taking field notes in the classroom. Therefore, notes had been openly taken during lessons. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) say, there are times when note-taking is appropriate and one of them is when attending classes, since other people are writing too. Besides, teachers appeared to get used to that early in the study, and after a few weeks I felt that it was taken for granted. In addition to the above, when I wanted to

write about an incident that happened during break time, at the playground I usually waited until I got back into the classroom after the break.

During staff meetings, I had to be very careful. Although in most staff meetings the time was devoted mainly to organisational issues, there had been times when very private issues about children's circumstances were discussed, and issues of the school that obviously they wanted to be confidential. At those times notes were not taken. Otherwise, taking notes during the meeting did not seem strange since a lot of teachers were taking notes. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that this is one of the situations where it is appropriate to keep notes in public. While I had not taken notes, it was easy for me to remember, because after the meeting I was always back home, where detailed notes were made but always being careful about confidential information.

Critical incidents

Based on the arguments about what a critical incident in education is, the criteria that had been set for this study, in order to identify a critical incident, when carrying out participant observations were:

a. When the incident was a clear example of the sort of behaviour or action that could be related to the key concepts of the research question and sub-questions, and therefore the meaning/explanation that is attached to it worth further studying and;

b. When the incident was unexpected and caused surprise to the teacher.

After identifying a critical incident, which usually occurred in the classrooms, I quickly wrote on my notepad the questions that I wanted to ask about the incident, and then on a pro-forma of a critical event (Flanagan, 1949, Wragg, 1999), or else, on a critical events analysis schedule (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008), suggested by the writers (Appendix III, p.309) I was writing what led up to the event, what happened, and what the outcome was. After that, the teachers involved were interviewed in order to have their perceptions of the incident. So, usually, after the end of the lesson and during the break I had the informal conversational interview with the questions that I had prepared, and other questions based on teachers' responses.

Taking field notes for critical incidents

Immediately after the informal conversational interview with the teacher for the critical incident, notes were taken. The idea of using a tape recorder in the critical incident technique, or taking notes in front of the participant while being interviewed, was rejected, since within the pilot study both of these actions made the participants self-conscious. Nonetheless, whatever the participant said about the incident needed to be recorded. Therefore, after the informal conversational interview, I spent the rest of time during break at the back yard of the school, which was a quiet place, and I could write down the complete interview without anyone noticing me. I followed this approach with all the critical incidents, whether they occurred in the staffroom or in the playground.

Informal conversational interviews

Informal conversational interviews arose in each time and place, while I was in the field, and had not a particular focus. They were mostly complementary to participant observations and to critical incidents, and were used either for clarification, or for a better understanding of a situation, or even for organisational arrangements. Mostly, I initiated them, but there were times that teachers themselves wanted to talk to me.

Taking field notes for informal conversational interviews

Informal conversations with the teachers usually occurred in the classroom, when the children were busy writing something, and the teachers were moving around the classroom. Most of the time teachers were approaching me and we were discussing silently. After teachers left to continue the lesson, I wrote down what we said. For an informal discussion with a teacher after a lesson, or in the staffroom or even conversations among teachers and between the teachers and the head teacher, I usually took brief notes and very detailed notes were made when I went home.

Documents

In addition to the above methods, many documents from regular official meetings, particular policies that the school employed for particular children, circulars sent to the school by the MOEC and documents for professional development meetings

were collected. Further, documents relating to the organisation of the school, teachers' time of working and time plan, and also classroom timetables and the lists of children's names, were particularly helpful for the organisation of my time in the field.

Before using a document I tried to evaluate its credibility by checking its authenticity and accuracy, mainly by asking questions related to the origin of the document, its purpose, and its sources and by identifying similar documents for comparison (Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest, both records and documents will be encountered by the researcher working in the field, but the researcher should organise, make sense of and interpret the documents.

Documents were useful for understanding processes and the organisation of the school. This was important, because as argued by Yin (2009), documents can correct spellings and titles or name of organisations that may have been mentioned in an interview, or they may also provide additional information or details to an issue that emerged from another data collection method. Likewise, documents may have contradictory information to what a source might say and, therefore, further exploration of that information is required. Finally, documents can be used for making inferences meaning that by the structure or by the way a document is presented, further issues can emerge around a particular concept. Nonetheless, according to Yin (2009), a researcher "should treat inferences only as clues, worthy of further investigation, rather than defensive findings, because the inferences could later turn out to be false leads" (p.103). This is the way that documents were used in my study, as complementary to other methods offering clues about the main issues that were emerging.

So, at this stage I was making field notes from participant observations, critical incidents and informal conversational interviews, and documents were collected. During this stage, I was reading back my field notes and documents, and initial thoughts or comments about them were made at the margins. Then I noted down every question that I wanted to ask the next time that I would visit the school. That process was helping me to gradually build a picture of the main issues that were

emerging and was the ground on which I was focusing on, for addressing the research question and sub-questions, for formulating the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews.

Stage 3: Focused exploration of the issues that emerged

The aim of this stage was to explore further and in more depth the issues that emerged. It lasted for fourteen weeks and it was the longest and most difficult one, since a parallel case study in the second primary school was being conducted at the same time. The case study in the Socratio primary school began in the third stage, in order to provide more depth and additional information to the issues that already emerged, and also, based on its unique characteristics, to enrich the data. Therefore, it could better serve this purpose during the third stage, when the initial issues emerged from the Aristotelio School. Another reason was to avoid confusion. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), when the researcher is carrying out multiple site case studies, it is preferable not to do this simultaneously from the beginning, since the researcher is overwhelmed by new information and names, and this is confusing. Therefore, there were weeks in the third stage that I was in the Aristotelio primary school for three days, and two days in the Socratio primary school, and vice versa. This stage, due to the fact that it was long, was subdivided into three sub-stages, with smaller sub-aims, which could facilitate the main objective of stage three.

Sub-stage 3.1

The aim of sub-stage 3.1, which lasted for four weeks, was to explore further the issues that emerged in the Aristotelio Primary school. The methods that were used during that period of time at the Aristotelio School were primarily the semi-structured interviews as follows:

Semi-structured interviews

All the teachers, the special teachers, the speech therapist and the school escort of the Aristotelio School were interviewed. It was necessary for all of them to be involved, since that was a whole school study and the perspectives of all of them were important, in order to understand in more depth teachers' professional development

needs, as these were emerging from themselves and their colleagues. The head teacher, the inspector and the Senior Education officer, preferred to be interviewed towards the end of the school year. The semi-structured interviews were carried out at different classrooms of the school, according to their availability. A major advantage was the fact that I knew beforehand all the participants, and that made arrangements and the conduct of interviews to flow naturally. Each interview lasted from forty to fifty minutes. All of them were recorded, while on my notepad I had a particular space to note the participants' expressions or feelings next to a question.

The interview guide was constituted by three thematic areas, which emerged based on the issues that came forward from the two earlier stages. These were categorised under three thematic areas as groups, taking into consideration also the research question and sub-questions of the study. The first thematic area, involved a group of questions, related to teachers' understandings/meanings, attitudes, commitment, confidence, and ways of valuing children. The second thematic area, involved a group of questions, related to the context of the school and teachers' professional development needs in relation to that. The third thematic area, involved a group of questions related to teachers' professional development needs, opportunities and their responses to them. The questions involved under each thematic area are shown in Appendix III (p.310), and were used in a very flexible way. This means that they did not determine the flow of the interview, since that was guided based on the conversation that was developed. Therefore, the interview of each participant was different from others, since the questions asked for each participant were based on his/her responses, and further questioning, or more time was spent on particular issues that were emerging and were not originally included in the interview guide. Moreover, further questions were asked to particular participants, that could help me in clarifying the issues involved around an incident, or a situation in which the participant was involved and which needed further exploration. The use of the semi-structured interviews, therefore, was in coherence with the rest of the fieldwork. One of their main uses was to develop and explore in more depth the themes that emerged from previous observations, critical incidents, and informal conversational interviews, as well as to facilitate further issues to arise, which I could then observe

more closely. Moreover, since the interviewees were not strangers, they were considered to be partners in the interview, contributing in many aspects.

In the Socratio School during the third stage, the aim was firstly to get to know the setting, in order to be able to choose classrooms and participants, and to start exploring the issues that emerged. The exact same processes that I carried out for the Aristotelio primary school were also carried out for the Socratio primary school. A preliminary visit was made to the school, and a meeting was held with the head teacher towards the end of February, in order to explain my research aims and methodology. After that, the head teacher agreed to the research to be carried out in the school. Within my first visit and during the break, I presented my research in exactly the same way as I did with the Aristotelio primary school. Then, I asked for teachers and other staff to participate. I shared the same letters and almost all agreed to participate and they signed the IFL consent form (the head teacher, fifteen teachers, one special teacher, one speech therapist and one school escort). Four teachers, for personal reasons, as they suggested, preferred not to be involved. However, in my view, this did not have important impact on the study, since I could observe the classroom settings in which they were teaching with other teachers working in them. Moreover, the research could still be carried out in the same way, in all the other settings.

The methods that were used in this stage were participant observations, critical incidents, informal conversational interviews and collection of documents. Towards the end of this stage, and based on the same criteria that I used for the Aristotelio School, the classrooms and participants that should have been given priority of my time were selected. Furthermore, two additional criteria were set for the Socratio School: firstly, classrooms that were involved in programs as part of the initiatives provided to ZEP school, and secondly, teachers that were participating in professional development opportunities, which did not appear in the Aristotelio School, were given priority. Six classrooms, one from each year group, which seemed to involve a great range of children's diversity, and in which particular strategies were used as part of the measures taken as a ZEP school, were chosen. Moreover, time was devoted particularly to seven teachers that were teaching for more than twenty five periods, which were of forty-minute each, in these classrooms.

Also, the ZEP co-ordinator of schools in Paphos, who was visiting the school every week, was interviewed.

Sub-stage 3.2

This sub-stage lasted for two weeks. Its aim was to transcribe all teachers' and other staff's semi-structured interviews of the Aristotelio School. Although transcribing interviews started along with the conduct of interviews, that time was essential for completion of transcription, since the transcripts needed to be ready for member checking. Transcription was very time-consuming and required a considerable amount of time, approximately six to eight hours for each interview. However, I managed to have them all ready by the end of sub-stage 3.2 and all the transcripts were returned within the next stage, sub-stage 3.3 at random days to the participants, based on their availability for member check.

This sub-stage 3.2 was also used to prepare the semi-structured interviews for all teachers and other staff of the Socratio primary school, based also on the new data that had been collected from that school, as well as from the semi-structured interviews in the Aristotelio School.

Sub-stage 3.3

This sub-stage lasted for eight weeks. The aim of this stage was more focused exploration of the issues that emerged, based also on the new data collected and the new issues that emerged from the semi-structured interviews in the Aristotelio Primary school, and from my visits to the Socratio primary school.

The methods used in the Aristotelio primary school during this stage were participant observations, critical incidents and informal conversational interviews as presented above. In this sub-stage 3.3, I was focusing more on particular issues that emerged from previous stages, that still needed more information, but I was also exploring new issues that emerged from the semi-structured interviews, and from the data collected from the Socratio primary school. Moreover, the interview with the head teacher of the Aristotelio School was carried out in this stage, which has also been transcribed and returned for member check.

In the Socratio School, fifteen teachers and other staff (special teacher, speech therapist, school escort, head teacher) were interviewed, using semi-structured interviews. The same processes as for the Aristotelio School were used with the teachers and other staff of the Socratio School. The questions asked, however, were slightly changed, in order to be relevant to the context of the Socratio School, given that it was a ZEP school. During the semi-structured interviews, particular emphasis was given to the elements of the Socratio School, that were different and, therefore, worthy of further questioning in relation to the main research question and sub-questions of the study. Moreover, the methods of participant observations, critical incidents and informal conversational interviews were carried out in the different school settings of the Socratio School.

Further arrangements for interviews were made, with the general inspector of both schools as well as with the Senior Education officer of Paphos and the ZEP co-ordinator. In different afternoon hours, the interviews with them were carried out. The questions asked were similar to the questions asked to the teachers, since I wanted their perspectives on the same issues that teachers were interviewed. However, emphasis was also given to issues related to their role/post, and its influence on teachers and the process of inclusion in schools. Towards the end of this stage, and after all the interviews were transcribed, these were returned to the participants for member check, which was one of the strategies used to establish trustworthiness in the case study. The following section discusses all the strategies used for this reason.

Establishing trustworthiness in the case study

"To what extent can the researcher trust the findings of a qualitative case study?" (Merriam, 1988, p.166). This is a key question that all researchers and especially those carrying out a qualitative case study should be able to answer, since "the concept of trustworthiness illuminates successfully the ethic of respect for truth, in a case study research" (Bassey, 1999, p.75). Merriam (1988) considers that design concerns about a qualitative case study, may be greater than for a quantitative study, because validity and reliability are not accounted for, from the beginning, as in a quantitative study.

In trying to ensure validity and reliability in my study, I found that the concepts of 'valid and reliable' in a qualitative case study are not straightforward. In qualitative studies, such concepts have been addressed in several ways by various writers. Three stances in particular, may be considered to be taken, concerning the issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). The first, according to Creswell (2007), is the employment by qualitative researchers of the terms reliability and validity in very similar ways to quantitative researchers, when seeking to develop criteria for assessing research. Creswell (2007) argues that the authors who continue to use positivist terminology, support that this facilitates the acceptance of qualitative research in a quantitative world. The second stance taken is the creation of alternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) established the concept of trustworthiness of a study and have used alternative criteria such as credibility, which replaces internal validity, transferability, which replaces external validity, dependability, which replaces reliability and confirmability, which replaces objectivity. Finally, according to Bryman (2008), the third stance taken is a midway between quantitative and qualitative criteria, for example Hammersley's (1992) 'subtle realist' account. This account, according to Hammersley (1992), entails recognising that we can never be absolutely certain about the truth of any account, since we have no completely incontrovertible way of gaining direct access to the reality on which it is based. Therefore, "we must judge the validity of claims on the basis of the adequacy of evidence offered in support of them" (Hammersley, 1992, p.69).

The second stance which is about establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), was adopted in this study, since it seemed as the most appropriate stance, given the qualitative nature of the study and its underpinning epistemological and ontological orientation, which falls under the naturalist paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A wide range of techniques or strategies are available to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. For this issue, Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that qualitative researchers use strategies, based on three perspectives; the researcher's perspective, the participant's perspectives and those of the people external to the study. First, from the perspective of the researcher, strategies include triangulation (Creswell 2007, 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Miles

and Huberman, 1994), disconfirming evidence (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Miles and Huberman, 1994) and researcher's reflexivity (Merriam, 1998). Strategies for the study of participants involve member check (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005), or respondent validation (Bryman, 2008; Maxwell, 2005), prolonged engagement in the field (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1988) and collaboration (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Finally, strategies of people external to the study (reviewers, readers), involve audit trail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Miles and Huberman, 1994) thick and rich description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005), and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The strategies that have been employed to establish the trustworthiness of my study are firstly, strategies to ensure the credibility and dependability of the study as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), such as triangulation, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and member check. Each of these strategies is explained below:

Triangulation of sources (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003a;) and triangulation of methods (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003a) are key characteristics of this case study, as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. By triangulation of sources, according to Patton (2002), a researcher can check the constancy of different data sources within the same method. Therefore, for information collected in this study, triangulation of sources occurred because teachers' views, and other key stakeholders' views (special staff, head teachers, inspector and the senior education officer), documents and records as well as my own observations were explored for the same information, and this contributed to sources triangulation.

Further, different methods were used for data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By using methods' triangulation, the researcher can check the constancy of findings, as these had been extracted by different data collection methods (Patton, 2002). Since participant observations, critical incidents, informal conversational interviews, semi-structured interviews and collection of documents were used, triangulation of the findings can be claimed. With data triangulation, the potential problems of

credibility can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2003a). Further, as Lin (1976) argues, by using a multi-method approach, the researcher feels confident that the data collected are not artefacts of one specific method, because different methods lead to similar results. Therefore, by using the process of triangulating, different sources and methods enhances the trustworthiness of the study.

Prolonged engagement is another strategy used; it is a process which enables the researcher to understand the context (Cresswell and Miller, 2000; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is about spending enough time in a case study, in order to build trust with those who provide data, being immersed in the natural setting, and trying to avoid intended or unintended misleading ideas. It needs to be noted here that I am familiar with the wider Cypriot context and with its larger cultural parameters. I am also familiar with a Cypriot school setting, given the fact that I graduated from such schools, therefore, prolonged engagement in the field enabled me to challenge the kind of bias that could be brought into the study, based on this prior knowledge and experience (the issue of bias is addressed further under the part 'researcher's reflexivity'). However, I was not familiar with the specific context of Aristotelio and Socratio primary schools, so prolonged engagement was necessary. Further, this strategy was particularly important for me in order to remain 'open' to the issues that were emerging in the field, given that a framework was formulated and was used for guiding reasons before entering the field.

Peer debriefing or review, is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research. A peer reviewer provides support, challenges the researchers' assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I consider that my supervisors took the role of peer debriefers, given the fact that throughout the study they provided written feedback on every aspect of my work. Their role could also be seen as critical friends (Bassey, 1999), which is a role equivalent to peer debriefers.

The member check technique (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), or respondent validation (Bryman, 2008; Maxwell, 2005) was also used within the case study. According to

Creswell and Miller (2000), member check is the process of taking back to the participants the raw data and/or interpretations, so that the participants can check for their credibility. Although interpretations were not given back to the participants, they had the opportunity to check their interview transcripts and comment on their accuracy. Further, they noted down what they thought that they had forgotten, or they clarified some points of their answers. According to Bassey (1999), this gives a good opportunity to the people under study to "put the record straight" (p.76).

In addition to the above, the strategy which ensures the transferability of the study, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest was used, which is that of thick and rich description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005). Giving as detailed a description as possible, through the write up, it enables the readers to make decisions, concerning whether the accounts are credible (Cresswell and Miller, 2000). Moreover, with rich and thick description, readers can also judge, regarding the transferability of the findings; whether the findings can apply to other settings or contexts. However, according to Bassey (1999), the researcher needs to keep a balance between saying too much, that can end up confusing and wearing out the readers, and saying too little, which can reduce confidence in the findings of the research. I believe that thick and rich description was achieved in presenting the case study research, but readers can judge this.

Moreover, strategies were used in my study, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) can establish the confirmability of the study. These are the triangulation and audit trail strategies. Triangulation has already been presented. The strategy of audit trail as this was used in my study follows:

Audit trail is a process through which researchers provide clear documentation of all research decisions and activities, throughout the account or appendices (Creswell and Miller, 2000). An external auditor through a systematic procedure, writes an analysis after carefully studying the documentation provided by the researchers. This was not carried out in an official way, but each reader can act as an external auditor when reading the account of my study as well as the appendices. Moreover, a case record and a case data base were created and are available for external audits. For case studies, Stenhouse (1988) argued that a 'case record' is important for every

study and is the substantial collection of documents, observers' notes, interview transcripts, which form the basis from which the case report is written. Further, Yin (2003a) argues that it is important to create a 'case study database', in order to save the raw data, which may consist of case study notes, case study documents, tabular materials or narratives, and all these should develop a chain of evidence.

Finally, two more strategies were used in my study, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) enhance all of the criteria of trustworthiness. These are researcher's reflexivity, and the use of a reflexive journal as presented below:

Researcher's reflexivity (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Merriam, 1988) and own position (Merriam, 1988) are important strategies for the trustworthiness of the study. Researcher's reflexivity is the process whereby personal beliefs, values and biases, that may shape the inquiry, are acknowledged by the researcher. This includes the researcher explaining his/her own position toward the study, for example the philosophical issues underlying his/her decision about methodology, the basis for selecting participants, and the social context from which the data were collected, which can all be indicative of the investigator's position (Merriam, 1988). In many respects our 'own position' and 'reflexivity' are concepts which are inextricably linked, since I believe that they influence each other. They enable researchers to understand how they contribute in shaping the results of their own studies (Steier, 1991). Reflexivity "urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement within a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 228). In other words, reflexivity is a process of self examination (May, 1998), that enables researchers to reflect on and understand the deep assumptions that underlie their research. As Elliott (2005) states, the notion of reflexivity is used to indicate an awareness of the identity, or self, of the researcher within the research process. Reflexivity also, means the tendency to critically examine and reflect analytically upon the nature of research and the role of the researcher in carrying out and writing the empirical research (Hertz, 1997).

According to Nightingale and Cromby (1999), there are two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity "involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs,

political commitments, wider aims in life, and social identities have shaped the research. Epistemological reflexivity requires us to engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be found? How has the design of the study and method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings?" (Willig, 2001 p.10)

My own position and reflexivity and the way that these impact on the design, implementation, and the outcomes of my study are incorporated into the narrative account, under the sections related to the rationales and throughout the study. Moreover, the use of the reflective journal, as this has been described in the methodology chapter, facilitated to some extent an understanding of 'self', including assumptions, beliefs and biases and the ways that may have impacted on the research process. For example, within the first days of the study, I was writing quite often in the reflective journal how I felt in the school, in relation to the behaviour of teachers towards my presence in their school. The level of my anxiety also seemed high. However, such comments are rarely evident from the second week and after in the field, which seems that after the first week I was not to feeling uncomfortable in the school, and any kind of worries with regard to teachers' behaviour towards me, were eliminated. This may indicate that towards the end of the third week, where I made the selection of classrooms and participants, these were not biased by my personal preferences, since given that I was feeling comfortable with all the staff, I felt free to choose the classroom and participants, based on the criteria that were set.

Conclusion

Summing up, in this chapter a reflective account of the fieldwork was provided. Firstly, the scene was set by giving details of the context in which the fieldwork was carried out. The management of the study before entering the field was then presented. Explanation was given about the way that the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' was used in the study, while the pilot studies and the processes undertaken related to gaining access research ethics were provided. After that, the implementation of the research design was presented, with details related to the ways that data were collected through the various methods at three different stages. Finally, the strategies that were used to establish trustworthiness in my study were

illustrated. This is important, in order to enhance confidence in the findings of the study that will be presented, along with my interpretations within the next four chapters. Chapter four presents teachers' views about inclusion, chapter five presents the aspects of the schools that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion, chapter six presents the findings related to teachers' views about their professional development needs and chapter seven presents the opportunities that teachers attended and their responses towards them. It is important to note that all of the names that will be mentioned in these chapters are pseudonyms.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT INCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research sub-question of the study:

- "What are teachers' views about inclusion in Cyprus?"

The main categories along with their sub-categories will be presented and analysed through illustrative examples from the data, mainly from the Aristotelio School, since that was the central school of the study. Examples from the Socratio School will be presented as complementary, only when they show something different, new, or interesting, which may enhance the understandings gained from the Aristotelio School.

Two main categories emerged in relation to the views about inclusion in Cyprus expressed by teachers taking part in the study. These are: teachers' meanings of inclusion and teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, which are summarised in Diagram 1 along with their sub-categories. Each of these categories is presented below:

Diagram 1: *Teachers' views about inclusion in Cyprus*
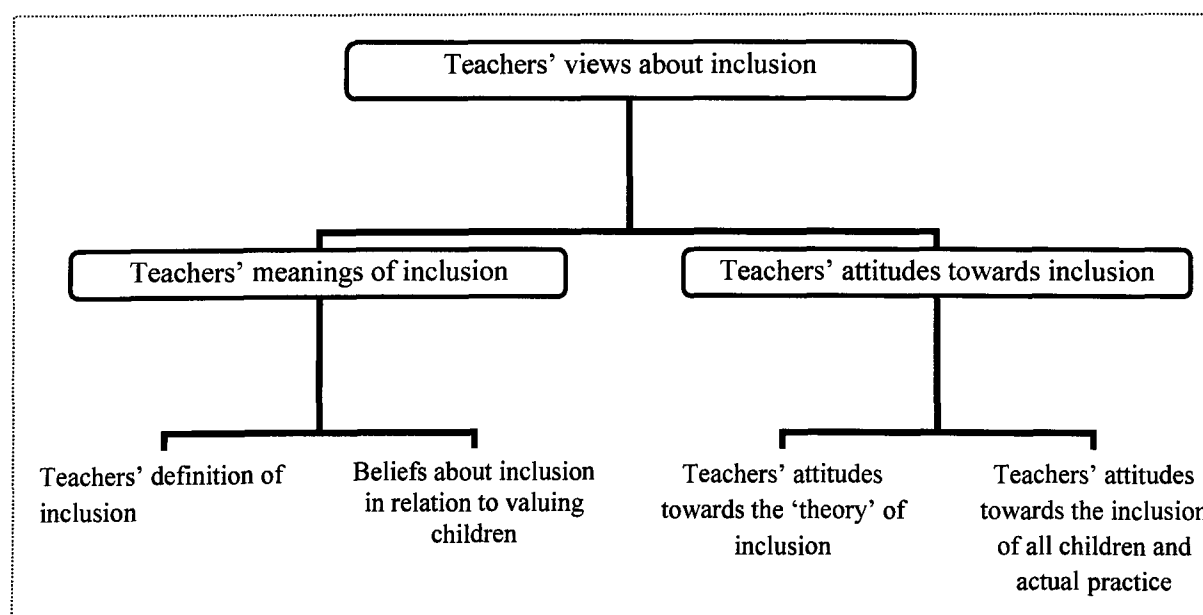
Teachers' meanings of inclusion

The category of teachers' meanings about inclusion emerged, based firstly, on the issues related to the ways that teachers defined inclusion, and secondly, on their beliefs about inclusion in relation to valuing children, as follows:

Teachers' definition of inclusion

Based mainly on teachers' semi-structured interviews, different issues emerged about the ways that they defined the notion of inclusion. First of all, although the majority of teachers were aware of the existence of the term inclusion, there were also teachers that admitted that they had not come across this term, before my arrival. The teachers that were aware of it were informed by different sources, such as the university, as in the following examples from the Aristotelio School:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Fani*</u>

Elina: Have you heard before the term inclusion?

Fani: Yes, I have... when I was a student at the University of Cyprus...

<u>*Interview with Mr.Iakobos*</u>

Iakobos: Yes..I think from the university at pre-service education...

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Kalli*</u>

Kalli:...Hm at the university long time ago

In all the examples except from the first one, an uncertainty seems to accompany teachers' answers. Also, many teachers at the Socratio School answered with an uncertainty as in the following example:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Emily*</u>

Emily: At the University of Cyprus mainly...I think when I was a student for my undergraduate studies....as far as I remember of course...

More certainty was expressed by teachers from the Aristotelio School, who admitted that they came across that term as part of their postgraduate studies:

<u>*Interview with Mr. Christoforos*</u>

Elina: Have you heard before the term inclusion?

Christoforos: Yes, because I am doing a master and one of the subjects is about inclusion

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna: Yes...I am currently doing a master and inclusion is one of our topics

Interview with Mrs. Chara

Chara: It did happen to have a topic as part of my postgraduate studies which was related to inclusion...

The majority of teachers however, admitted that they have heard about inclusion generally and vaguely, during their careers as teachers as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Elina: Have you heard before the term inclusion?

Ira: Yes, but not many things, generally from schools...I think

Interview with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia: Yes but nothing specific... generally in the schools maybe from circulars...or seminars

Interview with Mrs. Ioulia

Ioulia: In conversations that we may have in schools but I haven't searched about it

Interview with Mr.Panos

Panos: I am not sure but I think in the schools from the inspectors...?

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani: ...Hm...is a term that you can hear in schools...generally speaking

Teachers, as seen from the above examples seemed to be aware, but not always sure. Their comments related to circulars, seminars, or the inspectors, appear to reflect the policies of the MOEC, which are usually presented to teachers through the circulars, the inspectors or the related seminars.

It is important to note that a few teachers mentioned that they had not heard the term inclusion before the study, as in the following examples from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mr. Nikos

Elina: Have you heard before the term inclusion?

Nikos: No...before you come no

Interview with Mrs. Margarita

Margarita: No it didn't happen...

Nevertheless, although most of the teachers were aware of the existence of the term inclusion, they showed a confused understanding about the notion of inclusion. The following example from the Aristotelio School is representative of the way that most of the teachers defined inclusion:

Interview with Mrs. Maroula

Maroula: Inclusion in school...first of all we talk about the classroom and the category of children that we want to integrate...this is because we have different sub-categories of the children with problems...like children with SEN... children with learning difficulties... children with other problems who need additional support either from the special teachers or the regular teachers...

First of all, in this example the term 'inclusion' and 'integration' were used interchangeably and were given the same meaning, which was about helping particular 'categories' of children being integrated in the classroom. These children were the children that were considered to have 'problems', such as children with SEN/ learning difficulties or any other categories of children, that were getting extra support because of these problems. Although it does not emerge in this chosen example, inclusion was also related by many teachers to the children that were coming from other countries, as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mr. Panos

Panos: What I understand is that inclusion is for the children who come from other countries and how we are going to integrate them to the contemporary Cypriot schools...

Interview with Mrs. Melina

Melina: When I hear inclusion of the children in schools I understand that this is about children with different ethnicity...who need to be integrated in the school not to be marginalised by others.... for example the foreigner children, Pontioi [children from ex Soviet Union] to fit into the school... to be integrated, in order to be able to work in the classroom, in the school, according to the rules...not to be marginalised but to be included...

In these examples, a relation of inclusion to the children coming from other countries was obvious. Moreover, inclusion and integration were used interchangeably. That was also the definition and the kind of understanding, that almost all the teachers from the Socratio School suggested as the following examples indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Antriana

Antriana: Inclusion is about the way that the children coming from other countries can be integrated to the school environment...

Interview with Mrs. Sotiria

Sotiria:... I think that inclusion is about the integration of foreign language children in the school unit...I mean to adjust them to the school environment to have equal rights with the Cypriot children...to be all equal.

The second example from teachers of the Socratio School is also raising the equal rights of children coming from other countries, however the use of the word 'adjust' relates mainly to the notion of integration. In addition, it is possible that the higher number of children coming from other countries in the Socratio School is associated with teachers' understandings of inclusion in relation to these children.

In contrast to the examples above, a few teachers considered that inclusion is for all children and not only for children with 'problems', or coming from other countries, as the following example from the Aristotelio School indicates:

Interview with Mrs. Antria

Antria: Every child is different and should be integrated to the school efficiently I mean to adjust him/herself to the school environment...

However, it seems from this example that even when the term inclusion was not related to a particular 'category' of children, it was still used interchangeably with the term of integration. Also, this example is contradictory. On the one hand the teacher talks about all children but on the other hand she is expecting the child to adjust to the environment. This reflects the notion of integration rather than inclusion.

Only one teacher defined inclusion differently, based on his knowledge from his postgraduate studies. As he said:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos· Inclusion the way that I understand it and based on the module within my masters is that we need to change the school in terms of its infrastructure curriculum etc. in order to be able to provide any support that will help all the children be integrated normally...

This example was closer to the notion of inclusion, as defined for this study, since there is an emphasis on changing the school in order to help all children.

Overall, it seems that teachers had different meanings about inclusion. It could be argued, that this could create a confused understanding among the teachers, regarding what inclusion means. Inclusion was related to particular 'categories' of children, and the terms inclusion and integration were used interchangeably. These understandings seemed to be based on different sources of information. The most prominent sources appeared to be the universities, either in undergraduate or postgraduate studies, or the policies of the MOEC. Given the ways that teachers understood inclusion, the following sub-category presents their beliefs towards inclusion in relation to valuing children.

Beliefs about inclusion in relation to valuing children

Through the conversations that I had with teachers about their behaviour in relation to children, as well as through their responses in semi-structured interviews, it appeared that their understandings of inclusion could link to the ways that they were valuing children. First of all, the overall dominant way of thinking about children that the majority of teachers expressed, seemed to reflect beliefs that children's education difficulties emerge mainly from children-related factors, including their personal characteristics and their home background. In particular, most of the teachers were suggesting that the problems are within the children, like in the following teachers' discussion, which took place in the staffroom at the Aristotelio School:

Fieldnotes: Staffroom

It's break time and I am in the staffroom, there are many teachers, a girl comes in the staffroom and gives a paper to Mrs. Stauri. "Ok Monica thank you" says Mrs. Stauri. The girl leaves and the teacher turns to the other teacher that also teaches in year three and tells her:

Stauri: She repeated the classroom but I think that there was no point...she is hopeless.

Theodora: Why? What is she doing?

Stauri : She doesn't care, she can't concentrate during the lesson you tell her something and she replies anything else, except from what you have asked, she doesn't participate, she talks all the time with others and she annoys them...not to mention her writings... now she brought me the test that I had done in mathematics, she was not able to finish on time and I left....

This example shows that the child's academic failure was considered by this teacher to be completely the child's 'fault'. For the teacher, it appears that the problem for that girl is centred in her own abilities and behaviour. There was not mentioning at all at teacher's teaching methods or other factors beyond the child, that could possibly be related to that. Similarly, in my discussions with the teachers or within their interviews I was getting comments like:

Interview with Mrs. Antria

Antria: Can I add something? I cannot ignore the fact that some children due to their personal weaknesses they cannot be included.

Such comments, and these ways of talking about children, illustrated the belief of teachers that the problem is within the child. The following incident from the Aristotelio School was considered critical because it shows how dominant that belief is:

Critical incident/event:
Date:12/1/09 *Time:9:10* *Focus of the event: 'He is problematic'*
What precipitated the event: *We are talking with a teacher about several issues while I am waiting for the school records.*
What took place: *Suddenly the door opens and a group of 6-8 children appears and is pushing a boy very violently towards the teacher. The child has hearing aids and looks as if he is panicked.* *"What is going on" says the teacher and looks at the children. Some of the children*

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say "Stefanos wants to leave the school" "Ok"says the teacher... "I want all of you to go out and leave me with Stefanos" The children go outside and the teacher tells to Stefanos "What is going on Stefanos? Why do you want to leave? Is it because I told you that I will send you back in year one classroom?" Stefanos is just looking at the teacher and doesn't say anything. " I lied" says the teacher " I told you that because you were very naughty and I wanted you to stop acting like that..I will not send you back"

Outcomes:

Stefanos smiles and the teacher tells him "Go outside now and play and we will talk again when we go back in the classroom after the break" Stefanos runs outside very quickly.

Notes on interviews with the participant:

......He then turns to me and tells me:

Teacher: I am feeling very desperate with the pupil you just saw...do you remember when I was saying something about a pupil in the staff meeting? This is the one that I was referring to. Every day he does something...today he wasn't allowing me to move on with the lesson...He is 'problematic'...he has a lot of problems...

Elina: What kind of problems?

Teacher: Beyond the hearing problem which is the least one from my point of view, he has other more serious problems...psychological problems, learning problems, behaviour problems he is a 'weak pupil'...

It is noticeable from the discussion that we had, that, for the teacher the difficulty to include that child seems to be considered only as a result of the child's 'problems'. Through our discussion the child was labelled as 'problematic' and was defined as 'weak'[1]. This relates to the ways that children were valued based in particular on their academic response. An explanation of this kind of valuing follows.

Teachers' valuing in relation to children's academic response

The ways of valuing children based on their academic response was communicated in every day school language, among teachers and their superiors and their meanings were taken for granted. Through the following example at the Aristotelio School, I will explain that dominant way of valuing children. It is an extract from a discussion

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[1] I recognise that this might seem a bit harsh to the reader. However, it does make sense in terms of the two particular Cypriot schools' contexts.

that took place during a staff meeting, regarding a decision that teachers needed to take in relation to pupils' participation in an optional composition competition:

<u>*Field notes: Staff meeting*</u>

Iakobos:.....but not all of the children can respond or understand, for example I devoted 80 minutes about this [composition]topic in the classroom and I am sure that if you ask Antreas for example, he will have no idea, there are some children that can't! They are 'weak'! They cannot do the basic things, so how will they be able to respond to that composition?

Victoria: Yes, but there are some children who are 'excellent' and it's a pity to take away a good opportunity for them to be distinguished. I mean not only do we simplify our lessons based on the 'average' pupils so that the 'weak' can also follow, which is unfair for them [for the excellent].... it's important I think to give them such opportunities; I have some pupils in my classroom that I definitely want them to participate.

A value system of an academic hierarchy seems to be implied here, in classifying children under three 'kind' of pupils in relation to their academic attainment; the 'Excellent pupils', the 'Average pupils' and the 'Weak pupils'. Excellent seem to be the high attaining pupils, weak, the low attaining pupils and those that were in between, were considered as average. Children's attainment appears to be one of the most important factors for valuing children. In a similar way with the critical incident presented above, the way of using that academic hierarchy as a dominant value system was also linked to labelling the children, as shown more clearly in the following example from the Aristotelio School:

<u>*Field notes: Playground*</u>
It is break time. The teachers at the playground are complaining about children's non-participation at a history lesson:

Nikos:...[this happens]many times but only with the 'weak' pupils and that was why I was surprised today...because even the 'excellent' pupils were not knowing...With the 'weak' pupils ok...they can't do much anyway...For example Marios is completely in his world doesn't care and you may go close to him and remain silent without even trying.

Theodora: Yes, they are lazy I have such children in my classroom too... I shout at them but they act as if nothing happens sometimes I think that their IQ is low they are not clever and whatever you do is in vein...they are problematic they are not all excellent... all the classrooms have the excellent pupils who are the 'stars' of the classroom the average that with some extra work they can follow and those weak pupils who hardly do they achieve anything....

Excellent pupils in the example were given positive characterisations and seemed to be highly appreciated as the name of their category also implies. In contrast, low attaining pupils were valued as 'weak' pupils and several labels were attached to those children, which show a negative valuing such as lazy, problematic, and not clever. The pupils who were neither excellent nor weak were seen as average that could at least follow. Another example from the Aristotelio School is the following:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Kalli
After the lesson Mrs. Kalli tells me
Kalli: Did you see the boy who was sitting in front what he was doing?
Elina: Yes...why is that?
Mrs Kalli: He is my 'gem'
Elina: What do you mean by 'gem'?
Kalli: He is an indifferent boy completely hopeless without any skill at all he can't play the guitar he can't be synchronized with other children and he behaves like an animal the other two boys who came also late in the classroom are completely incompetent!!

Again, in this example the children who are considered to be low attaining are getting a very negative valuing. In particular, the boy was labelled by his teacher in a way that seems ironic, since she used the word 'gem' to imply something opposite, in relation to the pupil's attainment. Moreover, in this example, the education difficulties seemed to emerge only from 'within the child' factors.

A teacher from the Aristotelio School appeared to have a different view about the dominant way of valuing pupils, as the following extract indicates:

Interview with Mrs. Maroula

Elina: You mentioned the 'good' pupil and the 'bad' pupil. What do you mean by these... who is the good and who is the bad pupil?

Maroula:..A good pupil is the one who is high attaining in written work..and participates orally... he/she gets high marks in Greek and Mathematics firstly, and in general in what he/she has been asked to do...I mean is the one who can also play the music instrument well in music lesson.. is good in gymnastics, good in English...generally in all the lessons..

Elina: Why do you think that?

Maroula:..We usually say that the children that are not good in Greek or in Mathematics cannot be included...and we label them... for example we say that this student is weak, hopeless...bad or is never going to learn...because these children are not good enough we label them negatively in many ways...that they are lazy,

incompetent...that they are problematic...and we don't think that these students may have a rare talent in something else...

This is an example of a teacher contesting the labelling of children based on the academic hierarchy used by teachers to value children. The teacher in the example, additionally, points to the kind of expectations for children that are low attaining. These are explained below.

It seems that teachers held beliefs about low attaining children and their possibility for change that implied low expectations. Through the following example at the Aristotelio School, it is more clearly indicated that some teachers did not believe that low attaining children could actually change or make a progress:

Discussions among teachers in the staffroom

Theodora: Have you already finished the chapter?

Stauri: Yes...excuse me but I decided that I will move on with the good students and those who can. I am fed up with the weak students...do you know how irritating it is to try all the time to repeat the same things again and again devoting the whole time for them...and for what? The only thing that this results is in staying behind the required coverage of the curriculum...if they can't, this means they just can't. If they don't understand this means they just don't and we just have to accept that. It would have been great if all [pupils] were excellent but they are not so I tried, they couldn't respond and I moved on with those who can.

The teacher in the example shows that she considers that it is impossible for low attaining children to move on. It could be argued that this is a belief that does not leave much prospect for change and, therefore, for teachers having higher expectations for these children.

Teachers' valuing in relation to children's ethnicity

In addition to the beliefs of teachers about children's academic response, similar dominant beliefs were also held about children coming from other countries. The majority of teachers expressed their concerns about having these children in their classrooms, and a negative perception was sometimes indicated of these children by teachers. The following critical incident at the Aristotelio School is indicative of such response:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="1"><center>*Critical incident/event:*</center></td></tr>
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Date:26/3/09
Time:7:25
Focus of the event: 'Children from another country'

<u>*What precipitated the event:*</u>

It's early in the morning and I am in the staffroom. Few teachers are there and seem to work on some handouts.

<u>*What took place:*</u>

The door opens and a man with two children, a boy and a girl appears, from their facial characteristics it is easy to understand that they are not from Cyprus. He says "good morning" in Greek and in a foreign language says something to the children. The children sit on two chairs at the corner. A teacher tells him "do you need something?" The man does not respond (shows not to understand). The teacher repeats the question in English but again the man does not respond and only says "Romania". The teacher turns to the other teachers and says in a low voice "for whom the bell tolls?" (An expression which means that someone is going to have bad news). The man leaves. In the meantime other teachers arrive in the staffroom and they look at the children. A teacher asks the other teachers "are they new pupils? How old are they?" Another teacher said: "I have no idea but they do not speak Greek...."

<u>*Outcomes:*</u>

........The bell rings and the children follow a teacher towards their classroom

Some teachers in the above incident seem to hold a negative stance towards the idea of having the children from another country in their school, and some others an uncertain stance. The negative stance was evident from the first teacher's reaction, who after she realised that the father and the children, were coming from another country and did not know the Greek language, she appeared to considered this as 'bad news'. Further, the uncertain stance is shown, when another teacher asked their age; that is a question that could indicate the classroom that these children would be in, since according to the regulations, children from another country go to the classroom which is one year group below their age. Again, the age question demonstrates how the teachers were increasingly concerned about which group age

the children would join. Finally, another teacher's response on this question, emphasised that the children did not know the Greek language. There is, therefore, an indication that children's language created more concerns for teachers. The following example from the same school, will allow explaining more these concerns, related to children coming from other countries and the way that teachers perceived/valued these children:

Interview with Mrs. Chara

Elina: Mrs. Chara, when you said that there are a lot of things that need to be changed so that you would be able to promote the inclusive process...what do you actually mean?

Chara: First of all, I believe that there is a preconception for some children...we are not talking only for children with learning difficulties...but for 'foreign country children'...So there is a preconception...

Elina: What does this mean to you?

Chara: Well...for many teachers...you will hear them say...I have this number of 'Rossopontious' [from ex Soviet Union] in my classroom and this number of Cypriot pupils...this is a preconception...

Elina: Could you talk to me a bit more about this issue?

Chara: Actually we are coming in the school with a concern or having in mind of how many Rossopontious or children from other countries we will have in our classroom, who will be their parents etc...I believe if we take out of our minds that preconception... the negative perception that we have for some children...we will be able to accept all the children, first of all we, as teachers and then all the others...I mean that we say that we treat equally all children but I believe that behind our minds we think.. a!!...this is Rossopontios...

Elina: What do you think for example?

Chara: That they may not be that good in Greek...or that generally the children coming from other countries...they may have difficulties in lessons...mainly because they come from foreign countries and speak a foreign language...so this makes you being negatively oriented....

Concerns, as the teacher explains, about educating children coming from other countries are held among the teachers. These concerns are about the fact that these children do not know the Greek language and have additional difficulties in the classroom, and that, according to the teacher, creates negative perceptions of children coming from other countries. However, in the above example it is worth noting that the particular teacher is challenging the preconceptions related to children

coming from other countries. As with the children with low attainment, teachers also had low expectations from children coming from other countries, as indicated in the following example at the Aristotelio School:

Fieldnotes: Staffroom

I am in the staffroom and to the next room a teacher is doing an individual session with one of the children that did not know very well the Greek language. After approximately twenty minutes the child leaves and the teacher comes in the staffroom and looks upset and says:

Mrs. Stefani:...sometimes there are some children that their [academic] strengths can go to only a certain level...This girl from Russia for example...I used to have the demand to reach the other children to do everything that other children were doing I was shouting and insisting...I mean I knew the problem with the language but I wanted her and the other 'foreign-language children' to try...but it seems that they can't do progress they are of a certain level so I changed...I just don't expect them to do much...I don't insist, I don't shout...and the lesson flows easier and more quietly.

In this example, the teacher has stopped expecting from children who did not know well the Greek language to make progress, and her belief for change was decreased to the extent that made her give up the effort. It is also noticeable that the teacher believes that the education difficulties are a result only of the fact that the children coming from other countries do not know the Greek language well. Other factors beyond the 'within-the child' ones are not considered in relation to the educational difficulties that these children experience.

However, in the Socratio School, there was a belief among the teachers that the children coming from other countries, even though they had difficulties with the language, they could make progress. For example:

Interview with Mrs. Soula

Soula: When I was firstly appointed to that school which belongs to ZEP, I came here with a preconception because the majority of children here do not know Greek well and they are low attaining as well....so I didn't expect from these children to do much...However, after I spent some time here I realised that they just needed a different approach in order to be able to understand...and although it sounded impossible in a classroom where you can find four different languages for them to respond, they are now able to reach a level that I didn't even thought that they could.

It seems that although the teacher had a preconception about the children coming from another country, when she arrived at the Socratio School, perhaps because the majority of children did not speak Greek in that school, the teacher 'had' to alter the approach that she usually used, and found that these children could actually make a progress. It is also evident that the expectations of the teacher changed towards the children coming from other countries.

In the Socratio School, more emphasis was given to the difficulties related to the different cultures of children coming from other countries, but what was interesting, was that some teachers, did not view these difficulties arising from within the children, but from teachers' understandings and behaviour towards the children's cultural diversity. The following extracts are indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs. Dora

Dora: Sometimes....due the fact that we come from a Greek Cypriot environment we cannot understand the children coming from other countries and because in that school foreign children are the majority, this makes us feel strangers...and sometimes uncomfortable...for example for the children in my classroom is natural based on their culture to go within Easter day to the cemetery in order to celebrate with their relatives who passed away...this is what they do is their custom ...spontaneously I made a comment that that was weird so I feel that that time I made them feel strangers see what I mean? This is unpleasant...

Although the teacher here expresses her concerns in relation to the cultural diversity that she has to deal in the school, she indicates a growing awareness of how children felt, because of her behaviour in relation to children's culture. Also, it is interesting that the teacher does not view the difficulty in relation to children's cultural diversity, as a difficulty that derives from within the children, but as a problem that is created by her own behaviour. Another teacher from the same school also told:

Interview with Mrs. Loukia

Loukia: This school as you can see has many different cultures... cultures that we are not familiar with... children sometimes see some things in a completely different way from us so when I was firstly appointed in that school I had a preconception about them... sometimes they don't accept each other... they have a 'problem' in accepting each other and this requires a great effort from us to familiarise themselves with each other and of course we, to get to know all these different cultures and respond to them...

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In this example the teacher explains the preconception that she had for children coming from other countries in relation to their cultures and the difficulties that emerge. However, the variety of cultures, in both examples presented above, suggest that a growing awareness of the importance of teachers' understanding these cultural differences, is required. This is different from what was presented as a dominant way for valuing children coming from other countries, since in both examples, teachers considered that it is them who have to change and learn about children's cultures.

Finally, beyond children's academic response and ethnicity, teachers held certain beliefs about children's family background. This is another child-related factor which appeared to influence the ways that teachers valued children, and it follows.

Teachers' valuing in relation to children's family background

Children's family background refers to a child's family structure, the extent that parents are involved in their child's education and the socioeconomic status of the parents/family. Teachers' assumptions/ beliefs about children's family background, seemed to be considered the reason to explain the behavioural and learning difficulties that some children were indicating. For example, most of the teachers were holding certain assumptions for a child's family which had a 'different' structure, like families with a single parent. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative:

Interview with Mrs. Rania

Rania: Nowadays we have many children in our classrooms who come from 'problematic' families almost half of the children... their parents are divorced or their parents do not live together and they live either with their mother or their father so all these children carry psychological problems and they show aggressive behaviour...

Some families in which the children grow up as seen from the example, are characterised as problematic and are considered the reason why children indicate 'aggressive behaviour'. This is more clearly indicated in the following example from the same school:

Interview with Mrs. Lydia

Elina: The other time we were discussing about Petros and you mentioned that he comes from a 'normal family' what did you mean by normal family?

Lydia: It means that the parents are not divorced...there are not fights or violence in the family this is normal...A good family is the family which has two parents who love each other...they have their jobs they are supporting their children you know...they have a program in their life...and it's weird how this boy is acting so inappropriately with such a good family.

According to that teacher, the child's behaviour was not what she had assumed or expected it to be, because according to her beliefs, children who come from a 'normal' family behave appropriately.

Moreover, most of the teachers appeared to value children based on parents' involvement in their child's education. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: Parents play a significant role to the way that I see the child, I mean whether they show interest or not, for example if you see that a parent is interested, comes in the school regularly, asks you about his/her child's progress, you are creating a positive view about the child and makes you to want to help and pay more attention to that child.

Similarly a teacher said:

Interview with Mrs. Melina

Melina: Parents play a significant role to the way that I value a child if they are interested or not I mean you can see that from the child if the child is clean does his/her homework it means that the parents are interested but if the child is dirty doesn't do the homework...Yes definitely when I know that parents are interested a positive image is created in my mind about the child.

Whether parents are involved or not seems to influence teachers' ways of valuing children. They seem to assume parents' interest, based on the times that parents visit the school to ask teachers about their children's performance and whether the child does his/her homework. It is also noticeable in the second example that a child's appearance, in terms of whether was clean or not, created a particular image and a certain way of valuing the child and his/her family.

In addition to parents' involvement in their child's education, particular beliefs were held by teachers in relation to the education that parents had, and the influence that

this had on the children. The following examples at the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Ira

Ira: Some parents visit me during the 'parents' hour [every teacher in the school has a forty-minute period per week, which is devoted to parents, and parents can visit them within that time] but to be honest they are not all parents capable to help...for example Kiriakos' parents who has so many problems are not educated so...they don't know how to help...and I can understand I do not try to 'push' them.

The fact that some parents were not educated appeared to make the teacher in that example to assume that they were not capable to help, giving the sense that the child, who she thinks has many problems, cannot be supported by his non-educated parents. This seems to prevent her from having higher expectations for them. Another example, is the following at the Aristotelio School, when a teacher found out that one of her pupils, who was considered to be 'problematic' and came from an uneducated family, had actually parents who were holding highly appreciated social status:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Avgi

Avgi: It's impossible, how can such parents have a 'problematic' child? I thought that they were uneducated people who are not involved at all...they don't care about their child. I definitely need to call them to have a talk about their child.

The socioeconomic status of child's family, was another child-related aspect for which teachers were holding particular beliefs. For example, in the Socratio School:

Interview transcript with Mrs. Angela:

Angela: The majority of the parents that have their children in that school are coming to Cyprus to cover firstly their biological needs...so the education of their children is of secondary importance for them, what they care is to survive, so they don't care if their children are going to learn anything.

Elina: How do you know that... for example?

Angela: Well I can assume that a mother for example starts her work at 7:00 a.m and finishes at 7:00 p.m she needs to prepare the food for the next day...I assume... that she will not ask her child about his day at the school or to help the child to do the homework....... I know that they don't have the time so I don't insist to visit me at the school.....

This example is showing the beliefs that most of the teachers had in relation to the socioeconomic status of the families coming from other countries, and the implications that it had, in relation to their involvement in their children's education. A series of assumptions are made by the teacher in the example, about the families which were considered to be low-income, with the most interesting that these parents would consider the education of their children as of secondary importance. The teacher also, based on these assumptions, seems to be trying to show understanding of the limited time that these parents are thought to have.

In relation to such families, teachers were also expressing their 'sympathy', while charitable feelings and actions were sometimes expressed. It is worth noting the action of a teacher at the Aristotelio School, who brought many toys and clothes to the children from Romania, based on her assumption that their family needed them:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia: Their mother... how many things to do? I haven't met her and I don't think that I will, since she will have to work so many hours but I understand... Isn't it a pity...at least we can give to the children some support to have some things in their house....

The teacher, in this example, expressed her pity towards the particular family and illustrates charitable feelings, by donating some toys and clothes to these children.

Summing up, it emerged that teachers see educational difficulties to arise mainly from children. Moreover teachers' ways of valuing were based on particular child-related factors, such as the children's academic response, their ethnicity and family background. It was also noted, that low expectations for children with low attainment and for children with a different ethnicity were expressed, while some charitable feelings were illustrated for children coming from poor family background. These ways of viewing difficulties, as well as teachers' meanings about inclusion as these were explored earlier, were seen to be closely related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, which are described within the next section.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion

Two categories emerged in relation to the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion. These are: teachers' attitudes towards the 'theory' of inclusion, as this was

understood by them, and towards the inclusion of all children and actual practice. These are explained below:

Teachers' attitudes towards the 'theory' of inclusion

Most of the teachers participating in the study, expressed positive attitudes towards the 'theory' of inclusion, as this was understood/defined by them. I give an emphasis to the word theory, because their positive attitude seemed to be theoretical. It was only related to particular categories of children, while for others, even in theory, a negative attitude was evident.

First of all, inclusion, as indicated from the data presented above, was largely understood by most of the teachers as the integration/inclusion of particular 'categories' of children in the school. It seems that their understandings of inclusion had implications on how they responded to my question about their attitudes towards the inclusion of all children. For example, to my question "What is your attitude towards the inclusion of all children in the school?", some teachers from the Aristotelio School expressed the following views:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Ira: Yes... it is good to exist...the weak children will not be discriminated.

Interview with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia: I support that philosophy. I think that it is a good thinking rather than some systems that isolate or separate the strong from the weak pupils...

In these examples, teachers suggested that they had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of all children, in terms of the children who were considered to be low attaining and 'weak'. In addition, some other teachers answered, in terms of the children coming from other countries, as in the following extract from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Fani: I really feel that there should be an effort to include all children, because the children who come from other countries....need to get into our education system...they need to be educated...they should be included...they shouldn't be out of the school or generally the rest of the pupils or the teachers not to try to include

them...all together should make an effort, in order for those children to be integrated normally...

A similar example to this one from the same school is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Ntina*</u>

Ntina: I am positive...why not to be included? All the children irrespective of their country have the right to be educated.

The teachers in the examples, suggested that children coming from other countries have the right to be included and expressed a positive view about it. Nevertheless, linking back to the beliefs of teachers about children coming from other countries, there seems to be an inconsistency between what they were suggesting. It seems that, based on the 'human rights', and the right of all children to be educated, teachers agreed to inclusion theoretically. However, as it was indicated in previous examples, teachers had expressed their preconceptions and negative perceptions of these children in their classrooms.

Different to the statements of positive attitudes towards inclusion, were the attitudes of some teachers at the Aristotelio School. These teachers appeared to have negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children, who were considered to have 'serious problems', like children with SEN and children with serious behaviour problems, as the following examples indicate:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Chara*</u>

Chara: I am positive towards the inclusion of all children. I think that there should...just to clarify I am not talking about children with SEN that have serious problems but for the rest of the children...

Another example is the following:

<u>*Interiew with Mrs. Ioulia*</u>

Ioulia: I think that there are some children that they shouldn't be in regular schools, these are the children with very serious learning difficulties or SEN children who scream during the lesson or do not have self help skills...I don't agree to be with other children because they have a negative impact to the whole classroom and I don't think there is nothing positive for themselves anyway...

In these examples, the suggestion that children with SEN should be educated in separate settings is evident, especially in the second example, where the teacher supports the view that this has a negative impact to the other children and it is also not beneficial for these children. This is an indication of the teacher's negative attitude towards the inclusion of these children. The following example from the Aristotelio School explains why some teachers were negative towards the inclusion of children with 'behavioural problems':

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna: There are sometimes, when we should aim at the inclusion of all but there are some situations, when the child disturbs the rest of the classroom...I mean to spoil the lesson...I am talking for children with serious behaviour problems...for this kind of children, I am negative to their inclusion...I mean for the sake of inclusion...other children to be in danger...I mean for only one pupil to disturb the rest of the classroom. It is here where you say that there cannot be inclusion and it shouldn't if for example other children are in danger or the child with problematic behaviour shouts all the time and doesn't leave the rest of the classroom to learn...I mean for him/her...because we have to include him to 'destroy' all the other children?

Again, the teacher here clearly expresses negative attitude towards the inclusion of children with serious behavioural problems because, based on her view, this has a negative impact for the rest of the children. Particularly, she emphasised the difference in the numbers of children and she compared the number of children with problematic behaviour and the rest, to support her view that for the sake of minority and their inclusion, the other children should not be 'destroyed'. The language that she also used about it shows that the teacher was very negative.

The negative attitudes expressed by some teachers for children with SEN and for children with behaviour difficulties, indicate a consideration of the actual practice of inclusion, since, teachers explained their views by referring to the lessons in the classroom. Nevertheless, in terms of the inclusion of all children and actual practice, even the teachers who were positive towards the inclusion of particular categories of children, expressed concerns, when they thought about it in terms of the diversity of children in their classrooms, and more negative attitudes were indicated. This is discussed in the next section.

Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of all children and actual practice

Although most of teachers expressed a 'theoretical' positive attitude towards the inclusion of particular categories of children, negative attitudes were expressed by almost all the teachers about the inclusion of all children and actual practice in the classroom. More specifically, feelings of dissatisfaction were expressed about it. Diversity was acknowledged as a problem/difficulty in their work as the following examples at the Aristotelio School indicate:

Informal conversation with Mrs. Ira

Elina: Mrs. Ira, how do you feel about the diversity that exists among your pupils?

Ira: ...Well... I feel that it doesn't benefit anyone and it also creates difficulties to the flow of the lesson and it is unfair for the 'excellent pupils.'

Elina: Could you talk to me a bit more about it?

Ira: For example the lesson you just saw...what did the 'good pupils' gain from that? What opportunities did they have? You know...I have to prepare a lesson at least for an average pupil and I end up devoting the lesson to the weak pupils and how they are going to follow the rest...Generally all that diversity that exists among the pupils is causing a lot of ...problems.

The teacher seems to understand diversity in terms of children's attainment and considers that the diversity that exists in her classroom is creating difficulties that make her feel that it is not beneficial. Other teachers from the same school also, expressed similar feelings as the following examples indicate:

Informal discussion with Mr. Iakobos

Elina: In general how do you feel about the diversity that exists among your pupils?

Iakobos: ...well I feel that it influences negatively me and the children, because I have to lower my standards in the classroom, something which is unfair for the 'good pupils' and the lesson also delays and doesn't finish on time...for example today I couldn't finish the scheduled repetition that I had to do because some pupils were delaying me because of all that diversity that I have in the classroom..

The teacher here feels that the diversity in attainment acts as a barrier for completing his work, the way that he planned. Time, is additionally referred to in this example which seems to have an impact in what the teacher says. Another example from the same school is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Chara*</u>

Chara: It causes many problems...there are pupils who are very good and others who are weak...even if you try to respond either individually through the reinforcement sessions or in groups, you cannot devote the time required for each given the requirements of the curriculum...this is a problem for an individual teacher who has so many children in the classroom...so all this diversity is a problem, it doesn't help anyone neither the teacher nor the pupils...

The teacher feels that an individual teacher cannot cope with the range of diversity that exists in the classroom, and the time is not enough for the use of different strategies. The curriculum is additionally referred to in this example given its requirements, which seems to impact on how the teacher feels about dealing with the diversity of children in a classroom.

The following critical incident at the Aristotelio School is an example, which summarises teachers' attitudes towards including all children in the classroom:

Critical incident/event:
Date:20/2/09 *Time:12:15* *Focus of the event: 'the difference is too much'*
<u>*What precipitated the event:*</u> *Its break and I am in the staffroom sitting next to a teacher who assesses children's tests in mathematics. Some other teachers are sitting there and are talking.*
<u>*What took place:*</u> *The teacher takes a test and shows it to us. In the test there were some squares with the correct answers below and they were decorated with flowers colours while others were drawn like faces...The teacher says... "look at these...these are the children who are neglected...because of all that diversity that we have in our classrooms...the excellent ones...I gave that test and they finished early and until the other pupils finish they were decorating their test....just for the time to pass..."* *"Yes, I think this is unfair' says another teacher... "the difference that exists among them is too much...and this is a problem...others are excellent, others are too weak... their behaviour is quite different, some children have completely unacceptable behaviour, again the children with learning difficulties or the children who don't know the Greek language...this is a problem".*

<u>*Outcomes:*</u>

The teacher continues assessing the tests and the other teachers leave because the bell rings.

The examples above, including the critical incident, show what many teachers expressed about their feelings for the diversity among their pupils in the classroom; it seems that, for them, it appears to reflect many difficulties, something that could not contribute positively to their lessons, and negative attitudes appeared to be held about it. So, it could be argued that diversity was seen as difficulty, rather than as something to be valued and celebrated, an element that relates to inclusion. This is partly the reason why I characterised their attitudes as negative towards the inclusion of all children and the actual practice involved.

Also, the seating arrangements that were made by some teachers for children with behaviour difficulties or children with SEN may reflect that negative attitude. In almost half of the classrooms at the Aristotelio School, separate desks existed at the back or in front of the rest of the groups, where particular children were sitting permanently there, or were going there for a period of time. In the following example, I asked the teacher why a boy in some lessons was sitting alone for a period of the teaching time and then was going to the group, and she told me:

<u>*Informal discussion with Mrs. Maroula*</u>

Maroula: I have Kostas sitting there because of his behaviour. When the lesson is not offered for group work he is there and when the lesson is carried out through group work he goes with his group and takes his role etc.

Elina: What behaviour?

Maroula: He is a very aggressive boy and distracts the others when he has nothing to do...In the beginning of the school year I had him more time sitting alone but week by week he spends more time in his group...depends on his behaviour.

Teachers having some children out of the whole classroom interaction for behavioural issues seemed to be a common practice in all the classrooms of both schools. In the lessons that I observed in all the year groups, even if there was not a separate desk permanently in the class, some children were asked to sit alone for a

period of time, as some kind of teachers' response to 'inappropriate' behaviour. The worrying aspect was when some children were sitting alone permanently, without any kind of interaction with their classmates, as in the following examples at the Aristotelio School:

Fieldnotes: Mathematics Lesson

The classroom is separated into two big groups and the children are sitting next to each other except from a boy who sits alone and his desk is completely separate from the other children and it is attached next to the teacher's desk.

Informal conversation with the teacher

Elina: Why is this pupil sitting alone?

Nikos: He used to be in a group but he was disturbing other children, he was doing noise, he wasn't paying attention to the lesson and he was pushing other children so I have him sitting alone. Now we are all more quiet.

Another example similar to the above is the following:

Fieldnotes: Greek Lesson

All the children are sitting in groups except from Roullis who sits alone on a desk at the back of the classroom. The children raise their hands to answer the teacher's question. Roullis says:" Mr. I want to be in a group, I don't want to sit here alone". Tthe teacher doesn't reply and tells to another child who was raising his hand to answer...

Informal conversation with the teacher

Elina: Why is Roullis sitting alone?

Panos: Roullis was disturbing his classmates and some parents complained, so we decided to have him sitting alone so as not to disturb others.

In both examples, based on their behaviour in the classroom, some children were isolated. In the first example, that boy was also officially registered as having SEN.

So, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and actual practice, reflected mainly negative attitudes towards children's diversity, especially for children with SEN or behavioural difficulties. The remaining of this section will present the factors which appeared to influence the creation of such teachers' attitudes.

Teachers' previous experiences appeared to be one of the factors which influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The teacher from the Aristotelio School in the

following example refers to a negative experience that she had in including children with autism:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: As regards the children who have no mental problems and they can understand everything I am positive...but when it comes to children which have problems...like autism etc. that create serious problems in the classroom, I believe that this makes teachers' work difficult...because it did happen to have two autistic children in my classroom and they were screaming and I couldn't do my lesson and the other children couldn't be concentrated so for the sake of including two children with SEN we created problems to the other twenty five children...I think that it is not fair neither for the children nor for the teacher to be 'loaded' with such children...

I consider this as a negative attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN, mainly because the teacher used the word 'loaded' which reflects a negative meaning, but it is important to acknowledge the issue of a previous negative experience which seems to create this negative attitude. A different example, from another teacher at the Aristotelio School is indicative also of how positive previous experiences influence their attitudes:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Avgi

Avgi: It did happen within the first years as a teacher to have an autistic child in my classroom and I have managed to respond to that child, I believe successfully enough given the difficulties...so I am not afraid if they tell me that I will have again such child in my classroom. I remember that the other teacher didn't want to have that child in her classroom at all...

This example shows that previous successful experiences, increase teacher's confidence and a more positive attitude towards these children. Another example, is from a teacher who had gained a successful experience in the past, in relation to the inclusion of a child with difficult behaviour and low attaining level:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Elina: To what extent do you feel that the inclusion of all children is possible?

Rodoula: It is possible, it takes more time for some children but I strongly believe that when some things happen on time all children can be included.

Elina: What makes you believe that?

Rodoula: I had a successful experience in the past...there was a very aggressive and a low attaining boy everyone said that is impossible to include that child and that we had to send him to another school because he was causing a lot of problems...I

talked firstly to the head teacher and then with his parents and we asked an education psychologist to come...the psychologist talked to me separately, and then to the parents separately and then all together we had been given guidance as of what we had to do and how to handle the situation. Due to the fact that we had an immediate response from the education psychologist, parents collaborated and I did exactly what the education psychologist said, we were successful; the child was included in the classroom as every other child. All this process of calling the education psychologist and parents happened within three-four days, it was an immediate action and this is why it was successful and why I think that it is possible to include all children.

The example that the teacher provides, makes additionally a reference to contextual factors, including parents and their support and specialist support from the school, in her effort to achieve the inclusion of the child. Contextual factors therefore, along with the successful experience that the teacher had in that example, made her have a more positive attitude towards the inclusion of all children.

So, teachers' previous experiences on inclusion appeared to influence their attitudes towards the inclusion of children's diversity. Another factor which seems to influence teachers' attitudes towards children's diversity is their perceived expertise. The feeling of teachers that they lack of such expertise seems to explain why they were suggesting that children with many needs will be better in separate settings, an aspect which indicates negative teachers' attitudes. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative of teachers' expertise in relation to their attitudes:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Melina

Melina: I believe that some children with serious problems or SEN will be better in separate settings, where experts can offer them a specialised support, we don't have the knowledge that experts have...

In this extract, the teacher made the above suggestion, with a link to the 'specialised' people, not teachers, who will be able to provide more support to children with serious problems. Moreover, the teacher suggested that experts have a specialised knowledge. In further discussions about issues of expertise related to inclusion, the following teacher from the Aristotelio School suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani
Stefani ...I mean I don't have the proper knowledge to be able to understand why they [the children] act like that in the classroom and how to simultaneously respond to all of them... I feel that we need experts who have specialised experience to help with such kind of issues.

Elina: Who are these people?
Stefani:...very distinguished persons in such kind of issues..it could be professors from universities or other academics who specialised in those areas... of children's behaviour and perhaps psychology...

What is of interest in this example is the teacher's perception of experts. Implicitly she makes a comparison between herself as a teacher and experts for such issues, and makes it clear that the necessary knowledge and skills are specialised and are acquired by people who are experts in such areas. Moreover, the using of the adjective 'very distinguished', gives an emphasis to the difference that the teacher thinks that exists between her and the experts.

It seems that teachers were concerned about their expertise, and that made them perceive their expertise as lacking, and element which appeared to impact on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children's diversity.

In addition, teachers' perceived expertise seemed to influence teachers' perception about their role and responsibilities, in particular for children with SEN. These perceptions about their role appeared to be another factor which influences their attitudes for including children's diversity. The following examples from the interviews with the special teachers will help understand more this issue. The special teacher at the Aristotelio School said:

Interview with the speech therapist

Lenia: I have asked from a teacher to provide a small additional support when he had the time...it was something very small and very easy, it was just about reading and I have asked him to come and see how I do this and repeat the same thing in the classroom...I needed him to do that because the child had no support from parents and I had only limited time with that child in the school and that was not enough support for the child...so I asked from the classroom teacher to do that small effort to help... and he found thousand excuses to avoid coming and watching what I was doing. I encouraged him many times I told him that it is so simple and he avoided with the excuse that he is not an expert in these kind of stuff...the particular teacher might be considered as a top teacher and be excellent in his work but not only him but other teachers also do not want to do something that is not in their duties. They say these are not my duties...so why should I do something that is not my responsibility?

The teacher in the example as presented from the special teacher's point of view, avoided providing that kind of support, based on the assumption that he is not an expert in that area. The special teacher also makes another assumption that the

teachers do not consider activities related to her work as their responsibilities. The stance of the teacher might also indicate a negative attitude towards the inclusion of the particular child. That view was also supported by other special teachers, like for example the following special teacher from the Socratio Primary school:

Informal discussion with the special teacher

Ellada: I work with four children in that school and I can say that our collaboration with the teachers is almost non-existent. Unfortunately, they don't know our role...if for example I am not interested about a pupil and what he/she is doing in the classroom and discuss with the teacher, nobody is going to ask me, they think that we have completely different jobs and in general there is an indifference...it's a pity because if they were a bit more involved with us and what they consider our responsibilities, we could achieve a constant support for these children.

This special teacher, in addition to the previous example, suggests that teachers have a different view about the special teachers' role, while she claims that what they have to do is not completely different and some of the responsibilities that teachers think that are only for special teachers, could be shared for achieving a constant support for some of the children that have more needs than others. Some of the teachers were also holding such views, as in the following example from the Aristotelio School:

Field notes: Greek Lesson
...The children are saying their answers one after another. When the turn of Nicholas comes the teacher says to another child to move one. This happens three times.
After the lesson I asked the teacher about it and she said:
Theodora: Nicholas has something... I think is called selective mutism...I am not sure...
Elina: What is that?
Theodora:...is when children do not talk or they talk when they want to...for example Nicholas' mother told me that the child talks when he is at home.
Elina: What do you do about that?
Theodora: Nothing...what should I do? His mother says that he is fine at home, he is not officially registered as having learning difficulties and he hasn't got any individual hours with the special teacher.
Elina: Doesn't he? Do you collaborate with the special teacher about it anyway?
Theodora: No, I don't think that she has extra time to work with him.

In the above example, the teacher seems to think that other people have the main responsibility for some of the children. In particular, it becomes clear that the teacher considers the difficulty of the particular child, as a need which had to be dealt by the special teacher's work. Even, when I asked about her collaboration with the special

teacher, she answered, based on her view that it is related to the special teacher's work. So, her perceived role and responsibilities in the school are used to explain her stance towards including this child.

In conclusion, it seems that, at a theoretical level, teachers were positive towards the inclusion of particular categories of children and negative towards others. Nevertheless, in relation to inclusion and actual practice in the classroom, negative attitudes were expressed. Teachers' previous experiences, their perceived expertise and role as teachers, in relation to particular children, appeared to be factors that influence their attitudes.

Conclusion

Teachers' views about inclusion were presented in this chapter. It was evident that various meanings were attached to the term inclusion. Also, it was noticeable that teachers related inclusion to particular categories of children. Moreover, teachers' beliefs in relation to valuing children were explored. Educational difficulties were seen to emerge, mainly from children, while considerable evidence was provided to suggest that teachers were valuing children, based on child-related factors, such as their academic response, their ethnicity and their family background. Finally, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, although they were theoretically positive towards particular categories of children, as far as actual practice of inclusion was concerned, teachers' attitudes were negative. Their previous experiences and their perceived expertise and role in the school, seemed to influence the creation of such attitudes.

The following chapter will explore the schools' context and the aspects that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SCHOOLS' CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research sub-question:

- "Which aspects of the schools' context enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion?"

The categories that emerged in relation to this research sub-question are: aspects related to the schools' structures/organisational environment and; aspects related to the schools' interpersonal/social environment. The categories and their sub-categories will be presented and analysed through illustrative examples from the data, mainly from the Aristotelio School, while examples from the Socratio School will be presented only as complementary, when they show something additionally. Diagram 2 summarises the categories and sub-categories of this research sub-question.

Diagram 2: *Aspects of the schools' context that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion*
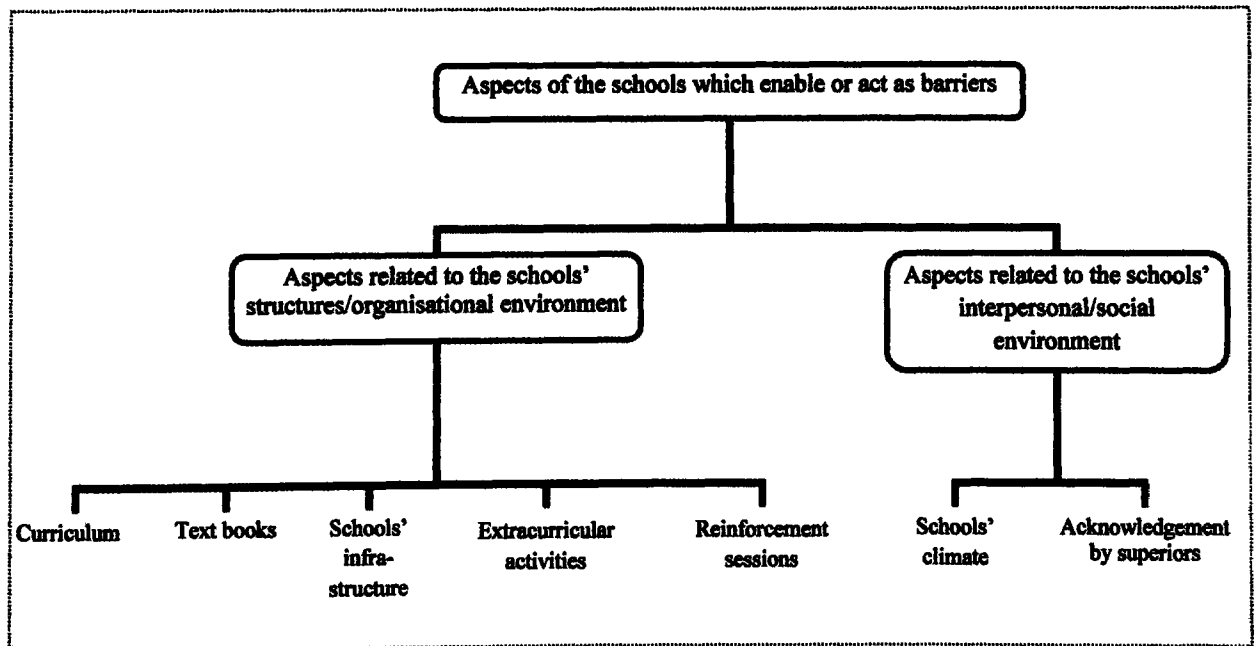
Aspects related to the schools' structures / organisational environment

A number of aspects related to the schools' structures and way of organisation, seemed to have an impact on teachers, in enabling or preventing them from fostering inclusion. These are: the curriculum, the text books, the schools' infrastructure, extracurricular activities and the reinforcement sessions.

The first sub-category, which was mentioned by all teachers, is the curriculum. The curriculum and the text books which is the next sub-category, although being different, were terms used interchangeably by the teachers, to refer to the teaching aims and material books that teachers have to use, which are prescribed by the Ministry. However, in order to give more clarity, I decided to present the curriculum and the text books in separate sub-categories, since different issues could be related to the curriculum and the text books.

Curriculum

The curriculum is prescribed by the MOEC and is used on a nationwide basis. In particular, the time demands required for its coverage, appeared to act as a barrier in teachers' ways of working for the inclusion of children. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Elina: What factors within the context of the school may act as a barrier to your attempt to foster inclusion?

Rodoula: Definitely the curriculum!

Elina: How does it...?

Rodoula:...for example, there are so many things that you need to cover, in a specific time, and in the end you literally run to cover all those aspects and you are forced somehow not to pay the attention that you should to children for example who are not participating...who can't work in the group as all the others...you are somehow obliged to leave them behind for the sake of covering the demands of the curriculum...

In this example the teacher clearly suggests that the curriculum acts as a barrier, for spending more time, in order to help particular children participate. The importance of that extract is on the emphasis that is given by the teacher to the demands of the curriculum and the way that they impact on the ways of working, which according to

her, is considered as one of the reasons why some pupils are left behind. Similar example is the following, from the same school:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Elina: You mentioned the curriculum... to what extent would you say that it enables you to foster the inclusion of all the children?

Ira: It doesn't...

Elina: It doesn't? Why?

Ira: It has too many demands for coverage over a year's time...

Elina: Could you give me an example?

Ira: ...When for example you have to cover within a year 4-5 mathematic books with many aspects...you can't help or push the pupils with many difficulties...you have a very short time to try but then you move on because you have many things to cover and you can't stay behind and unfortunately some children stay behind...they cannot follow...

This example is presented additionally to the above, because it describes the way that the curriculum prevents her from spending adequate time with the pupils that have additional difficulties. Although the example that the teacher gives relates to the text books, she is referring to the barriers related to the curriculum. It is noticeable, therefore, in this example, that the coverage of the text books and the curriculum are used interchangeably. In addition, the teacher uses the expression 'stay behind'. It is used to show on the one hand that the teachers cannot stay behind in the coverage of the curriculum, and on the other hand, that due to that, some children may stay behind. More clarity can be given to that aspect through the following conversation that I had with a teacher at the Aristotelio School, who tried to use a different and more inclusive teaching approach, but the time finished without her being able to complete her lesson. In relation to this she said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Maroula

Maroula: Sorry for not being able to see the whole lesson but as you could see there was no time...anytime that I try to do something different from what the book says I am always concerned about the time that it needs in relation to whole lesson and for covering also all of its aspects as the curriculum points out...

Elina: the curriculum...?

Maroula: I mean the pressure is such that it doesn't leave you the space to do a lesson differently, to deliver it in a way that focuses more on children...to involve

more group work, to have different activities for different children, to provide support to the children that have difficulties...so as to be more inclusive...it is really stressful... the other classroom is already a chapter ahead and we were supposed to finish that lesson two weeks a... It is not flexible... given the things that you need to do within a certain lesson...I mean if for example I didn't have to teach so many things within a lesson I would have been able to focus more on the children, their needs ...Now I am just running to cover the points of the curriculum...there is no flexibility for extra or different exercises...

Beyond the time requirements which are very stressful, it is also noticeable that the teacher compares the extent that she covered the curriculum with the extent that the other classroom of the same year group has covered it. This also seems to be another stressful aspect related to the coverage of the curriculum, since the classrooms of the same year groups should be close, in terms of the extent that they cover the curriculum. In addition, in this example, the issue of non-flexibility of the curriculum is discussed. Also, through her comments, aspects related to non-flexibility emerge, in terms of the way that she delivers the curriculum, such as the use of extra or different activities that may allow more support for the inclusion of all children. All these seem to be prevented in an effort to cover all the requirements of the curriculum. The aspect of non-flexibility of the curriculum is also suggested by other teachers as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna: The curriculum is centralised and fixed...I mean it is send to us by the Ministry and you have not many opportunities for changes, it is not flexible...

Elina: Can you give me an example?

Marianna: For example, if I want to do some extra or different activities to help the inclusion of some children, the curriculum is so overwhelming by the things that we need to cover within a lesson that hardly do we find the time to do something different...alternative activities or exercises that could help to promote...inclusion.

Another example is the following:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Sofia

Sofia: You can't change many things from the curriculum...you have specific things that you need to cover in a specific time-frame so you can't do many activities or activities that are time-consuming, even though they could enable you to help all children move on... it sets limits, its restrictive ...

A combination between the non-flexibility of the curriculum and the time requirements is explicitly expressed through teachers' comments about it, in relation to the extent that it allows them to respond to all children. The same argument seems to be made by the Senior Education Officer in his interview:

Interview with the Senior Education officer

Senior Education Officer: The curriculum is all about how to cover it...How to cover all of its demands, because it is overwhelming with information that children 'should' acquire and that leaves little space for achieving its main goals, such as the creation of a Democratic school which accepts all the children...

Also, in relation to the curriculum, some teachers expressed that 'inclusion' is not explicitly referred to as an education objective, as in the following examples from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: Inclusion is not a clear objective in the curriculum...I mean you cannot see it written down anywhere...of course the curriculum does mention about the creation of a democratic school and it can be implied by that, that every child should be educated at least the basic education...so in some way I need to take this into consideration, but beyond the implied mentioning it doesn't motivate you...it's very general...

The teacher in the example acknowledges that inclusion is implied under the general aims, stated in the curriculum. However, it is obvious that she considers the non-explicit mentioning on inclusion, as an aspect that does not motivate her.

On the other hand, the following teacher from the Aristotelio School suggested that the explicit reference on 'differentiation', through a circular, which was considered by the teacher as being related to inclusion, acted as a motivation:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Ira: For example lately...last year I think there was as an educational goal to differentiate our teaching...to meet the abilities of all children etc...which I think this can be related to inclusion...so, this was some kind of motivation because you should do it, since it was considered important and I think that even the teachers who did not differentiate their teaching systematically...that educational goal became a motivation for them...I don't know if this can be considered as motivation but if inclusion was an explicit educational goal I think that it could act as motivation...

The notable point in this extract is the use of the word 'important'. It seems that teachers consider that, if inclusion or any other issues that are related to that are explicitly referred to in official documents as education objectives, such as in the curriculum, this assigns importance and may become a motivation. So, the non-explicit reference of the curriculum on inclusion, acts as a barrier for teachers to foster inclusion, since it does not seem explicitly to motivate them towards its achievement.

Text Books

Another aspect that relates to the curriculum, as I already suggested, are the text books. In the previous examples, the coverage of the curriculum and the text books were used interchangeably. However, there are some elements of the text books which were suggested by the teachers as aspects that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. In particular the text books, which have recently been introduced for the Greek Language lesson, were acknowledged by teachers as one of the aspects that was enabling them. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Informal discussion with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: There are some lessons in the [new] books that can help you promote ideas related to equality of all children, about the diversity...I think all that, enables you to foster inclusive ideas and try to bring the children together...

Elina: For example?

Christoforos: The lesson you just saw about the intercultural school...haven't you see how many ideas and messages were given through the text? I think that such texts help to foster the notion of inclusion among the children...

The teacher in this example relates equality of all children and diversity to the notion of inclusion, and emphasises on the way that the particular text in the book, which was about the intercultural school, provided him with the opportunity to foster those inclusive ideas. Likewise another teacher said:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Fani: I think that the [new] books involve some lessons that can be very good in relation to inclusion...I mean several ideas can be given based on that, issues of friendships in contrast to marginalisation, or all the children are equal...however I

think that there should be more issues like that in the book to give us the chance to try more often to foster them in the classroom...

This extract is additionally presented here, to show how the teacher links some key inclusion issues, such as friendship or equality, in contrast to marginalisation to the use of new books. She also points out that more opportunities are necessary to be given in the book's contents, in order to give them the chance to foster such ideas more often.

However, a different picture was presented at the Socratio School, in which only one teacher shared similar views with teachers at the Aristotelio School, focusing on the value of the new books for fostering an inclusive culture. This exceptional example is shown in the following extract:

Interview with Mr. Achilleas

Achilleas: The new books foster the goal all different but all equal...so these ideas are met regularly during the lessons and there is the opportunity to discuss those with the children, and this is a way which enables you to foster...you know an inclusive environment and deal with the arguments between children.

Beyond that example, all teachers at the Socratio School emphasised another aspect in relation to the content of the books in general, and not only of the new ones. They felt that they did not address the needs of children in terms of their language difference. The following examples are indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs. Artemis:

Elina: You mentioned the new books...

Artemis: Yes, actually the concepts that exist in the books are not responding to the needs of the children in our school...

Elina: Why?

Artemis: For example mathematics...Children are very good in mathematics but they can't understand concepts which for Greek Cypriot children are taken for granted such as 'increase' or 'reduce' and children in that school keep asking, does increase means less? Does reduce means more? And I have to find ways every time to make them understand common terms...the books take all these for granted because they are responding to the needs only of the Greek Cypriot children...

Another similar example from the same school is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Sotiria*</u>

Sotiria: ...but the new books cannot respond to the needs of children coming from other countries...they are very good for the Greek-Cypriot children but do not respond to the majority of the children in this school...

Elina: Why?

Sotiria:...because the children here need simpler texts or exercises, in order to be able to understand them, because they have a difficulty in understanding them....for example in Year One they should bring together the syllables, in order to create a word...but the children didn't even know what the words meant...how could they create them?

In both examples an emphasis is given to the issue of books' non responsiveness to the differences that children had in that school, in terms of their language. They are indicative of the more practical difficulties that are created for teachers, by the use of those books when teaching children that do not know the Greek language well. It was noticeable, however, that, such practical difficulties, in relation to the text books, were not mentioned by the teachers of the Aristotelio School. It may be assumed that, the higher number of children not knowing the Greek language in the Socratio School may be the reason why that was brought up only by the teachers in that school.

Beyond the curriculum and the text books, which are aspects that are shared in all the schools of Cyprus, aspects related to the particular structural/organisational context of the schools seemed to have an impact on the extent to which teachers fostered inclusion. They involved some elements that could act as enabling aspects and others that could act as barriers. These are the schools' infrastructure, the extracurricular activities and the reinforcement sessions, as follows:

Schools' infrastructure

The schools' infrastructure seemed to enable teachers to foster an inclusive context, firstly in terms of the adequacy of classrooms existing at the schools. This was evident through the observations I carried out and teachers' interviews, from both schools. The following examples are from the Aristotelio School:

Fieldnotes :Playground

Beyond the teaching classrooms and staffroom, the school has a classroom for home economics, science classroom, design and technology classroom, music classroom, English classroom, art classroom, computer classroom, which are all equipped with the necessary furniture and materials. Further a huge room for ceremonies exists.

Teachers expressed their satisfaction in relation to the above, and also acknowledged the school's infrastructure as a positive factor for promoting inclusion, as in the examples below from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Kalli

Kalli: I am very pleased by the fact that I have a classroom for music... there you can find many music instruments and all the necessary equipment to work and this, I think is a big plus in relation to the creation of a climate which makes children happy....

Another teacher also mentioned:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Katia

Katia: There is particularly a classroom for the English lessons, which involves all that I need, for example drillings, flash cards/ memory cards, which enable all the children to be involved and enjoy the lesson...most times a good and happy climate is created in the classroom and the children participate...

Special education teachers also found this as an important positive aspect of the schools, in relation to the work that they were doing with particular children, as this is indicated in the following example from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Antigoni

Antigoni: It is important for the school to have particular classrooms for special education...appropriately equipped and this is something that I have in this school...in other schools I need to move around the school to find an empty classroom to do my lesson and I do it in other classrooms...of art or home economics which have nothing to do with what I need... so a lot of time is lost when doing that...this is a problem...we may lose 10 minutes from the lesson...here, I know that there is a proper classroom where I can be with the child, which is also as you have already seen decorated properly to create a happy and friendly climate and make the child feel comfortable and not threatened...I think this is very important.

The adequacy of classrooms was acknowledged by the teachers as an enabling aspect for fostering children's inclusion. Similarly, the existence and adequacy of

audiovisual aids in the schools were also acknowledged as facilitators, as for example, in the following interviews at the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani: ...It helps me a lot the fact that this is a well organised school...it involves all the audiovisual aids that you need, I mean you can prepare your material and present it in a way that will increase the interest of all children and this enables me to respond to the diversity of children.

In a similar way another teacher said:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Rodoula: First of all, the fact that there are computers in every classroom helps...and especially now, since they will create a computer classroom and therefore, all the children will be able to work with them... beyond that we have projectors, tape recorders and all the technology that a school can have and this personally facilitates me a lot to create an atmosphere, which in many cases makes the children participate.

In contrast, in terms of schools' infrastructure, many teachers at the Aristotelio School suggested that the number of children in the classroom, as well as the amount of available educational materials were acting as barriers. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are related to this:

Informal discussion with Mr. Iakobos:

Iakobos: I think that in order to be able to promote inclusion...there should be fewer children in the classroom, I think the number that I have now which is 25 is beyond the limit and prevents me from paying attention to all and help to their inclusion.

Elina: Why?

Iakobos: We have forty minutes for each lesson...even if I had 20 children in the classroom, this means that each child is allowed an average 2 minutes ...but this is not exactly the case because after the bell rings it takes more time for them to get ready....you know...to prepare their books for me, to write on the board...In this way we don't have the time to get to know all of our pupils and understand the children daily, even if, let's say each of them had 2 minutes. So it is possible and it happens that you will leave behind some children every day in terms that the time given and the number of children in the classroom do not allow you to understand all of them and help their inclusion.

A combination between the number of children in the classroom and the time available for each lesson seems to make this teacher think that the number of children acts as a barrier. Another example from the same school is the following:

Interview with Mrs. Ntina:

Ntina: Definitely the large number of children in the classroom is a problem for responding to all the children and promoting their inclusion...

Elina: How does this act as a barrier? Talk to me about this issue...

Ntina: ...when you have 25 children in the classroom for example, you can't focus on those who have difficulties...

Elina: Why?

Ntina: Because within those forty minutes you need to cover a particular part of the curriculum, which is obligatory...so you can not focus on those children and even though you don't want to leave behind anyone, due to that pressure of time you have to leave some of them behind...but I believe that if we had less children e.g. 12-15 you have enough time for a more individualised help for those children during the lesson.

This extract is additionally presented, in order to illustrate also the underlying reasons that most of the teachers used to justify their views about the number of children in the classrooms as a barrier. These reasons seemed to emerge from their beliefs, that the educational difficulties of particular children required individualised support. Trying to use individualised support to include children with particular needs seemed to result in finding the time as barrier. This is something that perhaps made teachers think that it was difficult, given the demands of the curriculum along with the time provided to respond to each individual pupil. The following extract from the fieldnotes taken from a lesson at the Aristotelio School is indicative of a teacher trying to respond individually to children:

Fieldnotes: Greek lesson

I am in Year One and the teacher seems to try to help children write a composition:

The teacher moves around the classroom to help the children, some children finish their composition and start talking. The classroom becomes very noisy and the teacher says: "I want the children who finished taking one book from the library and reading it. Valeria and Aggeliki go to the board and write three words beginning with the letter K". "Mrs. I need you" says another girl "I can't now" says the

teacher "I want to come here only Koullis, Alexandros, and Nikos...all the others to remain silent". The two girls on the board say "Mrs. we don't know what to write..." "One moment" says the teacher. In the meantime, many children talk to each other and others are looking outside the window...the classroom is very noisy. Antrianna approaches the teacher to show her work. The teacher who was still noting something at Alexandros work, in an angry way says " Antrianna did I tell you to come here? Haven't I told you to wait?" "...But Mrs. it's been a lot of time and the bell will ring for a break and you will not correct it as the other time..." "Sit down now" says the teacher at a very loud voice. "I need to see Nikos notebook". Antrianna goes back to her seat. The teacher says "How many notebooks I didn't check yet..."Almost half of the children raise their hands... The bell rings and the teacher says: "we will continue tomorrow". Most of the children run outside the classroom and the teacher helps some other who stayed in the classroom.

After a while I meet the teacher at the staffroom and I asked her:

Elina: What happened back there with Antriana?

Stefani: She was insisting to see her notebook but I told her to wait because she is a 'good' pupil and I had to help the children that needed me more first...This classroom has very good pupils who can write a composition in three minutes but there are also children with many difficulties who either come from other countries or have learning problems...there is also a boy who is hyperactive and the average pupils...The problem is that I have many children in the classroom and the time is not enough for all... so I try to help the children with many problems but this is also unfair for the other children...but with so many children in the classroom I have no option.

This incident and the discussion with the teacher show that the strategies being used by the teachers seemed to focus on individual children, and priority was given to children with more difficulties, leaving other children's needs behind.

However, the school context at the Socratio School which belonged to ZEP and, under ZEP regulation, had fewer children in the classrooms, showed a different pattern, which informed the importance of number of the children in the classroom for inclusion. Almost all the teachers suggested that the small number of children in the classroom is an enabling aspect, as in the following example:

Interview with Mr. Achilleas:

Achilleas: First of all the number of children in the classroom helps a lot because our school belongs to the ZEP schools and we have a small number of children in the classroom... and this enables us to pay attention to all of them, and do different things for some children who need extra support...I think that this is one of the most important aspects which helps us to include the children.

A teacher who worked in both the Aristotelio and Socratio School highlighted the difference:

Interview with Mrs. Rania:

Elina: You mentioned the number of the children in the classroom, how do you feel about it?

Rania: It is something which acts negatively because the number of the children in that [Aristotelio] school is large...I work also in a ZEP school and I have twelve children in the classroom and the difference is huge. Although the degree of difficulty in the ZEP school is bigger than in that school... due to the fact that only three out of the twelve children know how to speak Greek well and the rest of them don't, you can imagine that they had many difficulties...but we manage to reach a very good level, equivalent of the children who had less difficulties basically because I had less children in the classroom and I could help all of them...With small number of children in the classroom you can have 2-3 groups, sometimes creating groups of children with the same difficulty and therefore, you can focus on their difficulty and sometimes you can create mixed ability groups where children help each other...so you can do many different things, something that I can't do with 20-25 children as in this school, where you have to keep a standard way of working and you can't respond to the needs of all of them in every lesson or every day...

The teacher in the example does not seem to think that perhaps, the difference is not due to the number of children in the classroom but in the use of a different strategy. It appears, from the teacher's point of view that the difficulty is emerging only from the number of children in the classroom and not the kind of approach that she is using. It could be argued that, if the teacher used the strategy which she usually uses at the Socratio School, adapted for a larger number of pupils at the Aristotelio School, then this perhaps could enable the teacher remove the barriers related to the number of pupils in the classroom.

Similar kind of assumptions seemed to underlie the aspect of the 'extra educational material' related to schools' infrastructure. At the Aristotelio School, many teachers suggested that lack of the appropriate extra educational material from the school, which could be used additionally within their lessons to address the needs of children, was a barrier. The following extracts from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Informal discussion

Ntina: ...These are the handouts that I prepared for children in Year Five...for the science lesson. Do you know how many hours I spent trying to create them?

Unfortunately rarely do we find already existent material that can respond to the diversity of the children that we have in our classroom...you need all the time to create extra material and exercises which children will be able to do... We don't have what can be called a "bank of materials", where teachers can use for guidance...or other materials that can be used as they are...

Elina: Nothing at all?

Ntina:...well there are some DVDs and CDs with educational content but they are very few and are related mainly to some national celebrations like the 25th of March, 1st of April or in relation to our religion...Christmas...Easter...I mean for example, I never found a handout for the science lesson which differentiates a bit the book's exercises, in order to respond to the 'weak' pupils...something that I have to do for almost every lesson...that kind of material which could guide us would have been very helpful.

The interesting point in this extract is the example of the kind of educational materials that the teacher considers as an important need, in order to respond to the 'weak' pupils. It seems that those educational materials were considered as necessary for differentiating the lessons, for those particular pupils. This is more clearly expressed in the following extract from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Sofia

Sofia: There could be extra [educational] material...due to the fact that a teacher has a lot of preparation...for a classroom which involves pupils from an average level of attainment to an excellent level of attainment...so for the rest of the pupils...I mean the teacher has to prepare for each of them something different so this is very difficult....I mean the time... The teacher dedicates major time in the afternoon for preparation, so it would be good if we had extra material and for them...

Clearly, the teacher refers to the children with excellent, average level of attainment, or 'the rest of them'. For the 'rest of them', who do not belong within the 'excellent and average' categories, she suggests that the time required to prepare extra material is major. Based on the teacher's understanding, it seems that the difficulty was thought to be in particular for those pupils who are perceived to have an attainment level below the 'average'.

In contrast, at the Socratio School, such a 'bank of additional educational materials' was existent and was placed in folders. The folders were ordered from Year One to Year Six and were placed in the staffroom, where all the teachers could use them. That was considered as an enabling factor for teachers at the Socratio School. The following extracts are indicative:

Field notes: Staffroom

It is early in the morning and I have noticed that many teachers are going in front of the library and are taking handouts. So I asked Mrs. Loukia:

Elina: What are these?

Loukia: These are some activities, that teachers working here in previous years found successful and they are all gathered here and we can use them as well or take ideas and create our owns...and we can add anything new.

Elina: Successful in what?

Loukia: ...well they can help all the children to participate even if they don't know the language well...for example these are some flash cards but there are other alternative activities and exercises for each year group...it is something like a prepared package. They are very helpful...but there is still the need for more material, not only in relation to the language but also in relation to their attainment as well....I mean the excellent or the weak...this is something that we plan to do...

The kind of education material that was prepared, was aiming at responding to the language barriers for children coming from other countries, and according to the teacher that was a facilitating aspect of the school. It is to be noted, however, that towards the end of the extract, the teacher suggests, similarly as with the teachers at the Aristotelio School, the need for the creation of education material that relates to the level of attainment of children.

Extracurricular activities

The extracurricular activities seemed to act mainly as enabling aspects within the context of the schools. In both schools, extracurricular activities like the athletic day, the music day, the day devoted to healthy food, the day devoted to feelings/emotions and many others, including traditional and national celebrations, were taking place quite often. In most of the cases, the whole school day was devoted to extracurricular activities, related to the theme of the day and children were involved in various activities. It is important to note that some extracurricular activities were obligatory and were determined by the Ministry, while others were optional. The central ideas covered within some of the extracurricular activities, appeared to enable teachers to foster inclusion. A number of teachers mentioned that through extracurricular opportunities children may be more easily included. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Rodoula: Some of the extracurricular activities help children come closer and be included, for example, the athletic day, where all the children of the school made group works and played together, the day which was devoted for diversity, friendship, confidence...all these help children to be included because they create a positive climate...an inclusive climate...

The importance of this extract is the kind of climate that is created through particular extracurricular activities that seem to link with some key inclusion issues, such as diversity and friendship. It seems that an inclusive climate is created, that helps children come closer and work together. Another example from the Aristotelio School is the following:

Interview with Mrs. Kalli

Kalli: I think that the extracurricular activities can help children to be included... they give the opportunity to children to come closer to each other and also show their talents. For example Nikolina, was a very shy girl, she never had friends...you could find her most of the times sitting alone during breaks...Well that girl was selected from the school to represent Cyprus at a European song contest, after one day which was devoted to music and children did many different activities related to that...After that, Nikolina became quite popular...and you will never see her alone...my point is that through these extracurricular activities we can enable children to socialise, reduce marginalisation and there is also the chance for hidden talents to emerge...this is one of many other similar examples that I met, not only in this school but in others as well.

It is suggested by the teacher that through the extracurricular activities, children are given the opportunities to socialise and show their talents. This to some extent may reduce marginalisation of particular children. The following incident from the Aristotelio School is considered critical, due to the kind of achievement that a boy who was considered to be 'weak' showed.

Critical incident/event:
Date:27/2/09 *Time:09:25* *Focus of the event: I was surprised by what he could do!*
What precipitated the event: *The children are writing a composition and the teacher moves around the classroom and helps them.*

What took place:

Kiriakos stands up, goes close to the teacher and tells her: "Mrs. I finished" The teacher stands up and goes next to him...she takes the child's composition and reads it and she looks surprised and says: "I can't believe this...Wow Kiriakos this is very good, how did you do that?"Then, she shows it to the classroom and says "Look at this composition...Kiriakos finished first, and he wrote all the things necessary in a neat way".

Outcomes:

The teacher goes in front of the cupboard takes a pencil and gives it to Kiriakos and says "...this is a reward for your good work and make sure that you will keep this up".

Notes on interviews with participants:

After the lesson we discuss with the teacher

Elina: Am I right that you were surprised with the particular composition?

Ira: Yes...I didn't expect that...Kiriakos has been improved a lot these days...he shows interest, he writes...

Elina: Why do you think that happened?

Ira: I think all started with that extracurricular activity that we had the previous days, where we devoted the whole day making activities related to friendship and feelings...all children got closer to each other and I have noticed that Kiriakos who was always in the margin got involved with his classmates...Also the nature of the activities that we had that day and the way that I delivered them made Kiriakos to take an extra effort... for example, I used Smurfs characters to present some of the activities and the children loved them. Ever since Kiriakos is getting better every day...

It seems here that the extracurricular activities had a positive effect, in relation to the inclusion of a particular child. In the above critical incident, it appears that a particular extracurricular activity indicated the way to the teacher to involve that child in the lessons. Moreover, according to the teacher, the activities themselves helped the child to get closer with his classmates. This critical incident is an example of the advantages of the extracurricular activities in promoting inclusion.

Nevertheless, in spite of the advantages that the extracurricular activities had, some teachers reported that the requirements for planning and delivering extracurricular activities, makes things even more stressful, and teachers' valuable time is taken up

for the extra work, that act as a barrier. The following fieldnotes, taken during a staff meeting at the Aristotelio School are indicative of such responses:

Field notes: Staff meeting

All the teachers are in the staffroom. The head teacher announces the issues for discussion. The first issue is about the upcoming extracurricular activities and they all need to suggest the dates that they prefer for each of them. Thirty extra-curriculum activities, including school excursions and national celebrations are discussed from the end of January until the end of the school year, with some of them lasting more than two days. At some point teachers start complaining:

Avgi: Ok, these are a lot of things...we will do them but I don't want anyone to come and complain if I stayed behind the curriculum...

Stefani: I agree...these activities are important...however the curriculum and the extra curriculum are too much to be covered.

Maroula: You know...I read an article at the newspaper, where the president of POED (president of teachers union) was complaining that those extra curriculum activities became a second curriculum...

Avgi: A second....a third...at least they should reduced the number of requirements for coverage for the curriculum, a teacher needs time to be prepared for those things...only in that way the extracurricular activities will be meaningful...if the school does this without stress.

Sofia: I think teachers in Cyprus are trying to do too many things and we miss the actual point sometimes for doing them.

Through these conversations, it is evident that teachers, although they think that the extracurricular activities are useful, they feel that they can act as a barrier in covering the curriculum, due to the time that is required for planning and implementation. It could therefore, be argued that the extracurricular activities create a stressful situation for covering the curriculum and perhaps, even less time to be devoted to the inclusion of all the children in the classroom.

Reinforcement sessions

Some children of the schools that were considered to have learning difficulties were allowed to have individual forty-minute reinforcement session with one of the teachers, once or twice a week, depending on the number of children in the schools that were having reinforcement sessions. Those children were usually children who were perceived as being low attaining or children coming from other countries, who did not know the Greek language well. The reinforcement sessions took place

during school time, in separate classrooms, and children were leaving their regular classroom for that period of time and then they returned back. Within those sessions, classroom teachers were responsible to help children cover any additional needs, including needs related to learning or needs related to the language.

Almost all teachers in both schools admitted that the work covered within those sessions was allowing particular children to work at the same level as their peers and was acting as an enabling aspect to their inclusion. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Interview with Mrs. Melina

Mrs Melina: The reinforcement sessions are quite helpful firstly to the foreign-language children because they have some personal time to learn and enhance their [Greek] language...Weak pupils also can cover some gaps and be able to follow their peers in the classroom. I feel that more hours of those reinforcement sessions should have been given because they really help.

Another example from the same school is the following:

Informal discussion with Mr. Stefanos

I kept doing the reinforcement sessions to a child that recently came from Georgia and now if you compare his level of attainment, you can notice the difference that the child did in three months...I think that this could have been the case for other children too, if they were doing reinforcement sessions.

In these examples, teachers are referring to the benefits that the reinforcement sessions have, in enabling particular children to be included in their classroom lessons. However, the way that the reinforcement sessions were carried out, may have had some results which were not enabling inclusion. Based on my observations, in order to carry out a reinforcement session, usually a teacher was coming into the classroom during the lesson and was calling for particular children to go to another classroom and have a separate lesson either individually or in groups. This was lasting between twenty to forty minutes and the children after that were returning to the classroom lesson. However, when the children were returning from the reinforcement session to the classroom lesson, they were somehow excluded from the activities that other children were doing. This was due to the fact that they could not follow the activities given, since they were out of the classroom for a considerable time. The following extract from the field notes is indicative of this:

Fieldnotes Greek Lesson

It is the first hour in the classroom and the teacher comes in along with another teacher and says "I want all of you to prepare your books for the Greek lesson, Dima do not take your stuff out, Mrs. Rania will take you to the staffroom. Then, she turns to Mrs. Rania and says: I want you to focus on the Greek alphabet and make some exercises on that... she doesn't know anything... so start from the beginning and we will see how it goes". The girl leaves the classroom with Mrs. Rania and comes back after approximately 35 minutes and the teacher tells her "Take your notebook out and copy what it is written on the board...after you do that you can go for a break" and goes close to her and takes her notebook out of her bag. The other children are working in groups and they are drawing the poster that each group created.

From this example, it can be illustrated that although the child's reinforcement session might allow her to understand better the Greek language, the fact that she had to miss the regular lesson, was somehow excluding her from the lesson.

Moreover, issues of labelling and marginalisation, especially within older classrooms, those of Years Five and Six, were associated by some teachers to the way that the reinforcement sessions are carried out. In relation to that some teachers at the Aristotelio School suggested that the way that the reinforcement sessions are carried out, act even as a barrier to the inclusion of children that are undertaking them. The following teacher from the Aristotelio School explains that:

Interview with Mrs. Antria

Antria: The way that the reinforcement sessions are carried out, can act as barrier to the inclusion of some children...From what I have seen and experienced, many children deny going for a reinforcement session, even if they need that, because they can be labelled as... 'useless', because of those reinforcement sessions. So...the children...mainly those who are in Year Five and Six, who can more easily understand what is going on, do not want to go because of the stance that other children may hold towards them...I mean that some children tend to marginalise to some extent those children and they also make fun of them...Not all of them of course, but I feel that there is a tendency those children to be considered by their classmates inferior because they have some learning difficulties, which are not normal for their age...it is so obvious the way that the reinforcement sessions are done and children also know what they are about...so this definitely acts as a barrier to the inclusion of some children.

The fact that some children leave the classroom for reinforcement sessions seems to have a negative effect on the way that the rest of the children perceive them. This, according to the teacher, acts as a barrier for children's inclusion and as the teacher argues, this may be a reason why some children deny participating in the

reinforcement sessions. The following incident was considered as critical because is an indicative example of the way that the reinforcement sessions are carried out and the consequences that they may have on the children who are involved in them:

Critical incident/event:
Date:29/1/09 *Time:10:00* *Focus of the event: I don't want to go!*
<u>*What precipitated the event:*</u> *The children are in the science classroom seated in groups and are doing their experiments. The teacher moves around the classroom and goes from group to group to check what the children are doing. All of them seem focused to the activity.*
<u>*What took place:*</u> *Suddenly, Rovertos starts shouting "Chris and Lora get ready! They are coming for you..."and laughs loudly. All the children look out of the window. I could see a teacher walking towards the classroom. "haha" says a child "losers get ready". The teacher stares at the children who were shouting and says "Be quiet!" The other teacher knocks at the door and comes in the classroom and says: "I am here for Chris, Lora, and Stauros, I am waiting them at the staffroom" and leaves. Chris and Lora have a reluctant look...they take a notebook and they leave...Stauros remains quiet and continues with the experiment...A child then shouts and says in a funny way "Come on Stauros...don't make the teacher wait for you..."and laughs. Some other children also start shouting at Stauros. Stauros still remains quiet and continues with the experiment. The teacher approaches Stauros and tells him "Did he tell you to go?" "Yes Mrs." says Stauros, but I don't want to...I don't want to leave the classroom...I don't like this...I want to stay here with my group..."..."Are you sure?" the teacher says... "he is waiting for you..."... "Mrs. I want to stay here" and he looks at the floor. "Ok, just go and tell him that you are not going"... "No Mrs....I am not leaving the classroom..."..."Ok" says the teacher ... "let's move on.."Rovertos walks quietly next to Stauros and tells him ... "you should go...now you will remain illiterate!" The teacher sees Rovertos and shouts at him "Roverto go immediately back to your group!" and writes on the blackboard some questions.*
<u>*Outcomes:*</u> *The children copy the questions from the blackboard and they work on their experiments and questions.*
<u>*Notes on interviews with participants:*</u> *After the lesson we discuss with the teacher* *Elina: What happened before? I mean when the other teacher came?*

> *Teacher: He came to call the children for their usual reinforcement session...He usually calls Chris and Lora but today he called Stauros as well...and Stauros did not want to go.*
>
> *Elina: Have this happened before?*
>
> *Teacher: I don't remember calling for Stauros during my lesson...I don't know if he does this within other lessons...but this happened again with the other children, they are going very reluctantly, haven't you see?*
>
> *Elina: Why do you think this is happening?*
>
> *Teacher: I think that the children are embarrassed because the other children make fun of them, they call them 'illiterate' because they know that reinforcement sessions are for the 'weak' pupils and children don't like this...*
>
> *During the break we talk with the other teacher about the event*
>
> *Elina: Stauros didn't come at the reinforcement session is that right?*
>
> *Teacher: Yes he didn't.*
>
> *Elina: Why do you think that happened?*
>
> *Teacher: What can I say...we don't have any kind of problems...I mean he is a very good child in the classroom very obedient...possibly he didn't want to leave the group and the classroom...you know children at their own age (Year five) can be very cruel, they make fun of each other and I think he felt embarrassed when I called him. He is a very sensitive child and I don't want to push him, if this makes him feel uncomfortable...so I don't call him all the time as the other children, but he is still a very weak pupil...he mustn't stop doing reinforcement sessions...see at his notebook (he goes to his cupboard and shows me Stauros' notebook), he writes all the words next to each other, he has a big problem in Greek...you can't understand what he is writing. On the other hand Chris and Lora made a progress.*

Within this critical incident, it is evident that the way reinforcement's sessions are carried out may have a controversial result, since the children who are asked to participate in those sessions may face discriminatory name-calling from their peers, or, be excluded from the lesson, due to the fact that they leave classroom for a considerable time and then they cannot follow the rest of the lesson, after they return back from their session. However, it needs to be pointed that emphasis is given again to the age of the children, and the fact that they are the older children of the school.

Summing up, the curriculum, the text books, schools' infrastructure the extracurricular activities and the reinforcement sessions appeared as aspects of the

structural/organisational environment of the schools that had an impact on teachers in fostering inclusion. Almost all of these aspects were enabling teachers, nevertheless, elements related to the same aspects acted as a barrier. The only aspect which was clearly a barrier for teachers to foster inclusion was the curriculum. The following category is about aspects related to the social/interpersonal environment of the schools.

Aspects related to schools' interpersonal/social environment

This category involves the aspects related to the interpersonal/social environment that appeared to enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. These are: the schools' climate and; the acknowledgement by superiors, as presented below:

Schools' Climate

This is one of the most important aspects of the schools that related to the interpersonal/social environment of the school. First of all, good relationships seemed to exist among teachers. These were indicated through daily informal support and collaboration, as in the following examples from the Aristotelio School:

Field notes: Staffroom

Nikos: Sofia, how do you deal with the boys during the activities hour…I find it quite difficult to deal with them, because it's the last hour before the school day finishes and I can't find any activities to make them be interested in anything…they get really naughty.

Sofia: Yes, it is difficult but I found some activities on the computers that really make them be interested and they really seemed to enjoy them… If you want, come tomorrow to have a look at what I do and I can also give you the material…

Nikos: This is great I will come tomorrow.

Another example is the following:

Field notes: Playground
The teachers of year two are talking

Margarita: Did you find any exercises for that lesson? I wasn't able to find any, that could respond to Nikodimos…

Ira: I think these will work (she gives her a handout). I prepared that...the last two exercises are for the children in my classroom that have difficulties, so I think that they will find a way to do that...

Margarita: How explain me that one.

The teacher explains to her while they are walking towards their classrooms.

It seems that through discussions and exchanging of education materials, as seen in the above examples, teachers were collaborating and supporting each other. Teachers' daily collaboration and support among them, which I call informal, was an enabling aspect. In the following examples from the Aristotelio School, teachers are suggesting the ways that collaborations and support among them can become an enabling aspect for fostering inclusion:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: Me and my colleagues actually exchange ideas...they might suggest me something that I haven't thought myself and a discussion is developed that can help me most of the times, move over any kind of difficulties...

Similarly another teacher from the same school said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia: When I face a difficulty, I speak to another teacher and through discussions, I can take ideas or complete my own ideas in relation to inclusion of some children...I find it really helpful and it is something that the majority of teachers do here.

It seems that teachers found it helpful to talk through difficulties with their colleagues.

In addition to that, teachers suggested that good relationships, which were developed between them and the children, were an enabling aspect that helped them promote an inclusive environment, as the following example from a teacher at the Aristotelio School indicates:

Interview with Mrs. Ioulia

Ioulia:...My relationships with the pupils are not distant, but friendly...of course you will hear other teachers say that your relationship with the pupils should not be very friendly, because then, children may not see you as their teacher any more...but I think keeping a balance is the best way to keep good relationships...For example, an advice that you may give or an instruction e.g. "I want you to collaborate and help each other if there is a need", then, they will follow your advices easier if you have a

friendly and good relationship with them rather than if you tried to impose it. This is not as easy as it may sounds, but it really helps in my effort to create an inclusive environment...

The teacher in the example explains the way that good relationships between teachers and pupils could facilitate the communication among them, and enable the creation of an inclusive environment. However, although a number of teachers expressed similar views, there were others claiming that this was not always the case, with regard to teachers' relationships with all children. The following extract from a staff meeting at the Aristotelio School is an example of such kind of relationship between teachers and the children:

Fieldnotes: Staff meeting

Teachers talk from Year One to Year Six

Mrs. Theodora: My relationship with the children is very positive...there is an understanding and I think that this helps a lot, in relation to what I want to do in the classroom.

Mr. Christoforos: I would say the same thing about my pupils.

Mr. Panos: I wouldn't say that for all the children in my classroom...there are some children in my classroom who continually do not show any kind of respect, neither to me or their classmates, and this is why I punish them usually.

Mrs. Avgi: The case in my classroom is better with the majority of children...there is respect and positive relationships are developed, except from three pupils who never listen to what I have to say...I cannot and I will never understand them...there is no connection...

From the above extract, it seems that some teachers were complaining about their relationship with particular pupils, while others were emphasising the positive climate that existed among them and their pupils. This shows a different picture from what the teachers in the previous examples suggested, even though there is not an explicit relation in the above example between the good relationships among teachers and children with their inclusion.

In terms of teachers' relationships with parents, a positive relationship seemed to exist between them, but that was being experienced under different conditions. For example, teachers at the Aristotelio School suggested:

Informal conversation with Mrs. Stefani

Elina: When you face difficulties in relation to the inclusion of some children where do you seek for support?

Stefani: I usually ask for parents' collaboration...this is very important for me because if they are positive towards me and what I am going to tell them, we can achieve what we need...

Elina: Can you give me an example?

Stefani: Yes...you know that boy with hyperactivity disorder...when I called their parents, they responded immediately...they showed understanding to what I was saying and they were positive to several things that I wanted them to do...since then, we meet regularly and we discuss...I say both positive and negative things about the child, not only the negative...so, I feel that I am not alone in relation to that...I think this is important...

Another example from the same school is the following:

Informal conversation with Mr. Iakobos

Iakobos: ...recently I had a child in my classroom that couldn't be included, based on her behaviour...I called the parents, we met and we discussed about the situation of their child and we found common ways on how we could help the child be involved with other children...I played my role at school and parents did theirs at home and they were giving me feedback and after some time we manage to help the inclusion of the child...I was really happy to have their support and their collaboration...it had very good results...Now if the parents did not believe me or denied that their child needed extra support, things could have been different.

It seems from the above example that while teachers were feeling that pupils' parents were showing an understanding and were collaborating and supporting them, was considered as an enabling aspect. Most of the teachers, however, suggested that parents were not contributing to the creation of that kind of partnership. For example, the teachers at the Aristotelio School suggested:

Field notes: Staffroom

Mr. Nikos is in the staffroom and assesses some tests...then, he tells to another teacher: "Again her test is close to zero...I can't believe that with such results her parents showed up only once...you can't take such results from your child and do nothing...neither to visit the teacher or at least tell me something...they were the ones who told that their child should repeat again Year Three...I thought that they were interested and ready now to do whatever it takes to help her, but their indifference is not helping".

The teacher in the example interprets the lack of presence of parents in the school for collaboration with the teacher as 'indifference' to their child's low attainment.

Moreover, parents not accepting that their child is having a difficulty was another aspect that acted as a barrier, as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: Parents sometimes do not accept that their child needs extra support and they are blaming the teacher...so the parents need to understand firstly that, and then to collaborate with the teacher, otherwise there is no point in trying to collaborate or to expect parent's support.

A barrier was also considered by the teachers to be present when parents were negative at teachers' suggestions, as the following teachers at the Aristotelio School suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Ntina

Ntina: Parents can act as a barrier when they are negative to things that you may consider important, with regard to their child, or they may not be able to accept what you are telling them about their child...so this means that you cannot collaborate with them and they cannot support you...

Interview with Mr. Stefanos

Stefanos: Particularly this year, although I could help a child in my free time to reach his classmates...a parent did not want other pupils to see her child leaving the classroom...I tried to convince her...she insisted...I respected her decision, but it was the child who got damaged...not anyone else...

The following incident from the Aristotelio School is considered critical, because is an indicative example of a parent not accepting teacher's suggestions:

Critical incident/event:
Date:28/1/09 *Time:7:50* *Focus of the event: My son did nothing!*
What precipitated the event: *It is early in the morning and the bell rings three times, meaning that they should all be gathered for the school's assembly. The children are standing in queues and the teachers move around to make the necessary arrangements. Then the head teacher*

starts talking.

What took place:

A bit later, a mother comes in the school, holding her child from hand and walks towards the queue made by children of Year Two. The teachers of Year Two are also there. The mother passes the teachers and takes the child in front of the line. Then she moves forward to leave. The teacher of Year Two waves her to come to her side and says quietly: "He did the same again yesterday..."

Mother: He didn't tell me anything...

Teacher: He was out of the classroom the whole day. We all tried to convince him go into the class but he was leaving...

Mother: Why would he do that?

Teacher: I don't know Mrs. Ntona...we need to meet and find a solution.

Mother: I don't believe that he did that....he never shows such behaviour at home...

Teacher: Maybe, but I am telling you his behaviour at school... do I have any reason to lie to you?

The mother goes in front grasps the child and brings him in front of the teacher:

Mother: Have you been out of the classroom yesterday the whole day? The child looks scared and doesn't reply...his mother insists... 'have you'? The child doesn't reply and the mother says in a louder voice 'if you did don't do that again, ok?' She then turns to the teacher and says: 'Are we ok with that?' The teacher says: 'I think that we should better meet and talk'...the mother says: 'but I still don't see the reason anyway..I am in a bit hurry another time we can arrange it'... and leaves.

Outcomes:

The teacher talks with some teachers that were next to her and another teacher tells me:

'This is what holds the teacher back, she finds no understanding from parents'

Notes on the interview with participant

During the break I talk with the teacher:

Elina: What happened during the school assembly?

Teacher: I told to his mother that he doesn't come into the classroom and as usual she denied it...she always tells me that at home the situation is different...that he is always very quiet that he also helps her, but I don't know, he is not like that at all...do we talk about two different children? I think she says that to protect him...when she calls me we talk but we end up saying different things...

Elina: Do you talk over the phone?

Teacher: Yes, I had to give her my number because she never finds time to come at school...I told her to talk over the phone and she only calls me to tell me her child's complaints...she never listens to what I am saying...

Elina: What does this means to you?

Teacher: She can't hear anything bad about her child...she refuses and says her son did nothing...! How can I move on and help here? Even if I do something at school to help the child, the child will go home and his mother will support him and makes me look bad to the child's eyes...if you don't have parents' support, there are not many things that you can do...

The above critical incident is an example of how difficult the communication and collaboration between the teacher and the parent can be, when parent seems not to accept her child's difficulties. An interesting point is raised, about the way that the child might perceive the teacher, when his mother does not seem to take into consideration the teacher's point of view.

In the Socratio School, another aspect emerged about the relationship between parents and teachers. First of all, according to all the teachers, parents did not show up to ask for their children, as the following teacher explains:

Interview with Mrs. Chrisa

Chrisa: ...but parents...we don't have a communication at all...they don't come to ask for their child. Perhaps is because they don't find time...This makes things even more difficult for the education of their children. Unfortunately, you will hear that from everyone in the school...we all want to have more communication...

It is evident through this example that the teacher wishes to have better communication with parents, but according to her, time constraints may act as a barrier for parents to come at the school. However, based on my observations, when I was in the field in the Socratio School, there were some times that I observed parents talking to teachers, during breaks or after the end of the school day.

In the Socratio School, it also appeared that most parents did not know the Greek language and that was acting also as a barrier among teachers' and parents' collaboration and support, as in the following examples from the Socratio School:

Field notes

It is the first day after the Easter vocations...I am in the staffroom and two teachers are talking about their pupils. Mrs Voula says: It is amazing...within the Easter, my pupils coming from Bulgaria completely forgot the Greek language, and it's been only two weeks.

Angela: this is because they don't practise at home...Parents talk only their first language and children cannot practise Greek language at home...that happens every time after the vacations...

It seems that parents who did not know the Greek language, was not enabling children to learn the Greek language, and this is an element that could act as a barrier in their participation in lessons. Moreover, this was creating difficulties in teacher's communication with parents, as the following teacher at the Socratio School suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Sotiria

Sotiria: ...the majority of parents do not know how to speak the Greek language... this is a major problem to our conversations...our communication...they don't understand what you are saying to them...

On the whole, support and collaboration with parents was important and acted as an enabling aspect for teachers, only when, according to teachers, parents were in a position to collaborate with them. Otherwise, parents could act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion.

Finally, teachers' relations with visiting experts were considered as aspects of the schools' climate, which were acting as enabling aspects, when there was an immediate experts' input. Visiting experts were considered the special teachers, the speech therapists and the education psychologists. As soon as teachers had collaboration and support, the creation of a positive climate was enabled, as the following examples from the Aristotelio School suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Chara

Chara: I don't collaborate this year with the special teacher because I don't have a child with SEN in my classroom, but last year I had a deaf child in my classroom and I had to collaborate, so as to advise me what I had to do, in order to help the child in the classroom.

Elina: To what extent that helped you?

Chara: It was very helpful because we manage...I think...to make the child feel comfortable in the classroom with other children and be included.

Another example from the same school is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Marianna*</u>

Marianna: Yes, we collaborate with the teacher who is working with two of my pupils...we just talk about our goals...I usually tell her what I need her to do in order to improve the writings of the pupils...

From the above examples, it seems that as soon as collaboration and support was existent among visiting experts and teachers that was making a positive contribution in the inclusive process. Nevertheless, the absence of immediate experts' input for support and collaboration with teachers, was acting as a barrier, as the following examples indicate:

<u>*Informal conversation with Mrs. Ira*</u>

Ira: Nikiforos definitely needs special education...he is in the classroom and he does nothing...he needs someone to provide him extra support...we made many efforts...but still nothing...so we send a letter to the Ministry to assess him and approve him for special education...he will definitely be approved...his mother came to school and we sent the application together in the beginning of September...now is towards the end of January and we are still waiting.

The teacher gives an example to illustrate the difficulty of not having immediate support, which is created by not having an immediate expert's input. The head teacher also of the Aristotelio School reinforced that view:

<u>*Interview with the head teacher*</u>

Head: First of all, we attempt to communicate with experts...we send a letter to the Ministry of education...if, for example, there is a behavioural issue, which is the most common, we ask for an education psychologist.

Elina: What kind of support do they have?

Head: Unfortunately, I can't say that they have any important support from the Ministry...can I say an example? The education psychologist cannot visit the school often...We have children in the school that we are waiting for the psychologist's assessment for two years...and we are still waiting...I don't want to insult the psychologist...he is responsible for many schools...how can he manage to see all the situations? So, for teachers who face difficulties with problematic behaviour, they have no support at all, or the education psychologist may come and visit the school one or two times for a very short period of time...so again this is not important...so we try partly to solve the problem with the special staff that we have in the school... if a child has a problem in speech, I will ask the speech therapist ...when she has

*free time and when she comes to the school, because she is not here permanently...
to examine the child or I will tell to the special teacher...who is responsible for
learning difficulties...to suggest what to do with children with behavioural
problems...and if we still see that there are no results, we call the parents, and if
they show understanding, we convince them to go to a private psychologist...*

It seems that the delay between the stages that education psychologist is needed in
the school and the time that he/she arrives to support the teachers, acts as a barrier.
The head teacher, in order to respond to that issue, tries partly to solve it through
other visiting experts, like the speech therapist and the special teachers, but it seems
that this is an aspect which has a negative impact on the inclusion of all children.

Summing up, good relationships between teachers and children, parents, and visiting
experts, as well as among teachers in school could allow the creation of a positive
climate, which could facilitate teachers to foster inclusion in schools. However,
elements of these relationships were also acting as barriers. The following sub-
category is related to another aspect of the social/interpersonal environment of
schools.

Acknowledgement by superiors

It was suggested by some teachers that it would be enabling, if inclusion as an
important education objective and if their efforts towards inclusion were explicitly
acknowledged by their superiors. The persons that teachers referred to as superiors
were the inspector who evaluates them and the head teacher.

Some teachers suggested that they would like their efforts towards inclusion to be
appreciated by the inspector, as the following examples at the Aristotelio School
indicate:

<u>*Informal discussion with Mrs. Fani*</u>

*Fani: It did happen to me, not in this school...the inspector visited my classroom for
inspection... for my evaluation and he was going to observe a lesson in maths. He
enters the classroom and asks me... in which chapter are you? I told him and he
said: "Really? You stayed behind the curriculum do you know that? You should be
in that chapter". Even when I explained that I had particular difficulties with some
children and that was the reason of the delay, in order to provide more support, he
just repeated that I should not stay behind the curriculum...What was the message?
That coverage of the curriculum comes first in the evaluation and then anything
else.... if they see anything else!*

The point that the teacher makes about the 'message' that she got from that incident, is that what matters for inspectors is the coverage of the curriculum, and that may discourage her from taking actions related to inclusion which could delay the coverage of the curriculum. Similar example from a teacher at the Aristotelio School follows:

Informal discussion with Mrs Sofia

After the lesson we discuss with Mrs Sofia

Sofia: ....I don't know if that effort [for inclusion]is appreciated at all...You know someone superior may open the book for example of Charis and they will see that the book exercises are not completed as they should, and that some of them not completed at all and this will have a negative effect on my evaluation.... nobody cares if you have given or did other things to support these children as long as the exercises in the book are not completed... this means that you are not doing your job properly. This is where I will be evaluated and not if I made an effort to include that child by giving him different material or by doing something else...

The meanings that the teacher in this example is making about the way that she is evaluated by superiors is that what is most important is to cover the exercises in the books as suggested by the curriculum, while efforts related to inclusion are not appreciated. However, the inspector in relation to teachers' evaluation and its relation to inclusion suggested:

Interview with the inspector

Elina: To what extent are teachers evaluated whether they include or try to include all children in the classroom?

Inspector: They are evaluated about that...all the teachers of Cyprus are evaluated based on four aspects which are...professional development, teaching skills, management and organisation of the classroom and general behaviour and actions and within these aspects how they deal with the children in need is a factor which is evaluated.

Elina: How do you evaluate this factor?

Inspector: There is arithmetic evaluation in their 12th year of experience this is how things are in Cyprus. Before that there are graphical evaluations which are not arithmetic but with comments and are taken into consideration for the teacher to take a permanent position and in addition there are some evaluative essays that we write where we can evaluate whether they help the children in need and whether they enable their inclusion.

The inspector under the four general areas that constitute the aspects, in which teachers are evaluated, does seem to take into consideration teachers' efforts for inclusion.

Nevertheless, the non-explicit reference seems to make teachers feel that this is not taken into consideration in their evaluation by the inspector. For example the following teacher at the Aristotelio School suggested:

Informal conversation with Mrs. Stefani

Elina: Isn't inclusion of all children a point in your evaluation?

Stefani: Is it? I am not sure I think that the evaluation by the inspector does not take this into consideration...there are four aspects but are we evaluated about that?

Most teachers expressed an uncertainty about the extent that inclusion of children is considered within their evaluation by inspectors. The point, however, is that the non explicit acknowledgement of teachers' efforts towards inclusion by inspectors, may act as a barrier for teachers to foster inclusion. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs.Stauri

Stauri: ....it can act as a motivation...if someone for example comes and tell us that if you manage to include that child this will be a plus in your evaluation...or if you are irresponsible and you show no interest at all this will have a negative effect on your evaluation...I mean this is not absolute but no one said something like this to us...possibly if the head or the inspector knew all of our effort... just to acknowledge our work this could be a motivation...

The point being made in this example is that teachers need to feel that the work related to inclusion is acknowledged by their superiors. It seems that they value the opinion of the inspector and the head teacher a lot, and an acknowledgement of their effort may be a motivation.

In addition to the above, teachers suggested that they would like inclusion to be acknowledged more explicitly by the head teacher as an important education objective, in particular through staff meetings. The staff meetings took place every week and were organised by the head teacher. Based on my observations, they were usually devoting most of the time to organisational issues, and sometimes that made issues related to inclusion not to be thought as a priority. Moreover, when difficulties

relating to inclusion emerged during the staff meeting, these were dealt very quickly or were addressed after all the organisational issues were resolved giving the impression that these were not as important as other issues, something that seemed to concern some of the teachers. In the following example from the Aristotelio School, I discuss with a teacher the fact that the issue that she brought up in a meeting for including a child who was considered to have many difficulties, especially in terms of his behaviour, was discussed briefly after three weeks in a row of meetings from the day that it was brought up:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Fani

Elina: Did you have any further discussion about the issue you brought up to the meeting?

Fani: No...I just gave my notes to the head as she asked nothing more...

Elina: So to what extent do you feel that it has helped you the discussion during the staff meeting?

Fani: Almost nothing at all I just shared my notes...because three weeks ago we tried to discuss that then other issues came up....then to the next meeting there was no mentioning at all and then I just read few things to the rest of the teachers but there was no time left everything happened very quickly.

Elina: What were you expecting from the meeting?

Fani: It was disappointing... I was expecting for suggestions what I could do about it as a teacher in the classroom and all of us in collaboration as a school what are we going to do about the inclusion of that pupil? The time of the meeting is not devoted for such kind of things. Organisational issues are always priority....but shouldn't the inclusion of that child be presented first?

The teacher expresses her disappointment in relation to the way that the difficulty that she faces for including a particular child, was being treated during staff meetings. There seems to be a superficial response during the staff meetings as organised by the head about that since as she suggests, and as I also observed, a very quick and limited time was devoted to that issue. The fact that the issue related to the inclusion of a particular child was discussed after three meetings, since the day that it was brought up may reflect that it was not given priority. However, it is worth noting that before this issue with the particular teacher was brought up at all, the head of the school during a staff meeting, has shared an article to the teachers about "Helping children who are trapped in their anger" and was related to issues of children's

difficult behaviour and ways to deal with these. This however, was the only time that such an issue was discussed during a staff meeting. On the one hand, this may contradict what teachers were suggesting that nothing is said in staff meetings for the inclusion of children, however, it only appeared one time, and perhaps the topic of my research which was related to inclusion may have influenced the head to present such an issue during the staff meeting.

So, the explicit acknowledgement of inclusion as an important education objective by teachers' superiors, was seen as important for teachers to foster inclusion. However, the implicit rather that explicit acknowledgement of teachers' efforts towards inclusion by the inspectors and the head teacher, was acting more as a barrier, since they did not seem to motivate teachers towards inclusion to a great extent.

Conclusion

In this chapter aspects related to the structure/organisation of the schools, and aspects related to their social/interpersonal environments, seemed to act both as facilitators and as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. It is worth noting that most of the aspects within the structures/organisation of the school were enabling teachers to foster inclusion, while only some elements within these aspects were considered as barriers. In terms of the social/interpersonal environment of schools most teachers considered the positive climate within the schools as an enabling aspect, while the non-explicit acknowledgement of teachers' inclusive efforts by superiors was considered as barrier.

In the next chapter I explore teachers' views about their professional development needs especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children. Moreover the professional development opportunities that teachers attended along with their responses towards them are examined.

CHAPTER SIX

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research sub-question of the study:

- "What are teachers' views about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children?"

In relation to this research sub-question, two main categories emerged. Teachers focused on needs related firstly, to their knowledge and skills, which is the first category, and secondly, to on-going support and collaboration, as part of their professional development, which is the second sub-category. Diagram 3 which follows, summarises these categories and their sub-categories. Each kind of needs will be addressed separately.

Diagram 3: *Teachers' views about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children*
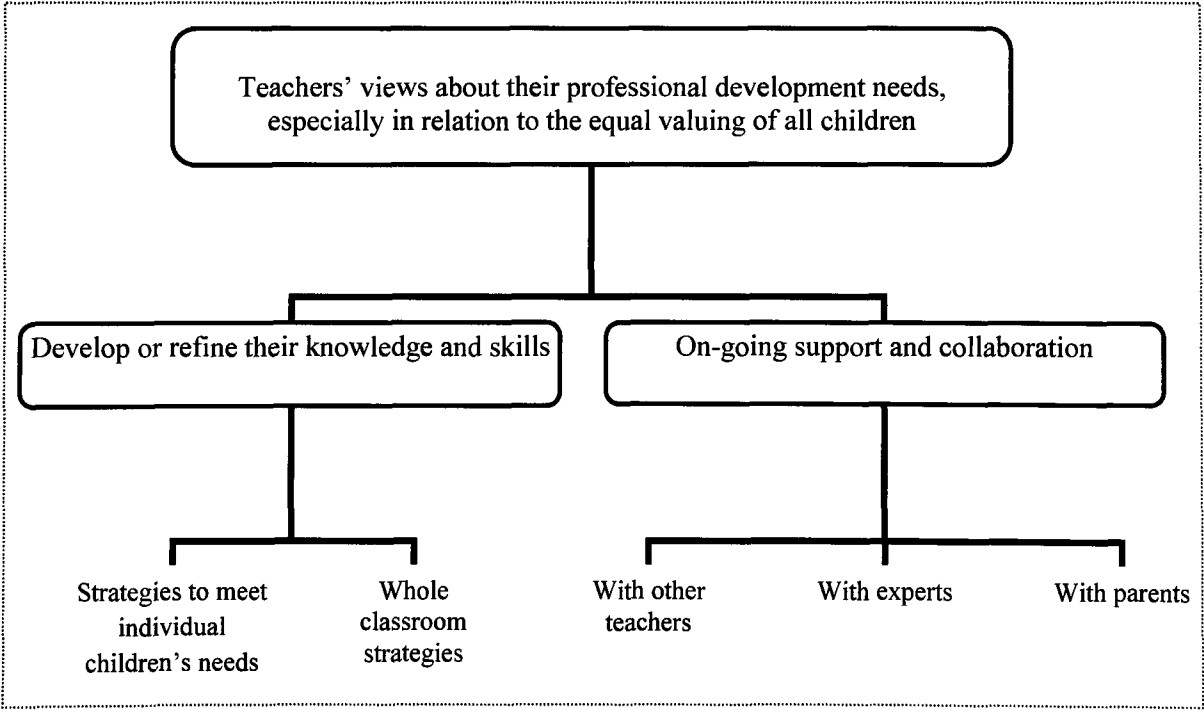
Teachers' views about their needs to develop or refine their knowledge and skills

This category involves two sub-categories: strategies to meet individual children's needs and whole classroom strategies. They will be presented below in this order:

Strategies to meet individual children's needs

Almost all teachers suggested that developing or refining their knowledge and skills in relation to teaching strategies about individual children or groups of children, is one of their most important professional development need. These strategies, based on teachers' sayings, seemed to imply that they aimed at responding to specific needs/difficulties that individual children or groups of children were considered to have.

One of these groups of children was about those children with a substantially lower attaining level, than their year group. These children based on many teachers' comments, were firstly, the children that had many 'learning gaps' from previous years, and the children that were officially registered as having SEN/ learning difficulties. The following example from the Aristotelio School is indicative of the need suggested by teachers for professional development, to address the difficulties of children that were having 'learning gaps':

Informal discussion with Mr. Panos

Panos: It is very difficult to include the children which stayed behind from previous years... I mean whose their attaining level is much lower than the standard of their year group...for example by year five they should have consolidated the multiplication tables...there are some children who still don't know them...how can I include those children in my lessons? The gaps that are gathered are too many...I mean we need professional development for that and how to deal with those situations. For example, during the assessment...I know that three children do not have the basis to respond to the level of their classroom...what am I supposed to do? They cannot follow the rest of the classroom so they don't participate or they are completely indifferent....

The interesting point in this example is that there seems to be a contradiction in the way that the teacher argued about his need. In the beginning he explained his professional development need to know how to respond to the children who's their attaining level in comparison with the requirements of their year group is lower than what it should be. However, within the last two lines, he seems to consider that

children's non-participation or their 'indifferent' stance emerge only from their attaining level. The teacher, although he recognises his own need he seems to consider that the difficulties emerge from children.

In addition to the needs of teachers in relation to the children who were considered to have 'learning gaps', some teachers expressed their needs in relation to the children that were officially registered as having SEN/learning difficulties. This is illustrated through the following representative examples from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Elina: You said that you need professional development in relation to the children that have SEN or learning difficulties...why do you think that you need that?

Christoforos: Because every classroom has such children with serious learning problems...and without gaining the necessary knowledge or skills if you like.., a teacher might try to do whatever he can but the teacher needs definitely the necessary knowledge to do that as appropriate...

The teacher in the example suggests that teachers can do what they think might work in order to respond to the children with SEN/learning difficulties in their classrooms, but they need to gain the knowledge and skills that go beyond their personal efforts. My emphasis is on the word the teacher used in order to describe these knowledge and skills. He calls them 'necessary'. The following teacher from the Aristotelio School is also arguing about that professional development need, and the example illuminates more what these necessary knowledge and skills are:

Interview with Mrs. Katia

Katia: I feel that it is really important through professional development to be in a position to understand a problem that a child may have... we may think that it is easy but it is not easy at all we need professional development to understand learning difficulties because we are not experts...

Elina: Why do you think that this will help you to equally respond to the diversity of your pupils?

Katia: Because if I know that a child has attention deficit for example, that child may need different activities or a child with dyslexia might also need different activities...I could differentiate my material for a child with dyslexia or a child with emotional issues or other deficiencies...

The teacher in the example feels that she needs professional development for children with SEN or with learning difficulties, in order firstly to be able to understand the needs of these children. This might refer to her knowledge/understanding of such kind of needs. Second, she refers to her need to be able to differentiate her teaching activities and material, and these might refer to the skills that she needs to develop along with her knowledge. However, an important point from this example is the use of the word 'deficiencies' by the teacher to refer to children's needs. This implies a child-centred focus something which might indicate that although the teacher considers her needs along with the children's needs the educational difficulties are thought to emerge from children's 'deficiencies'.

In addition to teachers' perceived professional development needs, in relation to children with lower attaining level than their year group, they also felt that they needed to know how to teach the children that were having Greek as a second or as a foreign language. That emerged more strongly in the Socratio Primary school as the following examples indicate:

Interview with Mr. Achilleas

Achilleas:...the majority of children in this school have Greek as a second language and many times children face many difficulties especially in grammar something which is taken for granted for the Greek Cypriot children, therefore we need to see those children in a different way and what is that way? No one has ever told us...therefore this kind of professional development is extremely important.

The teacher acknowledges the language barriers that children are having and argues for professional development in order to help him to find the ways to deal with that. Another example from the same school is the following:

Interview with Mrs. Emily

Emily: I definitely need professional development on how to meet the needs of children who don't know the Greek language I may need to learn also some foreign languages or at least some difficult terms that the children cannot understand...I need to find the ways to help those children...

In a similar way to the previous example, the teacher emphasises the need to learn ways to deal with the children that did not know the Greek language. She considered also learning herself a new language that might help her deal with that issue.

The difficulties that emerged in their classrooms on a daily basis from my observations show the complexities that were created, and possibly the reason, why teachers suggested that they needed professional development for responding to the needs of children coming from other countries. The following incident, from the Socratio School, may be considered as an extreme example of those difficulties and this is why it was also considered as critical:

Critical incident/event:
Date: 6/5/09 *Time:9:25* *Focus of the event: I speak to her in English and she explains to her classmate in Russian!*
What precipitated the event: *The teacher explains to the children the exercise and tells them to work silently.*
What took place: *I hear the teacher talk in English: "Petroula you will have to write in your notebook your thoughts about the excursion that we had when we visited the museum ok?" Petroula waves yes the teacher then adds "Please translate this to Nikolina." Petroula says to the child in a foreign language that was sitting next to her something, and the child takes her notebook out of her bag.*
Outcomes: *The children are writing in their notebooks.*
Notes on the interviews with participants: *Elina: Why did you talk in English to that child?* *Teacher: There is a very complex issue in my classroom... with the issue of language and this is why I reacted a bit when they told me that they will send in my classroom another child that doesn't know the Greek language.* *Elina: You reacted?* *Teacher: Yes...I was concerned and I was not very positive to that because Petroula doesn't know Greek at all but she knows a bit English...so, I have partly solve the problem with that but then Nikolina came who speaks only Russian. Petroula knows the Russian language so I talk in English to Petroula and Petroula translates that to Nikolina in Russian...things are very complex.*

Although the teacher does not explicitly argue in that incident for professional development in order to be able to deal with such situations, she expressed her concerns about the difficulties. Moreover, it was clear from that example that the teacher herself tried to solve the difficulty the way that she thought that it was going to help. She used the child who knew the language as a resource for addressing the difficulty that she was facing in the classroom, given the language barriers. This is a similar situation, to the situation that a teacher at the Aristotelio School had to deal with, when she was informed about the arrival of two children from Romania that could not speak Greek at all. At a further discussion with that teacher, she said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Theodora

Theodora: You know..I am not expecting them [the children who do not know the Greek language] to reach the level of the classroom...but at least to learn something...What else can we do? Is there another way? Nobody tells us how to deal with such situations.....I don't know...

The teacher admits here, that she does not know how to deal with that situation. In addition, the issue of expectations is raised here, which links to an earlier point about the kind of expectations that teachers have for children coming from other countries. Similarly, the following example from a teacher from the Aristotelio School is indicative of teachers' needs in relation to children coming from another country:

Interview with Mr. Panos

Panos: In my classroom the children that come from other countries, face many difficulties...it is difficult to learn the language and reach the level of children of year five which is a quite demanding classroom, so these children need to make extra effort... systematic effort and I think that we are not knowledgeable enough to help them, especially during the lesson, when you have to teach in the lessons grammatical phenomena....

The teacher expresses clearly his need to gain the knowledge required so as to deal properly with the language barriers which children coming from other countries are facing.

One possible explanation for this need, as the following example from the Aristotelio School indicates, is because teachers felt that responding to children that had Greek as a second or as a foreign language, were areas, not covered adequately at their initial teacher training:

Informal discussion with Mr. Stefanos

Stefanos: ...because when I graduated I haven't done anything relevant...we didn't do back then anything about the children that have Greek as their second language and I think that we need more professional development in relation to that.

The reason expressed by this teacher in the above example, was also the view of the person, who was responsible for the ZEP schools. In particular the ZEP co-ordinator said:

Informal discussion with the ZEP co-ordinator

ZEP co-ordinator: The teachers, especially those with over 10-15 years of experience... graduated university, doing very few things about children that have Greek as their second or as a foreign language... and is really important to have professional development about it, because times are changing...more and more children from other countries will come and at some stage all of our schools will be multicultural, the times where the schools had merely Greek-Cypriot children have passed.

The ZEP co-ordinator is pointing to the professional development need of teachers to deal with their needs on how to include children that have Greek as their second or as a foreign language. Also, he stressed the urgency of such a development, in order for teachers to be in a position to respond to the changes in terms of the ethnicity of children in the Cypriot schools. This view was supported by some teachers. For example, at the Aristotelio School the following teacher said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Sofia

Sofia: I need more professional development for the ethnic minority children that have Greek as second or as a foreign language.

Elina: What makes you say that?

Sofia: Because the number of those children in the school has been increased and we are not properly prepared I think... there are many things that we still need to know or do through professional development in order to deal with their inclusion.

This is a representative example of what some of the teachers said, about their needs, in relation to the language of children from ethnic minorities.

In addition, many teachers, especially from the Socratio School, suggested, that they had another development need in relation to the children coming from other countries; how to meet these children's psychological/emotional needs, given their immigrant status. A representative example from the Socratio School follows:

<u>Interview with Mrs. Angela</u>

Angela: The first and most important aspect for me is to have professional development for meeting the psychological needs of those children coming from other countries...their emotions because based on their family background they have firstly to meet their biological needs...the situation economically is not good most of them didn't even go to the nursery school or they came in the middle of the school year...I mean we need to have children in our classroom with good psychological condition to be able to share their feelings...I need to know and have the skill to do that, in order also to be able to meet the needs of those children and include them in my classroom.

The teacher in the above example, argued about her professional development need, particularly, to develop her knowledge but also the skill, to be in a position to respond to the emotional/psychological needs of the children from ethnic minorities. It is interesting however, the assumptions expressed about these children, and their family background, economic status, the time that they arrived in Cyprus, in relation to their perceived psychological needs. It seems that all these child-related factors are thought to be factors which influence children's psychological condition and the reasons why the teacher considers that she needs professional development in order to respond to such a condition.

In addition to the psychological/emotional needs of children from ethnic minorities, another professional development need expressed by many teachers, was about meeting 'difficult' psychological/emotional needs of children. I use the word difficult to describe the complex situations, as teachers suggested, that some children were experiencing, which were having an explicit impact on children's behaviour/actions in the school. The teachers that were aware of those situations, expressed the need to have professional development, on how to deal with them, in order to help these children in the school. The following discussion with a teacher from the Aristotelio School is a clear example of the connection between difficult psychological/emotional children's needs with the teacher's expression of the need to have professional development about it:

<u>Informal discussion with Mrs. Ira</u>

Ira: I had an art lesson before, and I told to the children to draw their feelings. Three of them drew grief and they had only black colour on their drawings, broken windows and they wrote unhappy. I know that they have problems at home because I talked to them and they told me some things...Aristos' parents are divorced, while

Sofronis told me that his parents are fighting..Simos also has a problem with his appearance because he has the illness of remaining dwarf. Although I know their situation I was surprised by the strength that these situations have in children's psychology and how much they are influenced by that...

Elina: How do you deal with these issues?

Ira: You show understanding on such issues...school is not only about knowledge...but unfortunately in such situations we are alone...We do whatever we think... Unfortunately we did not have specific professional development about how to respond to the emotional/ psychological needs of children. Simos especially faces discriminatory –name- calling. And although I try to approach him, he never talks to me...He is the only child that doesn't let me to help him..What am I supposed to do in such situations? I have another child also in my classroom that her father passed-away last year and most of the time she is absent-minded...So there is a diversity of psychological emotional situations in my classroom and I don't know, I am not able to respond to that. I need professional support.

The above discussion illuminates the need of teachers, to respond to the diversity of the psychological and emotional needs of children. The way that the teacher described what happened with children's drawings was unique, in terms that it captured the strength of children's feelings and the important professional development need of teachers to respond to those as appropriate. Also, this teacher expresses not just the need for knowledge about how to respond to the children's needs, but also support in doing so.

Further, many teachers expressed their need, in relation to dealing with challenging behaviour by children with diverse psychological needs. This is indicated in the following example from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani: I really feel that we need intensive professional development about children's behaviour...that needs a lot of work.

Elina: The behaviour...

Stefani: ...yes because there is a diversity of behaviours for different psychological reasons and I think that we need professional development for being able to value equally all the children...

Elina: Why do you think that?

Stefani: Because I think that if you have at least some kind of knowledge about the child's behaviour....where do the different behaviours come from... you can develop the proper skills and help by doing diverse things...I think that it is not right to

implement random strategies that we came up without having professional knowledge.

The teacher in the example expressed the need of developing the knowledge and skills, so as to be able to respond to the diversity of children's behaviour. She also assumes that the diversity of behaviours is based on different psychological reasons. So, according to this teacher, knowledge of the psychological factors that create particular behaviours and the necessary strategies to cope with them are important professional development needs. The following incident is an example which indicates the professional development need of teachers to know how to respond to complex psychological/emotional children's situations.

Critical incident/event:
Date:26/03/09 Time:10:55 *Focus of the event: Chrisanthos is a very difficult situation...*
What precipitated the event: *It is almost time for the school day to finish. I am in the staffroom and I am ready to leave.*
What took place: *I see outside of a classroom that Chrisantos is throwing a bag outside of the window, then Antonis comes out crying and the teacher goes next to him and helps him to gather the stuff and the bag..After a while, a woman comes and talks with the teacher and looks upset...She takes Antonis from the hand and they leave.... the bell rings and the children run out of the classroom...*
Outcomes: *The teacher sits alone with Chrisantos and they talk. Chrisantos leaves and the teacher comes in the staffroom and we talk.*
Informal discussion with the teacher *Teacher: Did you see what happen?* *Elina: What?* *Teacher: Chrisanthos five minutes before the end of the lesson had a fight with Antonis and he threw his bag out of the window...Antonis' mother was outside because she waited for him and she saw what happened and very upset she came and we talked....she started complaining about Chrisanthos' behaviour and that he*

> *doesn't want him next to her child and that she will talk to the head etc etc...*
>
> *Elina: What did you do?*
>
> *Teacher: You know...Chrisanthos is a very difficult situation...we all know it but it's not just that...do you know what he told me in the morning? That his mother hit him very badly because his older brother had a fight with her and...this happens regularly...his mother works until late in a club...he has not father...I don't know if this is the reason why he acts like that...but I am very concerned... it never happened to me to have such a difficult situation before although it did happen to have children with behavioural problems in the past I never had such a situation I don't have the experience in such situations...I really need to talk to the head to see what we are going to do.*

The teacher recognises her lack of experience to deal with the complex situation she encounters, although she understands the possible link between the difficult behaviour of the child and his emotional needs. Also, she admits that she needs help to know how to deal with complex situations. In the following example from the Aristotelio School, the need of teachers to know 'how to deal with and meet' or 'to respond to' such behavioural problems, related to both teachers' knowledge and skills, is clearly expressed by the teacher:

Interview with Mrs. Kalli

Kalli: I feel that I need professional development on how to respond to the needs of children with problematic behaviour...I mean how can I help Antonis...you saw how he is in the music lesson... in what ways can I do this... I would like as an educator to develop the knowledge and skill that will enable me, as music teacher, to respond equally to the needs of all the children...and be able to provide activities for all of them...This is what I feel that I need...

This example explicitly mentions both knowledge and skills to respond to each child equally. There is also a linking by the teacher of this professional development need to inclusion.

In addition, a further example from the Aristotelio School is presented below, which expresses the need of teachers for both knowledge and skills through professional development to respond to a broad diversity of behaviours which may relate to emotional needs, such as shyness and not just difficult behaviours:

Interview with Mrs. Stauri

Elina: Why do you think that you need professional development for keeping discipline in a classroom with a diversity of behaviours?

Stauri: I think that we face every day, different behaviours...children who are aggressive...children who not talk at all shy children...children with no respect etc...and I think that we need to develop the skill to keep discipline... and in order to keep discipline you need to know how to respond to all these different behaviours with the proper way and all at the same time...and this is difficult but I think that this is our most important need.

The specific skill that the teacher mentions is to keep discipline in the classroom, which involves diverse behaviours. As the teacher admits this is her most important need. However, such expression of a broader need was not common.

Finally, a professional development need which is included in the sub-category about strategies to meet individual children's needs, perceived by teachers, was how to respond to children that were considered to have a substantially higher attaining level than their year group. The teachers that expressed the need for knowledge and skill to meet the needs of 'more able' children were few. The examples below from the Aristotelio School illustrate this:

Interview with Mrs Melina:

Melina: I would like to be trained about how to respond to the needs of more able children...the children who are in a different level than their year group much higher...because I think that we do not give to them the proper attention and it would be good to have a professional development on how to respond to their needs too.

Elina: Let us talk more about it...why do you think that you need...?

Melina: Because I feel that the way that we are doing our lessons are more about the average pupils...there are also the reinforcement sessions for the weak pupils so I think that these children...children that may have a talent as well are more able we don't have the required skilfulness to promote them, to help them go a step further so they do not get I think from us the same opportunities or the opportunities which respond to their needs...

A similar example is the following:

Interview with Mrs Rodoula

Rodoula: I think that we need professional development on how to include children...not only the weak pupils...I mean more about the children who are high attaining are more able than others....

Elina: Why do you think that?

Rodoula: Because I met many children who are high attaining and are still not included...maybe because they get bored from our lessons because they find it easy...I think that we need to be trained about how to give in our lessons equal opportunities to those children as well what activities can we use to make them be interested...what aspect shall we focus more and in what ways...such kind of stuff...

Both teachers link their professional development knowledge and skill needs in relation to inclusion aspects such as equal opportunities, and this is more explicitly referred to within the second example. However, their comments in relation to children's attainment seem to be influenced by the implicit academic hierarchy presented in chapter four, which classified children in excellent, average and weak pupils based on their attainment. So, the dominant beliefs of teachers about children seem to influence the expression of such teachers' need.

In conclusion, this sub-category coverage, was about teachers' expressed need for knowledge and skills, in order to meet individual children's needs such as children with 'learning gaps' or SEN/learning difficulties; children from ethnic minorities who had Greek as a second or as a foreign language, along with their psychological needs; to the psychological/emotional difficulties of some children; to the children with challenging behaviour; and those who were considered as more able. It is interesting that the way that teachers perceived their professional development needs appeared to link to their beliefs and the dominant value systems as reported in chapter four. Teachers generally referred to children in a categorical way and argued about their professional development needs for both knowledge and skills in order to respond to the needs of these categories of children. Within many teachers' arguments the emphasis on child-related factors as the main reasons for children's educational difficulties were intertwined with their expressed professional development needs. Nevertheless, the need for the development of knowledge and skills in relation to whole classroom strategies were also referred to and are presented below.

Whole classroom teaching strategies

As expressed by most of the teachers, whole classroom teaching strategies were the group work, the differentiation of the lesson and the promoting of intercultural/multicultural education.

In relation to group work, at the Aristotelio School, the children in all the classrooms were separated into five to six groups of children, except from one classroom that was separated into two big groups. The groups of children were of 'mixed- ability'. At the Socratio School half of the classrooms had the children separated in groups and the other classrooms were separated into three vertical rows, having one desk behind another or in horizontal and vertical rows at the U shape. In both schools, most of the teachers suggested that they felt that group work was not carried out as it should be, when the children were sitting in groups. The following teacher from the Aristotelio School explains to me why she considers that she needs to know how to carry out group work.

Interview with Mrs. Sofia
Sofia: ....we have the children being in groups sometimes just to say that we have groups, although there is collaboration but sometimes due to the fact that each group of children in the classroom is of mixed-ability, it is only the good pupil the excellent pupil that benefits...who moves on... we could be shown other ideas...

The teacher feels that not all children benefit from group work the way that this is carried out, and alternative ideas could be provided about it. Some teachers' comments linked their decision to not use groups, to the need for more knowledge and skills in making groups work as the example from the Aristotelio School:

Informal discussion with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: I don't have the children separated in groups because I don't believe in groups when these are not working.

Elina: Have you tried it?

Nikolas: Yes and it wasn't working and it also distracted the children from the lesson...the truth is that we need professional development about that because I think it requires a particular skill to make the children work in groups...

The view of this teacher in the above example, that teachers need to develop their skills, in order to make children's groups work, can be supported by the successful examples of group work that I observed happening in very few instances with a particular teacher at the Aristotelio School. Although I cannot present here the whole lesson I will present some aspects of the lesson, which showed that the teacher had the knowledge and skill to do it and it worked.

Field notes: Greek lesson

The classroom is separated into five groups.....the teacher says to the children co-ordinators to share the handouts......She explains the instructions and says to the children: "read firstly individually and then discuss each point in your group. Each of you should say at least two points to the child that is responsible for writing, to write it in the group's notebook". The children start talking and a child is writing.....The teacher moves around the classroom from group to group and seems to facilitate children's conversations....she notes that a boy is working individually and says loudly to all the children: "the children who are working individually will have to write their work two times, since they will have to include what they did in the group's notebook". The boy shows to the other children what he wrote....She notices that a girl does not participate and gives her some ideas to talk in her group....She says to the children towards the end of the lesson: "Now I want the presenters of each group to come in-front and present the findings..."After the presentation, a discussion is carried out among the whole classroom,...particular children are participating quite often and the teacher encourages them with prompts while she co-ordinates the discussion...Towards the end of the lesson the teacher tells to the children to make the regular arrangements that they do in order to meet in the afternoon and finish the group work.

The approach that the teacher followed in a successful way from my point of view, was allowing for an equal valuing of all the children; equal opportunities were given to all the children, the children that were having difficulties were helped while the other children were also promoted. An enhancement of collaboration and support among the children was also encouraged. The teacher in this example seemed to have the knowledge and skill to make the groups of children work.

Another professional development need of teachers, which relates to whole classroom strategies, is differentiation of the lesson. Some teachers suggested that this is something that they need to work on within their professional development. An indicative example, which summarises what most of the teachers suggested in both schools is the following example from the Socratio School:

Interview with Mrs. Loukia

Loukia: I am not sure about how to make differentiation...It is very difficult to be successful with that. I think that you follow a basic line which is for the average pupils and then you simplify it for the weak pupils or you make it a bit more difficult for the excellent pupils I am not sure and I think that it is something important that we must not neglect that we need professional development for that... no one doubts this...

The teacher in this example emphasises her need to differentiate the teaching and the education material, in order to equally respond to all the children. What it is

interesting to point out however, is that differentiation was based only on children's attainment, and in particular to the academic hierarchy related to high, average and low children's attainment. This is how almost all the teachers perceived the differentiation strategy.

The need of teachers to learn how to promote intercultural/multicultural education is another whole classroom strategy which was explicitly expressed by some teachers at both schools. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

Interview with Mrs. Ntina

I think that promoting intercultural education is a skill that we cannot ignore in our profession...and it is important I think because due to the close society of Cyprus we do not have knowledge around other cultures and civilisations from which we could learn, and children also could learn from us...We don't know how to do this...how to use cultural diversity in the classroom what we call intercultural education and give the opportunity to children coming from other countries being more actively involved....

The teacher refers to the society of Cyprus, which has recently started to accommodate people from other countries, and the ignorance of other cultures and civilisations. The most interesting point is the need suggested by the teacher to learn to use this cultural diversity, in ways that promote intercultural education. A similar example from the same school is the following:

Interview with Mrs. Antria:

Antria: I feel that I need professional development on how to promote multicultural education. I believe that I need that skill because Cyprus belongs to European Union and our school nowadays involve children coming from different countries. There are not any more schools with only Cypriot children. You will find many children coming from England, Russia, Bulgaria, and Syria...so, we need to know how to respond to their culture and how to promote it along with our own culture.

The teacher refers to the need to respond and promote the cultures of all children. Not surprisingly, this was a professional development need that many of the teachers at the Socratio School mentioned. The following example is representative:

Interview with Mr. Nikolas

Nikolas: I think that we need professional development on how to promote multicultural education because at the university level the kind of knowledge that we got was not enough to help us here... and although I know some strategies in relation to having Greek as a second or as a foreign language I know nothing on how to

integrate those children in our culture...but also to preserve their character...I think that we need a lot of practice in relation to that.

The teacher emphasises his need to learn how to promote multicultural education and to help children to preserve their cultural identity while they are being integrated into the Cypriot culture. An important for inclusion point is that the teacher appears to acknowledge that the diversity of cultures should be preserved and promoted to the school.

Overall, the sub-category of teachers' need to develop their knowledge and skills about whole classroom strategies, involved strategies such as the group work, the differentiation and the promotion of intercultural/multicultural education. It was evident that children's abilities/attainment and ethnicity were considered the basis on which teachers' needs for knowledge and skills in relation to whole classroom strategies were based. The following category is another kind of professional development needs, suggested by teachers, that relates to on-going support and collaboration.

Teachers' views about their needs for on-going support and collaboration as part of their professional development

Teachers expressed their need to be engaged with different forms of collaboration with other teachers, experts, and parents, as part of their professional development. According to teachers, these could support them, and gradually enable them to improve themselves in relation to valuing equally children's diversity. Each kind of on-going support and collaboration with teachers, experts and parents is presented below:

Ongoing support and collaboration with other teachers

In terms of support and collaborations with other teachers, these were separated into two aspects: with other teachers in the same school and with teachers in other schools as follows:

Ongoing support and collaboration with other teachers in the same school

Most of the teachers, suggested that they would like to exchange classroom visits with other teachers in the school. For example, at the Aristotelio School teachers said:

Informal discussion in the staffroom

I am in the staffroom during the break Mrs. Avgi tells me:

Avgi: Do you know how much I would like to do what you are doing in the school...? I mean to see other teachers' way of teaching and how they are responding to different pupils that we have in our classroom...You are very lucky...we actually don't do it... and I wish there could be some way to do that systematically... I could see another teacher for example of year five and another teacher could come and observe my lesson.

Similarly another teacher said:

Interview with Mrs. Katia

Katia: I would really love to be able to be in a literacy lesson and see a colleague... how he/she teaches... this could help me very much. Unfortunately, we don't do that and it would be really helpful, because we are not the same persons, even though we are all teachers and we are teaching the same things... maybe a teacher is more qualified than others or he/she might be able to realise better what children need and found the ways to deal with them effectively...I could observe their lessons or they could come and visit my classroom and give me feedback...I could also give them feedback without of course doing that in a competitive way but as part of our professional development...

In both examples, the teachers expressed their wish to be able to exchange classroom visits with their colleagues as part of their professional development. They feel that there are many advantages in that. In particular, the teacher in the second example considered feedback, through teachers' mutual observations as important in dealing more effectively with children.

Moreover, some teachers suggested that at the classroom level they could try to experiment different ways of teaching and then reflect on them and compare the results as part of an ongoing professional development. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Ira: In the form of collaboration also, we could plan a different lesson together, we could then try to apply this in our classrooms... and then we could discuss and

compare the results...something like reflection... this provides also support, you don't feel alone while you cover your needs.

Another example is the following:

Interview with Mrs. Ntina

Ntina:... My point is that what we might listened to in a seminar or in a conference we need to try to do that in practice in our classrooms...we need to take that risks and experiment with that and then see if they worked or not... and then we need to meet together and discuss...for example how do you differentiate your teaching in order to include them all? You are given two or three ways... we need to carry these ways in practice and see how it goes.. if it does make a difference... and then we need to meet and reflect back to our effort... has it worked? What went wrong or what went well? And the teachers who might be more successful they could tell or show to the others how to do this... if no one was successful, then we need to rethink the approach from the beginning...this is what I consider meaningful professional development.

In these examples teachers seem to need such kind of classroom based collaboration for them, to support each other in their attempts to try something different or new. The need for this support can also be understood, by the use of the term risk, which possibly implies the possible difficulties that might be involved, and the need of teachers not to feel alone when they attempt something new or different. Also, mutual reflection as part of this process appears as necessary, since in both examples, it is suggested as a way of moving forward with their efforts. It is also noticeable in the second extract, the suggestion of the teacher that her colleagues who have been more successful in such efforts, need to show to the other teachers the approach which is more successful.

In addition, the following examples relate to another kind of support and collaboration among teachers, in the same school. It is that of observing a lesson in their classrooms, carried out by the teachers who are considered as more 'experienced teachers' as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Fani: The teachers who are more experienced or more qualified they could come in my classroom and do some lessons regularly, while I am observing, this would make me understand better what I need to do...

Similarly, another teacher said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Sofia as part of the member check process

Sofia: I feel that we need to take advantage of the already existing expertise, for example, some teachers have masters or doctorates in a particular issue which relates to children...we could observe those people's lessons regularly because they might find a better way to approach things in the classroom and we could be able to select techniques that could also help us...

Observing more experienced teachers, either in their own classrooms or in these teachers' classrooms was seen as a way of moving forward, and dealing with the issues that teachers had to face in their classrooms.

In addition to that comment, some teachers also suggested another activity among the teachers, as part of their professional development. This was the involvement in collaborative whole school activities, with other colleagues in the school, as the following teacher from the Aristotelio School suggests:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: I feel that the whole school needs to collaborate...and respond to all these different children...collectively all the teachers...classroom by classroom we could observe each other regularly to see the difficulties that exists in each classroom and suggest ways for dealing with that...I think that all together could do a great work...

The teacher here suggests that all the teachers should collaborate in order to solve each other's difficulties, classroom by classroom, meaning that they should all try together for each classroom to help each teacher, in relation to the difficulty that he/she faces.

Another activity that involves all the teaching staff is the following from a teacher at the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mr. Iakobos

Iakobos: What I feel that could work is something that I did in the past in another school for another issue.... is to carry out action research all together... for example, [in the other school] we defined 'creativity' we discussed the ways you can find creativity and then we moved to a qualitative research... I taught a lesson based on what we discussed I organised further lessons, and I prepared the appropriate educational material. After I did all these in practice, I made my conclusions....Finally, we met all together based on our experiences we discussed our conclusions and we shared our ideas on how to improve them..

The teacher in the example refers to a previous experience related to an action research project, which he carried out, in another school for another issue. He presents an interesting way of ongoing support and collaboration, that teachers could try, in order to share their ideas and improve themselves, in relation to responding equally to children's diversity. Although this seems difficult it was not impossible as the teacher said.

In addition to the collaboration with teachers in the same school, teachers suggested that they would like to collaborate with other teaching staff in other schools as follows.

Ongoing support and collaboration with other primary schools' teaching staff

Some teachers suggested that they needed as part also of their professional development to visit other schools and meet other teachers. For example, at the Aristotelio School, one teacher suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Avgi

Avgi: I feel also that observing other teachers in other schools and in other contexts is beneficial, because it can give you an alternative way of thinking about children... because you usually compare what you do in your school with what you see...

Another teacher said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Ioulia

Ioulia: It would be useful if there was a flexible zone organised by the Ministry that would enable our professional development for issues related to that...of equally responding to all the children.

Elina: Can you talk to me about it what do you mean by a flexible zone?

Ioulia: I mean that in different schools there could be trained teachers for the equal valuing of all the children and we could be given the opportunity to apply and visit those teachers in other schools, to observe their lessons or to help us...I mean for example teachers that work in ZEP schools are more experienced or have taken more professional development than us, about the children coming from other countries. It would be useful if we visited their schools and observe their lessons. Or even by discussing with them I think that we could still benefit and this knowledge can then be transferred to our school.

In both examples the idea of visiting other school contexts was suggested. In the second example however, the teacher suggests an interesting idea of increasing

interaction through what she calls a flexible zone between different teachers in various schools. In particular, she refers to the ZEP schools and the possible benefits that teachers could have by visiting those schools in relation to responding equally to children's diversity in terms of ethnicity. Another teacher from the same school said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Katia

Elina: You mentioned in one of our conversations a programme that was offered online...

Katia: Yes, it was a programme that had to do with interaction with other teachers in other schools and we could all communicate and discuss about various issues and the issue of responding to diversity was one of them...it's a kind of support that you get from other teachers in other school contexts.

The teacher based on her experiences suggested that interaction with other teachers that are teaching in other contexts can be supportive even if that is online.

Therefore, different forms of ongoing support and collaboration with other teachers, either in the same or in other schools were suggested by teachers, as part of their professional development needs. The following section is about the suggested by teachers support and collaboration with experts.

Ongoing support and collaboration with experts

Based on teachers' sayings experts were considered the visiting experts, such as the education psychologists, and special education teachers, the inspector and the university personnel. Many teachers suggested that they need to have ongoing support and collaboration with the experts.

One form of collaboration with experts that teachers suggested was focusing on the need for expert observation in the classroom, so that the expert could understand the needs of teachers. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative of this:

Informal discussion with Mr. Panos

Panos: Beyond those seminars, the experts...the education psychologists, or other specialists the special teachers could observe systematically a classroom which faces many problems and they could understand better the situation of the teachers they could make their conclusions and then they could talk to us...to support us...so

we really need to be able to say that we face 1...2..3 difficulties in the classroom and we need someone expert or specialized to come into our classrooms and help us...

A similar example is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mr. Nikos*</u>

Nikos: It could be better if the experts who are coming to our school were getting into the classroom to observe our lessons because although they might not see ten different kind of behaviours that I need to deal every day and they might see three they could still observe the children during breaks or in other lessons and then the education psychologist for example could discuss with me...I could say my views and he/she could advise me based on real time and real settings.

It seems that the teachers in the examples feel that if the experts observe by themselves a situation, they will be in a position to support them better. The main point from these examples therefore, is the need for expert observation in the classroom. Also, it is noticeable within the last sentence of the second example, that the teacher considers this kind of expert individual support better, because as he denotes, it is based on real needs and real time and settings, meaning that it could be closer to his daily experience. This is something that was pointed out by most of the teachers who suggested this kind of support and collaboration by experts.

Moreover, many teachers suggested that they would like in relation to the difficulties that they face in their classrooms, to have personalised support from experts. They supported that what they needed is to be in a position, when they need support, to be able to arrange a meeting with them, in order to discuss the difficulties that they have. The following examples from Aristotelio indicate this:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Victoria*</u>

Victoria:...what could help us are the experts to be responsible for particular schools and a teacher to be able to make an appointment for a meeting with them and discuss his/her particular needs...

Another example is the following:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Antria*</u>

Antria: ...we need their [the experts'] support systematically, to advise our school 2-3 times per week so as to be able to meet with them and guide us...advise us what to do...something like private lessons, to be able to tell them what is bothering us to talk about several issues that come up every day with different children...only in this way

I feel that we can improve ourselves in relation to all this diversity that we see in our schools...

The additional point in this example, in relation to the need for a more personalised support from experts, is that teachers need this support to be regular and systematic.

Further, it was suggested by almost all the teachers that they would like the experts 'modelling' the strategies that teachers needed to learn. In other words, teachers suggested observing the experts dealing in their classrooms with the issues that they have to face daily. The following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate this:

Interview with Mr. Stefanos

Elina: So... you would like those experts to visit...

Stefanos: Yes, to visit our school, and have some seminars...but not theoretical... It did happen for an education psychologist to visit our school for a very 'difficult child', but she didn't help...

Elina: Why?

Stefanos: Well...she came for a very problematic...child...The whole school was concerned about him...We tried everything...and when she came she just told us what the books were saying...theories that we are all familiar with...and another teacher who was upset with that, she said "Come in my classroom and show us..." My point here is that theories are good, but I want to see things happening in practice...I want practical things...

The teacher suggests that experts should get into teachers' classrooms and show in practice the strategies that they are advising them to follow. Teachers seem that they do appreciate what they are being told, but they cannot be convinced if they do not see them being carried out in practice.

Finally, another example of an ongoing support and collaboration suggested by many teachers is that of regular experiential workshops organised by experts for all the staff. The following example, which summarises almost all the ideas that most of the teachers suggested in relation to that, is from the Aristotelio School:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia: We need all these specialists, education psychologists, special teachers, the inspector, that come into the school, to discuss with us and based on that to create experiential workshops where they could give us in groups several problems to solve

to discuss and exchange ideas based on theories that we may have learned about... for example group work in the classroom and examine to what extent can these theories actually help the particular difficulties that we have in our classrooms.... and then those experts could add to what we already know and give us an alternative guideline in relation to our difficulties for inclusion how we can move on and solve them...

The idea of all the staff of the particular school being involved in school-based experiential workshops is being discussed here, and interesting ideas are brought into the fore, such as, the collaboration among the staff to solve in groups issues that relate to inclusion and the consideration of theoretical aspects to the particular context of the school with the support of the experts. Moreover, another teacher from the same school suggested that such ways of professional development should be ongoing:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: It could be also useful for example in our school, to have experts sent by the Pedagogical Institute every month to organise professional development, preferably experiential workshops in the school for different issues related to the diversity of pupils, or to coordinate teachers for organising their own professional development...to choose the issues and preferred ways for their delivery...

Another point is being discussed here in addition to the above, which is, the experts coordinating the teachers, to organise their own professional development in the school, based on their preferred issues and ways of delivery, on a systematic basis.

Another teacher also suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Lydia

Lydia:...I think that the people working at the university are experts and they could help us...I mean....to show us some videos of successful practice or to show us in the classroom particular techniques for those children in relation to the whole ....and then with other teachers who have similar difficulties in the form of workshops to work together to prepare sample lessons exchange ideas and then the expert people could add on that advice us...support us...

In those examples the need of teachers to be supported systematically from the university personnel is suggested. Different ways of such an ongoing support and collaboration as part of their professional development are suggested.

Ongoing support and collaboration with parents

In terms of the ongoing support and collaboration as part of their professional development a few teachers from the Aristotelio School, suggested that the involvement of parents could be helpful. The examples below are indicative of this:

Interview with Mrs. Rania

Rania: It could be interesting and helpful I think to have parents being involved to our professional development in a more active way...I feel that we could do some experiential workshops together, and each one could understand the other's person position, or in the classroom the parents can actually come and observe lessons and then discuss different ways to approach their children... they could learn from us, but we could also learn from them aspects that we may never thought.

Another teacher also suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Maroula

Maroula: I feel that we need to collaborate with parents, in order to have their support...and be able to respond to the needs of their children in a better way...for example we could actually watch together videos with children in the classroom... different kind of behaviours, and ways to respond to that...or they could come in the classroom and help us also understand better if our methods help their child... for example when a child doesn't raise his/her hand, I insist and I try to make the child say something in order to make the child feel that he/she contributes to the lesson...but does the child actually feel in that way or he doesn't like it all? The parents can help me in that, either by discussing with their children or by knowing his/her reactions better than I do...so discussions may evolve about what is happening in the classroom, and I could improve myself in relation to responding to the diversity of children...

In the examples, the teachers suggested that they would like parents to be involved in their professional development through collaborative activities. The perceived advantages are discussed in these examples. The main reason for this suggestion is their assumption, that parents can help them understand and respond appropriately to their own children.

In concluding the second kind of teachers' professional development needs, it was evident that teachers need different forms of ongoing support and collaboration, especially with other teachers and with experts, while less emphasis was given to collaboration with parents as part of their professional development. Also, it was evident that the kind of collaboration that teachers emphasised was school-based, either in the classroom, or through whole school activities.

Conclusion

The views of teachers about their professional development needs, especially in relation to the equal valuing of all children were explored in this research sub-question. Two kind of professional development needs emerged; to develop or refine their knowledge and skills in relation to strategies about individual children and in relation to whole classroom strategies. The second kind of professional development was that of an ongoing support and collaboration with other teachers, experts and parents. Having in mind teachers' views about their professional development needs it is interesting to explore the kind of professional development opportunities that they attended or initiated and their responses towards them. These are explored through the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research sub-question:

- "What professional development opportunities did teachers attend and how do they respond to these opportunities?"

This is the final research sub-question, which is concerned with the professional development opportunities that teachers attended and also, their responses to these opportunities. Some of these opportunities will be indicated additionally with frequency tables, so as to have an overview, of the range of opportunities that teachers attended. However, teachers' responses towards these opportunities will be presented and analysed, in a qualitative way, as with the other research sub-questions.

The opportunities that are presented in this section, emerged based on what teachers said, which may have also been from previous years of working in other settings, or opportunities that were initiated by them. Also, these opportunities emerged, based on my observations; what I observed being carried out in the schools and the opportunities that were given to the teachers in the schools, since announcements about these were put on a board in the staffroom. Responses refer to teachers' actions and their meaning making in relation to the different opportunities that were offered and attended, or initiated by them. It needs to be clarified here, that several professional development opportunities were presented to the teachers, but this section is only about the opportunities that teachers attended or initiated, and have been associated by them, to their professional development needs, in relation to inclusion. Such opportunities were separated under three main categories: general/ wide opportunities, school-based opportunities and individual opportunities. Each of them will be presented separately, including an illustration of the kind of

opportunities that emerged and teachers' responses in relation to that. Diagram 4 below, summarises the main categories and their sub-categories:

Diagram 4: *The professional development opportunities that teachers attended or initiated*
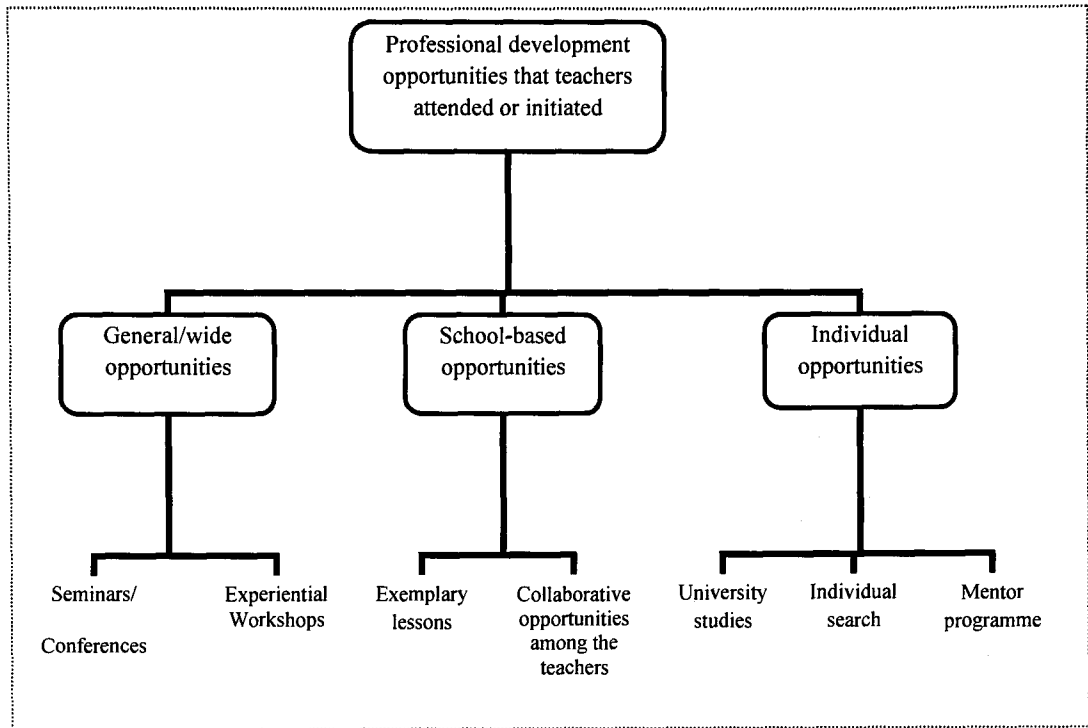
General/wide opportunities

The general/ wide professional development opportunities involve the opportunities, which were organised mainly by the MOEC, the Pedagogical Institute and other organisations, and were offered in a Pan-Cyprian or in a district/ local level. They were open to all teachers with few exceptions, and were also optional. Therefore, it largely depended on teachers, whether to take up such opportunities or not. Such kinds of opportunities were: the seminars/conferences and the experiential workshops, presented below.

Seminars/Conferences

Seminars and conferences, based on what teachers suggested, along with the documents that I collected, were the most often and usual professional development opportunities that were offered to teachers. Although seminars and conferences are by definition not the same kind of opportunities, teachers were using these terms interchangeably when they referred to them, and this is why they have not also been

separated in this section. Various topics were covered through these opportunities, but what will be presented here are the seminars/conferences that teachers attended either in the year that the study was carried out or in previous years, and were directly or indirectly linked by them to their professional development needs in relation to inclusion. These were grouped under five thematic areas: seminars/conferences, 1. about children and their behaviour/ behavioural problems, 2. about children from ethnic minorities, 3. about children with learning difficulties/SEN, 4. about children with psychological difficulties, and 5. about issues related to children's diversity. They are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *The extent of taking up afternoon optional seminars and conferences*

	Professional development opportunity		
	Seminars/ conferences		
	Thematic area	Extent of take up by teachers at the Aristotelio Primary school	Extent of take up by teachers at the Socratio Primary school	Total
1.	About children and their behaviour/ behavioural problems	14	2	16
2.	About children from ethnic minorities	3	8	11
3.	About children with learning difficulties/SEN	8	1	9
4.	About children's psychological difficulties	5	1	6
5.	About issues related to children's diversity	3	2	5

The numbers next to the thematic opportunities, indicate the number of teachers who mentioned that they attended such kind of opportunities. It is noticeable, that from the Aristotelio primary school, most teachers attended the seminars/conferences that were related to children's behaviour, while from the Socratio primary school, most of the teachers attended opportunities related to children from ethnic minorities. The opportunities related to the psychological difficulties of children and to their diversity did not receive the same number of attendance as the other opportunities.

Teachers' responses in relation to these kinds of opportunities were about their offering time, their location, the topics/issues covered within them, and their way of delivery. Each of them is addressed below:

The offering time of seminars/conferences

Teachers' responses in relation to the time that the seminars and the conferences were offered implied that it was creating difficulties, which could act as a barrier to their attendance. In particular, almost all the teachers, in both schools, that have taken up such opportunities suggested that they preferred to use school time instead of the afternoon personal time, which was the time that most of these opportunities were offered. The following example from the Aristotelio School is particularly interesting and important and is presented here, because it summarises and shows what teachers said in relation to that issue:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Sofia*</u>

Sofia: ...but the seminars should take place during school time, in working time, I mean the teacher should be able not to go to work, for professional development purposes...because you know, sometimes the seminars which are carried out in the afternoon are optional, and depends on teacher's willingness ....and sometimes is very difficult for a teacher to dedicate personal time...

A closer look at the way that the teacher suggests why the seminars should be offered within some of their working hours, shows that she feels, that it is easier to attend them, rather than when she has to give up her personal time, in order to take up such opportunities. The most explicit reason is that teachers may have other things to do during their personal time, and this creates practical difficulties, which might prevent their attendance. The following example from the Aristotelio School will help to understand more clearly, the practical difficulties that are created, when the seminars/conferences require teachers' personal time. During our discussion about seminars/conferences that teacher said:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Lydia*</u>

Lydia:...I mean that they should be carried out during the morning hours...to be incorporated into our school time...the time that is for our professional development...

Elina: Why do you suggest this?

Lydia: Because we all have our families...our children...we have many things to do each afternoon with our children...to take them to their private lessons, to help them with their homework...so, when they tell us that a seminar for example is carried out in an afternoon, it immediately creates many difficulties...and they cannot obligate me to attend...I mean I may go, but it will be very reluctantly and in a rush...so, having a time devoted to professional development within our school time, will be better for us...

In addition to the previous example, this teacher suggests that it is difficult to dedicate personal time, and she gives some examples based on her role as a mother. It is also noticeable that she uses strong words to describe the impact that these difficulties have. When she thinks about attending an afternoon optional seminar, she says 'they cannot obligate me' and when she attends one given the difficulties, she feels that, 'it will be reluctantly', and 'in a rush'. These are indicating a quite stressful situation which might also have some negative impact in relation to teachers' attitudes towards such opportunities. Further, its importance grows when we think that almost all the teachers in both schools mentioned these practical difficulties and their impact to their attendance at these professional development opportunities.

The above examples refer mainly to the optional afternoon seminars. However, since teachers were referring to seminars and conferences interchangeably, it will be helpful to present here the issues that were related to a particular conference, which was carried out during teachers' working hours. This may allow showing the kind of difficulties that emerged in relation to the teachers' preferred time of school working hours. That was a two-day Pan-Cyprian conference, which was organised in another district, about children that had Greek as a second or as a foreign language; each school had to choose two or three teachers from its teaching staff to attend this conference, based on the number of teachers that were working in the schools respectively. In the case of the Aristotelio School, three teachers were selected after a draw, and from the Socratio Primary school two teachers were selected based on the fact that they were responsible for the reinforcement sessions. So, the first difficulty given the way that the system works is that not all the teachers can attend the same opportunity at the same time and be absent from school duties. The following extract from the Aristotelio School is from the interview of a teacher that attended that conference and it presents other kind of difficulties that are created

when teachers are not using personal but working time, as most of them suggested that they would prefer, for their professional development:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Avgi*</u>

Avgi:...for example, I went with two colleagues to the two-day conference...for these two days that I wasn't in the school the children of my classroom were separated in groups and went to other different classrooms of various year groups... so actually the other teachers had extra pupils in their classrooms until the end of the school day...beyond the fact that the children lost time from their lessons, the coverage of the curriculum stayed behind because there wasn't an official replacement of me by another teacher, since they didn't send to the school another teacher because the period of our absence was short...So, there is that disadvantage when you are not devoting personal time and I totally disagree with that approach given the way that it is carried out...it needs to be properly organised so that all the teachers can benefit from those opportunities but not to take children's time for that...

The main disadvantage which was created through this opportunity, during school time is that there was a negative impact on covering the needs of children. Although this situation lasted for a short period of time, it influenced negatively children's work in the school. So, such difficulties cannot be ignored. However, it has to be acknowledged, that this way of organisation, which was problematic, was chosen by the particular head teacher of the school, and it does not imply that it is a common practice in Cypriot schools, when teachers attend seminars/conferences during school time.

The location of the seminars/conferences

Another teachers' response in relation to the seminar/conferences was in relation to their location. Teachers in both schools suggested that they need the location of the professional development opportunities to enable their attendance. By location they meant the district in which an opportunity is carried out. The teachers that were participating in the study were working in schools in the district of Paphos and this aspect emerged quite strongly, by almost all the teachers. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are indicative:

<u>*Inteview with Mrs. Chara*</u>

Chara: There are some seminars organised by the Pedagogical Institute, which are very interesting but are practically difficult to attend, because they are carried out in other districts and this is a problem.

Likewise, another teacher said:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: Especially from Paphos this is a problem because you have to travel around to attend a professional development opportunity and this is a problem...

In both examples travelling to another district in order to attend a seminar/conference is considered a problem for teachers' attendance, given the difficulties that such travelling can create, even if the topics covered through such opportunities are interesting. The second example gives a particular emphasis on the district of Paphos and that a teacher has to travel in order to attend a professional development opportunity. This is something that I also noted on the information collected through documents, about the professional development opportunities, which were offered from the MOEC and the Pedagogical Institute. For example, in the booklet of the Pedagogical Institute which was sent to all Cypriot schools, all the available optional seminars were listed for the year 2008/09. From the seventy-two seminars that primary school teachers could attend, only three of them were carried out in the district of Paphos and teachers that wished to attend any others were obliged to travel to another district. However, this does not imply that these were the only seminars that were carried out in Paphos, since based on the documents that I collected, seminars organised by other teachers' political parties and other private institutions and organisations were also carried out in Paphos.

Topics/issues of seminars and conferences

Teachers' responses in relation to the topics which were covered through the seminars and conferences, suggested that they need to have a voice about what these topics should cover. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are representative of what teachers suggested:

Interview with Mrs. Sofia

Sofia:...sometimes the seminars are carried out by political parties so...it depends on the organisation, which will be the theme of a seminar..

Another teacher also said:

Interview with Mrs. Victoria

Victoria: The professional development opportunities that we get do not have to do with the needs that we actually have as teachers...a teacher will attend such

opportunities because those are offered.... I mean that we are not given the chance to say, I, for example, need to be trained on how to differentiate my teaching... and be able to find an opportunity and attend. No, I have to attend some opportunities because those are offered and not because I am interested... just to enrich my CV when I will be called for a promotion...but for the issues that I am really concerned I don't get any chances the time that I need them...

In the last example the voice of teachers is felt to be ignored and the reasons for attending seminars/conferences is felt not to be their actual needs and interest. This raises the issue, to what extent the seminars and conferences, which are for teachers, actually respond to what teachers feel that they need.

When I was in the field, however, at the Aristotelio School, during a staff meeting the head teacher announced that all the teachers together, should discuss and complete a questionnaire sent by the Pedagogical Institute. The questionnaire involved close-ended questions and teachers had to choose from the options that they were given, the topics which thought that were most necessary to be covered, through their professional development, and the way that they felt, that these should be delivered. This shows, that to some extent, some of the people who are responsible for teachers' professional development, attempt to obtain teachers' voices, even if in the particular example, the topics/issues given were pre-determined and a questionnaire was completed by all collaboratively and not by individual teachers.

Towards the end of the second extract, an interesting point is being made by the teacher, which refers to the timing between what is needed and when an opportunity is available to cover the need. In relation to the timing, teachers suggested that they need before or within the beginning of the school year, to be able to say what they need and be educated about it early on. The following examples from the Socratio School will be presented in order to help understand that issue better:

Interview with the ZEP co-ordinator

ZEP co-ordinator: ...but such professional development opportunities should be offered from September...from the beginning of the school year so as to prepare teachers for what is going to follow...because from the beginning of the school year when they arrange the classrooms...each teacher knows the majority of the pupils that he/she is going to teach, therefore, he/she can be educated beforehand about that... for example about children coming from other countries who don't know well

or not at all the [Greek] language...there should be from the beginning of the school year opportunities to help the teachers...

So, except in the case that a teacher is newly transferred and does not know the situation of the classroom that he/she is going to teach, it is suggested by the ZEP co-ordinator, that it is important for teachers to be educated from the beginning of the school year. In the Socratio School also, teachers suggested the following:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Athina

Athina:...such opportunities should be offered in time based on our needs.

Elina: What do you mean?

Athina: For example, me and Chrisa are working in a classroom where it involves a child with hyperactivity disorder...I mean we knew that we were going to work with that child in our classroom from the beginning of the school year...so there could be an opportunity offered during September...for all the teachers that were going to work with these children and know nothing about it....they haven't done any kind of training for hyperactivity disorder in previous years, to help us...this could be done for other issues and other children as well, but from the beginning of the school year...

In both examples it is suggested that teachers need to have professional development about what they need in time, so as to be able to support the children. However, the point that the teacher in the second example made is not entirely correct, since as it is suggested in the official documents that I collected, seminars for children with AD/HD are offered every year by the Pedagogical Institute. Nevertheless, what is being stressed in this example is important, since for that year the seminars about AD/HD were offered within April/May while teachers felt that they needed to have them from the beginning of the school year and not towards the end of it. What is also interesting to mention here is that in both examples it becomes clear that what teachers feel that they need to have covered within their professional development opportunities, largely depends on the children's characteristics that they are going to teach. In the first example, children's ethnicity and whether they know the Greek language are considered teachers' need for professional development and in the second example the special needs of the child also act in the same way for the teacher. The following example from the Aristotelio School is also indicative of that point:

Interview with Mrs. Avgi:

Avgi: From the beginning of the school year there should be a list and teachers should write on that, the issues that they need for professional development based on the children that are going to have in their classrooms and others needs of course...in that way before starting teaching each year teachers will be better prepared....

The teacher here related the needs of teachers with the children that they were going to teach. This can also be related to the point made in an earlier discussion that for teachers the key factors in valuing are within the children. Nevertheless, it is also noticeable that the seminars/conferences which were offered to the teachers were also categorised based on children's characteristics.

The Table 3 (p.210), which describes the extent that teachers took up these opportunities, which were associated by them to the notion of inclusion, with the exception of the last thematic opportunity, indicate that the offered seminars/conferences were focusing on categories. A categorical approach is offered to the teachers as part of their professional development and this may confirm teachers' assumptions about how they should think in relation to children's diversity. In the following example, at the Aristotelio school, the teacher explains to me how the seminar that she attended for AD/HD encouraged a particular way of viewing a child who presented 'behavioural problems':

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Elina: How has the seminar about attention deficit helped you?

Fani:...It has confirmed what I was suspecting about the child based on his behaviour... because I didn't have such a child in my classroom before and what I have heard at the seminar it was exactly what I was thinking.

Elina: What were you thinking?

Fani:...that the child...there are medical reasons why he acts like that...it's not because of me...it was a relief...

A view that the problem is within the child is encouraged by the teacher's attendance in the particular seminar. What is the most worrying aspect though is that she says in the end that it was a relief, possibly meaning that her teaching was not related to such a difficult behaviour by the child. A similar example is the following at the

Aristotelio school, where the teacher explains why she thinks that the seminar about 'learning difficulties' helped her:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani:...I mean that [through that seminar] some things that you see in the classroom you say that it is not only my thought there is a particular reason...

Like in the previous example, the teacher admits that what she thought in relation to some children and the issue of learning difficulties were enhanced by the topics/issues covered through the seminar. Teachers were viewing this as a positive aspect of the issues/topics being covered through these opportunities, but it suggests that the way that the topics/issues are being categorised, imply that the problems are centred in the children, something that may discourage teachers from thinking about their own strategies and structures.

Way of delivery of seminars and conferences

A final teachers' response in relation seminars and conferences was about their mode of delivery. According to teachers, some of them were purely theoretical, others referred to practical examples, where as others were combined with experiential workshops.

Based on what teachers have said, the majority of the seminars/conferences that they attended were theoretical, meaning that most of their time was devoted to the theoretical aspects of an issue. Teachers' response in relation to that way of delivery involved both positive and negative parameters.

One of the advantages of theoretical seminars/conferences in teachers' view was that they were enriching theoretical knowledge. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are representative:

Interview with Mrs. Ira

Ira:...it has helped me understand better how these children with ADHD...learn, which is different to other children... they face additional difficulties...and because I have such child I my classroom it was good to know some other theoretical things...

In this example, it is suggested that the theoretical aspects of an issue being covered, enabled the teacher to understand the needs of the child better. Another teacher also,

in relation to the conference that he attended about special educational needs suggested:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: It has helped me in terms of gaining knowledge firstly...the necessary knowledge for special educational needs.

However, teachers emphasised, that the way that the theoretical seminars/conferences were delivered was broad and general and they felt that although it enriched their knowledge, in relation to the particular needs that they had in their classroom, that way of delivery was not enough. The following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate the kind of disadvantages that teachers found, in relation to the mode of delivery of the particular seminars:

Interview with Mrs. Katia

Katia: Although those seminars have helped me, they could be much more helpful... to be more focused to particular aspects rather than being that general or theoretical...

Another teacher at the Aristotelio School also said:

Informal discussion with Mr. Nikos

Nikos:...I go to every seminar that is carried out, but nothing helps me in practice...they are all theoretical which do not help to the particular difficulties that I have in the classroom.

Elina: So, If I understood well...nothing of what you have heard or seen in these seminars has helped you to respond to the needs of children?

Nikos: No...

The same teacher in his interview also added:

Interview with Mr. Nikos

Nikos: I don't like it when someone presents all the situations of children with special education needs generally, because this is not helping me with the specific need that I have, it is too broad and it is not going to the adequate depth...

The main disadvantage brought up in the examples is the broadness and generality which tends to characterise the theoretical seminars/conferences. According to the teachers these do not help them in relation to their specific needs. Another disadvantage that almost all the teachers mentioned is that the theoretical seminars/conferences involve limited practical aspects and this does not help them to

develop their skills in relation to covering their needs. The examples from the teachers at the Aristotelio School are clearly suggesting this:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Fani

Fani:...For example, when I need to develop a skill and how to work with particular pupils I don't want to go there [at the seminar/conference] and start talking to me about general things in relation to differentiation for example... and then to try to isolate myself the aspects that may concern me or that may help me...I need to know for example five techniques about a specific issue not for anything else...

In this example the teacher clearly refers to the development of particular skills in order to cover her need, and an interesting point is being made here; that is left to the teacher to try to find from what is being said at the seminar/conference, the way to develop the skill that she needs to address a particular issue. The following example from the Aristotelio School focuses more on that aspect and can help to understand better the points that teachers made:

Interview with Mrs. Chara

Chara: I attended some theoretical seminars but they were not helpful...they should be much more practical to involve practice or to refer to practice... for example I went recently to the seminar about discipline and it was just the theory of what is discipline...and at the end they gave some examples but not in great depth...instead they could talk to us, ask about our need, and advise us with more practical things.

The teacher explains the difference that could be made in covering her needs, if the seminar was focused in more depth on specific teachers' needs in relation to discipline, rather than the theory of what is discipline. It is suggested that the issues covered should reflect practical aspects of their needs. The following extract from the same school illuminates more that aspect:

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna : Theory is very different than practice and it is not always applicable in practice. I mean that they tell you for example to show patience in such situations but it is not always easy... It is important what they say to us to respond to reality.

The difficulties created for teachers when the seminars/conferences are only theoretical, are described in the above extract. It seems that the theoretical way of delivery does not always support teachers in real settings. Such teachers' responses suggest that they need opportunities which enable the creation of a link between theory and practice, so that teachers can benefit in practice.

The argument that teachers prefer the opportunities which combine theory and practice could be enhanced by the positive way in which teachers responded in relation to the seminars/conferences which referred to practice. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are illustrative:

Interview with Mrs. Melina

Melina: A seminar that has actually helped me was the one which combined theory and practice...

Elina: How was that seminar?

Melina: Firstly, they presented us the theory...and then the expert gave us written examples...She explained the behaviour of the pupil across different weeks and how she managed to include that child. It was a very interesting seminar and it has helped me a lot...

Other examples from the same school which show positive teachers' response towards the seminars/conferences which refer to practice are the following:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Rodoula: The seminar that I attended which involved the use of scenario about the behaviour of a particular pupil was extremely helpful, because it provided me with ideas and alternative ways on how to deal with such situations...

In the above extracts, the view that these kind of opportunities could actually indicate particular strategies as examples or ideas that teachers could use in practice is evident, and characterisations such as 'interesting', 'useful' and 'helpful' were assigned next to the kind of opportunities that were delivered in that way, indicating that those were valued.

A final way of delivery of seminars/conferences, based on teachers' sayings, was that in which these were combined with experiential workshops. The experiential workshops are presented below.

Experiential workshops

The experiential workshops were in most of the cases combined with short theoretical seminars and were considered the practical part of these seminars. Experiential workshops, as these were described by teachers, were the kind of opportunities in which the teachers were separated into groups and were carrying out different activities, through the co-ordination of the people who were organising

them. Such kind of activities involved putting themselves into pupils' position, and discussion about it in groups, or in groups, teachers were shown activities and were asked to discuss the different issues involved and then find possible solutions. Table 4 details the extent of the take up of experiential workshops.

Table 4: *The extent of taking up experiential workshops*

	Professional development opportunity		
	Experiential Workshops		
	Thematic area	**Extent of take up by teachers at the Aristotelio Primary school**	**Extent of take up by teachers at the Socratio Primary school**	**Total**
1.	About children from ethnic minorities	5	7	12
2.	About children and their behaviour/ behavioural problems	9	2	11
3.	About children with learning difficulties/SEN	4	1	5

In the above Table, as in the previous one (Table 3, p.210) most of the teachers at the Aristotelio School attended the experiential workshops which were related to children's behaviour, while most of the teachers at the Socratio School attended the experiential workshops that were related to children from ethnic minorities.

Teachers' responses in relation to experiential workshops, emerged in terms of the time, location and the issues/topics covered through this kind of opportunity. However, as these were the same as with teachers' responses related to seminars/conferences, they will not be repeated. What is unique about teachers' responses in relation to experiential workshops, concerns their mode of delivery. Teachers were very positive in terms of their way of delivery. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are representative of such kind of response:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Elina: Why do you think that experiential workshops help you better?

Fani: Because they provide practical guidance and make you think the way that they can be applied in your own classroom in order to achieve you goal.

Another teacher also said:

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna:...the experiential workshop was very helpful and it has actually helped me in relation to my classroom, because what we did at the workshop I have been able to do them in my classroom and I have seen progress.

Teachers in these examples emphasised the practical nature of the experiential workshops, and also, their applicability in their own classroom settings. This enhances the argument made in the previous section, about seminars and conferences, that teachers prefer the opportunities that are more practical and are related more easily to their practice.

Another advantage that teachers mentioned in relation to the experiential workshops is that their way of delivery, enables them to develop collaboratively the kind of problem-solving strategies, which can be carried out in practice. The following examples from the Aristotelio School are showing that:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani:

Stefani: Although I didn't attend many experiential workshops, those that I have been able to attend, they helped me very much in terms of practice, because we met with the other teachers, we collaborated in groups, we solved particular problems in a game style, and it was quite helpful...that we did all these all together and we learned things in a collaborative way.

The issue of collaboration among teachers is additionally in this example. This was emphasised also, in the following example as a positive characteristic of the way that the experiential workshops were delivered:

Interview with Mr. Christoforos

Christoforos: I really enjoy when I attend experiential workshops, because there is collaboration among the teachers, and we are all involved actively in our own learning...we do not just passively listen to what they say to us...we do different activities we are engaged in various projects that meet the goal of the experiential workshops... this has many benefits in our work in the classroom.

Beyond the issue of collaboration, the second example also refers to teachers' active involvement in their own learning, in contrast to the other kind of opportunities, in

which the teachers as he suggests keep a more passive stance towards their professional development.

Overall, the general/ wide opportunities were externally designed, were offered during afternoon hours and were optional. Such opportunities were the seminars/conferences and the experiential workshops. The following section is about a different kind of professional development opportunities.

School-based opportunities

School-based opportunities for teachers' professional development were carried out in the school setting. Some of them entailed collaboration among the teachers or between them and other key staff, while others, were initiated by the inspector of the school, or by teachers themselves. Such kinds of opportunities are: the exemplary lessons, and the collaborative activities among the teachers as presented below.

Exemplary lessons

The exemplary lessons, based on what teachers have said and my observations, are examples of lesson plans, carried out in practice during school time, in the classroom by one teacher. Other teachers, the head teacher and the inspector observe that lesson and then they can discuss about it. The exemplary lessons are initiated by the inspectors of the school, in collaboration with the teacher that is going to carry out the exemplary lesson, and the head of the school. It is compulsory for the teachers in the school and teachers from other schools of the district that teach children of the same year group, to attend. However, other teachers of the school can also observe the lesson, if their timetable allows for it. Teachers suggested that they have such opportunities no more than two times per year. In the year that the study was carried out, an exemplary lesson was carried out in the Aristotelio School in the beginning of the school year; the teacher of Year One was the responsible teacher for doing the exemplary lesson about the teaching of the Greek lesson. Moreover, in that year, two teachers of Year Three of the Aristotelio School attended an exemplary lesson about the teaching of Mathematics in another school, and similarly, two teachers from the Socratio School attended that opportunity. Finally, through our informal discussions, almost all the teachers based on their previous experiences suggested that they attended exemplary lessons for various school subjects. The extent of taking up

exemplary lessons will not be presented in a table, since attendance in these lessons was compulsory, and therefore it did not depend on the teachers whether to attend or not. As a result a similar number of teachers attending exemplary lessons were indicated in both schools, given their compulsory nature.

Teachers' responses in relation to exemplary lessons were related to the topics covered within them, and to the way of their delivery as follows:

Topics of the exemplary lessons

In relation to the topics that the exemplary lessons aim to cover, teachers suggested that they would prefer not to be generic, for example how to do a Greek lesson but to focus on particular strategies which would help them with specific children. For example, a teacher at the Aristotelio School said:

<u>*Interview with Mrs. Ntina*</u>

Ntina: I observed an exemplary lesson in another school about how to teach the Greek language lesson. I am not saying that it wasn't interesting, but I feel that the exemplary lessons should be focusing on particular aspects and not to be general...generally how to teach the lesson....it should focus on specific issues...such as the issue of the differentiation or dealing with the children with behavioural problems in the lesson...When I went to that exemplary lesson, I remember, I was trying to focus on those aspects when available and not that much about the teaching methods..I think that each teacher has its own way and general approaches on how to teach the lesson are not that much of interest...

Similarly, at the Aristotelio School another teacher said:

<u>*Informal discussion with Mr. Nikos*</u>

Nikos: I need to observe classroom lessons for inclusion... up to now we are only offered exemplary lessons on how to do the lesson of Greek or Mathematics. When I observe such lessons I usually focus on other things which are related to my needs, such as how is the child behaviour and how does the teacher respond to that...and I compared it with my approach...

What is remarkable in both examples is the way that teachers use those opportunities to meet their needs. They use exemplary lessons for their own purposes and they take advantage of these opportunities to focus on specific aspects of the teaching process. In particular, they try to focus to the aspects the general approaches that relate to inclusion and their own professional development needs. This is something that gives an idea about how teachers respond in relation to the adequacy of topics for covering their professional development needs.

Another teachers' response in relation to exemplary lessons, relates to their way of delivery, and is presented below.

The way of delivery of the exemplary lessons

The teachers that attended the exemplary lessons on how to teach Greek and Mathematics, all agreed that they were useful in taking ideas that could be used in order to enrich their own lessons. However, such statements were always accompanied by the views that what was showed to them through exemplary lessons did not match in the reality of their everyday lessons. The following example from the Aristotelio School is representative of teachers' responses in relation to the way of delivery of the exemplary lessons:

Interview with Mr. Nikos

Elina: To what extent have the exemplary lessons helped you?

Nikos: How can "a show" help you? To take ideas?....or to feel inferior that you don't know how to do some things... or to compare yourself with the teacher that is carrying out the exemplary lessons?

Elina: How could the exemplary lessons be improved so as to enable you to foster inclusion?

Nikos: To be more natural...I did an exemplary lesson too and I tried to make it natural to the level of the daily routine classroom.

This example is quite interesting because it shows additionally how teachers feel towards exemplary lessons as part of their professional development. He suggests that the exemplary lessons can make the teacher to compare his knowledge and skills with the teacher that is doing the lesson, but without actually helping them about it, because the teacher characterises the exemplary lesson as a 'show'. He also suggests that the exemplary lessons need to match more the natural classroom situation.

Another teachers' response in relation to the way of delivery of the exemplary lessons is that they were not offered often, and what they experienced as benefits from the exemplary lessons did not had continuity. The following extract from the Aristotelio School is suggestive of that response:

Interview with Mrs. Stauri

Stauri:...for example...how can the exemplary lesson help me since I will attend that only once...as usually happens in most of the cases...what kind of support am I going

to get when the exemplary lesson for example that I attended recently was carried out only one time? I don't think that this can help me adequately in relation to what I need.

Attention needs to be given to the connection that the teacher makes between the frequency that the exemplary lesson is offered and the kind of support that she feels that she gets. It is quite evident that she feels that this is not supportive to the extent that she wished.

Beyond the exemplary lessons, other kind of school-based opportunities were those which involve teachers' collaboration, as presented below.

Collaboration among the teachers as professional development

The professional development opportunities that will be presented under this section were also school-based and were using school time. In the case of the Aristotelio School, these were initiated by teachers that were teaching children of the same year group. In the case of the Socratio School, these were part of the measures taken for a ZEP school. So, they are separated in this presentation and unofficial and official collaborative opportunities.

Unofficial collaborative opportunities

The form of collaboration among the teachers which I call unofficial collaborations was initiated by teachers and was either that of mutual observations; teachers exchanged classroom visits and observed their colleagues working in other classrooms, or teachers were observing a lesson of another colleague in their own classroom. The following Table 5 (p.228) can indicate the extent that teachers initiated such opportunities as a way to cover some of their professional development needs that could be related to the notion of inclusion.

It is noticeable in Table 5 (p.228) that a small number of teachers have initiated such opportunities at the Aristotelio School while at the Socratio School such opportunities did not emerge even though teachers of both schools expressed the wish for this kind of opportunities to be part of their professional development.

Table 5: *The extent of initiating collaboration among the teachers as professional development*

		Professional development opportunity		
		Collaboration among the teachers as professional development		
	Form of collaboration	**Extent of initiating collaboration by teachers at the Aristotelio Primary school**	**Extent of initiating collaboration by teachers at the Socratio Primary school**	**Total**
1.	Mutual observations	5	-	5

The following examples from the Aristotelio School are showing the value of such collaboration and some of the difficulties involved as part of teachers' responses in relation to them:

The teachers, who have taken up such opportunities as part of their necessity to meet particular needs that could be related to the notion of inclusion, expressed very positive views in relation to them. The following examples from the Aristotelio School were chosen in order to show the advantages that teachers felt that they had, in relation to mutual observations as part of their professional development:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Fani: ...It helped me a lot when we exchanged classroom visits, because we were able to discuss about our particular difficulties and to be given advice specifically about what we needed.

Another teacher from the same school said:

Interview with Mrs. Rodoula

Rodoula: ...when I face a difficulty I usually ask from teachers to observe their lesson in order to see how they deal with the difficulty that I have or I may ask them to come and observe my lesson and advise me about that....

The first advantage that teachers felt that they had in relation to the mutual observations is that they could have direct discussion and advice about how to meet specific needs. What was emphasised in both examples was that the kind of advice that they were having from their colleagues was taking into consideration the

particular difficulties they were experiencing in their teaching, and they found that particularly helpful.

In addition to that, as it will be shown in the following examples, teachers felt that because they were taking the role of the observer in their own classrooms, or in other teachers' classrooms, that was giving them the chance to reflect on their own teaching approaches, and also to observe closely and pay more attention to children's responses. This is something that they are not able to do to that extent when they are teaching as explained in the following extracts:

Interview with Mrs. Maroula

Maroula:...This is the most direct way of professional development, because it's in front of you...you can see what is happening and you not only observe teacher's techniques but you can also observe the child...the children...how they react in relation to the question that the teacher is posing...and it makes you wonder...when I did a similar lesson how did the child answer to me...? what was his/her reaction...? There isn't anything more direct than this...to observe a teacher doing a similar lesson in your classroom...it makes you reflect on the way that you are working with children and you say...why has this teacher manage to make children participate? What did he/she do better? You also understand children more, and it makes you think differently about them...because when you teach them, you can't focus on their reactions. This is the most direct feedback that you can have about your lesson in relation to the children....

The most important aspect that is additionally mentioned in this extract is that it can actually make the teacher think differently about her pupils, to see them in another way and also understand them better. The following extract from the Aristotelio School is a clear example about that aspect that this opportunity can offer:

Interview with Mrs. Theodora

Theodora:...I have asked from another teacher to teach in my classroom to see how he does the lesson and how he deals with particular issues. I was sitting at the back of the classroom and I was able to understand many things and see how my pupils act or react when the teacher is not watching them and this influenced a lot the way I value my pupils it made me see them more equally...

Elina: Could you explain me this a bit more....that it influenced the way that you value your pupils?

Theodora: Yes...for example there is this boy...Charis who was very annoying he made noise, he disturbed my lesson and I used to punish him a lot...yell at him, send him outside the classroom...remove a star from his group because of him...but whatever I did he never changed his behaviour and I thought that he was an indifferent, insensitive boy who doesn't care at all about the lesson or even the

punishments...The day that I observed a lesson in my classroom, the teacher who did the lesson used the same approach with me...the punishment but what was I able to discover through that opportunity is that when the teacher reprimanded the child and then he turned his back to write on the board... the expression of the child changed completely...he took a very sad expression, he looked down and then he whispered something to the child sitting next to him. I had never seen him like that...he did actually showed that he did care about what just happened. Once the teacher looked at the children, he became the Charis that we all know...I will never know why he does this but I changed completely the way that I was thinking about him and I also stopped using punishments and I see that there is also an improvement....

The reason for presenting this example additionally is because it shows that this kind of opportunity and the chance that is given to the teacher to take the role of the observer in her own classroom influenced and possibly challenged her way of thinking about her pupils. A change in direction was taken based on that incident when the teacher had the chance to observe closely what is happening in her classroom.

However, beyond teachers' positive responses towards these kinds of opportunities which were initiated by them, they expressed that these were very difficult to be carried out, as it is explained through the following example from the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Fani

Fani: This is a very good professional development opportunity, and I wish we had the time to carry out them more, unfortunately it needs a flexible timetable...for example it is not easy to take up time from your free time and visit a colleague because he/she might not teach that time, the lesson that you are interested in and which you know that your colleague is good at...for example dealing with children with difficult behaviour...

It is evident in this extract that the aspect of time that teachers have in the school and the way that this is organised based on the school schedule, has an impact on the extent that teachers might initiate such opportunities. What was more interesting nevertheless, is the following deeper reason that might prevent such kind of opportunities. The extract below from the Aristotelio School, can describe that point:

Interview with Mrs. Sofia

Sofia: It is difficult to do this [mutual observations with colleagues] in practice....it's a bit complicated issue....to go in another classroom and see another teacher, one teacher who works in another school and they are doing that, told me that it was

very strange, teachers did not accept it....you know it's a matter of mentality...of culture...we did not learn to be trained like that...it causes misunderstandings and it is not easily accepted...

This extract raises important issues, the most important is that teachers are not familiar with such kind of opportunities and this seems to create reservations towards it and even not acceptance. One of the main concerns that teachers said that they have, which is also mentioned here are the 'misunderstandings'. This is better explained in the following example from the Aristotelio School:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Theodora

Theodora:.....I mean when I asked from another teacher to observe her lesson, she politely denied and I felt that she didn't feel comfortable...but I am not blaming her, because although this isn't usually the case in this school, many teachers can be too judgemental and teachers feel as if they are being inspected when other colleagues observe their lessons and they may gossip etc... and this is not right...

How misunderstandings can be created through these kinds of opportunities is explained in this extract. It also gives the sense that teachers care a lot about what other teachers might say in relation to how they work. This might make them feel uncomfortable about showing their actual needs, since as the teacher in the example suggests they might feel as if they are being inspected. This could also be related to issues of insecurity and confidence about their own competence. One of the teachers that initiated such opportunities made it very clear to me, that the extent of initiating such kind of opportunities, largely depends on teachers' extent of familiarity with the person that they collaborate with:

Interview with Mr. Nikos

Nikos:...with the teacher that we collaborated in that way we are also friends...we have a familiarity...of course you can never trust someone...but when you are not afraid to show to the other person the way that you are working, this enhances honesty about what you are doing or saying and there is a true collaboration...but I don't want someone to come in my classroom to inspect me and then say things behind my back...when the motives are honest then such kind of opportunities can have a success.

Even in this example, the teacher has some reservations, but the main point here is that success of such kind of opportunities depends on honest motivation that will make teachers not be intimidated by them. What has been shown in all the above examples about this aspect is that people will have reservations in initiating or taking

up such kind of opportunities, as long as they are not familiar with the concept of such kind of professional development and as long as these are not carried out often.

Official collaborative opportunities

This kind of opportunity appeared only in the Socratio School because it is a ZEP school and it was part of other measures taken by the Ministry for ZEP schools. So, this opportunity was co-ordinated by the teacher who was responsible for the ZEP schools in collaboration with the administration of the school and two teachers that were teaching in Year One. This opportunity aimed to support children of Year One which had Greek as their second or foreign language. Teachers of Year One were trying different approaches jointly in their classrooms for the Greek Lesson at least one time per week, in relation to these children. For example, in order to enhance children's speaking skills, children were asked to bring their favourite toy in the classroom. They sat on the floor in a circle and through various activities and games they talked to the other children about it. This was an approach which I found different from other approaches in lessons in the Cypriot schools studied. The ZEP co-ordinator was providing teachers with the necessary material and guidance. After that they were discussing and evaluating the results of each of the approaches that they were carrying out. This was happening on a regular base, and the results of each kind of experimentation were given to the ZEP co-ordinator and the administration of the school and were discussed along with the teachers involved. This is what could be described as experimentation and reflection.

The teachers that were involved in the programme and the ZEP co-ordinator were very positive about this kind of opportunity, mainly because it enabled the teachers to meet their need to respond to the children coming from other countries. The teacher at the Socratio School said:

Interview with Mrs. Angela

Angela: I am very excited about it... Every time we try different things with the children, through different activities in which they can talk about their feelings their friends their families and this is carried out in a completely different way...it doesn't feel that is a lesson...the main objectives are achieved much better and in a more interesting way with these different methods that we are using and this is encouraging for us...because it help us a lot to respond to what these children need.

Beyond the achievement of the programme's aims, the teacher expresses here a very positive attitude towards that programme and the way that it is carried out. She says in the beginning that she is excited and then that it is very encouraging. It is implied in this way that through this programme, teachers were enabled to meet their need to respond to children from ethnic minorities. It seems that both, teachers and children, can benefit through this programme. In relation to that the ZEP co-ordinator said:

Interview with the ZEP co-ordinator:

ZEP co-ordinator:...Teachers were excited about the programme, because they were given the chance to try something different in order to meet the needs of the children who don't know the Greek language...and because they were successful this I think reduced the worries that they had about the extent that they can respond to these children, since the traditional way did not seem to be working well with these children in Year One.

This example suggests that teachers had the freedom to experiment with different strategies though the particular programme. Teachers through this kind of opportunity seemed that they felt that they were meeting their own professional development needs for responding to these children.

Overall, school-based opportunities were either organised externally such as the exemplary lessons, and the official collaborative opportunities, or were initiated by teachers themselves such as exchanging of classroom visits to observe other teachers' lessons. It is of note that teachers responses were more positive towards the opportunities that gave them the chance to be involved or observe practice and collaborate with their colleagues. Interesting were the collaborative opportunities initiated by teachers themselves, however, as with the general/ wide opportunities difficulties/disadvantages were also presented in school-based opportunities.

Individual opportunities

Individual opportunities refer mainly to the kind of opportunities that were undertaken by individual teachers by their own initiative such as studies at the university and individual research, or they were organised for individuals by the Pedagogical Institute and were compulsory, such as the mentor programme. These individual opportunities had implications for teachers' professional development in relation to addressing their needs for fostering inclusion.

University studies

University studies mainly refer to postgraduate studies and to the experiences of teachers from undergraduate studies. Postgraduate studies in educational issues were particularly popular among teachers. The following Table 6 indicates the extent that teachers took up these opportunities which were related by them to the notion of inclusion.

Table 6: *The extent of taking up university studies*

	Professional development opportunity			
	University studies			
	Thematic area	**Extent of take up by teachers at the Aristotelio Primary school**	**Extent of take up by teachers at the Socratio Primary school**	**Total**
1.	Master about Management in Education with reference to issues that could be related to inclusion	8	5	13
	Master about education in general	2	1	3
	Master about curriculum studies	1	-	1
	Master about language	2	1	3
	Experiences from undergraduate studies (learning difficulties, special educational needs, pedagogical issues)	5	3	8

Almost all the teachers in both schools did or were doing postgraduate studies. In Table 6, the kind of postgraduate studies that teachers were drawing on, in order to meet their needs, for issues related to inclusion are presented.

Teachers' responses in relation to postgraduate studies were very positive. The example that I will present from the Socratio School for this issue is particularly interesting:

Interview with Mrs. Sotiria

Sotiria:.....a module that I carried out last semester I think has helped me a lot on how I see and feel about diversity which is very big in this school...

Elina: Can you talk to me a bit more about that...what kind of module was that and how has it helped you?

Sotiria:.....The professor who carried out the module was from Greece and he was specialised in intercultural education...and he showed us videos from schools in Greece and how they deal with diversity...things that can be applied in Cyprus too. He also enabled us to understand the kind of diversity that we have to deal with...he reminded us that we have to deal with children and that all the children have different needs but above all they are all equal and they have the right to be all educated..........it made us change the way that we see and feel about the children coming from other countries...to understand their needs and their diversity including the diversity in their family background...I personally changed many of my assumptions about these children I do not see them with all these disadvantages that...most of the people in Cyprus see...it helped me keep a balance between what I hear every day from other Cypriot parents who threat to take their children in another school...and encourage me to want to do more for them...

The importance of this interview extract is on the aspect of how the teacher was influenced through the particular module in relation to how she values the children coming from other countries. The teacher here suggests that she faces many challenges in the school by other Cypriot parents and generally by the Cypriot society and how it deals with the immigrant people, but she has actually managed through that course to challenge those dominant assumptions about these children and to try to respond to diversity in the best possible way. Moreover, the way that the module that she attended was carried out, which involved practical ideas through videos were helpful, since as she admits, could be applied to the context of Cyprus.

In addition to this advantage of postgraduate studies, the following examples from the Aristotelio School will show how the postgraduate studies can help the teachers to meet their needs:

Interview with Mrs. Marianna

Marianna: The masters that I am currently doing helps me a lot because I find many common aspects in what I read in the books to what is actually happening in the classroom...and the best part is that there are practical suggestions, that I can carry them out in practice. I see that they are working...for example, the difficulties that we face with behavioural problems....it helps a lot...

Similarly a teacher said:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani: It has really helped me the master that I have done about Education where I usually go back to my notes and I discover things that I had studied, but now they are more meaningful because I actually have to deal with them in practice and in that way they help me cover my needs.

The teachers in the first example emphasised the more practical kind of support that she got through postgraduate studies, since they can draw on them and find ways to deal with difficulties that they face in the classroom. However, in both examples teachers were able to draw out for themselves what they needed from what they had studied.

The second aspect of university studies are the experiences gained through undergraduate studies and teachers were drawing on them when they needed to deal with particular difficulties, as the following examples from the Aristotelio School indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Antria

Antria: Although I did not do any postgraduate studies, the specialty that I did at the University about special educational needs and the research that we carried out....all these schools that we visited and the special units about those issues...I usually have a look at what we did back then in order to remind myself what I have to do in some cases...and that helps me a lot...

From these examples, it is suggested that teachers feel that they can use previous experiences that they gained through their pre-service education for meeting their needs. They can also use educational material as in the following example at the Aristotelio School:

Interview with Mrs. Margarita

Elina: How do you deal with that need?

Margarita: I use educational material from the courses that we had at the University of Cyprus for learning difficulties...

Using prior experiences and material is a personal task and initiative that teachers suggested enables them to meet their needs. Similar to this kind of task is the following:

Searching Individually

Two teachers from the Aristotelio School suggested that when they face difficulties in their classrooms, they were searching in books or the internet by their own initiative in order to find out more, about issues which relate to inclusion.

The teachers that used this kind of search as part of their individual professional development suggested that they found it as a useful way to cover their needs, as the following examples indicate:

Interview with Mrs. Stefani

Stefani: What I usually do to cover any needs that may come up is individual search...for me this is very important because there are many books and online resources and you can exploit in order to see what you can do...

The other teacher also said:

Informal discussion with Mrs. Victoria

I usually search through the internet many issues that concern me and this helps me to an extent to meet my needs...that kind of search...

What teachers mean by search as the above examples indicate is that they can use online resources and books in order to inform themselves about what they can possibly do to meet their needs.

Mentor programme

The mentor programme is an induction programme that was introduced in Cyprus by the Pedagogical Institute in 2008 and is compulsory for the newly qualified teachers. The purpose of the programme is to create a bridge between pre-service and in-service education and help newly qualified teachers. Teachers with many years of experience can act as the mentor after a special training, which they get from the Pedagogical Institute (MOEC, 2009). According to the Pedagogical Institute (2010), the mentor programme is separated in three phases. The first phase involves three meetings about the purpose and the structure of the programme. The second phase which lasts for six months is school-based and involves the collaboration and mutual observations of the mentor with the newly qualified teacher. The third phase involves the evaluation of the whole process and the programme and it is separated into two meetings. The reason for mentioning the mentor programme here is because

it was brought up by three teachers that were involved in the programme as an opportunity that could be related to the issue of fostering inclusion. One of the teachers and the mentor were working at the Socratio School full-time while the other teacher who was part-time was working with another mentor in another school. However, the fact that these particular teachers were undertaking the mentor programme had nothing to do with the school in which they were working since the programme was for all first-year teachers irrespective of the school that they were working. One of the teachers and the mentor-teacher responded in a very positive way about that programme in relation to inclusion. In particular one of them said:

Interview with Mrs. Voula

Voula:...My mentor has helped me a lot in relation to how to deal with diversity...I mean I was very impatient and I was getting easily upset with the children that were coming from other countries and were also acting differently from other children in the school and in the classroom. Through the mentor programme and based on my mentor's guiding I learned how to change the practices that I used in the classroom in order to leave more space for those children that tend to be slow to reach the others...so in this way I was able...in most of the cases to help them be included.

From the example that the teacher gives, she actually shows that she benefited in relation to how to deal with the children that could not follow the rest of the children in the classroom, so, issues of inclusion are addressed through that programme and in the particular example successfully. Although positive responses are expressed here by this teacher another teacher undertaking the programme raised some problems:

Interview with Mrs. Emily

Emily:...For me the programme was late, it came at the second year of my experience so I didn't feel that I wanted that extra burden because I was already overloaded with the work that I am doing for Year One which is the first time that I am teaching it. My mentor is working in Year Six so again when I observe her lessons I don't feel that I benefit...the only thing that I think that has helped me is that because you are involved in this programme you can observe lessons from other teachers too and it opened the doors for me to observe lessons of others colleagues that in any other circumstances I wouldn't be able to do, since most of the teachers in this school are negative in having other persons in their classrooms observing their lessons...so, at least I was benefited from this respect...I observed other teachers' lessons which were closer to the year group that I was teaching.

Elina: How do you feel that this programme could be improved so as to help you cover your needs and foster inclusion?

Emily:...my mentor could be a specialist in inclusive education...or to be a person that has worked with those issues in-depth before...I mean my mentor could show me how to do an inclusive lesson or how to respond to specific needs of children...my mentor showed me generic ways of carrying out a lesson but I don't know if what I have been shown is in line with the inclusive philosophy...so that could relate more...I think the programme in relation to inclusion.

Although the teacher raised difficulties such as the timing of the mentoring programme, she brought out her own benefits from this programme. It provided to her the opportunity for observation of colleagues, something that she would not have been able to do, as she says, because teachers were not very positive about that. This point relates also to an earlier discussion about the way that teachers feel in relation to having other teachers in their classroom observing them. An uncertainty also appears in what the teacher says about inclusion and the extent in which the strategies that her mentor teacher uses relates to that. Finally, there was a distance between the lessons that the teacher observed from her mentor which were for children of Year Six and to what she felt that she needed more in relation to children of Year One. The mentor of that teacher in relation to that programme and its relation to inclusion as part of teachers' professional development said:

Interview with Mrs. Athina

Athina: The programme is not directed particularly to inclusion...but teachers can benefit about that aspect too...to be honest I feel that there is a negative attitude towards that...but the newly qualified teacher does not only take things from that programme but also shares things...the only problem in our case is that I teach in Year Six and the teacher is teaching in Year One and there is a distance between the practices that she observes in my classroom...she enriches her knowledge but I think that these programme would have been better if we were teaching the same year group...

The mentor teacher points at two aspects in relation to that programme. The first one is that she confirmed the difficulty relating to the mismatch of year groups involved. She also acknowledged that teachers can benefit in relation to inclusion and the collaborative nature of the programme, which allows for teachers to share their expertise.

Overall, individual professional development opportunities seemed to provide a personalised kind of support for teachers. University studies, individual search and the mentor programme, appeared to have a positive effect on teachers. The individual search was initiated by teachers themselves, while the mentor programme

was externally prescribed. Finally, although university studies are externally prescribed it depends on teachers' willingness whether to carry out such studies. The large number of teachers undertaking them constitutes an interesting part of teachers' professional development, which is based on their own initiative.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings for the research sub-question related to teachers' professional development opportunities. Three kind of professional development opportunities that teachers attended or initiated emerged, the general/wide, the school-based and individual opportunities. Teachers' responses towards them indicated their preference towards the opportunities which were school-based, promoted collaboration and they involved or referred to practice.

At this stage, all the research sub-questions of the study have been addressed, including teachers views about inclusion, aspects of the schools' context that enable of act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion, teachers' professional development needs, especially for the equal valuing of all children and teachers' opportunities and their responses towards them.

The next chapter brings the understandings gained through the research sub-questions together, in order to present the overall understanding gained through this study and address the main research question.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter addresses the main research question of the study and makes a discussion on the overall understanding gained, about teachers' professional development needs, for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. The first section of the chapter discusses three professional development areas of need. Then, the suggested ways that are likely to address them are presented in the second section.

Teachers' professional development areas of need

The findings of this study, presented in the earlier chapters, were further re-analysed through a process similar to coding. In particular, codes were placed next to segments of data included under each research sub-question. These codes represented teachers' professional development needs in relation to what was suggested by the data. For example, next to the data related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, the professional development need of teachers 'to create positive attitudes towards inclusion' was placed as a code. These codes were then grouped/ categorised according to the links that they seemed to have.

Based on this analysis and categorisation, the overall understanding gained is that teachers' professional development needs are related to three areas: the dominant value systems, pedagogy and the unique contexts. These three areas are called teachers' professional development areas of need and were found to be influencing one another and interacting with each other. Figure 1 (p.245) represents them in concentric circles, in order to illustrate their relationship, which is explained below.

Dominant value systems were placed in the core of Figure 1 (p.245), in order to show their central role. In this study, they represent a set of values about pupils in Cyprus, which appear to be taken for granted and are shared among the teachers. More specifically, the area of need related to the dominant value systems emerged from the findings of the first research sub-question and from teachers' professional

development needs related to them. Such needs were for example, the need for teachers to deconstruct beliefs that appear to reflect a deficit way of thinking; their beliefs that the key factors for valuing are within the children, their beliefs in relation to children's attainment, ethnicity or family background, and their beliefs about children's possibility of making progress. Another example is the need of teachers to create positive attitudes towards inclusion, given that based on the findings of the first research sub-question, although teachers appeared to have a positive attitude towards the theory of inclusion they were negative as far as its implementation was concerned. Such kind of findings contributed to the development of the area of need related to the dominant value systems. Moreover, this area emerged based on the professional development need related to the finding of the second research sub-question, that teachers need to have an explicit agenda about inclusion and their need to have professional development opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children, as this emerged from the third research sub-question. Although these were findings that relate to the education context as well, they seemed to relate also to teachers' ways of understanding inclusion, their attitudes, and their ways of thinking and of valuing children.

As I have already described in the literature review, values are considered to be a central part of cultures. They are inextricably related or influenced by the main beliefs and assumptions, which in their turn influence the attitudes, norms, and behaviour of people (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988; Lawton, 1997). In the Cypriot literature, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), within their argument about how to develop an in-service training course with regard to inclusion, suggest that every effort should examine local beliefs and assumptions of teachers, and then in a constructive way use the international trends. Similarly, in the international literature, Carrington (1999) suggests, that professional initiatives for inclusion, need to take into consideration the beliefs of teachers, in order to be successful. Therefore, what I am arguing based on the findings of my study is that the professional development area of need that relates to the dominant value systems is perhaps the most fundamental, because it is concerned mainly, with deeply rooted understandings, beliefs and attitudes of teachers. Thus, the dominant value systems

need to be considered when exploring teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion.

It has to be acknowledged, nevertheless, that teachers' dominant value systems are not isolated from their contexts. Rather, according to Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006), teachers' belief systems are developed and established within certain political, education and social contexts. Therefore, for developing an in-depth understanding around the dominant value systems, I consider that the contexts should also be taken into consideration. In Figure 1 (p.245) the outer circle represents the area of need that relates to the unique contexts of Cyprus. It involves the socio-cultural, the educational, the community and the school contexts. The needs of teachers in relation to the socio-cultural context emerged based on the findings of the first research sub-question and the link between teachers' beliefs with the beliefs of Cypriot society about disability as these were presented within the literature review. The needs of teachers in relation to the educational, the community and the school contexts emerged based mainly on the findings of the second and of the third research sub-questions and in particular from the categories related to teachers' need in relation to particular organisational and interpersonal aspects of the school that enable or act as barriers for teachers to foster inclusion. Moreover, such teachers' needs emerged from the finding of the third research sub-question which was about an on-going support and collaboration of teachers with other teachers, experts and parents.

The socio-cultural, the educational, the community and the school contexts seem to link and interact with the dominant value systems. More specifically, an interesting link is considered in this study to exist, between the ways that teachers' understandings, beliefs, and attitudes are shaped, with the education and the socio-cultural contexts. The community and school contexts seemed to be the 'overarching platforms' on which these understandings, beliefs, and attitudes are validated and shared among the teachers. These links between the dominant value systems and the contexts will be discussed later. Such kind of links are supported by Angelides *et al.* (2004) who suggest that teachers, like all people, have grown up in an environment that has its unique characteristics and can impact on teachers' ways of thinking. Moreover, in the international literature, according to Todd (2007), "we cannot

understand practice-or any human thoughts, feelings or actions-separate from the context" (p.129). So, it seems that the links between the dominant value systems and the unique contexts are necessary for a meaningful understanding regarding teachers' professional development needs in relation to inclusion.

In addition to the above, based on the evidence from my study, our understandings of teachers' professional development needs, related to the dominant value systems in given contexts, will be incomplete, if the area of need that relates to pedagogy is not addressed. This emerged mainly from the third research sub-question and findings related to teachers' need for developing their knowledge and skills in relation to individual teaching strategies and in relation to whole-classroom strategies. These indicated the need of teachers for more pedagogical development. In Figure 1 (p.245) this area is represented by the middle circle, in order to show, that pedagogical development comes between the dominant value systems and the unique contexts. Although Ainscow *et al.* (2006) suggest an approach to inclusion which focuses on the process of developing inclusive practices based on inclusive values, within particular contexts, Howes *et al.*, (2009) argue that this approach results in the creation of a gap between inclusive values and teaching and learning practices, since there is no certainty about the practices that can best respond to these values. Carrington (1999) suggests that although some teachers may agree with and support the philosophy of inclusion, they may not have the necessary knowledge and skills, to implement it in practice, so, addressing issues related to pedagogy is important. It seems also, that pedagogical development is necessary, in order to have a complete understanding of and addressing in a holistic way, teachers' professional development needs. Pedagogy, therefore, cannot be seen separately from the dominant value systems and the contexts. This link is supported by Alexander (2005) who suggests that pedagogy is not just a teaching technique but "the act of teaching together with the ideas, values and collective histories which inform, shape and explain that act" (Alexander, 2005, p.2). This means that teaching is not separate from values and the contexts; rather, it is situated in them and cannot be considered as separate.

Figure 1: *Teachers' professional development needs and ways to address them*

Teachers' professional development-three areas of need

Ways to address teachers' professional development that relate to pedagogy

- Developing the knowledge and skills to implement strategies that respond to the needs of all children
- Enhancement of the existing expertise and practice
- *Creation of communities of practice

Unique contexts

Pedagogy

Dominant value systems

Ways to address teachers' professional development that relate to unique contexts:

- Reframing their meaning making regarding the wider community context

- Adapting themselves inclusively to the school context

Ways to address teachers' professional development that relate to dominant value systems:

- Deconstructing beliefs that appear to reflect a deficit way of thinking
- Creating positive attitudes towards inclusion
- *Having an explicit agenda about inclusion

- * Exploring with teachers their particular beliefs about disability and diversity embedded in the socio-cultural context of Cyprus
- *Developments in professional development opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children

*ways that relate to more than one professional development area of need

Given the ways that teachers' professional development needs were conceptualised, the next section discusses the ways in which they might be addressed.

Ways to address teachers' professional development needs

The ways that may address the three areas of need emerged based on the professional development needs which were assigned as codes next to the data under each research sub-question. For example, teachers' professional development need 'to develop their knowledge and skills in order to teach all children' suggested the possible way that 'by developing their knowledge and skills, teachers might teach all

children'. Then, all the ways suggested by the findings of this study, were further categorised based on the links that they seemed to have and they were placed under the three areas of need, according to the relationship that they appeared to have with them. The suggested ways are illustrated in Figure 1 (p.245). It is important to note however, that placing the suggested ways of addressing the needs under these areas was a difficult task, because the relationships of the need areas were overlapping. This means, that some of these ways, could be related to more than one of these areas, and such multiple relating ways are indicated with an asterisk (*). Due to that difficulty, it was decided to place each suggested way under the most relevant professional development area of need, which they are more likely to address. Their relationships with the other areas will be explained within the discussion.

In developing this argument, professional development in relation to dominant value systems is presented first, because most of the suggested ways relate to this area. Then, the presentation and discussion of teachers' professional development in relation to pedagogy and the unique contexts will follow, along with suggested ways for addressing them, and the interrelationships of these ways.

Ways to address teachers' professional development in relation to dominant value systems

As the evidence from the study suggests, teachers have to challenge the dominant value systems in the following ways: by deconstructing beliefs that appear to reflect a deficit way of thinking, by creating positive attitudes towards inclusion, by developments in professional development opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children, by having an explicit agenda for inclusion, and by exploring with teachers their particular beliefs about disability and diversity embedded in the socio-cultural context of Cyprus. The suggested ways of meeting this area of need are presented below:

Deconstructing beliefs that appear to reflect a deficit way of thinking

A way to address teachers' needs that relate to the dominant value systems is by deconstructing their dominant beliefs about children and about their role in relation to all the children, which appear to reflect a deficit way of thinking. This kind of

thinking as it was discussed in the literature review, seeks to explain educational difficulties in terms only of pupils' characteristics and of their families (Ainscow, 1999; Dyson, 1990; Trent *et al.* 1998).

The beliefs of teachers about children, which were presented in the findings of the study, could be easily related to a 'within the child' or a deficit model of viewing and thinking about children with difficulties. For example, teachers' beliefs that the key factors for valuing are within the children was demonstrated, when problems were seen to arise from children. More specifically, beliefs were expressed both about children's characteristics such as attainment, ethnicity or family background, and about their possibility of making progress. These, explained educational difficulties mainly in terms of child-related aspects. Such beliefs were also implying particular standards and norms, such as that of an academic hierarchy.

The beliefs which emerged from teachers, who participated in this study, are similar to those presented by Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), who suggested that teachers had beliefs that relate to the medical (deficit) model of viewing disability. In addition, the findings of my own study are similar with almost all the assumptions that were presented as a belief system, by the Greek writers Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) based on international writers' work, which suggested: that the individual student is mainly responsible for school achievement; success in education is seen as depending on the individual's ability and effort; lack of success is the result of the inability of the pupil (McDonnell, 2003). As I mentioned within the literature review, these beliefs are restrictive, and prevent the development of inclusive practices (Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006). Therefore, the argument here is that by deconstructing teachers' beliefs that appear to reflect a deficit model of thinking about children with difficulties, the area of need related to dominant value systems is likely to be addressed to an important extent; by moving away from these beliefs, a more equal valuing of children might emerge.

Moreover, the deconstruction of teachers' beliefs about their role and responsibilities in relation to all children has to be addressed, so that teachers can move away from a deficit way of thinking. As the findings have indicated, teachers were feeling that they were less responsible for children with SEN or for some of the children that

were considered to have problems. In addition, the belief that some of the children with SEN will be better educated in segregated settings, such as special schools, was also suggested by some of them. Likewise, it was evident their view, that people with specialist knowledge like special teachers or education psychologists were more responsible than themselves for meeting such children's needs. These beliefs may link to the deficit model of viewing disability, since it appears that teachers were viewing special educational needs and learning needs of children as within the child deficits that needed specialised support. The findings of my study in relation to this issue, are very close to the findings of Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) in Cyprus, where as they explain, there is the belief of teachers that specialists for children with SEN know better, and the special teacher is primarily responsible for educating children with SEN. These beliefs were similar to Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou's (2006), belief system in relation to teachers' beliefs about their role in implementing inclusive practices. Such beliefs preserve the separation and categorisation of children and most importantly, according to Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006), allow segregated structures to be sustained.

Further, such beliefs about specialists/specialist knowledge, and the feeling expressed by some teachers that they are not qualified enough, could be related to the issue of self-efficacy about their competence in teaching children with SEN. Issues of confidence in relation to teachers' competence in teaching children are reported by some authors (e.g. Ainscow, 1994, 1995; Buell et al., 1999; Forlin, 2001; Nind and Cochrane, 2002; Koutrouva et al., 2006; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). However as Lewis and Norwich (2001) suggest, it is not a different kind of knowledge that teachers need to learn but how to adapt regular teaching methods to the different degrees of learning difficulties that some children have. Thus, it is argued that teachers by deconstructing the dominant value systems about their role and responsibilities in relation to children with SEN or other education difficulties, and by having more confidence in their own competence, might be in a position to understand their role and responsibilities in relation to all children.

Creating positive attitudes towards inclusion

The findings of this study indicate that theoretically there was a consensus for the inclusion of particular categories of children in the school and for others, negative such as for children with SEN or behaviour difficulties. Nevertheless, teachers expressed their concerns and negative attitudes in relation to the actual practice of inclusion, because of the difficulties that were emerging, in their attempts to respond to pupils' diversity in their classrooms. The studies carried out in Cyprus which refer to teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion of children with SEN (Angelides, 2004, 2007; Nicolaides, 1987; Symeonidou, 2002a) suggest that although teachers may agree on a theoretical level with integration/inclusion of children with SEN, they have negative attitudes as far as its implementation is concerned. For example, the study carried out by Angelides (2004) illustrated that teachers believe that inclusion is an appropriate step in education but they are not willing to develop inclusive practices. However, although similar attitudes emerged within the findings of my study, with the studies above, teachers' attitudes about the inclusion of children with SEN was not positive both theoretically and in relation to the practice involved. Further, the exploration of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in this study attempted to capture teachers' attitudes towards the diversity of all pupils, and not towards particular categories of children. Also, teachers' previous experiences and perceived expertise seemed to be factors which influence teachers' attitudes either positively or negatively. This is a similar finding to Cypriot (Koutrouva *et al.*, 2006) and international literature (Avramides *et al.*, 2000; Avramides and Kalyva, 2007; Leatherman and Niemeyer, 2005; Levins *et al.*, 2005). So, it is argued that by creating positive attitudes towards inclusion is a way, which might enable teachers challenge the dominant value systems.

The next suggested way, of having an explicit agenda about inclusion, could also facilitate in the creation of positive attitudes.

Having an explicit agenda about inclusion

The need for the existence of an explicit agenda about inclusion, within the education context, appears to influence how teachers understand inclusion, their beliefs about children and about their role in relation to all the children, and their

attitudes. The links between an explicit agenda with teachers' understandings, beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion, are explained below.

First of all, inclusion had a different meaning for different teachers. What was similar nevertheless, in teachers' understandings of inclusion in this study was that it was used interchangeably with the term integration. According to Messiou (2006b), the term inclusion in Cyprus, has only recently been introduced by academics. More recently, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) suggest that the term integration is the one which teachers in Cyprus are more familiar with and in particular in relation to children categorised as having special needs (Angelides, 2004; Messiou, 2006b; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). The findings of my study also support these views, where teachers appeared to use the terms inclusion and integration in the same way, and that for some of them inclusion was related to the categorisation of children with SEN. However, what my study adds to the findings of other Cypriot studies is that it appeared that both inclusion and integration were also used in relation to other groups of children that were considered to have difficulties in terms of their attainment, ethnicity or family background, not just in relation to children with SEN. Although this shows to some extent a wider understanding of inclusion it is still attached to the notion of integration.

The interesting aspect, based on the findings of my study is that it appeared that teachers shaped their understanding towards inclusion, mainly based on information from universities either in undergraduate or postgraduate studies, or the policies of MOEC during their careers as teachers. These sources appeared explicitly or implicitly to influence teachers' understandings about what inclusion means, since they were reflected in teachers' definition of inclusion, as the starting point that shaped their understanding. Universities and the policies of MOEC may be considered as aspects that relate to the education context. Therefore, the education context influences teachers' understandings of inclusion, and the need for an explicit agenda about the inclusion of all children is important, in order to help teachers create a common understanding of inclusion. This could challenge the dominant value systems and the categorisation of children.

Moreover, the implicit reference to inclusion as an education objective in the curriculum and the implicit consideration of inclusion in teachers' evaluation by the inspector and within their staff meetings by the head teacher emerged in this study as a barrier for teachers to foster inclusion. Teachers, considered that it will be enabling, if an explicit official reference of the Ministry was made to the notion of inclusion and if inclusion was considered by the Ministry as an explicit education objective, as in the example of a circular which explicitly referred that teachers should promote differentiation in their teaching in order to include all children. Although the general and some of the specific aims of the Ministry's curriculum and the 1999 Law may reflect some elements of the notion of inclusion, the term 'inclusion' as such is not written in any of the official documents, rather, integration is the term used. Moreover, it was noted that beyond the official documents, teachers' superiors should take into consideration and value teachers' effort to promote inclusion more explicitly, for example within the staff meetings which are co-ordinated by the head teacher of the school, and the actual evaluation process carried out by the inspector.

The understanding I gained through the expression of teachers about more explicit reference and acknowledgement of inclusion in the curriculum and by their superiors, is that they need to feel that inclusion is thought to be an important aim, a priority of the Ministry or even their superiors, and is considerably appreciated. This understanding may be similar to the suggestion of Angelides (2002), that when teachers work in collaboration with their superiors, about a common goal, their morale goes up and they feel themselves to be better professionals. Also, according to Symeonidou (2002a), the unwillingness of the government to move towards inclusive education raises questions about the government's priorities while Koutrouva *et al.,* (2006) suggest that in relation to teachers' attitudes and in order not to feel mistrust for the inclusive efforts, actions should be taken by the Ministry, to support the personal efforts of teachers, and boost their confidence in inclusive practices. Todd (2007) suggests that the actions taken for inclusion by the government should not reflect that it is considered as a low priority. Finally, Mittler (2004) suggests that government responsibility should not just remain as slogans, rhetoric and fine principles but should find ways to improve practice. Therefore, a

shared commitment and support by the people involved in the inclusion of all children should be indicated (Carrington, 1999; Buell *et al.*, 1999) since this seems to have an effect on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the extent that they are committed to the process of including all children.

Moreover, in terms of teachers' beliefs and the suggested ways of deconstructing those which appear to reflect a 'within-the child' model should not be thought as separate from the wider context. Rather, clear links can also be made between the lack of existence of an explicit agenda within the education context and these beliefs. The policies of MOEC, as presented in the literature review, can easily be related to the deficit model of viewing and thinking, given that they start based on children's characteristics and a categorical approach is taken to separate children based on these characteristics. This may preserve teachers' beliefs which reflect a deficit model of thinking. Also, as I have presented about teachers' beliefs regarding their role, they seemed to consider themselves less responsible for children with SEN or with other learning difficulties than for other children. These beliefs may link to the ways that the education system functions, which separates teachers in special and regular teachers and has inspectors for special and general education.

The whole argument within the suggested way of having an explicit agenda about inclusion may link to what Mittler (2000) suggested, that the 'within-child model' still influences to a great extent policy, practice and attitudes of key stakeholders in education and it cannot just vanish. By having an explicit agenda, about the inclusion of all children, the understanding of teachers around inclusion might be clarified, beliefs that reflect a deficit model might be challenged and a more positive attitude might be developed towards inclusion. All these are elements that in their turn can challenge the dominant value systems.

Exploring with teachers their particular beliefs about disability and diversity embedded in the socio-cultural context of Cyprus

Although the findings of this study do not explicitly refer to teachers' beliefs about disability and diversity in relation to the Cypriot socio-cultural context, it is still possible to link some of the findings of the study with the socio-cultural context, through the use of Cypriot literature.

As the evidence from the study suggests some teachers have negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN in the schools, and that it is better for these children, especially those with 'serious problems', to be educated in segregated settings. These beliefs and attitudes may link to the way that 'disability' is viewed in the Cypriot culture and the way that special education historically was developed in Cyprus as presented in the literature review. These are characterised by a segregated philosophy (Symeonidou, 2009).

Moreover, as the findings have indicated, teachers' beliefs appeared to reflect a deficit way of viewing children with educational difficulties. According to Symeonidou (2009), the Greek-Cypriot culture is dominated by the 'cure effect' as presented in the literature review. So, links can be made between these beliefs and the medicalisation of disability, which is a characteristic of the values that prevail in the Cypriot socio-cultural context (Symeonidou, 2009).

In contrast, the way that teachers responded to cultural diversity and in particular to children coming from other countries, even though they expressed concerns about their education, showed an effort to respond to these children, by expressing positive attitudes towards their inclusion. This contradicts to some extent what is suggested by Angelides *et al.,* (2004), in their study about multicultural education, in terms of how the Cypriot society responds to diversity, and the relevant influence on teachers' values, beliefs and ideologies. As they denote, the Cypriot environment is close, ethnocentric, and nationalistic, and teachers have grown up without any contact and involvement with other cultures. That, as Angelides *et al.,* (2004) suggest, makes teachers resistant to what is considered to be "different". In the findings of my study, although teachers were acknowledging that in the Cypriot society there is to some extent racist views about people coming from other countries, they viewed that as a challenge in their work and as a motive to respond to the psychological/emotional needs of children coming from other countries.

On the other hand, the findings of my study are in line with some Cypriot literature about teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the families of the children coming from other countries. Those parents were considered to be low-income and non-educated people, who had to work many hours, making their involvement in their child's

education limited. To some extent teachers expressed their 'sympathy' which is one of the characteristic of the Cypriot society, as presented by Symeonidou (2002a) and even charitable feelings and actions were expressed, for example when some teachers brought to the children from Romania toys, and clothes. On the other hand, 'prejudice' which is another characteristic of the Cypriot society (Symeonidou, 2002a) towards the people coming from other countries, appeared in the findings of the study. Some teachers expressed views about the parents of children coming from other countries that might be considered prejudice. For example, they are thought to be 'indifferent' and not able to respond to their role as co-educators. According to Theodorou (2008), the immigrant families in Cyprus are socially marginalised and the perception of teachers of such families as being 'disinterested' enhances their marginalisation. As she explains, despite teachers' good intentions to understand the difficulties that such families are going through, the teachers cannot get away from the culturally deficit perspective and find ways to restructure the way that parental involvement is conceptualised, in order to respond to the needs of these parents. The issue of parent-teacher partnerships will be discussed further, later on.

The particular characteristics of the Cypriot socio-cultural context were explored in the literature in an attempt to explain teachers' understanding, beliefs, and attitudes found in this study. It is suggested that exploring with teachers their particular beliefs about disability and diversity embedded in the socio-cultural context of Cyprus, may enable them to challenge the dominant value systems and value equally all children. This is supported by Symeonidou (2009), who stated that by understanding the culture, allows an outline of the features that prevent moving towards inclusion.

Developments in professional development opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children

It is suggested that teachers may be helped to challenge the dominant value systems and value equally all children by participating in professional development opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children. This suggestion is based on the findings of this study from which I concluded that some of the professional development opportunities that teachers had or suggested that they need to have,

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seemed useful in allowing them to challenge current beliefs, and attitudes. Such opportunities were school-based, involved the active involvement of teachers in their own learning, provided direct practical guidance, and helped in understanding the children better. These were the more collaborative opportunities that were mainly school-based and were either initiated by teachers themselves, for example the collaborative activities among the teachers; by observing a colleague in his/her classroom or by observing another colleague in their own classroom. A characteristic example is the teacher who admitted that by observing her colleague teaching in her classroom made her think about her ways of valuing a particular pupil and a change in direction was also taken. Likewise, of value were the opportunities which were co-ordinated by more expert people, for example the opportunity in the ZEP school where teachers of Year One worked together, in order to address their need to respond to language diversity in their school, under expert guidance. The exemplary lessons, which although did not involve much collaboration, were used by teachers as an opportunity to search for alternative ways in order to meet some of their needs in relation to the inclusion of particular pupils. Finally, the mentor program, although it did not have as the ultimate goal to train teachers about including all children, did address this goal among other aims.

Teachers' expressed views of school-based collaborative reflective practice, as part of their professional development are in line with recommendations in some international literature. More specifically, some writers suggest that professional development opportunities should be school based, in order to enhance teachers' inclusive development (Ainscow, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2003; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Ainscow and Kaplan, 2005; Booth, 2000; Booth, Nes and Stromstad, 2003; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; O'Gorman and Drudy, 2010; Hopkins, *et al.*, 1994; Howes *et al.*, 2009; Mittler 2000; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). Also, within the Cypriot literature Angelides (2002) suggests that teachers' in-service training should take place in schools and classrooms, and follow collaborative approaches that analyse local practice. In this way, all involved can reflect in detail on aspects of their thinking and practice (Angelides, 2002).

What my study is adding to the Cypriot literature is that teachers themselves may be in a position to create such opportunities, even when these are not externally co-

ordinated. Moreover, this study brings into the fore some positive evidence of official professional development opportunities currently carried out in Cyprus, such as the exemplary lessons, the mentor programme and the official collaboration among teachers in a ZEP school, which are school-based and are likely to contribute in making teachers reflect on their own practices in order to teach more inclusively. This is a finding which may contradict to some extent Cypriot literature and the criticism that in Cyprus there are not professional development opportunities that promote partnerships among teachers in schools in order to reflect on their own practices for inclusion (Angelides, 2002, 2004; Angelides *et al.* 2003, 2004; Karagiorgi and Symeou, 2006; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009).

Therefore, developments should take place in all the professional development opportunities offered in Cyprus, in order for them to become more collaborative and be school-based, since as the evidence of this study suggests, such opportunities could support teachers in reflecting on their own practice. In this sense, they could help teachers understand how they value their pupils through their classroom practices and a more equal valuing of all children could emerge. Also, they may allow teachers to challenge beliefs which reflect a 'within the child model', and attitudes that are not in favour of the inclusion of all children.

This way of addressing the area of need related to the dominant value systems, links with the second main area of need which relates to pedagogy, but more discussion will be made when presenting that area below.

Ways to address teachers' professional development in relation to pedagogy

My findings suggest that professional development in relation to pedagogy may be addressed by: developing knowledge and skills to implement strategies that respond to the needs of all children; the enhancement of the existing expertise and practice and; the creation of communities of practice. I look at each of these in what follows.

Developing knowledge and skills to implement inclusive strategies that respond to the needs of all children

This is the first suggested way that may address the development area of need about teachers' pedagogy. It links to the previously mentioned suggested way about

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'developments in professional developments opportunities that relate to the valuing of all children'. That is because through such developments, teachers may not only value equally all children but also develop knowledge and skills to implement strategies that respond to the needs of all. The perspectives that teachers took in relation to their pedagogical development, was indicated in the findings. Teachers' perspective mainly focused on the children that they have to work with, each school year. Each school year, teachers are responsible for teaching different year groups in mixed-ability classrooms. They might also be assigned the role of carrying out reinforcement sessions or they might work at a school which belongs to the Zones of Education Priority. They expressed a need to develop knowledge and skills, in order to respond to particular 'groups' of children that they are assigned to work with. These could include children that have a substantially lower level of achievement than their year group, such as, children with learning gaps, children with SEN or other learning difficulties, children that have Greek as a second or as a foreign language, children that have a substantially higher level of achievement than their year group, or children that have emotional/psychological and behavioural difficulties. In my view, these perspectives focus on how to respond to the educational difficulties of individual children with specific needs within their assigned classroom, rather than seeking to meet the needs of all children.

In contrast and relating more to meeting the needs of all children, teachers suggested that they should develop knowledge and skills relating to whole classroom strategies. Such strategies are for example those of group work, differentiation, and strategies that promote intercultural/ multicultural education. However, based on the findings, it seems that 'within the child' reasons were considered as the main rationale for teachers to support these suggestions. For example, from some of the teachers' points of view the suggestion to develop the knowledge and skills in order to carry out differentiation emerged as a need in order to respond to the 'weak' children, in terms of ability, or to the pre-fixed attainment levels (high, average, and low attainment) of children. The point being made here is that although pedagogical approaches that could be related to the notion of inclusion were suggested by teachers, the reasons behind them were in most of the cases still attached to a deficit way of thinking. Their suggestions have as a starting point the characteristics of

children, and although knowing more about particular children is not wrong, the belief that the problem or that the educational difficulties emerge mainly from those particular children's characteristics, raises difficulties in using pedagogical strategies that value or include all children.

Tomlinson (2001) suggests that differentiation deals with the content, process and product-outcome related to the curriculum. However, the use of differentiation as a discourse of good practice is not straightforward. There are two arguments in relation to differentiation. From one hand, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) consider that all teachers should use differentiation as one of the elements that could support the education of all children. Differentiation also, based on Koutselini's (1992; 2001) argument, is essential in Cyprus in order to deal with the fact that a large number of pupils are not involved through the learning process. Kershner and Miles (1996) reported that teachers see differentiation as an integral part of their work in order to enhance the learning of all children. On the other hand, according to Ainscow (1999), differentiation strategies can restrict the expectations that teachers have for particular pupils, in a way that will have a negative effect on their performance. Hart (1996) expresses her concerns about the relationship between differentiation, entitlement and opportunity. She suggests that ability-based pedagogy results in labelling of pupils, which can influence their life chances (Hart, 2003).

In my view it is easy to see differentiation as a way of enabling the inclusion of all children, since, according to Moss (1996), it is concerned with how to match pupils' diversity with task and the teaching methods. My conclusion nevertheless based on the findings of my study, is that teachers need to develop an alternative way of thinking about their pupils and about themselves in relation to the pupils which does not reflect a deficit way of thinking, along with implementing differentiation strategies or any other of the pedagogical strategies that they suggested. Teachers need to learn how to work with children in a way that values equally the diversity of pupils, no matter their perceived abilities. This is in line with inclusive principles and links clearly to the Index for Inclusion and in particular to the indicators that all children are equally valued and there are high expectations for all the children (Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

Some strategies that relate to pedagogy were already being used by teachers, and what I am arguing in the next section is that enhancement of those strategies seems to be necessary for the promotion of inclusion.

Enhancement of existing expertise and practice

I suggest that in the schools studied, the expertise and practice for inclusion and the implementation of inclusive approaches exist to some extent. It is interesting that some teachers have developed the expertise to respond equally to all the children in their classrooms through group work. For example, one teacher was able to provide equal opportunities to all children through the creation of collaboration and support among the children, by the use of specific techniques and strategies relating to group work, aspects which made the group work successful.

Similarly, some teachers were themselves initiating opportunities in order to share their expertise of inclusive practice, for example when some of them asked a colleague to observe their lessons or when they observed a lesson from a colleague in their own classroom. In my view, these are existing practices which need enhancement. Likewise, the practice of using existing opportunities such as the exemplary lessons for training on other topics or issues, in order to address their own personal needs, could also be promoted.

The enhancement of the existing expertise and practice, as a way of meeting their professional development needs are in line with the Cypriot literature which suggests that teachers have the expertise and power to contribute significantly to the successful implementation of inclusion, by responding themselves to the needs and personal responses of pupils (Angelides, *et al.*, 2004; Angelides and Aravi, 2006/2007). According to those writers, this expertise which is valuable and can contribute to the development of more inclusive practices, should be given the opportunity to be fully utilised (Angelides, *et al.*, 2004; Angelides and Aravi, 2006/2007). Ainscow (1998; 2000a; 2003) believes that the expertise to teach all students effectively is already present in schools, but the skills go unrecognised and underused. Professional development, therefore, according to Ainscow (2000a; 2000b) has to make better use of existing expertise. The starting point of every inclusive move should be with existing practices and expertise because it is a useful

component that can form the basis of inclusive pedagogy and can be used to show new ways of overcoming barriers to participation and learning. It is one of the arrangements for developing practice that should be given priority (Ainscow, 2000a, 2000b).

Moreover, in the findings of the study, it is indicated that special teachers are in the school for particular days or hours of days, but their expertise does not seem to be shared to an important extent. Similarly, the expertise of teachers, with the exception of the informal classroom visits, is not shared in a systematic way to the extent that teachers wished for, either through staff meetings or though their greater involvement in collaborative activities. It would be a good practice if 'special' and 'regular' teachers as Angelides (2004) suggests, were organising their lessons together, in order to set clear goals and prepare their lessons with all members of the class in mind. Symeonidou (2002a) also supports that the teacher and special teacher should be working in co-operation for the benefit of all students. In Mittlers' (1995) view special staff should collaborate with teachers in ordinary schools since they have much to contribute.

So, along with the enhancement of the existing practice and expertise, it is important for teachers to share good practice and expertise among themselves, no matter the role that they have in the school, in relation to all children.

Creating communities of practice

The creation of communities of practice, in order to support teachers' pedagogical development, is linked to the enhancement of existing expertise and practice that was discussed above. This is because, as Laluvein (2010) denotes, by allowing experiences to be shared either by more or by less experienced people, the communities of practice can allow participation and the changing of current beliefs and assumptions. It emerged from the findings of the study that teachers need ongoing support and collaboration as part of their professional development. Based on those findings, I believe that the creation of communities of practice for teachers' pedagogical development is a way of meeting those needs. It is important to clarify how this term is being used here. Communities, according to Rogoff (2003), are defined as "groups of people who have some common and continuing organisation,

values, understanding, history and practices" (p.80). A community of practice according to Wenger (1998) is about a group or groups of individuals in a community that share a set of goals and through the process of sharing experiences and negotiations the group or groups can be developed (Lave and Wenger, 1991). So, a community of practice according to Wenger (1998) is characterised by mutual engagement, negotiated enterprise and a repertoire of resources and practices among its members.

Although the communities of practice are an idea that relates also to the unique contexts and more specifically to the community context, it is placed here, under the professional development area of need that relate to teachers' pedagogical development. That is because it can support that development in unique ways.

The communities in this study refer to teachers, parents and experts who are involved in the education of children. As Booth and Ainscow (2002) argue, building inclusive communities require staff, parents, governors, students and local communities to be involved. Creating communities of practice for teachers' pedagogical development as presented in this study, involves teachers' building strong partnerships and collaboration with the experts, with other teachers, and with parents, that will allow for their experiences to be shared for their pedagogical development.

As the findings of the study suggest, teachers need greater partnerships to be developed as part of communities of practice, which will support their pedagogical development. Teachers stated their need for more collaboration and support from the other teachers in their schools, through exchanging classroom visits, for experimentation and reflection, observing more experienced teachers teaching or more support from the special teachers, in order to share their expertise. Moreover, they suggested that they would like to collaborate all together with whole school activities or be involved all together in research projects. Finally, they suggested that they would like to collaborate with staff in other schools as well, because that will allow them to develop their own practice.

Also, teachers mentioned that, from the experts, they need expert observation in their classrooms, and a more personalised support through meetings. They also need

experts to model particular strategies, to organise school-based experiential workshops, or to co-ordinate teachers to organise them.

Finally, very few teachers suggested that they would like to be involved in collaborative activities with parents as part of their professional development.

In line with the expressed need for an on-going support and collaboration with other teachers, experts, and parents is international literature (Ainscow, 2003; Booth and Smith, 2002; Carrington, 1999; Carrington and Robinson, 2004; Corbett, 2001; Howes *et al.* 2009; Mittler 1999, 2000, 2002; Sebba and Ainscow, 1996; Todd, 2007). Some Cypriot authors also support this finding (Angelides, 2004, 2006, 2007; Phtiaka, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Symeonidou 2002b).

What my study is adding to the Cypriot literature is more detail about the particular forms of collaborations that in teachers' views are the most helpful and can support them in the process of inclusion. All these various practices of partnership in their communities are important for allowing teachers to be developed pedagogically. The community of practice, according to Ainscow *et al.,* (2003), allows us to realise the "significance of social processes of learning, as powerful mediators of meaning" (p.233). However, this does not necessarily mean that communities of practice themselves have a positive effect, but if they are used as a mechanism for change (Laluvein, 2010) they have the power to alter taken for granted beliefs, meanings and assumptions that restrict the full participation of its members (teachers, experts, parents), in collaborative sharing of inclusive experiences.

A community of practice according to Laluvein (2010) offers the possibility to its members to change or adapt their existing assumptions, theories and frames of reference. This could then influence the community context in which these assumptions, theories and frames are situated and developed. Thus, it is argued that teachers' pedagogical development, through the development of communities of practice, might also have an impact on the unique contexts, which are discussed in more depth in the next section. Overall, it is suggested that the development of communities of practice is an important suggested way that could enable to address the professional development area of need that relates to pedagogy.

Ways to address teachers' professional development in relation to the unique contexts:

Contexts, based on the findings of my study refer to the socio-cultural, education, community and school contexts. The socio-cultural and education contexts were presented under the area that relates to the dominant value systems. A suggested way related to the community context was the creation of communities of practice which was presented above, under the area of teachers' pedagogical development.

In this section, I present two suggested ways that relate to the community and school contexts. More specifically, teachers have to respond to the unique context of Cyprus by: reframing their meaning-making, regarding the wider community context and; adapting themselves inclusively to the wider school context. Each of them is explained below:

Reframing their meaning-making regarding the wider community context

The wider community context is constituted by the teachers' unique ways of thinking and meaning-making, in terms of other people involved in the community of practice and about their partnerships with these people. It is the overarching context which is important to the partnerships among teachers, experts and parents. In that sense, the wider community context has loose boundaries and it is something that is implied rather than explicitly seen or referred to. Laluvein (2010) suggests that a community of practice develops and functions in a context and can determine its success. It is similar to what has been called by Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) an 'education platform' which involves teachers' theories and beliefs for teaching, and supports, justifies or validates teachers' behaviour. In this way, from my point of view, teachers have an active role in shaping the uniqueness of that context through their thoughts, feelings and meaning-making and this active role, gives to the teachers power to interact in ways that may actually change and improve it. This is why this suggested way of reframing their meaning-making regarding the wider community context is considered important, since if the particular thoughts, feelings and meanings that they have for other people and their partnerships with them are reframed, they can actually enable themselves to respond to the uniqueness and challenges of the Cypriot context. So, the view that the context is not separate from

the individual but is intertwined and also created by people's feelings and thoughts (Cole, 1996; Todd, 2007) is being held here, in order to facilitate the understanding related to the unique community context.

As the evidence from my study suggests, the way of teachers' thinking about the experts emerged. Teachers consider that they do not have the 'expertise' required to teach all children. Rather, the experts are considered to have the required specialised knowledge and be the solution to all their problems. The implications that this has, as shown in the findings of the study, is for teachers to feel less qualified than experts and this possibly impacts on their confidence and also keeps them at a distance from issues that they do not consider as being included in their 'expertise', but as being in the experts' specialised knowledge. This way of thinking about experts, gives the impression that teachers feel that they have a secondary role to play in the partnership with experts, while experts should have the first, the guiding role when problems emerge. Therefore, the way of thinking about this partnership overall is not that they can equally contribute, but rather teachers expect to get advice and support, rather than equally collaborate and share their expertise with experts in order to solve a problem.

Further, how the policy of inclusion itself has emerged, may also be a factor in this view. Carrington (1999) suggests that the inclusive schooling model has influenced the context of the teachers' professional knowledge, meaning that experienced regular teachers do not consider themselves as the experts of the teaching profession, but see themselves as novices as far as the new education policies about the inclusion of all children are concerned. Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) suggest, that teachers believe that specialist know better about how to teach particular categories of children with difficulties. Also, Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) argue that one of the key assumptions in the belief system in terms of special education is that doctors or experts know best, and this has led to a particular belief about the inclusion of children with SEN. So, the suggested ways that were related to the socio-cultural and education context, presented under the area of the dominant value systems, may also have some kind of impact to the area of the unique context.

In terms of how teachers think about their partnership with other teachers, it was quite noticeable in the findings of the study, that although teachers feel that they need to collaborate with each other through mutual observations and reflection, what they often do is to exchange ideas, material or support each other outside the classroom. Most of them maintain the kind of collaboration which does not expose themselves or their skills to other teachers. As I discussed in the findings, teachers have many reservations about the extent that they should expose themselves and their needs to their colleagues, by having them in their classrooms. The fear that they might be criticised or that they might get negative comments that will influence their image as professional teachers was quite noticeable. Teachers did seem to care a lot about their professional image that other teachers hold of them and their reputation in and outside the school. Such fears may limit teachers from engaging in classroom collaborations, so limiting the benefits that teachers could get from their partnerships with other teachers, which could support and enable them to respond to the unique context. Similar comments were expressed by Koutselini (2008), when she was involved in an action research project with teachers of Cyprus. She argues that, especially in the beginning of the project, in which teachers had to collaborate in groups, teachers showed a competitive spirit towards their colleagues. Moreover, teachers in their efforts to preserve a good image and reputation, preferred to remain silent rather than show their lack of knowledge or ignorance and be judged by their colleagues (Koutselini, 2008). So, according to Koutselini (2008), the particular attitude of teachers towards their colleagues was a significant barrier in the process of collaboration among them. Howes *et al.*, (2009) in their project that involved teachers in an action research, suggested particular personal characteristics of the teachers that were actually engaged in the collaborative activities undertaken by their project. Some of these were the sense of enjoyment when they were working with their colleagues, confidence about their understanding of their relationships with the children, considering collaboration as something that was worth working on, and little defensiveness about their practice. In contrast, the teachers that were feeling that they were not appreciated in the school or were marginalised were acting differently. So, it is suggested that teachers' ways of thinking about themselves and their colleagues, is something that has to be taken into consideration, since it

influences the interactions and the kind of partnerships that develop among the teachers.

The findings of my study also, show that teachers have a unique way of thinking about parents, more specifically, about their role and about their status. In terms of parents' role, teachers consider them as important partners in the effort of including their children. However, teachers do seem to prefer the leading role which guides that partnership rather than a mutual contribution to that partnership. It was obvious in the findings, that teachers need parents to support them, to be interested in what they are doing, to understand them, to listen at them, to follow their instructions and not to intervene in what they think that they should do as teachers. On the other hand, only very few teachers suggested that they can get the advice of parents in order to understand the children better and develop appropriate practice. So, it can be said that teachers consider parents important, but they think that they should have the first, the leading role, and parents should follow and support. The ways that teachers-parents partnership should be though, in order to achieve children's inclusion, were mentioned by Mittler (1990) as described within the literature review where emphasis was given to that "a sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences and decision-making" (Mittler, 1990, p.9) should prevail within this partnership.

In terms of how teachers think about parents' status as shown in the findings, they do pay attention to parents' particular characteristics; their ethnicity, their language, their education/ job, their marital status, and to some extent they make assumptions about their economic status. As already shown these create particular meanings for how teachers see parents and particular assumptions are created based on them about the family environment in which a child lives. This in its turn might influence the kind of partnership that teachers have with parents, either positively or negatively.

Thus, it is important for teachers to reframe their particular ways of thinking and meaning-making about their partnerships with other people involved in the community, and about these people separately, in order for genuine partnerships to be developed, which can support them in responding to the uniqueness of the Cypriot context.

Adapting themselves inclusively to the wider school context

The wider school context is a more straightforward context than the other contexts, since it has building boundaries and is about its organisational /structural aspects and the climate, or the interpersonal environment which exists among all the staff working there. First of all, teachers need to understand that some aspects within the context of the school, either in the organisational or the interpersonal environment of the school, cannot or may never be changed. So, teachers by adapting themselves inclusively to the wider school context are likely to respond to the unique school context. In the findings of the study it is evident that teachers are considering elements of the organisational barriers as reasons why they are sometimes not in a position to foster inclusion, such as the curriculum, the time for the extracurricular activities, the reinforcement sessions, the number of children in the classroom, the amount of necessary relevant educational material or the time available. Moreover, elements of the schools' climate were also suggested as a reason which acts as a barrier for teachers to foster inclusion, as well as the non-explicit acknowledgement of inclusion by their superiors. Teachers, by developing the appropriate strategies that will allow them to foster inclusion, given these barriers, could be described as a way of adapting inclusively to the school context. In other words, teachers should adapt themselves inclusively to the given context. A lot of aspects which enable teachers to foster inclusion were mentioned, which teachers can exploit to overcome possible barriers. For example, the positive climate among the teaching staff, the good relationships between teachers and pupils, the extracurricular activities and the content of the text books.

Howes *et al.*, (2009) suggest that an inclusive context does not only depend on structures but also on teachers' ways of thinking about their pupils and about the ways that they can change their actions to respond to these structures. Teachers as they denote, can together act, share their experiences, discuss and understand their pupils better. It does not mean that the structural barriers will vanish but when teachers' conversations about how to respond to these barriers become part of the school they can actually influence the way that structures are perceived (Howes, *et al.*, 2009). This is a way in which teachers can adapt themselves inclusively to the school context. It is through team-work and partnerships, according to Ainscow

(2003), as these have been described above, that teachers can create a common language and reflect on what they are doing, in order to overcome the barriers and to promote inclusion. So, in spite of barriers, it is still possible for teachers to adapt themselves inclusively to the school context.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed the main research question of the study and made a discussion on the overall understanding gained about teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion. It was argued that, teachers' professional development needs are related to three areas of need. These are: the dominant value systems, pedagogy, and the unique contexts. These areas overlap, since they were found to influence one another and to interact with each other. Several ways suggested by the findings of this study were presented, which are likely to enable teachers in Cyprus to address these areas of need, in order to foster inclusion.

Therefore, the findings of this study, throw light in three areas of need, that must be taken into account for addressing teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus.

The next section makes a reflection on the overall study, and provides a summary of the aims and understandings gained through this study.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was on the field of inclusive education, and in particular it aimed to explore teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. The broader literature related to the main research question was explored. The professional development needs of teachers for fostering inclusion were analysed through the four conceptual areas of the 'inclusive pedagogical cultures' framework. Through this analysis, the research sub-questions of the study emerged. A collective type of case study was carried out, in order to address the main research question and the research sub-questions of the study. Based on the findings of each research sub-question the main research question was addressed. In the conclusion of this study, which follows, a reflection on the overall study and a summary of the understandings gained trough this it, is made.

Reflection on the study

This section is about a self-critique and reflection on the key aspects of this study: my engagement with the literature, the methodological aspects, and the findings. Suggestions for further research are made. It needs to be clarified, however, that because the study is qualitative in nature, I needed to justify and be reflective throughout the whole process of the research and consequently in all the chapters of the thesis reflective comments have already been made. So, in this section I am reflecting on key aspects of this research with a focus on their strengths and limitations.

Engagement with the literature

My engagement with the literature aimed at refining the main research question of the study and at the development of the study's research sub-questions. It was a continuing process in order to include updated material. One of the strengths of my engagement with literature was the use of the framework of 'inclusive pedagogical cultures'. The framework was useful, for analysing teachers' professional development needs for inclusion, in order to identify areas within the Cypriot context

that needed further exploration, in relation to the overall aim of the study. The framework itself had the advantages of being conscious of the Cypriot context, and of being comprehensive, since it provided clearly four conceptual areas along with their aspects. Therefore, it helped to guide the focus of the study by enabling the development of the research sub-questions.

A limitation in relation to the use of a framework in a qualitative research is that it may set limits to the study as of what could be found. The use of the framework however had only a guiding role, especially at the very beginning of the research process, and did not limit decisions regarding the significant issues that could be studied to address my research questions.

Methodological aspects

One of the methodological strengths of the study is the research design used in the exploration of teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus. This is perhaps one of the first studies in Cyprus that involved a school similar in key aspects with other primary schools of Cyprus and a ZEP school for exploring teachers' professional development needs through a collective type of case study.

A limitation in terms of the collective type of case study with a qualitative nature is the extent to which the findings of the study can be generalised. The results of my study may generalise to other teachers in other Cypriot primary schools settings which are similar in crucial aspects to the primary schools chosen for the study (Adelman *et al.*, 1980; Denscombe, 1998; Nisbet and Watt, 1984; Ragin and Becker, 1992). However, after completing this study and based on the understandings gained through it, another kind of generalisation may be considered also appropriate; the qualitative (Tripp, 1985) or the naturalistic generalisation (Stake, 1995). The qualitative generalisation according to Tripp (1985) is the generalisation in which the individual after meeting the facts of a new case applies them to his/her knowledge and so develops a personal understanding. This can also be related to the naturalistic generalisation as presented by Stake, (1995) who suggests that the understandings gained by the investigator from the interpretation of a case study, apply to his/her learning and this learning/understanding may apply to other similar cases. Based on

my understandings gained therefore through this study, these understandings could be applied in other similar cases. However, it has to be noted that this kind of generalisation was criticised by Atkinson and Delamont (1985), because as they suggest private personalised knowledge is not in line with the methodological principles from which the claim of knowledge derives. This is based on their assumptions that studies should be developed to be generalised in more general frameworks.

Findings

The new and original area of findings with the biggest contribution to the Cypriot literature is the way that the three teachers' professional development areas of need (dominant value systems, pedagogy and unique contexts) are conceptualised as shown in Figure 1 (p.245) along with the suggested ways to address them. I think that this way of conceptualising and understanding teachers' professional development needs, might be used as a way forward in the professional development of teachers for fostering the inclusion of all children.

The findings reflect particular areas of Cypriot teachers' professional development needs participating in the study, and suggest ways to address them. They are situated in the context of Cyprus and perhaps, if the findings are used as such, they may have a limited contribution to make in international literature. Nevertheless, the way of conceptualising/understanding teachers' professional development needs through the spectrum of the interactions involved within three areas of need, might be useful for understanding the professional development needs of teachers in other contexts. This understanding of teachers' professional development needs as three inextricably related and intertwined areas that interact with each other, might allow an adapted version of relevant suggestions, to meet these areas of need, in other contexts.

Suggestions for future study

The study also suggests dimensions for further research in Cyprus, to focus on. First of all, it shows how the unique contexts might influence teachers' thoughts, feelings or actions. Further research could be carried out in order to understand in more depth, the other three important contexts that emerged, in my attempt to explore the

schools' context: the socio-cultural, the educational and the community contexts. Such research could explore the ways that the different contexts interact with each other, in order to understand in greater detail the aspects of the wider context that enable or act as barrier, for teachers to foster inclusion in Cyprus.

Moreover, the wider community context which underpins the partnerships carried out within communities of practice was explored only from the teachers' ways of thinking about partnerships with experts, other teachers, and parents. It would be interesting and useful if the thoughts of parents and experts were also explored in relation to these partnerships and be compared with those of teachers. In a similar way, pupils' thoughts could be explored, since they are part of the communities of practice. Their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with teachers and the kind of teaching and learning that they are having by them, could be investigated, as part of understanding the wider context of communities of practice.

Finally, further research could be carried out, in relation to teachers' pedagogical development. Based on the results of this study, various professional development opportunities could be developed, with the aim of helping teachers to promote inclusion. Then, these opportunities could be evaluated, in terms of the extent that they actually helped the teachers to foster inclusion. Such research could provide more details and depth about the kind of opportunities that help teachers in Cyprus to foster inclusion.

Concluding Remarks

Teachers play an important role to the fostering of inclusion in schools. The study has revealed the rich and diverse ways, in which teachers seek to develop their understanding and skills, in relation to the needs of children they teach. This is encouraging and promising, for an equal valuing of all children in Cypriot schools. The results of this study, contributed to an understanding of teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus, by throwing light in three areas of need. These understandings can be used to enhance further, teachers' professional development for promoting inclusion in Cyprus.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I
Previous work

Table 1: *The significant pedagogical issues for the inclusion of all children*

Culture

Staff, education officers, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion.	III	Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.	III	Students are equally valued	III	There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers	III	Staff collaborate with each other	III	The school strives to minimise all forms of discrimination	II *
There are high expectations for all students	II	Staff and students treat one other with respect	II *	Students help each other	II	New Issue: Marginalisation is identified and reduced	I *				

Policies at school level

Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity	III	'Special Educational Needs' policies are inclusion policies	III	All forms of support are coordinated	II	The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued	II	Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies	II *	New Issue: Inclusive policies should be long -term processes	I *

Practices

Staff expertise is fully utilized	III *	Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership	III	Community resources are known and drawn upon	III *	Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind	III	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students	III	Students are actively involved in their own learning	III
Students learn collaboratively	III *	Lessons encourage the participation of all students	III	Staff develop resources to support learning and participation	III *	Lessons develop an understand-ding of difference	II *	Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning	II *	Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect	II *
Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students inclusion	II *	School resources are distributed fairly so that they support	II *	New Issue: Collaborative Action Research Network	I *	New Issue: Enlightened profession-nals	I *	New Issue: The contribution of special school sector to inclusive pedagogy	I *	New Issue: Social Inclusion Network	I *
New Issue: Reflection in Critical Incidents	I *	New Issue: Planning-in-action	I *								

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Table 2: *The framework of Inclusive Pedagogical Issues in Cyprus*

	Concepual area A	Concepual area B	Concepual area C	Concepual area D
C U L T U R E S	Sharing the philosophy of inclusion, partnership, and collaboration by all involved with inclusion	Equal valuing of all students	Elimination of discrimination	Removal of barriers to learning and participation
	Staff, education officers, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion	Students are equally valued	The school strives to minimize all forms of discrimination	Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school
		There are high expectations for all students		
	there is partnership between staff and parents/ carers		**New issue:** Marginalisation is identified and reduced	
	students help each other			
	staff collaborate with each other			
	staff and students treat one other with respect			
P O L I C Y	Staff development and long term processes for collaboration	Creation of teaching groups for the evaluation of all students	All school policies are inclusive policies	Co-ordination of support
	Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity	The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued	'Special Educational Needs' policies are inclusion policies	All forms of support are co-ordinated
	New Issue: Inclusive policies should be long term processes		Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies	
P R A C T I C E S	Understanding of differences and partnership	All students are involved in classroom activities	Teaching all students	Promoting the learning and participation of all students
	Lessons develop an understanding of difference	Students are actively involved in their own learning	Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind	Lessons encourage the participation of all students
	Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning	Students learn collaboratively	Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students
	Teachers plan teach and review in partnership	**New Issue:** Social Inclusion Network	**New Issue:** Reflection in Critical Incidents	Staff develop resources to support learning and participation
	Staff expertise is fully utilized		**New Issue:** Planning-in-action	Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students
	Community resources are known and drawn upon			
	New Issue: Collaborate Action Research Network			School resources are distributed fairly so that they can support inclusion
	New Issue: The contribution of special school sector to inclusion			
	New Issue: Enlightened professionals			

Appendix II
Procedures

ETHICAL PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING
IN THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PERMISSION TO PROCEED WITH RESEARCH: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Reference Number:	08/018
Name:	Elina Gerosimou
Programme of Study:	PhD
Research Area/Title:	Professional Development Needs of In-Service Primary School Teachers of Cyprus, for Fostering Inclusive Pedagogical Cultures
Image Permission Form	Received (or N/A if no images)
Name of Supervisor:	Dr Kiki Messiou
Date Approved by Supervisor:	10 December 2008
Date Approved by Ethics Committee:	12 December 2008

Elina Gerosimou

15, Archbishop Makarios III

Chlorakas

Pafos,8221

Cyprus

Email:E.Gerosimou@2006.hull.ac.uk

Head of Primary Education   18th December, 2008

Dear Sir,

I would like to ask permission to carry out an educational research in the A and B primary schools of Paphos. The focus of the research will be on teachers' professional development needs for fostering inclusion in Cyprus.

The research will be carried out as part of the requirements of the PhD programme that l undertake at the University of Hull, in U.K.

Please find attached an overall summary of the research as well as a certificate that I am a student at the University of Hull.

Thank you very much in advance

Yours sincerely,

Elina Gerosimou

Elina Gerosimou,

PhD student,

University of Hull

Dear teachers,

I have taken permission from the Ministry of Education and Culture and from the head teacher of your school, to carry out a research at your school for the requirements of my postgraduate studies at the University of Hull.

This research project aims at identifying teachers' professional development needs for the inclusion of all children in the school.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study which will involve among others, participant observations in the classroom, during staff meetings, within the playground, in professional development situations, and interviews with all teachers. All these will be carried out at different stages and for the time of approximately six months.

I can assure you that your privacy, anonymity and confidentiality will be honored at every stage of the study and your names or your school identity will not be used when the data is written up or when/if the results are reported in scientific and academic journals. Moreover, you have the right to withdraw at any time of the research, without adverse consequences and any information gather until such time will not be used.

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project please do not hesitate to talk to me at the school or at email: E.Gerosimou@2006.hull.ac.uk.

If you agree to participate please complete the consent form attached.

<u>The IFL ETHICS COMMITTEE</u>

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

I, ……………………….......................of………………………………………….......

Hereby agree to be participant in this study to be undertaken by Elina Gerosimou and 1 understand that the purpose of the research is to identify teachers' professional development needs for inclusion in Cyprus.

I understand that

1. the aims, and methods of the study have been explained to me

2. 1 voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person.

5. 1 am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: Date:

The contact details of the researcher are:

Elina Gerosimou

E.Gerosimou@2006.hull.ac.uk tel. ……..

The contact details of the IFL Ethics Committee are Mrs J. Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX

Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988

BEBAIΩΣH

CERTIFICATE

Βεβαιώνεται ότι η Ελίνα Γεροσίμου αφότου πήρε έγκριση από το Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού της Κύπρου και αφού ενημέρωσε τη Διεύθυνση και το διδακτικό προσωπικό του σχολείου για το σκοπό και τη μεθοδολογία της έρευνας της, πήρε άδεια και διεξήγαγε έρευνα στο Αριστοτέλειο Δημοτικό Σχολείο Πάφου από τον Ιανουάριο μέχρι και τη λήξη της σχολικής χρονιάς 2008-2009.

This is to certify that Elina Gerosimou, after getting the informed consent of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus and after presenting the aim and methodology of her study to the head teacher and the teaching staff of the school, she had our informed consent and she carried out her research to the Aristotelio primary school of Paphos, from January until the end of the school year 2008-2009.

Υπογραφή:

Signature:

....

Η Διευθύντρια του Σχολείου

The Head teacher of the school

ΒΕΒΑΙΩΣΗ

CERTIFICATE

Βεβαιώνεται ότι η Ελίνα Γεροσίμου αφότου πήρε έγκριση από το Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού της Κύπρου και αφού ενημέρωσε τη Διεύθυνση και το διδακτικό προσωπικό του σχολείου για το σκοπό και τη μεθοδολογία της έρευνας της, πήρε άδεια και διεξήγαγε έρευνα στο Σωκράτειο Δημοτικό Σχολείο Πάφου από τον Μάρτιο μέχρι και τη λήξη της σχολικής χρονιάς 2008-2009.

This is to certify that Elina Gerosimou, after getting the informed consent of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus and after presenting the aim and methodology of her study to the head teacher and the teaching staff of the school, she had our informed consent and she carried out her research to the Socratio primary school of Paphos, from March until the end of the school year 2008-2009.

Υπογραφή:

Signature:

....

Ο Διευθυντής του Σχολείου

The Head teacher of the school

Appendix III
Fieldwork

Extract from fieldnotes

Visit 15: *Wednesday, 4/2/2009*

Time: *9:25-10:45*

Classroom: E *(Year 5)*

Time	Fieldnotes	Thoughts/comments
10:05	...............The bell rings for the fourth 40-minute period to begin. The teacher says: "Prepare your stuff for the Greek lesson." Sotiris is still sitting alone in a separate desk while the other children are in groups. The children are preparing their stuff for the next lesson. Vangelis comes into the classroom a bit later the teacher tells him "do not go to that group, sit here" and shows him another group... "No" say the children from that group "we don't want him here...he knows nothing..." "You will not tell me what I am going to do, quickly we do not have time, we need to finish this chapter today" says the teacher. Vangelis sits next to them, he looks	*Sotiris is a child officially registered as having SEN. He was sitting alone in a separate desk, from the first day that I visited the classroom* *Vangelis left the classroom lesson within the previous hour, in order to carry out his reinforcement session with another teacher in a different classroom.* *Is the fact that the child is carrying out reinforcement sessions play a role for what the children said? Couldn't the teacher challenge these views of the children? Is the time a barrier?*

reluctant..........The teacher shares a handout with exercises and reads loudly the first instruction and then says: "I want you to work with your group about the answers and we will talk all together about them". The teacher goes next to Sotiris and seems to explain something to him. Some of the children talk to each other and others solve the exercises alone. After a while the teacher says: "which group is going to tell me the first answer?" Many children raise their hands and the teacher says: "haven't I told you in groups? You were supposed to say to one child of the group the answers that you decided together..." "...but we do not all agree" says a child... "Ok" says the teacher "just tell me the answers individually". The children then raise their hands and the teacher tells to them to answer and writes the answers on the board.......

The children do not seem that they had the opportunities to practise working in groups. Is this the case?

The teacher did not insist and did not do something to facilitate children but moved on leaving children working in an individual path. Does this relate to the teacher's knowledge and skills in relation to group work?

Research Programme

9/2/2009-13/2/2009

Time	Monday, 9/2	Tuesday 10/2 (extracurricular activities)	Wednesday, 11/2	Thursday, 12/2	Friday, 13/2
7.45 – 8.25	C1	B3	A2		E2
8.25 – 9.05	E2	B3	A2		E2
Break					
9.25 – 10.05	D2	ST3	B1		C1
10.05 – 10.45	D2	E2	B1		C1
Break					
10.55 – 11.35	C3	C1	ST3		staffroom
11.35 – 12.15	C3	C3	ST3		staffroom
Break					
12:25-1:05 (end of school day)	staffroom	staffroom	ST3		
1:05-2:00			staff meeting		

Thank you

Elina Gerosimou

Critical incident/event
Date: Time:
Focus of the event:
What precipitated/ led up to the event:
What took place:
Outcomes:
Notes on interviews with participants:

ENGLISH VERSION: *Themes for the semi-structured interviews*

	GROUP A:	
	General aim of this group of questions:	
	Understandings/meanings, valuing, attitudes, commitment, confidence, needs	
	Questions	**Aim of the question**
1	First of all, I would like to ask you, for how long have you been working as a teacher and how long are you part of the staff in this school?	*Feel comfortable/ years of experience*
2	Have you heard before the term 'inclusion of children in the school?' If yes, when and how have you heard it?	*Understanding/meaning*
2	How do you understand the concept of the term 'inclusion of the children in the school?'	*Understanding/meaning*
3	What is your attitude towards the inclusion of all children? Why do you believe that?	*Attitude/commitment*
4	How do you value your pupils? / What are the factors which influence the way that you value your pupils?	
4	Which are the factors that help you value all your pupils? (what act as a barrier)	
5	How committed do you feel in carrying out the process of inclusion in your classroom and generally in your school?	*commitment*
6	In general, would you say that you are motivated to foster the notion of inclusion?	
6	If yes which are these motives?	
6	If no, what do you think could act as a motivation?	
7	How confident do you feel/ to what extent do you feel confident in carrying out the process of inclusion in your classroom and generally in your school?	*confidence*
7	What are the factors/aspects that make you feel ready to carry out the process of inclusion in your school?	*Confidence/commitment*
7	Please give me few examples of how do you include all the children in the classroom and generally in the school?	*Confidence/commitment/understanding*
7	What is that you need in order for you to feel ready and be able to include all the children in the classroom and generally in the school?	*Needs/confidence*

	Questions	**Aim of the question**
	GROUP B: **General aim of this group of questions:** *Context of the school, needs*	
8	Which aspects within the context of your school do you think enable you meet your inclusive pedagogical needs so as to foster the notion of inclusion?	*Aspects of the context that enable to meet needs*
8	Which aspects within the context of your school do you think act as a barrier for you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the notion of inclusion?	*Aspects of the context that act as barriers*
8	Where do you seek for support, in order for you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs?	*Aspects of the context /needs/support*
8	What kinds of support do you receive in meeting your inclusive pedagogical needs?	*Support*
8	What other kinds of support do you need to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs?	*Support/ needs*
	Themes that emerged and can be/will be related to this group of questions based on teachers' answers	
9	To what extent would you say that parents enable you to foster the notion of inclusion?	*Parents-teachers relationship*
9	To what extent would you say that parents act as a barrier for you to foster the notion of inclusion?	
9	How do you activate parents to be involved in the inclusion of their children?	
9	What is that you need from parents in order for you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the notion of inclusion?	*Parents-teachers /needs*
10	To what extent does the curriculum enable you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the inclusion of all children?	*Curriculum/coverage of the curriculum*
10	To what extent does the curriculum acts as a barrier for you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the inclusion of all children?	
10	How do you ensure that the curriculum is taught in a way which meets the inclusive needs of all pupils? Please give examples	*Curriculum/valuing of pupils*
10	What changes could be made in the curriculum so that you can respond to all the children?	*Curriculum/ needs*
11	To what extent do you feel that the time that you have in your classroom and in the school generally is enabling you to be responsive to the needs and the abilities of all children?	*Time/needs*
11	To what extent do you feel that the time that you have in your classroom and in the school generally acts as a barrier for you to be responsive to the needs	

	and the abilities of all children?	
11	How do you use your time in the classroom and the school in order to respond to the needs of all the children?	
11	What is that you need in relation to the time in order to help you foster the notion of inclusion?	
12	To what extent would you say that you collaborate with the other staff of the school for issues that relate to the inclusion of children? How?	*Staff collaboration*
12	With whom are you collaborating mostly and why?	*Staff collaboration*
12	Do you collaborate with the special teachers, the speech therapist and the school escort? How would you describe your collaboration?	*Teachers - special teachers-speech therapist -school escort collaboration*
12	What is needed in collaboration among the staff in order to enable you to foster the inclusion of all children?	*Staff collaboration*
13	To what extent are the staff meetings a good opportunity for collaboration and communication among the staff with regard to the issues related to the inclusion of all children?	*Staff meeting collaboration/communication*
13	To what extent are the staff meetings enabling you to meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the notion of inclusion?	*Staff meeting/ needs*
13	What do you need from the staff meetings in order to help you meet your inclusive pedagogical needs and foster the notion of inclusion?	
14	Regarding the extra-curriculum activities to what extent do you feel that they enable you to foster the inclusion of all the children in the school?	*Extra-curriculum activities*
14	To what extent do you feel that they act as a barrier?	
15	To what extent do you feel that you have a 'voice' and an active role in all the decisions that are related to all the pupils of your classroom?	*Decision-making*
15	What would help you to have an even stronger role?	
16	In which aspects are you evaluated by the inspector?	*Teacher's evaluation/assessment*
16	To what extent are you evaluated/assessed whether you include all children or not?	*Teacher's evaluation/motivation*
16	How does this evaluation influence your views/attitudes towards the inclusion of all the children?	*Teacher's evaluation/motivation*
17	To what extent do you feel that some children are marginalized in the classroom or during breaks?	*Marginalisation*
17	What is your role to in relation to that?	*Marginalisation*
17	What enables you to deal with marginalisation?	*Marginalisation/commitment*
17	What acts as a barrier for you to deal with marginalisation	

18	*(Reinforcement sessions if emerge ask in the same systematic way)*	

GROUP C:		
General aim of this group of questions:		
In-service professional development needs, opportunities, respond to needs and opportunities		
	Questions	**Aim of the question**
1	As an educator, What do you see as your professional development needs, especially in relation to valuing all children? (to respond equally to the diversity that exists among your pupils) or To what aspects/ issues do you feel that you need PD so as to be able to value equally all your pupils?	
2	Why do you think that the......is one of your professional needs in order to value equally all your pupils (to respond equally to the diversity that exists among your pupils)	
3	Which is the best way that could help you cover that need? (How could this need be met?)	
3	Why do you think that? You can give me examples if you like	
3	What opportunities are given to meet these professional development needs in order to value all children?	
3	Did you take part in such opportunities?	In terms of each development opportunity raised: All the following questions
3	To what extent did it help you to cover your need? You can give me examples if you like.	
3	What is needed further to even better meet that need? How could it be improved?	