‘The Inclusion of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder into Mainstream Schools in Mexico’

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Abstract

In the last twenty years, governments around the world have signed policies and enacted legislation concerning the right of every child to be provided with education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which states that every child with SEN should receive education in a mainstream setting, whenever possible stimulated, at least partly, the enactment of such policies. To some extent, the Mexican government has responded to the UN initiative by reporting a gradual increase in the number of children with SEN being placed in mainstream schools over the last ten years. However, despite the efforts of some parents and teaching assistants, there is an increasing concern that many children with ASD are not educated in mainstream schools or they have been included but without the support of a qualified teaching assistant or teacher, which has a negative effect on the quality of education. This situation has emphasized the need to improve strategies in order to overcome the barriers to effective inclusion for these children. Thus, the main aim of this study was to explore the extent to which children identified as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder are included within in mainstream schools in Mexico with the support from DOMUS a non-profit parent led organisation. This is done by examining the facilitators and barriers that affect the success of inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico.

Multiple case studies of children with autistic spectrum disorders were conducted. The data on the perceptions about inclusion was gathered from interviews with head teachers, teachers, teaching assistants, and parents of children with ASD. In addition, observations of the children with ASD both in class and in the playground were carried out along with focus groups conducted with secondary age classmates, sociometric data, and a review of DOMUS’ records.

Participants offered many perspectives on the facilitators and barriers that should be overcome in order to include a child with autism in mainstream schools in Mexico. Seven key themes and related subthemes that can act as facilitators or barriers emerged from the analysis. These included family factors, children with ASD’s social and academic abilities, school ethos, role of teaching assistant and DOMUS, and the influence of stakeholders’ experience in overcoming anxieties about inclusion, teachers’ competence, and stakeholders’ attitudes towards children with ASD. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature review.

It was concluded that the Mexican government’s inclusive education policies should be taken further, although the teachers involved should initially receive further training in order to help them feel more confident. An ASD friendly school ethos, positive attitudes from stakeholders, and financial resources can also support inclusion. Stakeholders need to overcome their anxieties, and they can achieve this by embracing the opportunity to experience inclusion. This study provides a starting-point in by identifying the facilitators that should be strengthened and the barriers that should be reduced in order to enhance the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico.
Declaration

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Dedication

To...

All children with ASD in Mexico, their families and teachers.

To my mom, my sisters Melina and Vera, my brother in law Isamu and my lovely nephew Isamu-kun.
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Glossary of Acronyms

AD  Asperger Disorder
AS  Asperger Syndrome
ASD  Autistic Spectrum Disorder
SEN  Special Educational Needs
(Necesidades Educativas Especiales)
SEBD  Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEP  Secretaria de Educación Publica
Ministry of Public Education
DEE  Dirección de Educación Especial
Department of Special Education
PNFEEIE  Programa Nacional para el Fortalecimiento de la Educación Especial y la Integración Educativa
National Program for Strengthening Special Education and Integrative Education
USAER  Unidades de Servicio de Atencion para Escuelas Regulares
Units of Support Services for Regular Education
CAM  Centro de Atención Multiple
Multiple Attention Centre
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the scene

International policies in many countries have encouraged the Inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). However putting the rhetoric into practice can be challenging in any country, even more so in developing countries, such as Mexico, with widespread high-level poverty (Forlin et al., 2010) and an increasing demand for educational services. Although the General Education Law (Ley General de Educacion) in Article 41 (Ramos & Fletcher, 1998) states that SEN services should serve any child who requires learning support and provide resources in the school, in practice, this is not happening and many children remain out of school. The main aim of inclusive education is to achieve educational equality for all children; however, in the case of children with disabilities, this sometimes depends on the type of SEN that the child presents. Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which is a ‘developmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction and communication as well as repetitive behaviours and restricted interests’ (Frith & Hill, 2004:1), are sometimes not easily included in mainstream schools because of different barriers and particular biological, cognitive, and behavioural manifestations. In Mexico, the prevalence rate of autism is not clearly known; however, it is estimated that there are 6,000 new cases of ASD each year in the country\(^1\) (Marcin, 2010). Only 426\(^2\) from approximately 37,000 children with ASD are integrated in Mexican mainstream schools (Marcin, 2007)\(^3\).

Although each child deserves to be treated equally, trying to provide appropriate education for all children can sometimes be complicated when the key facilitators are not present, such as in most developing countries as Mexico. Indeed, the Mexican Minister of Education stated that about 15 million children still do not attend school in Mexico (Jimenez, 2009).

Many concerns about inclusion of children, particularly children with ASD, can be raised because of the triad of impairments, which can complicate their inclusion in school even more than the inclusion of other children with other disabilities. The education for Children with ASD in Mexico is offered free of charge in Multiple Attention Centres-CAM (SEN

\(^1\) These percentages were estimated in 2007 by Dr. Marcin (Clima Director). This entire estimate should be treated as provisional because it is only an undercount of the true prevalence of ASD.

\(^2\) Estimates from Minister of Education (SEP) 328, DOMUS 45, CLIMA 48 children with ASD

\(^3\) These percentages were estimated in 2007 by Dr. Marcin (Clima Director) at the Conference on Autism Speaks to the World, Personal Communication and La Jornada (Mexican Local Newspaper). This entire estimate should be treated as provisional because it is only an undercount of the true prevalence of ASD.
centres). Children can also be included in a public school with the support of Unit Services for Regular Education-USAER. Additionally, they can be included in a private or public school with the support of private organizations (Ramos & Fletcher, 1998). Although some primary schools are public and free of charge, it is still a luxury for many families who cannot afford to pay for uniforms for their children. Thus, many children are not educated at all. Overall, little research focused on the education of children with SEN in Mexico (Guajardo, 2010), and almost no research covered the topic of the inclusion of children with ASD. Hence, this research focuses on inclusive education of children with ASD in Mexico in order to learn more about the facilitators and barriers that influence the successful inclusion of these children. This research attempts to contribute to the understanding of the ways in which children with ASD can be included into mainstream schools in Mexico.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Many countries in the world have signed international agreements about the rights for inclusion of children with SEN and disabilities. For instance, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (UNESCO, 2000), states that all children, regardless of their nationality, gender, or disability, have a right to obtain basic education. However, according to Lake (UNESCO, 2011), the executive director of UNICEF, ‘too many children are being left behind, deprived of their right to thrive and grow simply because they were born female, or have a disability, or live in one of the world’s poorest and most isolated places.’ Lake (UNICEF, 2011) stated that one third of the 72 million primary school age children are out of school due to a disability.

International laws and some parents advocate for the inclusion of their children. In many countries, the Index for Inclusion provides recommendations to schools concerning the process towards inclusion of all children (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), regardless of their background, culture, or disabilities; however, many still think that the best place for children with disabilities is a special school. Discussion about the outcomes of the last two provisions, mainstream and special schools, is still ongoing.

A great deal of research has been conducted about the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (Armstrong et al., 2010; Forlin & John, 2008; Green & Engelbrecht, 2007). Recently, there has also been a growing interest in the inclusion of children (Symes & Humphrey, 2010; Wainscot et al., 2008). ASD is a developmental disorder that has attracted
attention of many international researchers partly because it is seen as an inexplicable and puzzling disorder, as children with the condition do not have a physical abnormality and do not, at first sight, appear to have any special educational needs. Some children with ASD can be academically able but sometimes cannot interact with others because they behave differently or in some cases present emotional and behavioural difficulty.

Thus, inclusion can be more difficult for children with ASD compared to children with other special educational needs because these children present a triad of impairments in social interaction, communication, and imagination (Wing, 2002). Moreover, their hyposensitivity or hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli (Kern et al., 2006) causes them to face more challenges compared to other children with disabilities (Tuman et al., 2008). Children with ASD can sometimes present a learning difficulty, and it may be hard for them to shift attention. They may also display obsessive and repetitive routines. Due to these factors, these children may struggle in a noisy and changeable mainstream school environment. Furthermore, it can be difficult for them to interact with their classmates, which is further complicated if they present emotional and behavioural difficulties (Howlin, 2005b). Children who present Asperger’s can be seen by their classmates as odd. They can be discriminated against and bullied by other children, particularly at secondary level (Symes and Humphrey, 2010; Wainscot et al., 2008).

Some studies investigated the outcomes of inclusion of children with ASD (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001). Research studies on the outcomes for adults with ASD (Howlin et al., 2004; Mawhood et al., 2000; Baron-Cohen et al., 2009) reported that it is important to support children in gaining social skills to form relationships and be included in society so they could live more independent lives as adults (Lord & McGee, 2001).

1.3 Personal reasons for undertaking the research

My initial interest in children with special educational needs (SEN) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) began when I was seven years old and saw a film about a mother who was desperate to ‘take out’ the loneliness of her 4 year old child with ASD by implementing the SON-RISE program. Later, I decided to study Psychology. I always knew that I wanted to work with children, but I decided to focus my research on children with SEN when I went to a conference at an institution for children with Down’s syndrome. I was impressed by the organisation’s head teacher who mentioned a doctor who had told a mother that her child
with Down’s syndrome looked ‘like an animal’. Thus, the mother, who came from a very low economic status and had no education, checked if there was some hair growing from the child. I was angry to hear that a doctor, who was supposed to be educated, could say that the child was not able to do anything. Moreover, I also realized by different means that my country lacked awareness and information about SEN. At that point, I felt a strong urge to work with children with SEN. Recently, Giusi Spagnolo has become the first woman with Down’s syndrome to graduate from a European university (D’Ettorre, 2011). When I first heard the news, my first thought was that it is just impossible for anyone to predict the future of a child and simply decide that he/she will never be able to do anything just because of their condition. Thus, I started to do research about integrating children with Down’s syndrome. When I first came to England, I received a Master’s Degree in Special Educational Needs. Afterwards, I began to work on my Ph.D. research. My pilot study helped me decide to focus on the inclusion of children with ASD.

I have developed my interest in children with ASD based on my experiences during my fieldwork in Mexico. This experience made me aware that the services in Mexico are underdeveloped. It is still challenging for a country that offers limited services to promote inclusive education compared to developed countries. Indeed, I wanted to investigate the process of inclusion for using a sample of children, and I am hoping that this research could help improve inclusive education in Mexico.

Personal contacts of children (Sebastian’s mother, Julian’s mother, Hideyi’s teacher) helped me understand what it is like to live or work with a child with disabilities and what challenges parents and children face in order to find adequate services. It should be clear that it is important to provide these children with appropriate education in order for them to lead as independent life as possible, belong to their communities, and be included in the society.

1.4 Aim of the study and Research Questions

The overall intention of this study was to obtain a deeper understanding about the participation of children categorized as having ASD within mainstream schools in Mexico. The research involved case studies of nine children with ASD who were included in mainstream schools. It focused on the facilitators and barriers to the successful inclusion of these children.
To what extent and in what ways can children categorized as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder be supported within mainstream schools in Mexico?

In addition there were two sub-questions, as follows:

What facilitators support the inclusion of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder into Mexican mainstream schools?

What are the barriers that should be reduced in order to achieve successful inclusion of these pupils?

Outline of the Thesis.

Following this introduction to the research, the thesis continues with the following chapters.

**Chapter 2. Mexican Education System**

This chapter describes the Mexican Education System. It provides some data on the enrolment of children in Mexican education, explains the ways in which Mexican schools have been developing current provisions for children with Special Educational Needs and for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

**Chapter 3. Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

Chapter three defines autistic spectrum disorder and the characteristics of children with autistic spectrum disorder according to three different theories, (i.e. biological, cognitive and behavioural). It discusses these characteristics as the barriers for the inclusion of children with ASD in mainstream schools. Additionally, it reviews the causal factors and explains some educational interventions.

**Chapter 4. Inclusive Education**

This chapter defines inclusive education and discusses the Mexican context of the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and autistic spectrum disorder. It also considers inclusive education research about some of the facilitators and barriers that children with SEN and ASD face.
Chapter 5. Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology. It discusses the epistemological and research design, introduces the research participants, describes the research methods, and explains the data collection procedures in Mexico and analysis carried out in England.

Chapter 6. Results and Discussion of Cross Case Analysis

Using thematic analysis, this chapter presents a summary of the results by each child and school age and a discussion from the cross case analysis. It discusses the themes identified from literature review and presents the findings as well as the key themes of this research.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and Implications

The last chapter discusses the relationship between the research questions and the key themes that emerged from the data analysis. Next, it considers limitations of this research as well as the implications of this study with regard to educational policy and practice. Further research that could be conducted in Mexico in the light of the findings is suggested.
CHAPTER 2. THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN MEXICO WITH REFERENCE TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)
2 THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN MEXICO WITH REFERENCE TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information on the educational system in Mexico with a specific focus on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). It is important to shed some light on the educational structure of this country in order to understand current provisions for inclusive education provided by Mexican schools. The provision of education for children with SEN in Mexico is different compared to other countries, such as England. In this chapter, the word ‘integration’ refers to both integration and inclusion concepts. The following chapter discusses in more detail the words inclusion and integration and their usage in different countries.

2.2 Description

First, I briefly describe the country and the educational system in Mexico. The United Mexican States (Estados Unidos Mexicanos) is located in Central America. It is currently divided into 31 states and one federal district, Mexico City. The country’s population is 112,336,538 of which 24,027,000 live in the capital, Mexico City, and State of Mexico and its suburbs (INEGI, 2010). From the entire population in Mexico, 5 739 270 people, which means 5% of the population, have a disability (INEGI, 2010). In 2011, the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon, signed the law against discrimination of People with Disabilities, challenged by the National Council for the Development and Inclusion of Disabled Persons (Presidencia de la República, 2011). Although the World Bank suggests that Mexico has the highest per capita income in Latin America (World Bank, 2008), it has high poverty, with 18% of the population living below poverty (Forlin et al., 2010).

According to the National Household Income and Expenditures Survey (INEGI, 2010) (ENIGH), tremendous disparities exist between the richest and the poorest. In addition, according to UNICEF, 20.9 million young people, 53.2% of all Mexican children lived in poverty in 2007 (UNICEF, 2008). Indeed, Mexico City has ghettos of poor people close to wealthy areas. Although basic education in public schools is free for Mexicans, Elba Esther

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4 ENIGH is INEGI or Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, which regulates the statistics in Mexico.

5 Information from CONEVAL; Módulo de Trabajo Infantil, ENOE 2007, (INEGI, STPS);
Gordillo\textsuperscript{6}, who has been the Head of the National Teachers’ Union in Mexico for the last 23 years (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación or SNTE), has recently declared that out of 40 million children, only 25 million\textsuperscript{7} of school age children are attending school (Jimenez, 2009). This means that 15 million children are unable to attend school. This lack of education can be found more in rural and underprivileged places, where poverty is a strong factor (SEP, 2008).

The Secretariat or Ministry of Public Education provides free textbooks to children in primary public schools. Nevertheless, many parents are not able to provide money for other expenses or resources, such as additional textbooks or pencils, transportation, or school uniforms that the child would need. Thus, families sometimes encourage children to leave school. If both parents work, girls are encouraged to stay at home to take care of their siblings and do the housework (Levison, 2001) while boys have generally informal jobs outside their homes. Consequently, some children leave school to get informal jobs in order to fulfil their primary needs, such as food.

This country provides a secular education at public level; however, many private schools offer different religions. Religion plays an important role in the lives of a majority of the Mexicans. Overall, 92.9 millions (83.9\%) of Mexicans are Catholics and substantial subgroups are members of Protestant, Evangelical and/or Charismatic church organizations (INEGI, 2011). According to Blancarte (2001), 75 \% of Mexicans trust religious organisations. Additionally, Camp (2007) suggested that God’s role in people’s lives is very important for 40\% of Mexicans.

\textbf{2.3 Context of Education:}

The Ministry of Public Education (SEP) represents the main body in the hierarchy of the National Educational System. It decides the curriculum that most students learn. Article three of the 1917 Constitution states that Children should go to school (private or public) and that elementary education shall be compulsory and free for every Mexican (SEP, 2002b).

\textsuperscript{6} Elba Esther Gordillo was interviewed by Oppenheimer, 16 of April 2010.

\textsuperscript{7} Proyecciones de la población de México 2005-2050, CONAPO 2006; Estimates by Secretary of Education in a Conference about Education in Mexico.
In Mexico, initial non-compulsory education begins at birth to three years old. According to the Law of Obligatory Pre-schooling of November 2002 (Forlin et al., 2010), children should attend (compulsory) one year of Kinder Garden or Preschool between the ages of three to five. It is obligatory for parents to send their children to primary and secondary school (OECD, 2004). Children from 6 to 12 years of age have to attend compulsory Primary School while children from 12 to 15 years old should decide whether to go to Junior High School, secondary general, or secondary technical/vocational schools. All children attend from Monday to Friday; however, there are two different timetables in the morning and in the afternoon for different groups of children. High school for 15 to 18 years old children is not compulsory. There are two different types of education provision, public and private.

There are two different types of provision of education: Public and private.

Public (government funding) caters for 80% of all students (Sandoval, 2007). The average class size for public primary education is 40 pupils per classroom.

Private schools have an average class size of 20 pupils per classroom. Moreover, the curriculum is less strict in public schools compared to private schools (paid by parents or charity services) that offer better quality education. Any private school has to be registered and accredited by Secretary of Public Education (SEP, 2008). Private schools are obliged to follow the same curriculum as public schools but they usually are of a higher quality (Blanco, 2006) because they include other lessons and have smaller classes. For each grade, there is an achievement scale from 1 to 10. Pupils with an average of less than six must repeat the year.

For people who live and work in developing countries, education is an essential requirement and clearly provides them with a better quality of life. Well educated individuals could obtain better employment and satisfy other basic needs for food, accommodation, clothing, as well as gain access to health care and clean water (SEP, 2000b). However, some parents in Mexico do not value education because they have more immediate basic requirements that make them perceive education as irrelevant. For example, children need to work and earn money for food to help the family survive. Thus, some students attend only primary school and do not continue with a higher education. According to the last educational census from the National Minister of Education, 29 million children were enrolled in schools, of whom 4.5 million (17.5) were studying at preschool level, 14.5 million (50%) at the primary level, and 6 million (21.5) at the secondary level. Only 3 million young people (11%) were enrolled.
in high school (SEP, 2008). This slight decrease shows that more students attend primary schools compared to other schools (SEP, 2008) (See Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Preschool</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3-5 year old)</td>
<td>(6-11 year old)</td>
<td>(12-15 year old)</td>
<td>(15-18 year old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,248,000 per year</td>
<td>2,440,000 per year</td>
<td>2,035,000 per year</td>
<td>1,155,000 per year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Enrolment of children.

The government has made an effort to provide educational services to the entire population in Mexico. However, there is a significant disparity between public and private education as well as between schools in rural and urban areas (Blanco, 2006). The disparities can produce an enormous educational problem for the country. For example, in rural areas or ‘rancherias’, the communities are not only poor, but also far away from big cities, and as a consequence, they are isolated from public services. In addition, they have insufficient numbers of teachers; therefore, more than half of the primary schools in Mexico have multi-grade classes located in these poor communities (SEP., 2009). Most teachers prefer to live in the city, and they cannot go to these places because of poor access for them and for other children. Economical problems in the families are associated with a lack of provision for books, uniforms, and other materials. Many children need to enter the labour force and obtain employment instead of studying, although there are some children who manage the work in the mornings and attend classes in the afternoon.
Mexico has ranked number 100 out of 183 most corrupted countries (Transparency International, 2011). The Mexican Competitiveness Report 2009 from the World Economic Forum (Guerrero et al., 2006:1) suggests that ‘in a number of areas, suboptimal policies and institutions from an efficiency and growth perspectives are products of unequal structures of wealth and influence. It focuses on two areas of unequal structures: concentrated wealth in the business sector; and unions in protected sectors, the heritage of corporatist institutional arrangements.’ Another difficulty in Mexico is that the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) manages all teacher vacancies. SNTE is one of the most powerful and largest unions in Latin America (Hausmann et al., 2009), with a budget of approximately 4700 million dollars (Oppenheimer, 2010). Hausmann et al. (2009:15) states that the ‘SNTE has been in large part responsible for blocking reforms that would increase the quality of spending and help ensure equal access to education. Poor teacher performance and learning outcomes are associated with the SNTE-dominated, centralized collective bargaining for many work rules’.

As a result, Mexico lacks quality education, which prevents this country from developing (OECD, 2010). In her recent book, Oppenheimer (2010) wrote that according to Elba Esther Gordillo, 1,007,000 people, including teachers, administrators, and staff, are affiliated with the SNTE. Juli Castellanos, Mayor Official in charge of the Ministry of Education finances from 2006 and 2009 who was interviewed by Oppenheimer, suggested that 10,000 staff receives a salary but they are actually not teaching or working in any other jobs.

In addition, the system for recruiting and selecting teachers is inadequate (OECD, 2010). The actual number of teachers and teaching assistants in the country is unknown (De Pansazo, 2012). Since 2008, the Mexican government has been trying to change the process to offer teaching positions to teachers selected by a national contest (SEP, 2009). In the past, as well as in the presence in some cases, instead of passing a validated exam to teach in public schools, many teacher job vacancies are inherited from relatives who are part of the national teachers’ Union when they retire. If those who wish to become teachers do not have any relatives who held a teaching post, they will need to pay 10,000 dollars (Oppenheimer, 2010) to someone else with a post in order to obtain and have a job for life. Thus, some teachers are under-qualified or not qualified at all. Moreover, SNTE prevents schools from firing teachers even if they are not doing a good job (Oppenheimer, 2010). Even if a teacher has problems and is not performing well, the SNTE will move the teacher to a different school; therefore, the problem remains and students receive poor education in Mexico (Guerrero et al., 2006).
The above discussion shows that several challenges still need to be overcome in order to provide quality education for all children in Mexico. If administrators take the budget designated for education (Oppenheimer, 2010) and nobody ensures that teaching positions are given to the most qualified, and not to people who are less qualified or receiving a salary without working and the corruption will continue in this country (De Pansazo!, 2012) and it will be very difficult for the Mexican Education system to change in order that the country can develop (ONU, 2010). The next section defines Special Educational Needs and describes the provision of education for children with SEN in Mexico.

2.4 Children with Special Educational Needs.

In this section, I define SEN and describe provision provided to children with special educational Needs (SEN) in Mexico. As was mentioned above, a limited number of services are unable to provide education for all children in Mexico. The challenge is even greater when discussing the education of children with special needs because of different barriers.

First, from the Mexican perspective, services for children with SEN should provide resources for individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities and for gifted individuals (SEP, 2000b). The most commonly used categorisation of ‘learning disabilities’ or special educational needs in Mexico considers intellectual disabilities, motor impairment, visual impairment, language impairment, and hearing impairment.

The General Education Law (Ley General de Educación) in Article 41 (Ramos & Fletcher, 1998) states that SEN services should serve any child who requires learning support. All children have the right to education and their families have the right to choose the best option for them. According to a document from the Ministry of Education (SEP, 2006), previously SEN staff, education services were supporting only 343,000 children with or without disabilities, that is, 8% of all people with disabilities. Furthermore this document stated that 38% of them have ASD. These figures have to be taken with caution because it is unclear whether the Ministry of Education can reliably diagnose learning difficulties.

In Mexico, in some cases parents of children with SEN find out that their children require support, from the head teacher or other teachers in the school who later send them to a doctor or psychologist. In the UK, an educational psychologist with special training to carry out assessments and give proper recommendations assesses most children with SEN (Hick et al., 2009). In the past, head teachers and teachers in Mexico were filling an Integrative Education
questionnaire, the Serie 911, to identify children with SEN, although they were not qualified to give a diagnosis, which resulted in frequent under or over identification of children with SEN (Teutli, 2007). Although this questionnaire has now been changed to be more easily completed by the head teacher, a psychologist should still give a proper diagnosis.

Until 1994, Special Educational Services were centralised in Mexico City, the Ministerial Department of Special Education (Rhodes, 2000). Later, the organisation and deployment of SEN services expanded from Mexico City to the states. Ramos and Fletcher (1998) and Teutli (2007) reported that each state now works with its own financial resources to provide basic educational services according to the diversified conditions required by their particular populations and to promote greater availability and completion of schooling. However, every state and each district should be working with the National or Federal Program to Strengthen the Integrative Education in Mexico (Programa Nacional de Fortalecimiento de la Integración Educativa en Mexico, 2002a). The government created this program to establish laws for Special Education and inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools in order to increase the provision of education for children with SEN. However, every parent has the right to choose where to send his/her children, whether it is a mainstream or special school or public or private school. In addition, the National Development Plan 2007–2012 (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 2007) has also been promoting the rights for a quality education for children with SEN.

As mentioned previously, there are big economic disparities in Mexico. On the one hand, people who live in highly marginalized conditions are more likely to have children with SEN as they have less access to medical services, are more likely to experience high risk pregnancies, have poor diet, and inadequate access to education (Vaillard, 2007). In addition, on most occasions, these children are diagnosed when they get older. A great disparity exists between the time parents from highly marginalized families detect that their child has an intellectual disability and the time that they are formally diagnosed. Although very poor families may find that their children have disabilities when they are four, they may not have the economical resources to pay for a professional service and obtain official diagnosis until much later, when these children are ten years old for example (Vaillard, 2007). This information suggests that higher level of marginalization is associated with later diagnosis and increased developmental problems. Ethnicity and poverty reflects the gap in services for children with SEN.
The absence of an earlier diagnosis can sometimes have serious and irreversible consequences for the early rehabilitation of the child. Indeed most of these children do not receive an appropriate education because they start going to school without having a diagnosis or they do not go to school at all. When they do receive the diagnosis, the families may still not have the economic resources to buy services to support these children, and the government does not provide them. From the 4,097 government services for SEN, most were located in only 42% of the states, mainly in the capital and big cities rather than rural areas (Mount-Cors, 2004). This inadequate coverage has left children without any opportunity for support in poor rural places and villages far away from the principal cities of Mexico (Blanco, 2006).

2.5 Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

According to Ramos and Fletcher (1998) and Artiles (1995), children who are diagnosed with SEN, in this case particularly, children with ASD, can receive two types of service models operating throughout Mexico:

a) Public: 1. Multiple Attention Centre- CAM
   2. Unit Services for Regular Education- USAER

b) Private organizations, institutions and charity centres. Educational Centre DOMUS (Centro Educativo DOMUS) and Mexican Clinic of Autism (Clínica Mexicana de Autismo, CLIMA).

In the following section, I provide an overview of CAM and USAER. DOMUS (Centro Educativo DOMUS) and Mexican Clinic of Autism (Clínica Mexicana de Autismo, CLIMA) will be discussed in the chapter on the inclusion of children with autistic spectrum disorder.

**Multiple Attention Centres** (CAM-Centros de Atención Multiple) are government funded educational centres designed to replace the special education schools, centres of early intervention and centres of professional development, which previously served students with more severe disabilities. Ramos and Fletcher (1998) further pointed out that children who are categorized with severe SEN cannot be accommodated in a regular school; however, with the possible support of USAER, they can be educated in these centres.
The children in CAMs attend the class depending on their age and the corresponding grade. Each centre maintains approximately 20 students who are taught regular curriculum modified to the needs of each child. Each CAM is free to choose different strategies for curriculum implementation. Supposedly, these children have the same core curriculum and quality education as students with disabilities who are integrated into mainstream schools. However, CAMs support children have been categorized as having severe disabilities; therefore, different types of SEN can make it impossible for a teacher to provide an appropriate service for each child. For example, they may be teaching children with ASD, visual disabilities, and deaf children simultaneously. In 2007, 841 children at preschool level, 3,992 at primary level, and 151 at secondary level attended 90 CAMs in Mexico City (Direccion de Educación Especial, 2007).

**Unit Services for Regular Education** (USAER-Unidades de Servicio de Atención para Escuelas Regulares) is a government funded multidisciplinary group, which promotes the change in educational practices in schools and inside the classroom to provide education to children with any special educational need. Supposedly, each USAER has a director, 2 special education teachers, and in some cases a technical support team- speech and language therapist, a psychologist, and a social worker. Each unit serves five schools. One special educational teacher should attend within each school for the entire week, but this is not always the case. The limited research base in this area indicates that 72% of the staff believes that the Ministry of Education is not giving the appropriate resources to the teachers to support and include children with SEN into mainstream schools (Red International de Investigadores y Participantes sobre Integración Educativa cited in Aviles, 2006). USAER team members are responsible for children identified with SEN (Fletcher et al., 2003).

Currently, following the National Project for Educational Integration, 20,786 schools in Mexico should be supporting the inclusion of 492,000 children with special needs (SEP, 2009). However, this provision of educational service is not enough for all children. USAER (Dirección de Educación Especial, 2007) supervises only 1405 mainstream schools from 5172 in Mexico City. Out of those, 1251 are primary schools and only 6 are preschools. In addition, only 133 secondary schools have been supported (ibid). The number of schools left without any support from USAER is very high, and there is more support at primary than at secondary level.
Statistics from the Dirección de Educación Especial (2007) show that in 2007, 125 preschool children, 15,653 children in primary schools, and 1,307 children in secondary schools received services from USAER in Mexico City. This brought the total to 17,214 children with SEN. Again, the provision is mostly given to primary schools but this does not mean that the service is effective. For instance, children with ASD, who arguably require a teaching assistant every day, are not well supported by USAER and hence, they are not always included in all school activities. The original plan proposes that USAER group should provide in-school assistance to all children with SEN or ASD one day per week in the school. In reality, this means that the child will only have a 15-minute visit once every month because USAER does not have enough teachers for all children. This time is insufficient if we consider that their principal duties are to evaluate the child, structure interventions and their practice, carry out the assessment, and monitor the inclusion process and progress of the child. However, in practice, children with ASD attending a public school are not properly supported. For example, USAER multidisciplinary group visits only some schools over ten days per year instead of visiting the all children with SEN in every school forty-eight days per year (SEP, 2002a). As a result, there is insufficient time to support all children.

Although Mexican schools have a legal responsibility for the inclusion of children with SEN, most regular classroom teachers are not well trained or prepared to receive children with SEN and as a result, some rejected to include children with SEN as well as special education teachers. Additionally, the teachers can feel that the special education teachers from USAER spy on them (Fletcher et al., 2003). This can be a result of lack of planning when introducing the inclusion process in Mexico using USAER. This plan was not transitional. Training was given in the form of hierarchical, instead of training all teachers. The Government provides information about training other staff only to some school staff who would be responsible for passing on the knowledge to other teachers (Fletcher et al., 2003). According to Jordan (2005 :116) ‘Training is essential, since the mere addition of a support worker may do little to help the person with ASD or his or her teachers. Nor may it effect true integration or inclusion’. This means that lack of teacher preparation prior to the inclusion becomes a barrier for the inclusion of children with SEN.

Another difficult situation is that teachers’ confidence and competence in meeting inclusive demands are not adequate. According to the National or Federal Program for Strengthening the Integrative Education in Mexico, 65 percent of teachers participating in the research suggested that they do not have the skills to support different special needs of the children
who are integrated. Moreover, 73 per cent of the teachers suggest that the schools do not have the correct infrastructure for the physical access of some of these children, for example children who use wheelchairs cannot use a lift to go to the second floor (Aviles, 2006). Consequently, only a small number of teachers really desire to work with children with SEN in the schools (Mateos, 2007). Ironically, those who want to work do not have a teaching post or sometimes feel unable to work with children with ASD with them due to lack of training. As a result, there are not enough highly qualified teachers in the field of SEN. Moreover, instead of being integrated, many children with ASD remain in CAM or do not study at all (Ramos and Fletcher, 1998).

In order to be a teacher in Mexico, candidates should have completed an undergraduate program from the Escuela Normalista (such as a university in United Kingdom), although it is not always compulsory to finish the degree (Neri, 2009). However this system has not been updated since 1985 (Fletcher, 2005), hence in relation to the education of children with SEN, which has been becoming increasingly prominent, such teacher candidates are not qualified. Accordingly, the Mexican Government is attempting to change the undergraduate program and the Program of Special Education Degree. In addition, only 57 out of 463 universities specialized in training teachers in Special Education (SEP, 2000). However, in a study with pre services teachers, 44% of 286 pre-service teachers who were studying the degree still indicated that they have not had training to enhance the inclusion of children with SEN (Forlin; et al., 2010).

Changing the courses of this program will empower new teachers to provide children with SEN a higher quality education even though a need to train the older teachers who are still teaching in the country will remain. The National Program to Develop Special Education and Integrative Education in Mexico from the Ministry of Education encourages these teachers and teaching assistants by providing funds to those who are interested in receiving further training in SEN (SEP, 2000). This program is called ‘CARRERA MAGISTERIAL’ (López-Acevedo and Salinas, 2000). In this point system, teachers receive additional points and get a better salary for the achievement of a higher academic level by taking or offering different courses as well as engaging in peer review process and student assessment. The teacher is expected to have children with SEN in her classroom and teachers with greater qualifications receive higher wages. However, the quality of this further education may not suffice because people who are giving the courses are themselves not always qualified. Another challenge is that if teachers from public school decided not to specialize in SEN, the Teachers’ Union
would not force them to participate in the courses (Ramirez, 2010). When it comes to reality some teachers do not receive adequate incentives because of several barriers such as lack of resources or living in a state where promotion is not possible (McEwan and Santibañez, 2008).

Furthermore a research by López-Acevedo and Salinas (2000:24) found that:

‘Teacher’s enrolment in Carrera Magisterial has a positive relation with learning achievement; however the level in Carrera Magisterial is negatively correlated with the student's learning achievement. The bottom line is that the program might have some good aspects that possibly promote better teaching practices but there is a pervasive incentive as to how the teacher is promoted.’

The training given to teachers in Mexico is still not appropriate for the needs of children in this country.

Teachers and teaching assistants play a key role in the education of any child but also in the inclusion of children with SEN. Hence, there is a need to raise their awareness about the inclusion of these children. Many teachers in Mexico do not believe in the inclusion although some teachers recognize that this model of inclusion has encouraged knowledge, acceptance, and respect for diversity (Fletcher, 2003). Some of them perceive teaching a child with ASD as an extra task because they are responsible for large classes with several children in the classroom and for the new child with ASD that is been integrated but may not have received other form of support. Thus, if a child with ASD is integrated, he/she frequently requires assistance from an individual private teaching assistant. In many cases, this teaching assistant is given full responsibility for the child. The teaching assistant’s wage can be low, approximately £150 per month, but this may still be a lot to pay for parents of children with ASD (Ramirez, 2010).

When the Constitution was amended, one of the goals was that teachers offer the same curriculum to children with ASD (Ramos and Fletcher, 1998). However, in the practice, this has not been possible in all cases because each child has its own style of learning and needs. Children with ASD require differentiated work to be able to access the curriculum. Usually teachers and teaching assistants should be responsible for making the curriculum adaptations. In practice the teaching assistant is the one who is making adaptations to the curriculum of
children with ASD, and the curriculum comprises activities that are totally different from the activities of other children without SEN (SEP, 2000b).

Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, the Ministry of Public Education cannot afford to fund the full range of support needed to offer special education. Thus, families of children with special needs who can afford to pay a private service and the wages of a teaching assistant may access private schools (Ramirez, 2010). Apart from the above public services, there are some private organizations, institutions and charity centres. Educational Centre DOMUS (Centro Educativo DOMUS) and Mexican Clinic of Autism (Clínica Mexicana de Autismo, CLIMA) are some of these organizations, which are making considerable efforts to assess and educate children with autism as well as train teachers. These organisations will be discussed in the following chapter on inclusion of children with ASD.

Finally, I believe that the Ministry of Education has to compromise to provide better quality education for children with SEN in Mexico by offering more funds for education. USAER’s multidisciplinary groups can provide effective solutions to support the inclusion of several children but require a higher number of teachers in order to work across all the schools of the country. This should support the program for Transformation and Academic Strengthening of Normal School by reforming the Program of Special Education Degree and the courses of the Normal Schools to educate qualified teachers trained in the topic of SEN (Oppenheimer, 2010).

At the same time, it is necessary for the Mexican government to build a good relation between the Special Educational services and the Teachers’ Union in order to implement a better system of recruitment and specialization of teachers and to provide these teachers with the proper resources to do their job. Moreover, ‘Carrera Magisterial’ program should be revised. Training should be mandatory in private and public schools and taught by qualified people. They should be certain that teachers are committed to working with the children effectively. As OECD (2011) suggest that ‘the quality of teaching could be further improved through a stronger Mexico which is recovering strongly from the global recession,… better teacher training as well as more professional recruitment and school management and a recurrent, objective evaluation of all above’ is required. All these changes will empower teachers to provide children with SEN a higher quality education.
2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided an outline of the educational system and its structure in Mexico and an important foundation for this study described later in this dissertation. This contextual information helps understand the inclusion of children with ASD, which is discussed in the following chapters. It will be particularly helpful to explain why private services such as DOMUS and not government funded organizations support the children in this study. Hence, the services that they received do not represent the whole range of services that children across Mexico receive.
CHAPTER 3. AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER
3 AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the definitions and intervention strategies for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I discuss the main characteristics of ASD and explain this developmental disorder at three levels, biological, cognitive and behavioural, using Morton and Frith’s causal framework for developmental disorders (Morton, 2004). I also discuss different therapies and educational methods used in the treatment of children with ASD.

The overall purpose of this research is to study inclusive education of children with ASD in Mexico. This chapter will only contain a brief discussion about ASD in order to provide the necessary foundation for discussing inclusive education for this group.

3.2 Definition

3.2.1 Overview

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong ‘developmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction and communication as well as repetitive behaviours and restricted interests’ (Frith & Hill, 2004:1). In 1942, Kanner was the first to describe the condition of autism systematically. One year later, Asperger described children with a similar condition that became known as Asperger Syndrome (AS) (Howlin, 2005). ASD, which incorporates Asperger Syndrome, affects children’s communication abilities as well as their relationship with other people. It is more common in boys than in girls, with a male-female ratio of around 3:1 (Frith & Hill, 2004). Children with ASD are sometimes described as being lost in their own world, odd, shy, reserved and socially isolated.

In 1978, according to Rutter, four in every 10,000 children were diagnosed with ASD. Recent figures suggest that autism affects approximately one in 64 children in the UK (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009) and one in every 88 children in the USA, according to the Centre for Disease, Control and Prevention (2012). However, an earlier study conducted in South Thames, London, by Baird et al. (2006) estimated that ASD affects approximately 1% of the population, specifically 116.1 children per 10000.

The current estimates reflect a steady increase in the prevalence of the condition from 30 years ago, but the causes of this increase are unknown. It could be a natural increase or the
result of other factors, such as improved diagnostic services for children with autism. Alternatively, it could be due to the current widening of the diagnostic criteria, for example, individuals were not diagnosed before with AS and were only perceived as being slightly odd people who prefer to be isolated. A further reason for the increase in the prevalence could also be that society and parents in particular are more aware now about this disorder than they used to be; moreover, there are more qualified professionals who can diagnose the condition, knowing that ASD can be co-morbid with other disabilities (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009).

In Mexico, it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics pertaining to the numbers of children with ASD. This is partly because few professionals in Mexico possess the necessary qualifications to use the proper screening tools that can lead to a diagnosis (Albores et al., 2008) and the extensive training that is needed, which can be expensive (Hedley et al., 2010). However, Marcin (2010) estimated that three in every 1000 children have autism. The figures suggest an increase in the Mexican population of 2 million per year; therefore, it may be estimated that there are 6,000 new cases of ASD each year in the country. According to Marcin, Mexican private organisations are currently supporting only 8,000 children with autism, which is less than 10% of all children with ASD in the country (Hernandez, 2010). In order to shed further light on the current situation, Marcin and other researchers have designed a study of 35,000 school age children in Guanajuato, one of the biggest cities in Mexico, to get an accurate picture of the current percentage of children with ASD in this country (Hernandez, 2010).

### 3.3 Behavioural Indicators of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Children with ASD usually share the following set of characteristics, known as the ‘Triad of impairments’ (Wing, 2002):

- **a) Impairment in Social Interaction.** Children prefer to do individual activities and not to share time with others. This could mean that they are seen as odd, isolated individuals who are indifferent to others. There are three main groups of behaviours that characterise this problem:
  - **Aloof behaviour.** Children with ASD are not interested in having contact with others and prefer to avoid people who are interested in interacting with them.
Passive behaviour: Children with ASD who are not interested in interaction but they will participate if someone is willing to interact with them.

Active but odd behaviour: Children with ASD who want to communicate but have difficulties following social rules. They do not know how to interact and often become too close or show unpredictable manners with others.

b) Impairments of communication: A delay in the development of speech and non-verbal language is a common characteristic of ASD. They also find it difficult to understand non-verbal gestures. Levels of speech ability vary amongst children with ASD, with some of them unable to speak at all. The crucial issue here is that most of them, for instance, even those who can speak, lack a natural desire to communicate with others. It is estimated that approximately 25% of children with ASD will start talking and communicating by 2 or 3 years of age. However, they will continue showing social impairment. The remaining 75% will improve but will always need the support of an adult (Schaefer and Mendelsohn, 2008). Moreover, they cannot understand the purpose of communicating with others. Most children with ASD also present difficulties expressing emotions and intentions when interacting with others.

c) Impairments of imagination: Children with ASD show rigid behaviours and thoughts, restricted and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, poor social imagination and repetitive interests. In addition, stereotyped and ritualistic behaviour, repetitive routines and an extreme delay or absence of pretend play are common characteristics in these children (Wing, 2002). Because of rigidity of thought and impaired imagination, they are not able to generalise knowledge.

Children with ASD also tend to have a high pain threshold. Some of them express hyposensitivity or hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli, such as light, noise and odours, as well as difficulties with attention and orientation (Kern et al., 2006). In some cases, the brain does not process light properly because of a lack of melatonin, which is the hormone that causes human beings to feel tired. This can be associated with sleep impairments (Glickman, 2010).

Some children experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. They can injure themselves or others while trying to communicate, and this conduct can easily be reinforced if these
behaviours prove to be effective in gaining attention (Keen, 2003). Epilepsy has also been found in some cases (Schopler et al., 1998).

All children who exhibit the preceding triad of impairments with different levels of severity are described by Wing (1996) as being on the ‘Autistic spectrum’. Three types of Autistic spectrum disorders include 1) Autism, 2) Asperger Syndrome (AS), and 3) Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS).

People with AS present similar difficulties as people with autism and represent ‘the more cognitively able end of the autistic continuum’ (Howlin, 2005:6). The difference between AS and autism is that children with AS tend to exhibit higher intellectual abilities. They do not have a major language delay but they present difficulty in communication, as they tend to interact with others in an odd way. AS is usually diagnosed later compared to other types of autism. There is not a great difference between children with AS and those with high functioning autism in their obsessions and social impairments, although these impairments are more complex in people with AS than in people with autism (Frith, 2003).

Children who present a Pervasive Developmental Disorder and share the triad of impairments without fitting the description of autism or AS are diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, ‘PDD-NOS is also likely to span the entire spectrum, depending on the number and severity and extent of impairments.’ (Cotugno, 2009:25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical domain</th>
<th>Decreasing atypicality →</th>
<th>Asperger</th>
<th>PDD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impaired No eye contact</td>
<td>No eye contact relating to No physical affection Cannot be engaged in imitative tasks</td>
<td>Intermittent eye contact Seeks affection ‘on own terms’ May invade personal space of others (not true affection) ‘Engageable’ in imitative tasks, although with difficulty</td>
<td>Good eye contact) Shows interest in others, but often does not know how to join in. Easily engaged in imitative activities Rigid: has difficulty if perceives that rules have been broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed, and deviant</td>
<td>Nonverbal No response to voice:</td>
<td>Echolalia, delayed echolalia, odd</td>
<td>Speaks fluently, but lacks understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of verbal nuance, may 'act deaf'</td>
<td>No use of gestures as a means of compensating for absence of spoken language May use 'hand-over-hand'</td>
<td>inflection</td>
<td>inference, or humour. Difficulty with 'theory of mind' language tasks (fibbing; framing topic for partner; conversational repair)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Repetitious</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extreme distress if routines are changed or when required to preference for routines; easier to transition from one task to another preparation for changes in routine self-modulate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Behavioural/motoric</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frequent self-stimulatory, stereotypical movements (flapping, spinning, toe-walking, finger twiddling)</td>
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<td>Fascination with odd objects (tags, wheels, fans, etc.)</td>
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<td>Cognitive</td>
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<td>Same, but with diminishing level of distress; may be able to accept verbal preparation for changes in routine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Motor stereotypes infrequent; may re-emerge when excited Complex repetitious play activities (lining up objects, memorizing numbers, letters, etc.)</td>
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<td>Cognitive</td>
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<td>May demonstrate conscious awareness preference for routines; easier to transition from one task to another preparation for changes in routine self-modulate</td>
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<td>Behavioral/motoric</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Motor stereotypes. Play remains repetitious but repetitive absent quality is more subtle; preoccupation with arcane topics (e.g. bus schedules, solar system)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory phenomena</td>
<td>Intense aversion or attraction to specific classes of stimuli Auditory: covers ears Visual: visual self-stimulation (lights/patterns); looks at objects from odd angles Tactile: rubbing, licking, mouthing, deep pressure Olfactory: sniffing Extreme food</td>
<td>Same, but diminishing intensity</td>
<td>Same, but diminishing intensity</td>
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selectivity
‘Increased pain threshold’
Fears:
heightened/blunted

Table 3.3.1: Degree of expression of atypical features (Coplan, 2003)

3.4 Diagnosis

The diagnostic criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition revised (DSM-IV-TR) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) or the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision (ICD-10) (World Health Organization, 1994), are based on the abovementioned triad of impairments. Specialists should consider this when observing children alone or with peers. The diagnostic assessment is also based on information from the parents and teachers about the child’s development and behaviour. In addition, different assessment tools can be used to diagnose a child with autism. Some of these are rating scales, for example the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) (Schopler et al., 1980), Checklist for Autism in Toddlers Modified (CHAT-M) (Baron-Cohen et al., 1992), and the Screening Tool for Autism in Two Year-Olds (STAT) (Stone et al., 2008).

A Spanish translation of the Autism Detection in Early Childhood (ADEC-SP) and Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised (ADI-R) has been used for diagnosis in a study in Mexico (Hedley et al., 2010). Additionally, some doctors and psychologists use the Theory of Mind Test, or TOM test (Muris et al., 1999), which is similar to the Awkward Moments Test (Heavey et al., 2000) and can be useful in assessing the theory of mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009).

Intelligence tests, such as the Weschler Intelligence Scales for Children (WISC) or the Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) (Wahlberg, 2001), are not usually appropriate for children with ASD. According to Albores et al. (2008), 75% of children with ASD are being diagnosed with Mental Retardation, and it is well known that these tests are not appropriate for children with very low IQs.

Regardless of the assessment instruments used, it is important to understand that each child has his/her own profile. No child with ASD will display the same characteristics as another
child, with the severity of the symptoms being different in each child. The diagnosis of ASD depends on the personal traits and symptoms of the child as well as on whether they significantly interfere in the daily life of the child and its family. Most children present abnormal development from birth, but Lainhart et al. (2002) suggested that 20–30% of children with ASD between 18 and 24 months of age experience regression in their development.

Many parents of children with AS have difficulty obtaining a diagnosis, as the problem is not so severe, and the children simply act slightly odd. Consequently, AS children and children who have high functioning autism are typically diagnosed later than children with autism who are generally diagnosed at the age of 3 or 4 (Howlin and Asgharian, 1999).

3.5 Causal Factors or aetiology of ASD

In the last ten years, several studies have been conducted that explored the causes of autism (Matson and LoVullo, 2009). Currently, no conclusions have been made regarding a specific cause of ASD; most studies focused on possible brain, mental, and genetic factors that affect autism (Frith and Hill, 2004). A common explanatory framework that would explain and demystify the cause and development of this disorder has yet to be produced. At the moment, the aetiology can be considered to be multi-factorial (Keen et al., 2010).

In this section, I briefly explain the biological and cognitive causes of the behavioural symptoms of autism using Morton’s Causal Framework.

3.5.1 Biological Level

As mentioned previously, the epidemiology of ASD is multi-factorial. Many studies have found different brain abnormalities in individuals with autism (Morton, 2004) and reported that ‘mutations or structural variation in any of several genes can dramatically increase disease risk’ (Abrahams and Geschwind, 2008: 2), such as novo mutations in genes CHD8 and KATNAL2 with advanced paternal and maternal age being a risk factor (Neale et al.). Twins and siblings of children with ASD have provided strong evidence for a genetic basis of autism, as they have been found to be 25 times more likely to be diagnosed with the same disorder compared to normally developing siblings (Jorde, 1991).
In addition, parents of children with ASD show similar traits as their children compared to control groups (Abrahams and Geschwind, 2008; Happe, 2006). Some studies suggest that autism is primarily a genetic disorder and that 90% of the cases are inherited (Schaefer and Mendelsohn, 2008); however ‘the autism gene’ has not been found (Abrahams and Geschwind, 2008:2).

Howlin (2005) discussed some preliminary research that associates autism with disruptions in brain connectivity, in particular she explored the hypothesis that frontal lobe disturbance can cause executive dysfunction, and these difficulties lead to problems associated with the behaviours of children with autism.

Some of the other risk factors that can lead to brain damage (Baron-Cohen and Bolton, 1993) and are considered non-genetic causes of autism include prenatal factors and birth complications, such as pre-maturity and post-maturity (Howlin, 2005); advanced maternal age (Howlin, 2005) or health issues in the mother, such as obesity during pregnancy (Krakowiak et al., 2012); viral infections, autoimmune disorder, or a child getting retrovirus, herpes or cytomegalovirus before or after the birth (Frith, 2003).

All these possible causes have to be considered cautiously. Indeed many years ago, some researchers speculated about ‘refrigerated mothers’ who do not give enough affection care to their children. Although, obviously, parents play a key role in the development of children, this theory does not explain ASD (Happe, 2006). In some countries, such as in Mexico, some mothers are still blamed for causing the developmental disorder of their children by being distant with them.

Some chemicals, such as the mercury-based preservative thiomersal, present in the measles, mumps and rubella triple vaccination (MMR) and other vaccinations (Fitzpatrick, 2004), were claimed to be possible causes. Wakefield (1996) was the first to claim a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. In 2004, 10 of 13 researchers retracted the results of this paper and the British Medical Journal declared that the findings were a fraud (Russell, 2011). Other metals, toxins, pollutants (Hertz-Picciotto et al., 2006) or pesticides (Sullivan, 2008) have also been claimed as possible causes of the disorder. In addition, Sullivan and Maberly (2004) claimed that iodine deficiency in the mothers during the prenatal period is one of the reasons for increased prevalence of autism, but this has not been proved. Moreover, in an attempt to find a cure for autism as a biomedical disease caused by an immunological or toxicological
process, some children are being put on special diets without gluten, casein and dairy products while taking various vitamins, minerals and enzymes. They are being given chelation therapy and hyperbaric oxygen (Lathe, 2006), but there is no evidence that this type of natural intervention is effective. Evidently, there is still a need for further research in order to discover whether these causes are real and whether such interventions are helping.

3.5.2 Cognitive Level

Although the intelligence quotient (IQ) levels of children with ASD can vary from low or average to high (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), very few have high IQ. Some children demonstrate savant abilities in specific topics, such as music, but they still share the triad of impairments that characterise children with autism. Therefore, the cognitive causes of autism are not related to IQ. The most common psychological theories that explain autism at a cognitive level are: theory of mind, executive control and weakness in central coherence (Frith, 2003).

Frith and Hill (2004) argued that the **theory of mind** explains that the neurological damage in children with ASD results in their inability to communicate with others or understand the concept of deception (Baron-Cohen and Bolton, 1993). ‘The intuitive and automatic attribution of mental states to others is lacking. In the most severe cases, there is no understanding of mental states at all’ (Frith, 2003:206). Thus this suggests that the child cannot comprehend the boundaries between their own and others’ mental states (Happe, 2006).

Hence, they cannot understand others as most people do; they are not able to be empathetic with others because they do not understand others’ thoughts, ideas or feelings. These children lack the ‘ability to predict relationships between external states of affairs and internal states of mind’, called ‘mentalizing’ by Frith (2003:77), which could be caused by disruptions in the dissociative mechanisms.

The **theory of central coherence** is ‘the normal drive to integrate information into context, gist, gestalt and meaning’ (Baron-Cohen, 1997: 629). Children with autism present a weak central coherence, which means they have poor connectivity throughout the brain (Frith and Hill, 2004); hence, they cannot process information as other children do (Wahlberg, 2001). However, it has been proposed they can process details and concentrate on the constituent
parts, rather than having global processing and the ability to extract overall meaning (Frith, 2003; McGregor et al., 2008).

The **theory of executive control** suggests that children with ASD have a dysfunction of ‘the postulated mechanism that enables the normal person to shift attention flexibility, inhibit prepotent responses, generate goal-directed behaviour and solve problems in a planful, strategic way’ (Baron-Cohen, 1997: 885). Thus, they are characterised by a lack of flexibility and a reliance on obsessive and repetitive routines or activities. These repetitive behaviours and executive dysfunction are symptomatic of patients who had damage in the frontal lobes (Frith & Hill, 2004).

These three theories are not mutually exclusive (Frith & Hill 2004), as Frith explained (2003). Instead, the three theories are linked to cognitive processes that are connected with self-consciousness. In both theories of weak central coherence and in the executive dysfunction, an absence of balance between weak top down control and stronger bottom-up data processing can be found. Equally, a mismatch of this imbalance in identifying properly social signs from other people is the consequence of a single module not working properly in the theory of mind.

Further research is still required to identify causes of ASD. However, it is still more important to find the types of intervention that would be more supportive of children with ASD.

### 3.6 Educational Interventions

As discussed below, a range of interventions have been developed for children with ASD, any has been sufficiently effective. A key predictor of successful interventions seems to be early intervention; the sooner we can support the parents, the sooner the child can improve (Frith, 2003). The best results can be achieved if the child with ASD is provided with early intervention that would also involve parents, because according to Trevarthen et al. (1996:118), the ‘*best predictor of outcome in this population remains the level of functional language use at 30 months.*’ Thus it is important to intervene since the child is young. Behavioural and emotional problems in the future can also be minimized by providing support to younger children. Several interventions and complementary therapies, ranging from psycho educational, behavioural and cognitive, are available to teach children with autism through communication, interaction or inclusion (Jordan et al., 1998; Francis, 2005).
However, for the purposes of this research, in the following section I will only describe the interventions that are commonly used in Mexico.

**Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)** is a behavioural intervention designed to teach new skills and reinforce and maintain previously acquired skills. It also restricts the conditions under which interfering behaviours occur in order to reduce negative behaviours, that is, it discontinues reinforcing negative behaviours while enforcing positive behaviours. ABA, developed by LOVAAS (1981), is used in England to treat children with Autism (Francis 2005). The ABA instructional methodology most used with children with ASD is the Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT) (Steege et al., 2007), which has been proved to be an effective intervention (Granpeesheh et al., 2009; Spreckley and Roslyn, 2009). However, Steege et al. (2007:91) suggested that although DTT ‘has many advantages to recommend its use, it is not well suited to teach the full range of cognitive, social, academic, leisure, and functional living skills children with autism and related disorders need to develop and generalize to varied natural environments. DTT also does not address the treatment of behaviours that can interfere with instruction and the acquisition, generalization, and maintenance of skills many children with autism bring to instructional situations’.

Plenty of studies have attempted to evaluate the effects of ABA (e.g., Strain and Schartz 2001; Reed et al. 2007) and DTT (Delprato, 2001) with controversial results. Hilton and Seal (2006) considered that compared to the Developmental, Individual Difference, Relationship Based Model, the ABA approach is particularly effective in increasing language levels in children.

**Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children (TEACCH)** is a behavioural and cognitive approach proposed by Schopler (1997). It uses a structured method of teaching. It requires the support of individual teaching assistant, and it should take place in a planned environment using some visual cues that stimulate the child in everyday activities (Howlin, 2005b). Studies on the effect of the TEACCH program (Ozonoff and Cathcartand, 1998; Ventner et al., 1992) found that the benefits depend on the characteristics of the children, indicating that children with ASD with greater language skills and higher average IQ’s benefitted more from the program (Jordan, 1999).

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)** is an Alternative and Augmentative Communication System designed as a rapidly acquired, self-initiating strategy to develop functional communication skills in children with autism through some visual representations
(Bondy and Frost, 2001). One of the great advantages of PECS is that children who use it can be easily understood by others who do not know the system, as they can understand the visual images (Ganz and Simpson, 2004). PECS can decrease problem behaviour as well as improve the child’s socialisation (Charlop-Christy et al., 2002), because PECS helps the child feel less frustrated and more in control over their environment, to be more patient and understand that their needs will not always be met.

**Relational Developmental Intervention (RDI)** is a developmental program designed by Gutstein and Sheely (2002) to empower and guide parents of any child with ASD. Parents are taught ‘to play an important role in improving critical emotional, social, and metacognitive abilities through carefully graduated, guided interaction in daily activities’ (Gutstein, 2009:174). It should be noted that the child cannot present aggressive conduct before the start of this program.

According to Gutstein (2009:174), ‘parents, through the RDI curriculum and consultation process, have potential to exert a powerful impact on their children’s with ASD experience-sharing communication, social interaction, and adaptive functioning.’

**SON-RISE Program (Non-Option Method)**

Kaufman’s family developed this behavioural intervention. Kaufman himself claimed to be cured from autism following the use of the Son-Rise Program (Kaufman, 1994). Therapists and parents attempt to interact with the child in the most joyful way by imitating in an exaggerated way the stereotyped behaviour that the child enjoys. Imitation of ‘the behaviour can increase gazes at the other person and creative toy play’ (Trevarthen et al., 1996). Thus, after repetition of the behaviour, the child will prefer and start interacting with other people instead of continuing to engage in their repetitive behaviours (Howlin, 2005b). Williams (2006) provided some support for this proposition, although the results of this program have not been scientifically proven.

The children in my research sample have participated in the interventions reviewed above in various ways. Debates about the most effective interventions are ongoing. Indeed Simpson et al. (2005) carried out a review of the effects of these interventions and rated them according to the following conditions:

a) scientifically based, b) representing promising practice, c) having limited support and d) not recommended.
Based on the findings of this review, Cognitive Behaviour Modifications such as DTT were rated as scientifically based. TEACCH and PECS were rated as promising practices. RDI (Gutstein, 2009) was rated as having limited support while the Son-rise Program did not appear in this study. The Son-rise Program (Williams, 2006) has not been scientifically proven to be able to support children with ASD.

3.7 Outcomes for adults with ASD

Most parents of children with ASD are extremely concerned about the future of their children with ASD and the long term outcome when these children grow up and they will not be able to support them any more (Howlin, 2005b). It is difficult for most people with ASD to cope with day life changing situations and go to college, obtain a job, and live independently while contributing to their communities (Hendricks and Wehman, 2009).

Moreover, according to Browning et al. (2009), most adults with ASD and parents did not receive any support during the late adolescence, especially during the transition from high school to adult life. The support from the family is very important for the development of these children. However, the outcomes in adult life depend on different factors. Children with early language development and higher IQ, for instance, children with higher verbal IQ and a minimum IQ of 70, can possibly experience more positive outcomes (Howlin et al., 2004). Poor outcomes can relate to low IQ and lack of language skills, presence of epilepsy, as well as lack of education and hospital care. The outcomes are poorer for female compared to male adults with ASD. However, the preceding situations can be related to people who have lower IQ and more severe cognitive impairments (Howlin, 2005b). This is however disputable.

Most adults with ASD remain living with their parents or use residential provisions or hospital care (Howlin et al., 2004; Mawhood et al., 2000). A previous study found that six out of 68 people with ASD lived independently (Howlin et al., 2004). Moreover, a study by Cerduland et al. (2008) found that 64% of 16 to 36 year old adults with AS were living in their family home. Only 8% of 16 to 38 years old adults with ASD lived independently but still depended on their parents for support.

As was mentioned previously, people with ASD present impairment in social interactions, as they are unable to understand how other people think. They show ‘failure to respond to other’s feelings or emotions,… failure to share emotions or experiences,… poor integration of
social behaviours,...failure to interpret cues,...problems with rules,...morality and deception, mindfulness’ (Howlin, 2005b:105-114). As a result, it is difficult for them to form close relationships, friendships or long term relationships with others, to get married or have children (Howlin, 2005b). However, some studies (Howlin et al., 2004; Mawhood et al., 2000; Baron-Cohen et al., 2009) carried out on this topic suggested that only 15 to 30 % of adults with ASD can form close relationships and in a very few cases, they can get married. In another study, Orsmond et al. (2004) found that 50% of 235 adolescents and adults with autism had no peer relationships. Adults with ASD may desire to maintain close relationships but they do not have the skills to do it, thus this problem could be addressed by enhancing the communication and interaction skills of people with ASD.

After high school, not all children with ASD continue studying. On the one hand, a study by Cedurland (2008) found that none of the participant group with autism went to college. On the other hand, he found that 11% of participants with AS were going to college and 2% of them graduated from college. Those who have the opportunity to study or go to college could find a job and develop a better future.

Adults with ASD can struggle to get a job, and they usually find it with the support of their families. However, they tend to find a job in ‘segregated training centers, supported employment and non-competitive employment’ (Hendricks and Wehman, 2009:81). Howlin (2005b: 236-239) suggested that when an adult with ASD obtains a job, he/she could find it difficult to cope with ‘problems within the workplace [when they are not able to understand what they have been asked to do], communication difficulties to explain something about their job, failure to appreciate social rules [by being too close with others], inability to work independently, inappropriate work patterns, obsessional behaviours and resistance to change in routine. [In addition, they present other] behavioural difficulties [such as absence or not being punctual at work and it is difficult for them to] cope with promotion or they can be bullied by others.’

Although some people with autism are at risk of deterioration in adulthood (Billstedt et al., 2005), one third of 19 men who functioned poorly in childhood obtained good ratings as adults in a study by Mawhood et al. (2000). This means that the number of people ‘who show marked deterioration in all aspects of their functioning are, fortunately, very small and overall regression appears to be the exception, not the rule’ (Howlin, 2005:44).
Although many factors can cause positive or negative outcomes for people with ASD, for those who have high IQ’s and who can communicate better, education can be a helpful factor in their development and acceptance in society. Mostly the support from families and schools can improve the outcomes. A transition plan can be helpful to support these adults and find the best option for them (Roberts, 2010).

3.8 Conclusion

This brief review has considered some of the definitions and causes of ASD as well as interventions for people with autism. This forms a necessary foundation for the subsequent chapter, which reviews various definitions of inclusive education and identifies inclusive provisions for children with SEN, specific for children, with ASD in different countries of the world and in Mexico.
CHAPTER 4. INCLUSION
4 INCLUSION

4.1 Introduction

The last chapter reviewed the characteristics of children with ASD and treatment regimes used in Mexico. In this chapter, I review the literature on inclusion. I explore the definition of inclusion, its history, and the rationale that supports inclusive practice. I also provide an overview of the ways in which Centro Educativo DOMUS in Mexico organises the provision for children with ASD. Finally, this chapter considers some of the research findings on the inclusion of children with SEN, with particular focus on children with ASD. In doing so, this final section looks at research on outcomes for children with SEN and ASD, the attitudes of peers of children with SEN and ASD, teacher’s attitudes, the role of teaching assistants, and head teachers’ role.

4.2 Definitions of Inclusive Education

In the history of inclusive education, a number of international organisations have written policy documents, held conferences, and written statements about the need to move towards a more inclusive provision. The first serious discussions and analyses of the process of inclusion emerged during the 1970’s in the USA and England. However, the right for education is embodied in 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 1990, UNESCO produced the World Declaration on Education for All at the Jomtien Conference. In 1994, many countries throughout the world, including 92 governments and 25 international organisations ratified the Declaration of Salamanca Framework for Action, entitled ‘Principles, Politics and Practice for Special Educational Needs’ (Farrell, 2006). These international agreements stress the right of every child to be educated in a mainstream school (UNESCO, 1994). In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, (UNESCO, 2002) reaffirmed an inclusive education system for all children, providing guidelines for UNESCO’s work in responding to the challenges of education for all.

Currently, according to UNESCO’s 2011 Education for all Global Monitoring Report, there has been some progress in the provision of inclusive education for children around the world, but still the ‘number of children out of school stood at 67 million in 2008, and is falling too slowly to meet the Education for All target by 2015’ (UNESCO, 2011:1). Indeed, Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), stated that
72 million children from primary school are out of school and one third of them have a disability (UNESCO, 2011).

Thus, the reality is that many children are not studying because they have a disability and/or live in developing countries where they have to work and live in poverty or in fear of going to school under the conditions of armed conflict. Many developing countries do not have, or do not provide, the necessary funds to support education for all children.

In contrast to these all-embracing definitions of inclusive education reflected by UNESCO, discussions about inclusive education in Western countries, for example the UK, tend to focus on children with SEN. In the UK, several government documents that illustrate this, for instance, the Warnock Report of 1978 followed by the 1981 Education Act. Moreover, the SEN Green Paper on Excellence for all Children (DFE, 1997) as well as the Programme of Action (DfES, 2001 and 2004) supported the inclusion of children with SEN. All these papers attempted to encourage more inclusive practice across the UK. However, more recently, the government has issued a Green Paper, suggesting a need to ‘remove the bias associated with inclusion’ (DFE, 2011). Therefore, the move to encourage more inclusive provision in the UK is now being challenged.

In order to understand the evolution of the definition of inclusion in the UK, it is important to return to the Warnock Report (1978), which reviewed educational provision for children with SEN. At that time, integration was seen as the physical placement of children with SEN into regular classrooms. According to Hegarty and Pocklington (1981), there are three types of integration:

a) Locational integration is the process of making some changes in the school to make the placement of a child inside special classrooms or units in a mainstream school accessible.

b) Social integration means that the child is interacting with his/her peers only during some activities, such as sports, arts or meals, but staying in segregated conditions most of the time.

c) Functional integration means that the child with SEN is placed in a classroom with other typically developing pupils during the entire day.

Hegarty and Pocklington’s (1981) conceptualization of integration, though helpful, does not perhaps go far enough. For example, it is possible for a child with SEN who is functionally integrated, i.e., placed in a mainstream class, to be ignored by his peers and hence not receive
high quality education. A child in this situation will not be fully included in everyday activities. As Farrell (2000) suggested, the placement of a child in a mainstream school does not by itself mean inclusion, since a student who is fully included is ‘taking a full and active part in the school-life, being a valued member of the school community and being seen as an integral member’ (Farrell, 2000a: 154). According to Farrell (2000), integration is the first step in the process of inclusion. Inclusion makes it possible to accept children with SEN.

The view of inclusion has been conceptualized around four key pupil outcomes (Kalambouka et al., 2007; Farrell, 2004; Humphrey, 2008), presence, participation, acceptance, and achievement, which refer to ‘the promotion of the pupils:

- **presence** refers to the physical placement of a child in a mainstream class,
- **participation** refers to the extent to which a child joins in all activities,
- **acceptance** is the extent to which the child is welcomed by teachers and peers, and
- **achievement** refers to the social, emotional and academic progress.

Ainscow and Miles (2008) further developed the discussion of the field of inclusion and form five perspectives:

1: Disability and SEN

For many years, the term Inclusion has been associated with children who have learning difficulties or special educational needs (Ainscow and Miles, 2008). This definition has been lately criticized as being limited, with many theorists attempting to broaden the definition by promoting, for example, ‘Education for All’ (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). However, this view is also problematic, as it may reduce the importance of inclusion of children with SEN, which may lead to their segregation. Indeed, the term ‘inclusion’ sometimes refers to the placement of children with SEN in special schools, where their needs can be better met due to the severity of the learning difficulty, as it has been argued by ongoing research.

2: Disciplinary exclusions

Children who present emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as girls who became pregnant, are commonly excluded from schools (Kalambouka et al., 2007). Instead of excluding these students, teachers have the responsibility to support their participation inside the classroom.
3: Group vulnerable to exclusion

Social exclusion tends to happen in diverse groups according to different race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. This applies to any children, such as school age girls who get pregnant or those who manifest or have been identified as having SEBD, who are expected to leave school and are excluded from schools because of their inability to cross barriers.

4: The promotion of a school for all

Many countries have schools for children from certain religions, for example Muslim schools, or for children from different social status, for example private schools that are usually for privileged children. This perspective of inclusion ‘involves creating a single type of school for all’ which serves a socially diverse community [...] there was an emphasis on assimilating those perceived to be different into a homogenous normality rather than transformation through diversity’ (Ainscow and Miles, 2008: 19).

5: Education for all

This definition pertains more to developing countries in which not all children have access to free education. As noted previously, the broad objective of Education for All Children for 2015 fails children who are poor or who have a disability.

The Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) offers a complementary perspective of inclusive education that defines inclusion in the following way:

‘Inclusion in education involves:…Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.’

Inclusion, defined in this way, is achievable through an ongoing process of changing schools’ ethos, including the attitudes of the teachers, staff, and classmates. In taking this approach, it is possible to provide children with SEN with high quality education in a friendly
environment in which the child can fully be included and interact with his/her peers in all activities.

According to UNESCO’s policy guidelines (UNESCO, 2009:1), ‘Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well.’

This study reported in this thesis focuses on the inclusion of children with ASD in mainstream schools in Mexico, many of which do not welcome such children. If they do admit children who are so categorized into a mainstream school, it is difficult for them to fully participate in, and belong to, the school community (Tuman et al., 2008).

Thus, in this research, because my concern was with exploring the experiences of children categorised as having ASD, I have chosen to see inclusion as the ‘process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging often by addressing institutional factors and working generally on school development’ (Florian, 2007: 543). This definition is similar to Booth and Ainscow’s in that they both focus on changing the school in response to learner diversity.

Indeed one of the aims of this study is to investigate to what extent, and in what ways, schools can support children by identifying the facilitators and barriers to this support. Therefore, it is important to find ways of helping schools to change by showing how any barriers that children with ASD may face during the process of inclusion may be removed. This study aims to contribute to Mexican policy in order to assure a successful learning experience for children with ASD, who can be vulnerable at a mainstream school.

4.3 Rationale for Inclusive Education

Based on the discussion above, over a number of years, many different authors have been involved in heated debates concerning the inclusion and the most appropriate provision for children with SEN. A sad and stark story is the case of William Francis Blunn, who suffered the severe damage from segregation in the UK. William is frequently invited to give talks about his story at public lectures (Clarke, 2006). He was born in 1945 with a low IQ and was never educated. He was labelled as having learning difficulties. People with learning difficulties, such as William, were very vulnerable in those times, more so if they came from
a poor family like he did and became orphans at a young age. When his parents died, he lived with his aunt, some sisters, and a brother. At the age of 15, he was mistaken for a thief with the same name and despite his innocence; he was arrested for that theft. Unable to defend himself, he was accused of stealing. Although it is reported that he agreed to be institutionalised voluntarily, he was detained and abused for 45 years in a mental hospital without any opportunity of release.

Currently, he attend public conferences where he suggests that he is sure that if he had had the opportunity to be educated before, his story would be totally different. He said ‘Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself’. This is a great example of how important education is for any child with SEN. It can change the life of a human being who deserves to be treated with respect. ‘Value people and create opportunities for them to show the skills that they can develop and the talents which they have. Then we will see the difference’ (Clarke, 2006: 60). Educating a child with SEN can enable that child develop his/her abilities and become productive members in the society. Most of all, it could influence the child’s quality of life.

William’s story perhaps provides the most convincing rationale for viewing inclusion as a matter of human rights. William’s story illustrates that segregation from the society due to a disability at a young age denies the opportunities to be included in the society. William, for example, has been marginalized for his entire life.

The human’s rights perspective is best illustrated by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), whose slogan ‘supporting inclusion, challenging exclusion’ indicates their strongly held view of the subject. Inclusion, they argue, is as a matter of human rights and moral values and exclusion is an illustration of segregation. Clearly, education is a basic right and as a society, we have the obligation to include every child. CSIE suggests that segregation makes people with disabilities be perceived as second-class citizens who do not deserve to have the same rights as the rest of society. Barton stated, ‘questions of social justice, equity, human rights and non-discrimination are central to the issue of inclusion’ (Barton, 2001:94), and it can be easy for society to forget and denied them the same opportunities as others.

In the Index for Inclusion, Booth and Ainscow (2002) suggested that every child should be included and educated in the same classroom with all his/her peers. Inclusion’s principal objective is to ‘reduce exclusion and discriminatory attitudes, including those in relation to
age, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and attainment’ (Ainscow et al., 2006:2). An inclusive school supports all students by developing learning strategies regardless of their SEN, age, race, or gender, allowing all students to fully participate in school activities and interact with their peers.

Although all these authors have supported the right of children to be included, many children with SEN are still not studying in a school. As a result, they are marginalised and segregated, as noted by Armstrong et al. (2010:5) who stated, ‘Special Educational Needs plays a significant role in extending to a much greater number of people an educational rationale for failure within the educational system and the subsequent social marginalisation and denial of opportunities that follows for those who are unsuccessful within the ordinary school system’. These authors claim that every child’s right to education should be respected and he/she should be educated and not segregated in a special school. In considering the human right perspective, I believe that every child has a right to be respected, educated, and not discriminated against. Every child with SEN should be educated in the most appropriate space for them.

In conclusion, supporters of a human rights perspective align themselves with Farrell’s (2000a: 154) suggestion that ‘Inclusion in more general sense is now seen as a good thing and exclusion as a bad thing. Within this general rhetoric there is a risk that the need for pupils with SEN to receive high quality education can be forgotten’.

In contrast to authors who are positive about inclusion and base their arguments according to human rights, there are others who discuss this topic from an empirical perspective and base their arguments for and against inclusion on the outcomes of research (see for example Farrell, 2002; Lindsay, 2007; Lunt and Norwich, 2002). Lunt and Norwich (2002) suggested that inclusion in mainstream schools is not for all children and special schools should not be closed. Frederickson and Cline (2002: 52) suggested that ‘SEN were conceived of as lying on a continuum with ordinary needs… [and] provision too should be on a continuum, rather than segregated, in either special or mainstream schools’. Thus, a child with a learning difficulty should be educated in the place that would suit his/her learning needs better, regardless of whether it is in a mainstream or special school.

In a major review, Lindsay (2007:2) examined the research evidence in inclusive education and stated that, ‘evidence from many writers in favour of inclusion, however, suggests their interest is only in terms of the rights position and the research evidence is considered at best
not central to such considerations or even irrelevant[...], research evidence to the contrary perhaps showing negative effects of inclusion, may be rejected not as a scientific argument but because such evidence cannot be used as the basis for what ought to be.’ Moreover, the main purpose in teaching should be to facilitate the access to the best provisions for all students.

Although a strong argument claims that inclusive education has to be based on equity and justice, it is still important to show empirically that the human rights of a child cannot be fulfilled in a special school. However, this has not been empirically proved. Indeed, in some cases, it could be argued that the rights of a child can only be fully met in a special school. For example, consider a 16-year-old student with severe and profound learning difficulties due to severe and acute ASD who cannot speak, dress, or feed him/herself. He cannot be accommodated in a mainstream school and be taught with other classmates of the same age. It is hard to argue convincingly that this student should attend a mainstream class and study along with other classmates. A much stronger case could be made to place him/her in a high quality special school. This example illustrates an extreme case and indicates why the best place for such a child could be a special school that has the resources to develop the skills and abilities needed to live and work successfully in adulthood.

Hence, it is important to assess the needs of some children with SEN who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and then make a decision about whether these needs can be better fulfilled in a special school rather than a mainstream school where they may not find the support that is required. Such decision should be made according to the severity of their difficulties. Moreover, this may also result in the children not having access to high quality education or obtaining any positive social outcomes. Ultimately, they may become more segregated than they would in a special school.

Concerning human rights and inclusion, it is arguable whose rights are most important, the rights of children with ASD, the rights of parents, or the rights of classmates? What happens if a parent of a 16-years old child with acute ASD mentioned previously prefers a mainstream school and the child does not have the abilities to attend this school? For example, a child with ASD may disrupt their peers without disabilities. Therefore, it may be argued that human rights of other children to learn are being denied. Furthermore, if all special schools closed there would be no other alternative options for parents who advocate special school for children identified with severe disabilities who require it. Consequently, the
parents’ right to informed choice in selecting the most appropriate educational options for their child will be denied (Farrell, 2000b).

The discussion above highlighted the on-going debate about the provision of education for children with SEN. Arguments about human rights and education are extremely complex, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into a long discussion about this topic. Further material on that subject can be found in Wilson’s document (Wilson, 2004).

4.4 Inclusion in Mexico

In 1994, Mexico, like many countries in Latin America, signed the Salamanca statement and other international conventions. As a result, many children with SEN that were attending special schools were then integrated into mainstream schools. However, it is unclear whether these Mexican children have been fully included or whether they are still in the process of integration.

It is important to understand how these concepts are defined in Mexico. Guajardo (2009) stated that ‘inclusion’, i.e., ‘integracion educativa’ or ‘Integracion escolar’ (educational integration), is, with the support of Special Educational Services (Educacion Especial), the provision for children with SEN studying in mainstream schools using the same curriculum as children without SEN. However, inclusion in Mexico also includes the situation in which a mainstream school, without the support of Special Educational Services, supports a child with SEN. According to Guajardo (2009), the confusion between these terms emerged when the Salamanca Statement was translated because the word inclusion from English to Spanish did not sound well; therefore, they decided to leave it as integration.

Developing countries in Latin-America, such as Mexico, are still attempting to include children with SEN. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2006) stated that Mexico is still in the process of integrating children within mainstream schools.

Hence, the concept of inclusion in Mexico is related more to the idea of educational integration, which implies the provision of education to every child with SEN in mainstream schools with adaptations to the curriculum and a supply of material and physical resources from the Special Educational Services (SEP, 2002b). Moreover, it is not always possible for all children with SEN in Mexico to have access to inclusion, either because many schools are
not prepared to include them or, as Blanco (2006) suggested, children with SEN face the following barriers that can affect their access, permanence and participation:

- Lack of resources,
- Lack of differentiation of learning styles,
- The basic curriculum is very rigid and not flexible to any adaptations,
- Teachers are insufficiently trained and qualified to support children with SEN,
- Lack of teamwork,
- Discriminatory attitudes towards children with SEN.

Moreover, physical barriers, for example, the lack of proper spaces, can mean that inclusion does not always succeed, particularly in rural areas. Blanco (2006) also noted that in order to make the curriculum flexible, special equipment such as computers is usually required. Furthermore, the training of teachers can be expensive and most of these countries lack sufficient funds for education (Blanco, 2006). However, both the World Bank and United Nations (Armstrong et al., 2010) suggested that it is more expensive to provide education in special schools for all children with SEN than to include them in mainstream schools. Therefore, the inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools has economic benefits for developing countries.

Looking towards educational progress, the Mexican government created the National Program to strengthen Special Education and Integrative Education (2002a). This programme attempted to make some of these changes, and to regulate the Special Education Service with an aim to provide a better quality education to children with SEN. Moreover, it followed the process of inclusion of these pupils, trained teachers (Fletcher and Martinez, 2005) and conducted some research. Despite this, the number of studies about inclusion in Mexico is still limited (Forlin et al., 2010).

In 2004, the Program for Academic Strengthening in Mainstream School carried out a study using a questionnaire before changing the Bachelors Degree program to become a teacher in special educational needs. Overall, 2,263 respondents from 23 of the 32 states in Mexico answered this questionnaire, of which 742 were from organizations who train teachers in SEN, 1,245 were teachers of children with SEN, 208 were parents of people with SEN, and
were adults with SEN (Guajardo, 2010). The findings published by the Ministry of Education (Guajardo, 2010) indicated that 89% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN; however 66% of the 68 adults would not recommend the inclusion of children with SEN. The most interesting finding was that from the entire group of respondents, 90% believed in the process of inclusion while 10%, mostly parents of people with SEN, believed that there was no inclusion.

In addition, the Red International de Investigadores y Participantes sobre Integración Educativa has conducted research about the inclusive education. The findings from one of their studies showed that 72% of the USAER teachers reported that schools where they practiced do not have the appropriate infrastructure and necessary teaching material; thus, they are not inclusive for all children with disabilities (Aviles, 2006).

In 2007, the manager of the Department for Inclusive Education in Mexico, F., Teutli (2007), also stated in an interview, ‘the current model in Mexico is integrating children with SEN. We are not yet using an inclusive model...not in the United States of Mexico.’ From all the districts in Mexico, only Iztapalapa District USAER is using an inclusive model of education (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006). Accordingly to Amadio (2009:296):

‘The existence of a number of laws that contain references to universal rights in relation to specific population groups [for example children with disabilities], which are unable to fully exercise such rights, seems to suggest that the present problems and challenges in inclusive education derive more form the difficulty of effectively translating existing legislation into practice rather than from a lack of appropriate legislation’.

In Mexico, it still requires a long process to ensure that an inclusive education in Mexico is working in practice and not only in rhetoric.

For inclusion to move beyond integration, it is essential to raise the awareness of the need for inclusion and to educate society about SEN in order to change negative attitudes towards children with SEN. Second, the school ethos needs to create an inclusive culture inside the mainstream school for those children who can be included and provide specialist provision to those with severe and profound LD and additional disabilities that cannot be included into
mainstream schools. Only then, the inclusive culture in this country will become common practice in different schools.

### 4.4.1 Provision of inclusion for children with ASD in Mexico

In Mexico, as mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two types of inclusion, in public schools with the support of USAER, which has been described in Chapter 2, and in public or private schools with the support of an organisation, such as CLIMA and Educational Centre DOMUS (Centro Educativo DOMUS, A.C.). In the following paragraph, I will only describe DOMUS because I do not have information from other associations, such as CLIMA. DOMUS is a private organization, which is making considerable efforts to diagnose, assess and educate children with autism and to train teaching assistants, teachers and support parents.

The first role of DOMUS is to assess and diagnose any child if their parent has doubts about the possibility of having ASD (DOMUS, 2011). The parent and the child have to come to the organisation for two or three appointments during which the child is assessed by a Psychologist. They are observed and assessed over time using some psychological measures. A psychologist interviews the parents and examines a profile of the child. The cost of the diagnosis is approximately between £400 and £600 (Mojica, 2009). If the child is diagnosed with ASD, the psychologist will examine the severity and decide whether this child can be integrated with classmates without disabilities or be educated in the special school that DOMUS runs for other children who have been diagnosed with ASD. The parents decide whether they want to continue with DOMUS or find another organisation to support them. If they stay with DOMUS, the organization makes a Personalized Profile of each child to stimulate their senses, motor functions, verbal and non-verbal language, AAC, and academic abilities.

The second role of DOMUS is to provide education in a special school for children with ASD supported by a teacher who makes use of ABA, TEACCH, PECS and RDI. Children are taught daily activities as well as some academic subjects. Some of the children who remain in DOMUS are eventually integrated into mainstream schools.

Third, DOMUS trains teaching assistants to support the inclusion of children with ASD into public and private mainstream schools. The inclusion system that is used in Mexico is different from that in other countries such as England. In Mexico, recently graduated psychologists who are interested in working with children with ASD can apply to become
teaching assistants for children with ASD. In this role, the psychologists who just graduated frequently take most of the responsibility for the child inside the classroom. Psychologists are not qualified to be teachers. However, most of the TA have studied Psychology for 4 and half years, have training in schools, and have some notions about SEN. DOMUS provides them with the training to support children with ASD. However, the salary is very low.

DOMUS and parents choose, identify, and talk to the head teacher about the school that would suit the child’s profile. DOMUS provides courses to raise the awareness among the teachers, staff, and classmates about children with ASD. Teaching assistants paid by DOMUS attend the mainstream school with the child with ASD. They have Bimonthly Academic Objectives, Communication, and Language and Everyday Education Plans.

The fourth role of DOMUS is to provide support while undergoing the process of inclusion of the child with ASD. The DOMUS coordinator visits each school once per month to assess the work of the child, ask questions, and support the teaching assistants and teachers in their work.

The fifth role for DOMUS is to provide a service of group for parent and for siblings (DOMUS, 2011), similar to Friend’s Circle. These groups support parents and siblings of children with ASD and provide a facility where they can discuss and share their experiences. This is very important because, as Tuman et al. (2008: 4) suggested, ‘families with children with autism report isolation or distance from other members of their extended family, changed behaviours among siblings, and feelings ranging from depression to burnout’.

Finally, DOMUS also provides on-line courses for parents and teachers from other states in Mexico and for those who are not able to travel to Mexico City. DOMUS also attempts to promote the awareness of ASD within the society. Furthermore, they have also developed an on-line distance-learning training programme in screening.

However, only children whose parents are able to afford an assistant teacher can be integrated by DOMUS because they need to pay at least £250 per month in public schools and £750 per month in private schools (Mojica, 2009). These prices are far above the earnings of those receiving minimum wages. In developing countries such as Mexico, ‘economic resources are frequently cited cause of familial stress, as parents attempt to secure the necessary funds to find appropriate support services or treatment’ (Tuman et al., 2008:4). Some of the parents who bring their children to this organisation are wealthy and have the support of their
families or organisations that provide scholarships to children with ASD. Sometimes, parents have to sell all their belongings (Campbell, 2001) and some have to stop using the service because they are single mothers or have no money left. Accordingly, most participants in this study come from middle to high socioeconomic status, which is not common in Mexico City. Finally, children with ASD, particularly those from families that have insufficient economic resources, attempt to access public education but frequently fail to receive any education at all (Tuman et al., 2008).

‘Education policy for children with autism in Mexico remains extremely fragmented and is of variable quality. Public special education policy is characterized by inadequate coverage, low levels of resources, and programming that is of questionable efficacy. Nearly all private-based services are restricted to a small number of states and are beyond the reach of many poor and lower-middle-class families.’ (Tuman et al, 2008: 10)

The stressful situation of many children with ASD not attending school cannot continue to be seen simply as a daunting situation without solution. It should be respected according to the constitution that states that basic education is a right of all Mexicans citizens regardless of their economic status.

4.5 Inclusive Education Research

A considerable amount of literature has been published on Inclusive Education in different countries of the world (Armstrong et al., 2010; Forlin and John, 2008; Green and Engelbrecht, 2007). These studies’ orientation and methodologies vary hugely from surveys, case studies, and interviews, to more empirical intervention studies.

In this discussion, I focus on the research on the outcomes of inclusive education for children with SEN and ASD, the attitudes of classmates of children with SEN and ASD, teachers’ and parents’ attitudes towards children with ASD and the role of teaching assistants and head teachers in teaching children with SEN and ASD.

4.5.1 Outcomes of inclusive education for pupils with SEN

The majority of research on the outcomes of inclusion has focussed on the outcomes for pupils with SEN (Farrell et al., 2007; Lindsay, 2007; McDonnell et al., 2003).
Lindsay (2007) carried out a comprehensive review of the literature in this area. In this review, the researcher indicated a number of studies that considered social outcomes and showed that children with SEN gain socially when they are included in schools. Moreover, a preschool study by Buysee and Goldman (2002) found that those who were in school have more playmates that those in specialized settings. A Canadian comparative study of primary school age children with SEN by Wiener & Tardiff (2004) found that characteristics such as social factors, friendship, loneliness, self-perceptions and social skills in inclusive settings tend to be more positive. However, research comparing the self concepts of children with SEN and their classmates without disabilities showed more negative results for the children with SEN (Zeleke, 2004). Cambra and Silvestre (2003) also reported that classmates without disabilities in Spain have a more positive social and academic self concept and are more likely to be invited to join group activities compared to children with SEN. Other studies had been more neutral and did not find any relation between self concept and the setting in which pupils are educated (Elbaum, 2002).

Moreover, the study by Monchy et al. (2004) found that children with SEBD were socially less included than classmates without disabilities. The outcomes for children with ASD in some of the articles reviewed by Lindsay are similar to those with SEBD (Symes and Humphrey, 2010; McDonnell et al., 2003); although, it depends to some extent on peer support.

Another comparative study by Frederickson et al. (2007) suggested that children with SEN from special schools who had recently been included in a mainstream school were more accepted by the group compared to those children with undiagnosed SEN who had always attended a mainstream school but tended to be bullied.

Less research focused on academic outcomes and inclusive education. An example is a comparative research study conducted by Rea et al. (2002) in the USA on the academic outcomes for children with SEN. The researchers found higher academic outcomes for middle school age children with SEN in the inclusive rather than special settings. However, a three year Norwegian study conducted in a secondary school (Myklebust, 2002) reported greater dropout rates for children with SEN in a special class, and at the same, it indicated less academically effective time in the general class. Another study showed no difference in academic performance between children with developmental disabilities educated in the mainstream and those educated in special schools (McDonnell, 2003). Another study also
reported positive outcomes for children with SEN at secondary level (Cawley et al., 2002). Findings are not very conclusive, and it appears that inclusion has mixed outcomes for pupils with SEN.

4.5.2 Outcomes of inclusive education for children with ASD

The principal aim of educating any child with ASD is to develop social and cognitive abilities, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and adaptive skills and to reduce behavioural difficulties. Therefore one aim is to build reciprocal relationships with peers to help children with ASD become independent and socially responsible (Lord and McGee, 2001).

Children with ASD, as previously mentioned, present some or all of the following impairments in their development: difficulty in communicating and understanding other peoples’ social intentions (Myers, 2007), difficulty in coping with the unexpected, preference for routine (Wing, 2007), problems with memory and sometimes with attention. Children with ASD present hypo or hypersensitivity to noise or light. This may produce some difficulty for them in a classroom setting, where, for example, the child may react to the noise of a chair moving or a child screaming. Children with ASD also present visual and tactile sensitivity issues. Furthermore, some children with ASD have a very restricted diet because of smell and taste sensitivity. In addition, some of them present synaesthesia, perceiving a specific experience with another sense than the sense that is reacting to it, for instance smelling a colour (Attwood, 2007).

However, expectations of children with autism can be higher compared to those of other children with SEN because most children with ASD have attractive physical qualities and do not show any specific visual or physical characteristics of disabilities. Thus, people assume that they are able to study in school, since language is a factor that can support inclusion (Jordan, 2005). Jordan (2005:117) stated that ‘the degree to which individuals can and should be taught alongside typical peers depends on the severity of their unique needs, the expertise and attitude of the teaching staff (and their access to additional support) in mainstream settings and the adaptability and flexibility of the mainstream situation’. However, it is difficult for some children with ASD to interact, even when their functional language is good (Symes and Humphrey, 2010). Those with high functioning autism and AS can be especially vulnerable at school.
4.5.2.1 Social outcomes for children with ASD can be different from those of children with SEN.

According to one research study, children with ASD are not different from their classmates in social acceptance (Robertson et al., 2003). Moreover, Harrower and Dunlap (2001) suggested that if children with ASD are fully included, they interact more with their peers and also give and receive higher levels of social support. In another study, it was found that the success of a child with autism does not depend on whether they are in the mainstream or a special school setting (Harris et al., 1990). In contrast, the findings from other research suggest that preschool age children make adaptive and behavioural progress when included in mainstream school compared to special settings (Schwartz et al., 2004; Koegel et al., 2001).

McDonnell (2003) also found that inclusion could support the adaptive behaviour of children with developmental disabilities. However, their level of self-centredness or interest in creating friendship affects their inclusion. For example, children with aloof behaviour and those who do not interact with others prefer to be isolated; thus, they need their own space. Only a small number of these children are high functioning. For most of them, it is hard to be included. However, they are not acutely aware of peer rejection, since they do not understand it (Symes and Humphrey, 2010). Those who are passive, do not reach out to others, but are receptive when someone interacts with them are the most effectively included. Those who are active but present odd behaviour, such as some pupils with high functioning autism and AS, present severe difficulties in integrating with their peers and developing close friendships because of the lack of reciprocity, difficulty in reading emotion from the facial expressions of others, and lack of appreciation of social cues. They also fail to share interests with other people and present difficulty in using eye gaze, facial expression, and body language to regulate social interaction (Howlin, 2005b). However, highly functioning children whose developmental disorder is disclosed to staff and other pupils tend to experience more positive inclusion (Ochs et al., 2001).

Classmates without disabilities do not always know how to interact with children with ASD who are naïve, trusting and eager to be part of the group but can be seen as odd by their classmates (Ochs et al., 2001). Thus they are vulnerable to being shunned and bullied at school, more so during secondary school (Symes and Humphrey, 2010; Wainscot et al., 2008). Children with ASD usually do not report this situation to any adult, either because they think that others are aware of bullying or because they do not comprehend or realize that
they are being bullied. Some children with AS cannot cope with the effects of being bullied; consequently, some of them are diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder or Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Shayermman, 2007). When they feel that there is no way to solve this situation, they can try to revenge or retaliate against the bullies, harming others or themselves. This situation can even lead to suicide (Attwood, 2007; Shtayermman, 2007).

4.5.2.2 Academic Outcomes

Children with ASD who are included in the mainstream schools are provided with more challenging individualized education plan goals compared to other children who are in special schools (Harrower and Dunlap, 2001). In addition, children with AS also present comorbid neurological conditions, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder or Tourette’s syndrome; specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyscalculia; or emotional, such as depression and anxiety, which are more common in cases of milder autism (Sainsbury, 2008). All these characteristics can restrict their learning and their interaction with others and as a result make the inclusion of children with ASD to mainstream schools more difficult compared to children with SEN or classmates without disabilities (Tuman et al., 2008).

For the success of academic outcomes of children with ASD, it is important for the teacher and TA to meet the needs of these children by choosing the right learning style according to the severity of the developmental disorder and individual characteristics of the child.

It can be very challenging to interact with children with ASD. This needs to be acknowledged when considering the inclusion of a child with ASD into mainstream education. Unfortunately, some schools still do not give sufficient attention to the needs of these children inside the class (Symes and Humphrey, 2011). Most children with ASD who are included in mainstream school require a very structured environment that would include specific visual learning technologies. They also need to learn to interact and communicate with others. Moreover, they require an autism friendly environment open, to receiving a child with autism, in some cases with a one to one teaching assistant and the support of a peer (Hanbury, 2005).

Bowen and Plimley in The Autism Inclusion Toolkit (2008:8) suggest that an autism friendly environment require that the staff ‘understand ASD and to know and use interventions according to the individual, give support where it is needed and often as soon as possible, be willing to learn from and adapt for the pupil’. Also they suggest that it is important to
understand the ‘challenges to learning faced by the individual with an ASD’ (ibid) and motivate the child with ASD. Schools can adopt an inclusive approach, in some cases they still need to use a separate space during certain times of the day inside of the class to accommodate a child with ASD.

4.5.3 Outcomes of inclusive education for pupils without SEN

Studies reported positive outcomes in terms of attitudes, acceptance, knowledge of disabilities and friendships for typically developing peers of children with SEN and no academic achievement adverse consequences (Farrell et al., 2007; Farrell et al., 2007b; Kalambouka et al., 2007; Obrusnikova et al., 2003). Indeed, a study by Carter and Hughes (2006) found that the inclusion process can improve attitudes towards children with SEN. In a review of 26 studies by Kalambouka et al. (2007), they found that 81% of the outcomes were positive or neutral.

Additionally, Harrower and Dunlap (2001) found that inclusion enhanced positive attitudes and tolerance of individual differences. Another advantage for classmates without SEN is that they become more aware of their classmates’ disabilities, they learn to respect human diversity more, and they learn to create warm and caring friendships (Peltier, 1997; Obrusnikova et al., 2003). Classmates can also learn to value their own abilities, which fosters their own personal growth (Carter and Hughes, 2006). They can become more supportive and in some cases, they choose a helping profession as a result of their childhood experience with integration (Vizziello et al., 1994).

Moreover, the inclusion of children with SEN does not affect the pupils’ academic performance (Farrell et al., 2007; McDonnell et al., 2003). Indeed, many other factors can have a greater effect on the average academic achievements of typically developing pupils than the inclusion of a child with SEN (Farrell et al., 2007b). Although Lunt and Norwich (1999) found that schools with a higher number of children with SEN tend to report lower grades on an average, the evidence was inconclusive due to some methodological research problems. Thus, it can be concluded that the inclusion of children with SEN does not affect the academic or social outcomes of typically developing children. However, the outcomes for classmates of children with SEN with behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties (BESD) are uncertain (Kalambouka et al., 2007).
4.5.4 Outcomes for classmates of including children with ASD

The inclusion of children with ASD does not affect the pupils’ academic performance or social outcomes of typically developing children. However, inclusion is still a complicated process for children with autism, even more so if they have been identified with BESD (Howlin, 2005b). This is due to the noises or tantrums disrupting other members of the class (Carter and Hughes, 2006). For example, students with HFA or AS may also complain about courses and teachers in the middle of the class. Classmates, who are not well informed, may not understand the behaviour of the child with HFA or AS, and as a result, they may start bullying the child with ASD (Humphrey and Symes, 2010). The child with HFA or AS can become depressed and in response to bullying, can injure him or herself (Howlin, 2005b). Moreover, such child may following a minimal level of teasing or bullying from classmates, be aggressive with others. He/she may respond in a similar manner after being exposed to bullying for a long time (Batten, 2005).

However, improving learning strategies and facilitating ‘autism friendly’ environment that would incorporate different learning styles can enhance the outcomes for all classmates. Schools that raise awareness about bullying and autism of the classmates and parents decrease the level of bullying, and as a result, decrease the retaliation from children with ASD. Indeed, most classmates understand better a child with ASD and can know how to react and not to tease them.

4.5.5 Attitudes of classmates without SEN toward children with SEN and ASD

A growing body of evidence suggests that attitudes of classmates in the preschool and primary school towards pupils with SEN are positive (Frederickson, 2010; Campbell, 2007; Campbell, 2006). Primary age girls are usually more supportive of children with SEN. Classmates are generally keen to interact with the pupil whose disability is more visible but tend to reject those children who act odd and do not show a disability. According to a study by Campbell (2007), the attitudes of pupils towards children with ASD at primary school level are positive. These pupils generally want to interact with child with ASD if school provides information about ASD. However, in another study, primary school age children with ASD were found to be less accepted by their peers compared to their classmates without disabilities (Chamberlain et al., 2007). Peers can be more friendly and supportive towards children with high functioning autism when the developmental disorder is disclosed (Ochs et al., 2001).
It is easier for classmates to accept pupils with SEN in preschool rather than secondary school. In secondary schools, students might have a more negative attitude towards children with SEN (Little, 2002; Symes and Humphrey, 2010). Children with ASD can be less accepted by peers, more prone to be bullied, and subsequently suffering more from peer victimization compared to typically developing children or children with other kinds of SEN (Little, 2002; Symes and Humphrey, 2010). At this stage, classmates with and without SEN have diverse interests and classmates sometimes become tired and feel that is unfair to be taking care of the classmate with SEN. However, it is also necessary to ensure that children with ASD are not overprotected by their classmates. Although children with ASD require support, they need to learn to interact with society and to be independent.

Moreover, Fowler et al. (2004) conducted focus groups with typically developing peers from 32 high schools. These students acknowledged the importance of social roles and social acceptance. They also suggested seven topics summarizing different types of segregation of children with SEN: *(a) physical and social segregation, (b) differential expectations and treatment, (c) lack of knowledge about disabilities, (d) communication differences between students with and without disabilities, (e) behavioural challenges, (f) negative attitudes, and (g) insufficient or inappropriate support’* (Fowler et al., 2004: 345).

One of these topics suggests that expectations of children with SEN are very different compared to those of other classmates; thus, children with SEN are treated in different ways from typically developing children.

### 4.5.6 Teacher’s attitudes towards inclusive education of children with SEN and ASD

The perceptions, experiences and attitudes of teachers towards children with SEN (Ainscow et al., 2009; Davis and Hopwood, 2002) can be strong decisive factors in the inclusion of children with SEN. Positive attitudes from teachers can influence the way classmates include the child with SEN in the classroom. The methods of implementing regulations and policies to include children with SEN have also been shown to affect their inclusion into mainstream education (Sharma et al., 2008). Research on teachers’ attitudes towards children with SEN had identified both positive and negative attitudes. Countries like Canada, USA, UK, and Australia have been active in developing inclusive policies. Teachers in these countries tend to hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion than do teachers in developing countries. However, it took some time for these countries to develop their educational system and
actually see the results of a difficult process, which requires strong efforts of all stakeholders to succeed (Gyimah et al., 2009). A study conducted in other countries in Europe, such as Norway (Pijl, 2010) and Sweden, revealed that attitudes of Physical Education teachers in these countries are very positive towards children with SEN (Jerlinder et al., 2010). In other countries of Europe, such as the Netherlands, although the use of special schools is prevalent, the process of inclusion is still challenging. In France, Plaisance (2007: 47-48) found that the difficulties arise from the ‘fear of what is different, institutional resistance, and contradictions between professional cultures’. This author suggested that mainstream teachers should be trained to work with children with SEN in order to achieve a successful inclusion.

Since 2003, schools in Hong Kong, for example, have established different inclusive policies; however, many teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion remain negative (Forlin and Sin, 2010b). Although the process of inclusion in developing countries has been slower compared to the first world countries, such as the United Kingdom, teachers in many developing countries campaign for real inclusion. In developing countries in Latin America, Caribbean and in Africa (Gyimah et al., 2009), schools are still struggling to find the resources to train teachers and support the inclusion. Studies show teachers in these countries do not feel confident about including children with SEN in classrooms (Armstrong et al., 2005).

A review of 26 different articles by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicated that although teachers hold positive attitudes about the inclusion, they do not fully support the inclusion of children with SEN. Indeed, in some studies, teachers maintain a neutral or negative attitude towards the inclusion of primary school age children with SEN. This can result in low expectations from the pupils with SEN and can diminish the academic performance of the child (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

Teacher’s attitudes can change when they experience the process of inclusion; consequently, they can develop their skills and abilities. For example, in Canada, teachers’ attitudes have been changing since the inclusion process started. At first, the teachers were reluctant to include pupils with special needs, as they feared that they were not adequately prepared and competent, and they felt overloaded due to the increase in responsibilities associated with the inclusion of children with SEN in their classrooms. In addition, they did not feel they had enough resources and felt that they had to choose to support either children or their classmates.
However, over time, their experience of the process of inclusion has led to more positive attitudes towards the inclusion (Winzer and Mazurek, 2011).

Frederickson et al.’s study of the perceptions of teachers (2004) indicated that the attitudes of stakeholders towards children with SEN need to be changed. Stakeholders suggested that the academic and social progress that the child with SEN can reach is an important indicator of successful inclusive education.

Moreover, teachers also suggested that inclusion is a process that should be planned beforehand in order to be successful and that communication and the expertise among staff should be shared.

Additional research has shown (Avramidis et al., 2000; Gyimah et al., 2009; Goodman and Burton, 2010) that the following factors could affect the teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion:

a) The type and severity of SEN (Avramidis et al. 2000; Gyimah et al. 2009; Goodman and Burton, 2010) influence teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion. Positive attitudes are more common in the inclusion of pupils with physical disabilities, pupils with specific learning difficulties and visually impaired pupils rather than in the inclusion of children with mental difficulties, SEBD or more severe learning difficulties. Indeed, one of the principal concerns of teachers is the inclusion of children with SEBD (Ainscow et al., 2000; MacBeath et al., 2006). Recent evidence from Goodman and Burton (2010) found that perceptions of children with SEBD were more likely to be negative compared to the perceptions of children with moderate learning difficulties. In contrast, Gyimah’s (2009) study of Ghana’s teachers indicated that teachers’ perceptions were positive toward children who present any kind of disability even if it is SEBD.

b) The level of teachers’ involvement in the inclusion process and their lack of knowledge and experience appear to affect their attitudes towards children with SEN. The teachers reported feeling incompetent and, as a result, resisted teaching children with SEN (Sharma et al., 2008). Thus, pre-service education and inclusive education training at undergraduate, Master’s level or on the job (Harvey et al., 2010) are very important factors for the improvement of teachers’ education. Employing this training strategy would increase teachers’ confidence in teaching children with SEN and would help them develop a more inclusive teaching style (Purduea et al., 2009; Pijl, 2010). Moreover, teachers who had professionally experienced the inclusion of children with SEN are also keener to accept them
(Avramidis et al., 2000) and hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion. The best source of knowledge is experience (Harrison and Sullivan, 2006) even though teachers can be informed and trained, they need to have real-life experience with children with SEN to discover their own potential and creativity and feel more self-confident. If they do not try to get such experience, they could become stuck in a negative cycle in which they do not learn to practice the inclusion and instead retain their negative attitudes (Pijl, 2010).

c) Teacher’s personal traits, such as gender and age, influence teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion. For example, females are more likely to support inclusion (Ellins and Porter, 2005). Moreover, younger teachers tend to have views that are more positive. In addition, teachers who teach lower grades have more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Sharma et al., 2008).

d) Teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education of children with ASD were positive. Most teachers hold positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with ASD; however, in the UK, some teachers’ unions are still asking the government to re-evaluate the inclusion process (Batten, 2005). If teachers do not have adequate support, they can experience different tensions when including children with ASD in their classrooms (Emam and Farrell, 2009). Sometimes, teachers may not feel confident to manage a classroom in which children with ASD are also included (Barnard et al., 2002). According to Emam and Farrell (2009:194), ‘children’s ASD-Related manifestations as well as difficulties in social and emotional understanding are likely to form their attitudes towards their inclusion. These attitudes, in turn, imprint the teachers’ interactions and relationship with the children’. Thus, this can affect the way teachers perceive children with ASD. The quality of the teacher-pupil relationship is an important factor for a successful inclusion (Mahmud, 2009).

Previous research by Emam and Farrell (2009) revealed that some teachers feel frustrated because of the need to use a different language and spend more time to support the child in understanding instructions. Some are not committed to using different learning styles with children with ASD. Teachers can also be vulnerable to burnout (Jennett et al., 2003), especially when the teacher is not qualified to work with children with SEN, such as children with ASD (Batten, 2005; Glashan et al., 2004).

Previous research findings from the National Autistic Society suggest that 72 per cent of schools are not satisfied with the training that teachers have to support children with ASD. Indeed, only 22 percent of teachers completed training in autism (Barnard et al., 2002). Attitudes towards children with ASD may change if teachers receive quality training to
understand autism, learn strategies to avoid and overcome difficulties (Batten, 2005), and use approaches such as TEACCH and ABA (Jennett et al., 2003).

4.5.7 Parents’ Perceptions of inclusion of children with SEN

Parents in many countries have advocated inclusion. Parents of children with SEN have been the principal supporters of this process. Findings of a study by Yssel et al. (2007) conducted with 32 parents of children with SEN showed that they hold mostly positive perceptions towards inclusion (Fox et al., 2004). However, other parents of children with SEN were not satisfied with their children’s outcomes. Most parents thought that their children had the right to study in a mainstream school in order to have a better life.

Head teachers, staff, teachers and classmates’ attitudes toward children affect parents’ perceptions about inclusion (Elkins et al., 2003). Most parents find positive social experiences for their children, and they desire that their children fit in the school (Yssel et al., 2007; Elkins et al., 2003; Palmer et al., 2001). However, in a study by Freeman and Alkin (2000), parents suggested that peers rejected children with severe SEN who were included in mainstream classroom.

In a study by Palmer et al. (2001), 70 from 140 parents of pupils with SEN suggested that inclusion would enable their children to improve their functional skills and academic achievement as a result of higher expectations and additional stimulation. Parents whose children received quality support from their teachers expressed more positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, parents of older children with SEN who are included in the mainstream settings had more negative perceptions because of the lack of resources available to their children (Elkins et al., 2003).

Parents of children with SEN felt that teachers were not well trained and that they lacked experience in teaching children with SEN. They felt that attitudes from school towards children with SEN were important factors in the successful inclusion of children, and they suggested that some teachers’ attitudes towards children with SEN were not positive. In addition, negative attitudes may affect the collaboration between family and school, and in fact, family-school partnership has not been found. However, parents were willing to participate in family-school partnerships (Yssel et al., 2007). This cycle means that partnership between parents and teachers is very important for the inclusion of children with SEN.
Parents’ Perceptions of inclusion of children with ASD

Parents of children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in particular present several concerns regarding the inclusion of their children (Spann et al., 2003), as they feel that their children could be rejected by their peers. As mentioned previously, parents of children with ASD also wish their children to be included in mainstream schools because they want their children to live the same lives as other typically developing children (Spann et al., 2003). However, they are concerned about peer rejection and bullying. Parents perceived that teachers should be trained to educate children with ASD in both special and mainstream schools to develop expertise. The parents seem to prefer if teachers are trained in mainstream schools (Barnard et al., 2002).

Parents also perceived a need to increase the quality of provision, improve teachers’ attitudes toward children with ASD, and increase teachers’ abilities to make curriculum adaptations (Jindal-Snape et al., 2005). On the one hand, in one study (Waddington and Reed, 2006), factors associated with successful inclusion, such as school commitment and funding, were found to be important in the perceptions of parents and professionals. On the other hand, parents do not agree with professionals about children’s behaviour, social skills and academic abilities being significant factors in successful inclusion. Teachers’ attitudes toward children with ASD and learning styles that would be individualised to each child are likely to influence parents’ perceptions about inclusion (Whitaker, 2007).

Kasari et al. (1999) compared experiences of parents of children with Down’s syndrome and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. They found that diagnosis, age and current placement are important factors that have a positive influence on parents’ perspectives towards inclusion. Parents of children with Down’s syndrome tend to prefer full inclusion while parents of children with ASD prefer part-time placement. The findings of a research by Kasari et al. (1999) also suggested that parents of younger children with ASD are more likely to have positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to parents of older children. Parents of children who have been already included are also more positive towards inclusion. In addition, it was also found that parents from lower social classes do not spend as much time in the school compared to those who are professionals (Kasari et al., 1999). These findings are consistent with Whitaker’s (2007) study, in which many parents admitted that they do not dedicate enough time to enhancing their children’s skills. Therefore, it is important to recognize that parents also need to take an active part in the educational role of their children.
4.5.9 Teaching Assistant’s Role in the inclusion of children with SEN

In many countries of the world, including USA, Mexico and the United Kingdom, teaching assistants have been employed to support inclusive education of some children with SEN in mainstream schools. Indeed, the number of teaching assistants in the UK has almost tripled from 1997 to 2008 (Blatchford et al., 2009b). In some primary mainstream schools, there are as many teaching assistants as there are teachers.

A number of studies supported a positive role of teaching assistant (TA), in successful inclusion of some children with SEN (Lindsay, 2007; Fox et al., 2004; Farrell et al., 2010). Teaching assistants (TAs) in the UK and USA support inclusion in many different ways. ‘Many pupils with SEN have specific problems in learning and need one-to-one attentions for parts of the day otherwise they will not learn. It is therefore important for programmes of work to combine individualised instruction, either in class or in a withdrawal basis, with supported group work in mainstream school’ (Balshaw and Farrell, 2002:43).

Usually, from the parents and teachers’ perspectives, many teachers would not be able to provide quality education for all the students, including those with SEN, if they could not count on teaching assistants’ support (Alston and Kilham, 2004; Fox et al., 2004).

Teaching assistants also act as mediators, as they promote the participation of the child with SEN and enhance his or her learning. Teaching assistants should have to be aware how much support they should provide and when it is appropriate in order to allow the child to be independent but at the same time not isolated from other classmates (Lacey, 2001). They can also act as mediators between the school and parents (Farrell et al., 2010). Moreover, the collaboration between teaching assistants and teachers is also very important (Fox et al., 2004). Teacher assistants should be trained to modify the curriculum in order to use the right communication and learning style to meet the needs of every child (Alston and Kilham, 2004). Teaching assistants need to plan their activities and report to teachers. In one study (Blatchford et al., 2007), teachers suggested that the role of teaching assistant is beneficial for them because teaching assistants support children with SEN in the classroom and enable the teacher to meet the needs of all pupils.

However, this can lead to some teachers not interacting enough with the child with SEN. The teaching assistant’s role in inclusion and pupils’ academic attainment is more complementary rather than direct (Blatchford et al., 2007; Blatchford et al., 2009). Pedagogic courses are now instructing teachers on how to work with teaching assistants (Norwich and Nash, 2011). In addition, it is very important that they are self confident and understand their crucial role in
the inclusion process (Balshaw and Farrell, 2002). Findings from a USA research study showed that the support of teaching assistants in the inclusion of children with SEN, specially children with ASD (Giangreco et al., 2001; Young et al., 1997), has been increasing as the number of teaching assistants hired has risen. Giangreco et al. (2001) reviewed 26 non-data and 17 data-based studies on the role of teaching assistant. Before 2000, the role of teaching assistant had not been well explained. Teaching assistants were only expected to take care of children with SEBD.

A study by Carter and Hughes (2006) indicted that according to the perception of stakeholders, the principal barrier to inclusion is the lack of staff to support children with SEN. Teaching assistants on the other hand suggested that the principal barrier was the lack of information and attitudes from general education teachers and classmates. On some occasions, teachers were not prepared to support the inclusion of children with SEN and to tell other students how to interact with their classmates with SEN. According to a review of 26 different studies, Farrell et al. (2010) suggested that teaching assistants help maintain engagement in academic activities and improve the communication between the child with ASD and the teacher and classmates.

4.5.10 Teaching assistant’s Role in supporting children with ASD

It has been argued that some children with ASD require an educational approach based on one-to-one tutoring, thus the role of TA is seen as being important for some children (Young et al., 1997).

Few published studies described the role of teaching assistants in supporting children with ASD. One of the most recent studies found that teaching assistants tend to have more positive attitudes toward children with ASD compared to teachers (Emam and Farrell, 2009).

However, a review by Farrell’s et al. (2010) indicated a neutral outcome, suggesting that the support that children with ASD who were included in the mainstream setting received from TAs was not related to the interaction between the teacher and child. The effect of TAs in enhancing the children’s confidence was not found. In a review by Howes et al. (2003) they found evident that in all the studies ‘the participation of pupils in mainstream classes is directly related to the efforts of paid adult support staff. In addition, strong evidence emerges supporting the notion that paid adult support staff is generally important and useful in promoting inclusion and that they directly impact on pupils’ participation.’
However a research by Howes (2003) suggested that teaching assistants’ support can sometimes negatively influence the academic attainment of the child. If children with ASD received more support from the teaching assistant, their academic attainment may decline, as teachers may leave the full responsibility for the child to the teaching assistant. Therefore, children with ASD may interact less with the teacher and other classmates, thus becoming socially isolated (McVittie, 2005; Alston and Kilham, 2004). In contrast, a study by Robertson et al. (2003) found that support of teaching assistant does not affect the relationship between teacher and pupil with ASD. Other factors that contributed are access to the expertise of others’ training, and the relationship between the teacher and the teaching assistant. However, a barrier can exist when a teacher is not aware of ASD (Symes and Humphrey, 2011). In one of their studies (ibid), they interviewed 15 teaching assistants from four mainstream secondary schools who worked with included children with ASD. Their findings suggested that access to expertise, communication within school, and teaching staff awareness of ASD were some factors that support the ways in which teaching assistants can include children with ASD in the schools. One of the previous findings from a study by Alston and Kilhan (2004) suggested that frequent changes in staff can have a negative effect on children with ASD because children with ASD are not prepared to change their routines (Alston and Kilham, 2004).

It is interesting to note just how important the role of a teaching assistant can be in some cases. Their work with children with SEN and ASD differs across countries. For example, in Mexico, it is in some cases exclusively up to teaching assistants to provide instruction to and support children with ASD.

4.5.11 Communities orientated school with an inclusive ethos and the role of head teachers

Inclusive schools maintain a strong inclusive ethos which promotes and support a culture of respect for diversity (Dyson et al., 2002). Positive attitudes of stakeholders, referring to head teachers, teachers, teaching assistant, staff, classmates and parents, indicate a positive ethos about diversity and promote values that would support the inclusion of all children (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Highly qualified teachers and staff should use good practice and inclusive values inside the classroom and in the entire school. These schools are flexible, use different strategies, and see the work with children with SEN as part of their own job (Farrell et al., 2007b).
Schools that provide access to a full curriculum support the participation of children (Dyson et al., 2002). In the case of children with ASD it is necessary to create an autism friendly environment, use different learning styles, and develop a more flexible curriculum, which can be adapted according to individual needs and engage each child emotionally. This would provide the necessary support to enhance the participation of children with ASD and break the barriers that segregate them from mainstream school (Jordan, 2005b).

In the creation of an inclusive school, factors such as leadership should be considered (Murillo et al., 2010, Dyson et al., 2002). The role of leadership in the implementation of a successful inclusion in mainstream school has been found critical by challenging negative attitudes and celebrating diversity in everyday practice (Leo and Barton, 2006; Kugelmass and Ainscow, 2003). There is not a specific type of leadership for inclusive schools, but most inclusive schools require the support of a head teacher who should be a democratic leader (Murillo et al., 2010). This type of leader influences all stakeholders involved by displaying values that support the participation of children with SEN (Kugelmass, 2001). Therefore, all stakeholders (classmates, teachers, teaching assistant, staff and parents) have to be committed to the idea of real inclusion inside the classroom and the removal of any barriers (Dyson et al., 2002). It is essential to increase awareness in the school community in order to change attitudes towards inclusion among teachers and staff before and during the process of inclusion. Head teachers have to support the idea of inclusion, in both theory and practice, among teachers and staff who can be resistant to change (Yssel et al., 2007). Head teachers who show positive attitudes devote their time and involve themselves in the activities that include the child. Head-teachers and schools need to provide the teachers and staff with the proper training and motivation to enable them to become supportive partners in the challenging process that needs to be planned well and reviewed continually in order to succeed (Kalambouka et al., 2007). That way, teachers would be prepared to address the specific needs of the children with SEN. In contrast, the leaders with negative attitudes tend to think that they cannot make exceptions for children with SEN.

According to Chapman et al. (2011), head teachers suggest that leaders need to be proud of the achievement of children with SEN, which also motivates other classmates. Leaders also suggest that inclusive schools share a culture and ethos of respecting diversity, common ideas in practice, and teamwork in supporting the inclusion and adapting lessons to change structures.
4.6 Conclusion

The literature review above has considered numerous studies on autism as well as the concepts and objectives concerning the inclusion of children with SEN and ASD in mainstream education. A key purpose of this review was to synthesize evidence from these studies about the extent children with ASD can be included in mainstream schools. The literature review also focused on the factors that contribute to the positive outcome of such inclusion for both SEN children, their parents, peers and teachers. The review focused on the perceptions of these main stakeholders involved in the inclusion of children with ASD.

Parents in many countries, including Mexico, have advocated the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream education. Most of these parents believed their children had the right to study in a mainstream school in order to have a better life. It was therefore important to study what was the experience of inclusion of their children.

The level of social and academic abilities of children with ASD is a key factor in their successful inclusion in mainstream education. Children with severe SEBD, or those with multiple disabilities who in some cases also have mental health problems, for example, can experience real challenges in mainstream settings such as bullying, and this can have a negative impact on the success of the inclusion. However, for those with less severe symptoms of ASD, evidence suggests that there can be real and positive outcomes of inclusive education. Indeed, some children with ASD, who are fully included, make considerable progress and present less behavioural difficulties during and after their education. In the next Chapter, I discuss the methodology in which I chose a sample of nine children of different ages and with a range of ASD disabilities. This will reflect to some extent how level of disability impacts upon the quality (or lack of quality) of the inclusive experience.

Stakeholders’ attitudes towards children with ASD have been explored in the literature review and found to be a relevant and supporting factor, in almost all cases. Previous studies have reported positive attitudes, specifically peer acceptance, towards pupils with ASD in preschools and primary schools and sometimes in secondary schools. A teacher’s positive attitude and perceptions appear to influence the attitudes of classmates towards all children, including those with special educational needs. In my own research, I decided to use
interviews, focus groups and sociometry to study the perceptions of teachers and classmates towards children with ASD. This data was then compared to the existing studies above.

Stakeholders can feel anxious about new experiences and some parents are concerned that their children will be rejected. Teachers and classmates’ attitudes can change when they experience the process of inclusion. Indeed the confidence and training that teachers gain through experiencing inclusive contexts can positively influence teachers’ competence in supporting the inclusion of children with ASD. In this sense, I also realized that it was important to study whether the experience of inclusion itself had also influenced stakeholders in another context, such as Mexico.

Previous research conducted in the USA showed that the role of teaching assistants is another factor that can influence in the outcomes of inclusion of children with ASD. As mentioned before, in some cases in Mexico, teaching assistants are frequently believed to be responsible for managing the inclusion of children with ASD. Thus the participation of teaching assistants in this research was relevant to understand their role in the process of inclusion in Mexico.

Community oriented schools’ ethos should be based on an inclusive culture. Such schools have staff that share similar values, respect diversity, and show commitment to all students who are invited to participate in the process of inclusion. The literature showed that a very structured ‘autism friendly’ environment and a flexible curriculum, that can be adapted by using different visual learning styles according to individual needs, is likely to engage emotionally each child in the learning process. The use of educational methods, such as TEACCH and ABA, also enhanced the participation of children with ASD and broke some of the barriers that segregate them. In this Mexican study I spent some time observing school cultures to understand specifically what approaches existed to diversity, participation and flexibility in the curriculum.

Similarly, head teachers who share inclusive values with the staff and maintain positive leadership may contribute to the implementation of a successful inclusion. This can be achieved by challenging negative attitudes and celebrating diversity in everyday practice. Such leaders also had good relations with parents and the community. Head teachers’ leadership roles were examined in my study to assess their contribution to the participation of children with ASD in the school.
The outcomes of inclusive education for children with SEN or ASD and their classmates remain a contentious issue and research continues unabated. The controversial and contradictory nature of research findings in this field does little to help government and policy makers implement evidence based policies. This is due to many different methodologies, participants, and variables. However, the most important conclusion is that inclusion has a positive effect on children with ASD and that research to date has not yielded any significant negative impact on their classmates.

The inclusion process varies in its implementation worldwide from zero, through various forms of ‘locational’ provision to functional participation along the lines indicated in the Index for Inclusion. Moreover, it is continually evolving and is, therefore, an on-going global challenge. Inherent to my research was an examination of the existing level of provision of inclusive education in Mexico and a case study of ASD children and their schooling. The level of inclusion in Mexico is far more limited than in many other countries and even less is known about the implementation of inclusion programmes for children with ASD. The literature review contained many references to the need for resources and training to manage the inclusion process. Given the limited resources available in Mexico, as shall be seen in the chapters on results later, it is still unclear how children with ASD can be included in mainstream schools.

Developing countries such as Mexico need to consider the experiences of other countries, such as the USA, Australia, UK and Canada, where inclusive education is well researched, although it cannot be assumed that the same procedures can be applied to every country (not least because of resource constraints). Each country has to carefully consider its cultural and economic factors that could potentially influence the process of inclusion. As mentioned previously, there is a gap in the literature on the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico. Thus, the aim of this research is to investigate the process and practices in this country.

The literature review and research in this chapter has provided a solid basis for exploring in some detail the inclusion of specific cases of children with ASD in Mexican mainstream schools. I was eager to explore the school’s management, parents’ perceptions as well as attitudes of teachers and classmates toward inclusion, and teaching assistants’ roles and the use of the curriculum in the inclusion process.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology, the approach and methods used, as well as the collection and analysis of data.
CHAPTER 5. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS
5 METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed definitions and research on inclusion of children with SEN and ASD in mainstream schools. The aim of this chapter is to describe and justify the methodology that was used in order to investigate the following questions:

To what extent, and in what ways, can children categorized as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder be supported within mainstream schools in Mexico?

What factors support the inclusion of children with ASD into Mexican mainstream schools?

What are the barriers that should be reduced in order to achieve successful inclusion for these pupils?

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the methodological approach and the second section describes the methods used to collect the data. The first section focuses on the paradigms that underpin the current research along with the rationale for using qualitative methods (interviews, sociometry, focus groups and documentary analysis). It also describes and justifies the qualitative design, the aims and research questions proposed by the study. The second section describes participant selection, data collection methods and the analysis. Finally, the ethical issues and overall limitations of the study are considered.

5.2 Methodological Approach

5.2.1 Principal Paradigms in Educational Research

Epistemological paradigms guide the researcher’s thinking and the subsequent action (Mertens, 2004). An epistemological paradigm reflects the approach that is taken towards researching a particular problem and considering the outcome (Murray and Lawrence, 2000) together with the conceptualization from which the methodology follows. It illustrates the stance of the researcher, as the research procedures will be determined within the chosen paradigm, (Murray and Lawrence, 2000). The three paradigms typically referred to in educational research are positivism, interpretivist and critical theory (Merriam, 2001). In what follows, I will briefly discuss each of these paradigms:
In the positivism paradigm, the aim of the research is to discover the truth using the scientific method and carefully designed measurable and statistical methods, such as tests, experiments and survey data, to find answers to problems that should be scientifically valid and can be universally applied. Research that is based on this paradigm uses quantitative methods and aims to be objective (Fossey et al., 2002). The researcher may often have contact with participants, however, as an ‘independent observer’. Controls are utilised to minimise or neutralise experimenter effects or biases, and samples tend to be large. Moreover, findings are claimed to be generalisable across populations (Merriam, 2001). The positivist researcher tends to conduct:

‘Social research that seeks to apply the principles developed by the natural sciences. The key principles are the neutrality of the researcher with respect to the problem and taking decisions about the results of the research out of the researcher’s hands. Positivism seeks to emulate scientific research in seeking to develop theory. Its approach is to postulate hypotheses which, if proven, can constitute building blocks of a theory’ (Newby, 2010: 661).

Positivism has been criticized because it tends to see the world in a mechanistic way, and according to Cohen et al. (2000), positivism is not appropriate when the study is concerned with the behaviour of humans, because human phenomena, for example, the perceptions or feelings from students at school, can be naturally challenging and complex compared to a more predictable and natural world. Thus, the interpretive approach can be more helpful when studying and trying to understand phenomena from the viewpoint of those who experience them. Such phenomena measured in quantitative ways can be inadequate, because much of the rich description that lies beneath a numerical categorisation of a person’s view or experience is not captured. This can lead to poor representations of participant’s potential contribution to the research, suggesting that the topic should be investigated through other more appropriate means. As Einstein stated, ‘Not everything that can be counted, counts- and not everything that counts can be counted’ (Harrison and Sullivan, 2006).

The Interpretive approach to research is non-statistical and is one of the most common paradigms in Qualitative Studies (Cohen et al., 2000). Constructivists reject ‘the notion that there is an objective reality that can be known and take the stance that the researchers goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge’ (Mertens, 2004:
14). This means that interpretative approaches are interested in understanding actions and meanings and in learning about the causes of phenomena.

According to Merriam (2001), interpretive researchers understand the particular meaning of the process or experience that constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive mode of inquiry, i.e., hypothesis or theory (rather than a deductive or testing), in order to understand the subjective world within which people operate. As Newby suggested, ‘The social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated’ (2010:19). Interpretive researchers attempt to conduct studies based on the viewpoint of people who are involved in the experience. Interviews, observations and document reviews are commonly used qualitative methods in the interpretive paradigm (Mertens, 2004). Interpretive research is sometimes referred to as constructivism. According to Merriam (2001), inclusive education in interpretative research is seen as a process and the school as a lived experience; therefore, the knowledge had to be gained from an inductive mode of inquiry.

The third paradigm is critical theory, which is concerned with inequalities in society and suggests that everyone should be considered as an equal and should deserve the same rights as any other member of society. The main aim of the approach is for research to influence reality. From the critical theory’s perspective ‘social reality is multi-layered, events and relations based on hidden underlying social structures/forces that evolve in a historical context’ (Fossey et al., 2002: 219). As such, this theory not only attempts to comprehend the phenomena, but also tries ‘to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society’ by unveiling myths and hidden truths in order to transform society (Cohen et al., 2000: 28). It is based on the work of Habermas (Newby, 2010). This paradigm can be used in both qualitative and quantitative studies. However, this study utilized action research as the preferred underlying research paradigm (Merriam, 2001). One of the principal critiques is that researchers who support critical theory perspective usually have a political agenda; thus, they are deliberately not neutral and their research is value driven (Cohen et al., 2000).
5.2.2 Position of current research

Inclusion is a social construction of reality that is experienced in a different way by each stakeholder (parent, head teacher, teacher, teaching assistants and classmates). This research adopted the interpretive paradigm because it seeks ‘to understand the subjective world of human experience’ (Mertens, 2004: 22) by focusing on the viewpoint of stakeholders in the inclusion process of children with ASD. In the interpretive paradigm, inclusive education in a mainstream school is a lived experience (Merriam, 2001), and data comes from fieldwork investigation. Interactive approach uses a more personally involved style where ‘facts are products of social construction and therefore the values surrounding any statement of facts must be explored and made explicit’ (Mertens and McLaughlin, 1995: 50). This approach is more exploratory and can be more pragmatic, derived less from a theory. For example, can change the path during the data collection process (Robson, 1993).

The principal aim of this research was to carry out an in depth study about inclusive education for children with ASD in Mexico. However, when investigating this topic using this approach, perspectives of those who are experiencing inclusive schooling are needed to illuminate current ‘lived experiences’ of stakeholders involved in the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico. Qualitative methodologies are required to acquire rich data that would reveal important nuances in the perceptions of the range of ‘stakeholders’ involved. Qualitative studies tend to be used in cases in which the researcher aims to reflect on the practice in context. This study uses a qualitative design because it is very useful to understand social phenomena. As Merriam suggested, ‘Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their own world and the experiences they have in the world’ (2001:6). This relates more to the process that drives behaviour and people’s perceptions of the world, because individuals are unique, not homogeneous. Moreover, interpretations of a situation vary according to each person’s point of view.

By employing qualitative modes of enquiry, I attempted to ‘understand the complex interrelationships among all that exists’ in the phenomenon (Stake, 1995: 36). Case studies are commonly used as a research method in Education, Psychology and Sociology. According to Stake (1995), there are different kinds of case studies, (1) intrinsic case study to understand a phenomenon without attempting to generalise the information, (2)
instrumental case study to understand another issue or revise generalisation, and (3) collective or multiple case study to research a general phenomena (Silvermann, 2010).

This research used an exploratory multiple case study because it developed ‘pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further enquiry’ (Yin, 2009:9). Different schools attempt to include children with ASD in Mexico. The research essentially studied children with ASD included by an non profit organisation DOMUS within their whole environment to ‘develop deeper explanations of the complex social factors that bear on issues of inclusion’ (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002 : 8), because there is still a limited amount of research about the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico. It is very important to explore this phenomenon in more detail.

An exploratory multiple case study is a very helpful research method to establish the causes and effects of a social phenomenon in natural settings (Yin, 2009), because case studies focus on the significance of the data that is collected rather than the frequency of an event (Cohen et al., 2007). Different cases are examined because they can illuminate the phenomenon. Case study design offers deeper insights into the ways in which children with ASD can be supported, the facilitators and barriers of their inclusion, and specific facilitators and barriers in the nine case studies. This is an exploratory research, a multiple case study support initial propositions.

A single researcher conducted this qualitative study. Researchers are one of the principal instruments in the process of data collection and analysis. Case study involves fieldwork with a focal point to understand the phenomenon; it collects data from various sources to obtain insights about this particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2001). The design of this kind of study is very flexible because during the data collection, the original plan can change. As a researcher, I spend time in the field having some contact with participants.

Exploratory case studies usually preselect a sample in a very non-random way (Merriam, 2001), because the main purpose is to understand a feature or process of each particular case. As mentioned previously, case study ‘is not sampling research’ (Stake, 1995: 4). Research does not attempt to draw on a random sample and indeed, case studies can be criticized because of their ‘uniqueness and artificial conditions surrounding the case’ (Yin, 2009:61). Thus the use of multiple exploratory case study design in this study contributed to achieving a richer experience and understanding the phenomenon better than from one single case (Merriam, 2001). In addition, according to Yin (2009), multiple case design should be
preferred over single case design primarily because the researcher has the possibility of replication. Second, the researcher can contrast different situations in the case studies. Third, the more case studies a research includes, the more reliable are the findings. Hence, this research evaluated nine different case-studies to ‘offer a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon’ (Merriam, 2001: 84). During my pilot study, I gained an insight into the educational context of Mexico. It was clear that the country is still in a process of inclusion and that only one to two children with ASD are integrated in each school.

My original research plan changed because I was only able to work with one instead of two organizations in Mexico, as was the original plan. As Yin suggested (2009:70) ‘Few cases studies will end up exactly as planned. Inevitably, you will have to make minor if not major changes’. Concerning one of the chosen organisations, CLIMA, the director decided not to be part of the research because they preferred to be involved only in quantitative research. However, DOMUS was able to provide me with nine cases. DOMUS provided all cases to meet the inclusion criteria according to the age, child characteristics, different gender, backgrounds and areas in Mexico City.

Finally, seven schools accepted the research plan, which involved nine children with ASD and their respective nine parents, with the aim to make an in-depth analysis of the facilitators, barriers and the environmental context influencing the inclusion of children with ASD.

The methods included in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observations, and written documents (Patton, 2002). The data analysis was inductive, done mostly by the researcher. Qualitative data analysis is not only descriptive, but also reflective (Merriam, 2001). This means that by analysing the process of inclusion, the main purpose will be to illuminate the phenomenon.

5.3 Pilot Study

During the first semester of 2009, I conducted a pilot study in Mexican schools for one month to investigate the general and inclusive education provided to children with ASD and children with Down syndrome. I specifically focused on the effect of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) on enabling the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico City. The pilot study served several different functions. First, I learned more about the general work of Mexican organisations, for example DOMUS. Second, it was useful to meet
children with ASD and children with Down syndrome in order to help me select the sample and define the topic for my PhD.

What are the best choices within the Alternative and Augmentative Communication Systems for the inclusion of children with Autism and Down syndrome in Mexico?

The sample comprised teachers, teaching assistants from DOMUS and the classmates of 3 children with ASD, one from a Private Preschool, one from a Primary Public School, and one from a Secondary Private School. Moreover, the sample comprised teachers and classmates of 3 children with Down syndrome, one from a Public Preschool and two from a Primary Public School.

I used mixed methods, one quantitative and two qualitative. The quantitative method used the form of a questionnaire. I designed a questionnaire for teachers and teaching assistants of the children with ASD and Down’s syndrome. I also used two qualitative methods, interviews with teachers and teaching assistants and observations of the children with ASD and Down’s syndrome and their classmates in the school.

While discussing AAC systems, the stakeholders offered some perspectives on the barriers that should be overcome in order to integrate a child with autism in mainstream schools in Mexico. These focused on the perceptions of teachers and teaching assistants of the barriers of successful inclusion of students with ASD in mainstream schools. These included the following:

- Economic and material resources
- Lack of training of teaching assistants and teachers
- Lack of information;
- Curriculum adaptations;
- Role and personality of the teacher or teaching assistants;
- Children’s abilities; communication difficulties or lack of social interaction; behavioural difficulties;
- The attitudes of teachers, teaching assistants, peers and peers’ parents towards children with autism. These attitudes were the most dominant factors.
Most stakeholders showed positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with ASD and Down’s syndrome. However, inclusion of children with ASD seems to be more challenging than inclusion of children with Down’s syndrome. Indeed, they suggested that most children with ASD should receive the support of a TA, while children with Down syndrome could be included without this support. Some TAs also suggested that not all teachers in mainstream settings are able to cope with children with ASD. The acceptance from classmates of children with autism depended also on the severity of the characteristics of each child with ASD. They also found advantages of the integration of children with autism (less behavioural difficulties) as well as advantages for their classmates (for example they learnt to be more supportive with others). However, some TAs stated that Mexican educational settings and some mainstream teachers were not well prepared to include children with ASD. Indeed, some teachers in mainstream schools suggested that they were unable to support children with ASD.

However, through the process of data analysis, I found other important facilitators and barriers to achieve successful inclusion of children with ASD that should be studied. Thus, I decided to change my PhD topic and conduct a research on the stakeholders’ perceptions of the barriers and facilitators of successful inclusion of children with ASD in mainstream Mexican schools. I focused on the following research question and two sub-questions:

To what extent, and in what ways, can children identified as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder be supported within mainstream schools in Mexico?

What factors support the inclusion of children with ASD into Mexican mainstream schools?

What are the barriers that should be reduced in order to achieve successful inclusion for these pupils?

I found that interviews and observations were helpful during my pilot study. Since not all of the participants completed the questionnaires, I decided to use other kinds of qualitative methods, such as focus group.

### 5.3.1 Preparing for data Collection

The following protocol guided this research (Yin, 2009):

a) An overview of the multiple case studies and all the background information, including methods that were used.
b) Field procedures, access authorization from the schools, a clear schedule, and provision for unanticipated events.

c) Research questions for the study

d) A guide for writing up the research.

5.4 Research Sample

The participants met the following criteria:

This research used an opportunistic sample because the participants were supported by a Mexican organization for children with ASD called DOMUS. The research participants comprised nine children with ASD, three children from each age group (Preschool, primary and secondary), who were integrated in preschools, primary schools and secondary schools. In addition, nine Mexican teachers and teaching assistants as well as the parents of the children (father or mother) participated in the research.

DOMUS was selected because it is a recognized institution created by parents of children with autism. The sample was convenient because the organisation wanted to support this project and it was easy to gain access to the sample. In addition to the willingness of the organisation to be involved, it was important to identify schools that practiced the inclusion of children with ASD. This would have been difficult without DOMUS’ assistance.

Nine children with ASD were chosen. One parent did not agree with his/her child’s participation in the research. The principal reason for not giving approval was that the child had emotional difficulties at that particular moment. Additionally, head teachers from one public and one private school did not permit access. The permission to access the private school was given but when the research started, the owner, who had not been notified by the head teacher about the research, was a little annoyed that she had not been informed and declined to participate, saying that she did not want children and teachers to be distracted. The public school also refused to take part and asked for consent from the Ministry of Education in Mexico. As a result, I needed to identify three new cases.
Finally a sample of nine children with ASD integrated in Mainstream schools providing provision for 5 to 18 years old children was selected. Thus after selecting the case study sites, the following people were chosen to participate, as shown below:

**Preschool** (Private or Public) School

- Three children with ASD (Three male)

Three teaching assistants, three Teachers and classmates (approximately 20)

Three parents (mothers) of children with ASD were interviewed also.

**Primary** (Private or Public) School

- Three children with ASD (Two male and one female)

Three teaching assistants, three teachers and classmates (approximately 20)

Three parents (mothers) of children with ASD were interviewed also.

**Secondary** (Private or Public) School

- Three children with ASD (Two male and one female)

Three teaching assistants, three Teachers and classmates (approximately 20)

Three parents (mothers) of children with ASD were interviewed also.
## 5.5 Overview of Data Collection

The following table summarizes the data collected for each participant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child's name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Interview with Teacher</th>
<th>Interview with TA</th>
<th>Interview with Head teacher or Socio</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Files</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Private Pre-School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Karina</td>
<td>Leticia</td>
<td>Kristina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cecilia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>Private Pre-School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Regina</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>Private Pre-School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>Dora</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Georgina</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Graciela</td>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>Valeria</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Irma</td>
<td>Almu</td>
<td>Valeria</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USAER teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvin</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>Liliana</td>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marco</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Euridice</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1 Data collected for each participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Private School</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Beatriz Marco</th>
<th>Euridice Lidia</th>
<th>Carmen</th>
<th>Ricardo</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hideyi</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 Methods for Data Collection and Fieldwork:

This study adopted a multi-method approach to collect the data. Data collection for each child followed the same procedure although not necessarily in the same order. Evidence from different sources (Yin, 2009:98) can provide additional perspectives that no source by itself could give (Patton, 2002). With respect to this, observations, interviews, focus groups, sociometric measures, and official student records from DOMUS were used to collect the data.

5.6.1 Observations

Observation is useful tool for the researcher to gather data in different situations at a specific moment of time rather than in another moment or from a second hand method (Patton, 2002). Observations can be made during fieldwork, including occasions when other methods are taking place, for example during the interviews.

Observations can be divided into structured, semi-structured and non-structured. Structured observations are based on a previously planned agenda with certain categories indicating what is trying to be observed. In semi-structured observations, the researcher has an idea of what he/she is looking for, but at the same time will be open to see what else is happening in the setting. Non-structured observations are not planned.

The role of the researcher, which can extend on a continuum from being a full participant to a non-participant, can also define observations. The researcher who is a full participant, is
participating with the sample directly, using other different types of research methods to collect the information, such as interviews or documentary analysis (Patton, 2002). Researcher as a passive participant is present but rarely interacts with the participants directly. At the other end of the continuum, researcher acts as a non-participant, or onlooker who only observes and is not involved in direct participation.

The first advantage of direct observation is that the researcher can observe the interaction among participants within the research setting, physical setting, and human setting and study not only verbal language but also body language cues in order to understand the participants, the environment, and the interactions among them (Cohen et al., 2007). Second, observation helps the researcher be more open minded about what he/she can discover during the fieldwork instead of relying on previous documents or verbal reports. Third, as a non-participant, the researcher who is not fully immersed in the routine can see the setting from a different point of view compared to the people who are fully involved in and might forget things when they are being interviewed (Patton, 2002). Fourth, direct observations can be very useful for extracting information from the data that is more reliable compared to information obtained from an interview. Additionally, it can verify some information that the interviewee does not want to answer in an interview. It provides an opportunity to contrast information that the respondents choose to disclose or not disclosed against reality (Bell, 1993). Finally, meeting all people in a setting indicates the level of the reflection and introspection of the researcher during the data analysis (Patton, 2002).

This research utilized passive participant semi-structured observations because the principal aim of these observations was to understand the interactions among the children with ASD, their peers, teaching assistants and teachers in the classroom environment without intervening in the class. Hence, observations were carried out in naturalistic settings, the classroom, the schools, and DOMUS organisation. In some cases, observations were done in the homes of participants. Semi-structured observations were planned deliberately.

Although observations should be recorded systematically, the use of videotape or other kind of recorder can intimidate people (Merriam, 2001); therefore, it was decided that observations were not going to be recorded on videotape. Throughout this process, notes were taken to record the observations. The researcher sat in the classroom within the children’s immediate sight but slightly separated from the group in order not to distract the children. Different teachers explained the researcher’s presence and the purpose of the research.
Appendix (F) summarizes the procedure for observation used in this study.

5.6.2 Interviews:

Qualitative studies use mostly interviews as the research method to collect the data. Interviews are very helpful in obtaining knowledge from the experiences, views or perceptions of the interviewee (Kvale, 2009). They are social interpersonal encounters between the interviewer and the interviewee, with each interview being different (Cohen et al., 2007).

There is a myriad of classifications of interviews. However, the most commonly used type of interview is the person-to-person encounter. Interviews can be classified by whether they are conducted face to face or by other means, for instance by phone. Interviews can be classified according to their purpose, their degree of structure, the extent to which they are exploratory or hypothesis testing, whether one person or a group is interviewed, for example, via a focus group, (Kvale, 2009) or whether it is a more-in-depth interview, where the interviewer asks the respondent about facts and perceptions (Yin, 2009).

According to Merriam (2001), the degrees of structure or formality of an interview can range along a continuum from structured to semi structured to non-structured. Structured interviews have predetermined questions in the form of a survey. Non-structured interviews have open-ended questions and are flexible, like a conversation. The semi-structured interview comprises a mix of predetermined and more flexible questions.

One of the principal advantages of using an interview is its adaptability. You can listen to the response while assessing not only the response but also the feelings and emotions of the respondent. Another advantage is that the interviewer can ask the respondent to clarify his or her answers by asking follow up questions (Newby, 2010). A high quality interview can extract rich and highly illuminating information, which other research methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, cannot do. However, the principal disadvantage of interviews is that they can be time consuming to conduct and to analyse. For the purposes of this research, sufficient time was available for the researcher to carry out face-to-face interviews.

Another disadvantage is that the interviewer’s subjectivity can affect the interpretation of the data. Each interview is different, because participants are different and have an effect on the interview; thus, this involves subjectivity. In this research, only one interviewer conducted in-depth interviews with different respondents. Each interview’s dynamic was different, but
at the same time, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees during interviews produced richer data than did observations (Bell, 1993). See appendix (D) for the schedule of interviews conducted with teachers and parents and see appendix (E) for an example of parents’ interview.

Semi-structured, face-to-face encounter interviews were the primary data-gathering source used to construct the participants’ perspectives regarding the research questions of the present research. Interviews with head teacher, teacher, teaching assistant and parents of each child with autism were audio taped to explore their perceptions of inclusion, the support children with ASD received, and the facilitators and barriers to their inclusion.

Before conducting the interviews, I defined the aim of the research and specific information that was required from the interviewees. Some questions were structured within the interview and guided by the research questions; however, I was also flexible and invited the interviewees to speak freely so that I could listen to commentaries from the respondents.

It was not possible to conduct interviews with children with ASD, as had been planned, because all nine participating children with ASD experienced severe language difficulties.

**5.6.3 Focus group**

Focus group was another type of interview and a useful research tool to triangulate with other methods. Because the focus group participants were discussing a particular theme, the discussion yielded insights revealing more spontaneous and emotional information than did other kinds of interview (Kvale, 2009). Moreover, it might be easier and less time consuming for the researcher to conduct a focus group than attempting to interview each respondent, as the researcher who acts as discussion moderator can observe the interaction among several participants. Focus group discussions can produce important data in a short period of time.

However, using focus groups has some disadvantages. For example, one or two participants can dominate the discussion, and this needs to be handled sensitively by the moderator who needs to be aware of the body language displayed by those participants who might want to say something but appear not to have the confidence to do so (Robson, 1993). In addition, it is possible that some participants invent an opinion when they do not know what to say. Finally, another disadvantage of focus groups is that interviewer might be able to obtain more information by interviewing each participant individually. In the study, focus groups were conducted with some classmates from the three secondary schools. Focus groups were
conducted only with Secondary school age children, because preschool and primary age children were too young. It was decided to conduct focus groups to find factors that affect the phenomena under the investigation. The data came from a discussion among students about their own experience of having a child with ASD included in their classroom. The discussion topic was previously planned.

In the current study, focus group discussions were held with some classmates from the three secondary schools (See for example Appendix J). It was decided to use focus groups in this research because this is a helpful method to find factors that affect certain phenomena such as the perceptions of classmates without disabilities. The data came from a discussion between some students about their own experience of having a child with ASD included in their classroom. The topic of the discussion was previously devised and classmates were informed prior to the discussion. Focus groups produced rich data from the interaction between the participants in the focus group, since the interaction in the discussion between the participants exhibited a synergy that one person alone would never bring to a person to person interview (Cohen et al., 2007). Their ‘answers did provide inspiration for the others who were able to add to their stories, as a result of hearing other people’s ideas. They may not have been able to do this in an interview environment for instance. Overall, the focus group did lead to clarification’ (Chambers et al., 2012: 133).

The focus groups from the research were conducted in accordance with Krueger and Casey’s guidelines (2009):

Participants were selected because they shared a common characteristic in relation to the topic of the focus group. In the research, the sample for the focus groups was opportunistic; participants were classmates of children with ASD included in the selected schools. There were three focus groups of female and male secondary age children from two different schools. The classmates who were invited to participate were selected according to the teacher’s recommendation of students who interacted the most or the least with the child with ASD.

The number of participants in each focus group ranged from five to seven respondents. This number was chosen because smaller sample would not provide diverse perceptions while large sample would limit the opportunity for all students to participate and share their insights. The discussion was mediated by the same moderator (Krueger and Casey, 2009). I
also started the next question inviting a different participant in order to obtain the opinion of most students.

The focus group’s principal aim was to collect information on perceptions, feelings and emotions about the specific topic of discussion. The focus group provided a more natural environment compared to interviews because participants were influencing others and others were influencing them during the discussion.

During the discussion, I explained to the students the purpose of the focus group and clarified that there are no right or wrong answers. I also emphasized that participants were comfortable to express themselves freely even if they disagreed with one another. I was careful that students answered the questions without talking about irrelevant points during the focus group. Although a list of the topics was pre-planned, as moderator, I used open-ended questions in a natural way.

5.6.4 Sociometric Measures

Sociometry can measure the social preference and ‘highlight the feelings of attraction, indifference and rejection’ inside the classroom (Hopkins, 1993: 119). This method offered useful data to answer whether the classmates considered the child with ASD popular and included them in daily activities. It allowed the researcher to assess whether the child is accepted or rejected by their peers. Acceptance reflects ‘strong positive links that a child has with other members of the peer group while rejection reflects strong negative links that a child has with other members of the peer group’ (Bukowski et al., 2000: 12). Some children may experience indifference from their classmates.

As part of the sociometric measure of the research, each child in class had been given two pieces of paper (see example Appendix G and H). On one sheet of paper, children wrote with whom they wanted, sometimes wanted, or did not want to work on a project and on the other piece of paper with whom they liked to play or interact in recess.

The procedure in preschool was different because the children were very young. The researcher talked to all children from preschool and asked them the same questions individually face-to-face. In the case of a Montessori school, the use of sociometric measures was not allowed.
Focus groups and sociometric measurement were used because they offer creative ways in which children can explain their experiences with the inclusion of children with ASD. Please see appendix (J) for an example of focus group.

5.6.5 Records from DOMUS about children with ASD

Written records from DOMUS were reviewed with the consent of the parents and schools. Records were very useful in order to verify, corroborate or augment the obtained information (Yin, 2009).

These records contained personal information that was not revealed here. This included the family’s name, address, and information about any illness. The school was using the same system with all children as DOMUS used. The records included the profile of abilities of children with ASD involving the rules of living, communication and language, and everyday education, as well as plans involving bimonthly academic objectives, communication and language, and everyday education. It also contained the plan of each school (preschool, primary or secondary school) to integrate the child, for example, a plan to raise the awareness of ASD and inclusion in the school for the classmates and teachers. DOMUS made a leaflet or presentation with information about the child. In this way, the classmates were able to learn more about the child before he/she entered the school. The classmates gained a brief idea of who the child was and how he might behave.

5.7 Analyzing the Data

Data analysis in qualitative studies can be eclectic and can vary in each study. Usually, the amount of data that is collected in each case study is enormous. Qualitative researchers are interested in finding relationships between the questions and the data collected. The methods of analysis focus on interpreting the experience, perceptions or views from participants in the research. ‘Qualitative data analysis requires coding and searching for relationships and patterns until an holistic picture can emerge’ (Johnson and Christensen, 2004: 85).

Different approaches, such as conversation analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative analysis and thematic analysis, can be used to analyse qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Stake (1995:39) highlighted that ‘the most distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry is its emphasis on interpretation.’ Interpretation is a commonly used method of analysis.
Conversation analysis refers to methods that people use to produce orderly talk-in-interaction’ (Silvermann, 2010). Discourse analysis is the study of ‘the way in which different versions of the world, society, events, and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse’ (Potter, 2004: 202). Conversation analysis and discourse analysis are both used to analyse transcripts. I did not use discourse analysis because I was not interested in studying the linguistic or structure of the words that stakeholders express. I also did not use any videos during the data collection.

Grounded theory ‘is a theory which involves three stages: an initial attempt to develop these categories which illuminate the data, an attempt to ‘saturate’ these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance, and the attempt to develop these categories into more general analytical frameworks with relevance outside the setting’ (Silvermann, 2010: 435). I did not use grounded theory because my principal aim was to clarify the facilitators and barriers rather than to create a theory.

Narrative analysis involves chronological description of events collected in form of stories that need to be investigated (Riessman, 1993). My interest was in exploring the support that children with ASD received as well as the facilitators and barriers of their inclusion; therefore, I could not base my research on the stories of the children.

Drawing on the results of the pilot study, literature review and the fieldwork, the most relevant data from the interviews’ transcripts, observations and focus groups were analysed through Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis was chosen because it is a flexible and appropriate method for ‘identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). This means that thematic analysis considers all data carefully to code them qualitatively into a list of themes that are related (Boyatzis, 1998).

Another advantage of thematic analysis is that it can be used within different theoretical frameworks. Moreover, two of the methods that I used were semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Both methods were useful in summarizing the most important features from many different themes that emerged from a large amount of information, such as data collected from all the stakeholders from 9 case studies in this research. Thematic analysis helped find differences and similarities or a pattern between all the data. It generated anticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006:26).
Thus, the preceding design was employed to allow for the examination of each case study and a subsequent analysis of the different case studies. This process was accomplished in two phases described below.

5.7.1 Phase 1

Interview data from different stakeholders was analysed on a case-by-case basis (Stake, 2006). The sociometric data and review of records were analysed by other means. As mentioned previously, thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews, observations and focus groups of this research because ‘Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Therefore, this method is eminently suitable for this research because this research aimed to describe the experiences of the stakeholders concerning the inclusion of children with ASD while at the same time examining the barriers and factors that support or hinder the inclusion of nine children with ASD with different abilities and different ages (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis (see appendix K) implemented in the research used several stages, as described below, according to those described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

(1) Data familiarisation,

Full interviews and focus groups were transcribed into Spanish, the original language, and only quotes were translated to English. The researcher transcribed all the interviews, and from that moment, the researcher started to analyse the data. The researcher listened and read all recordings and notes at least twice during the process of transcribing, taking additional notes, if necessary.

(2) Generation of initial codes,

Data management and part of the analysis from the different sources for each case study were performed using a software package NVivo8 QSR International, Southport, UK, a computerised qualitative analysis programme (Silvermann, 2004) for classifying and sorting the data from audio as well as text files. Hence, the codes reflected the themes that emerged
from the interviews, focus group and observations. I used the data drive approach (Boyatzis, 1998) based on previous pilot study.

(3) Searching for themes,

Two types of approaches can be used to identify themes and organize them into categories. One is theoretical approach, which organizes themes based on a theory. The other classification is inductive and organizes themes in the context of other themes. I used an inductive approach, thus I identified and coded ‘extracts’ within the data. I sorted the codes into potential themes and gathered all information or quotes that were important to a potential theme. I used a mind map to organize the themes.

(4) Reviewing themes,

This phase comprised two steps. First, I verified whether each theme had enough data to correlate with different coded extracts, or I divided a theme into two, if needed, in order to find a real and appropriate place for each code. In the second step, I created a thematic map of the analysis of the entire data set to verify that each theme was related to the extracts that had been coded.

(5) Defining and naming themes,

When I had the thematic map, I needed to refine each theme and understand what these themes mean before finding the correct name for each theme.

(6) Report production,

Finally, I analysed selected extracts by analysing previous research question and comparing it with the literature review in order to write up a report of the full analysis.

The data on each of the three case studies obtained from the interviews and the focus group was analyzed using N–vivo for all three schools, Preschool, Primary and Secondary, separately. Following this, each section was divided into two main themes, facilitators and barriers. Within these, eighty codes (equivalent to nodes in N-Vivo) were created from the transcribed data. (An example of a code is a comment reflecting positive attitudes from classmates, or lack of training for teachers). From these eighty codes, seven common themes emerged, which provided evidence about both facilitators and barriers of effective inclusion.
Sociometric analysis and pupil records

The sociometric data (Hopkins, 1993) provided information on the frequency with which classmates chose the child with autism to take part in the class or at recess. The number of times the child with autism was chosen in each class was generated by dividing ‘yes’ responses from ‘no’ responses from the classmates. This gave an idea of how popular the child with ASD was amongst his or her classmates (see appendix L).

The DOMUS records of children with ASD were reviewed to support the information obtained from other research methods (observations, interviews, focus group and sociometry).

5.7.2 Phase 2

In this phase, individual cases were analysed further using cross-case analysis in order to find common relationships or differences amongst different case studies by ‘aggregating findings across a series of individual studies’ (Yin, 2009: 156). The comparative analyses were conducted across 9 different case studies. Although each case was unique, the purpose of this cross case analysis was to compare the outcomes of case studies from preschool, primary and secondary school settings and find a possible explanation for successful inclusion of the nine cases. This led to drawing out themes about facilitators and barriers of inclusion across cases (Merriam, 2001).
Phase 2. Cross Case Analysis

Figure 5.1 Cross Case Analysis

5.8 Triangulation on the Methodology

My goal was to explore the facilitators and barriers of successful inclusion without generalising (external validity) this phenomenon. Thus, I maintained trustworthiness in the research by using triangulation across the case studies instead of focusing only on the reliability of the research (Merriam, 2001). Trustworthiness was also established by the credibility of descriptions and findings in the multiple case studies as a whole (Stake, 2006).

In qualitative studies, the concept of objectivity or internal validity is replaced by credibility external validity is replaced by transferability, reliability is replaced by dependability, and finally objectivity is replaced by confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Accordingly, I assured that these criteria were met using the procedures outlined below.
Internal validity or credibility was achieved by maintaining good practice by following the same procedure for each case study during the interviewing and observational process. This involved, for example, using the same schedule for all interviews. Moreover, using multiple case studies could demonstrate external validity (transferability) because 'by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases,...we can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 29). Case studies can provide rich data and offer a broad knowledge of the situation.

According to Stake, reliability or dependability means that if any of the procedures during the data collection are repeated, it should produce similar results (Stake, 2006). Thus, dependability in the study can be achieved by using a case study protocol, in particular methodological triangulation. Furthermore, it is important to consider that triangulation by using multiple methods in the research can support trustworthiness through enhancing external validity (Merriam, 2001). This research used five different research methods, including interviews, observations, focus group, sociometric data and review of DOMUS’ records. This enabled me to consider the perceptions of different stakeholders. This study considered the views of parents of children with ASD, head teachers, staff, teachers, teaching assistants and classmates of each pupil with ASD who formed the focal point of the research. It was also helpful because it allowed me to crosscheck the information using different research methods.

Other protocols for triangulation of data involve using different researchers or observers in the study. ‘For instance, qualitative interviews can approach objectivity in an arithmetic sense of intersubjectivity. This may take the form of a communicative validation among researchers’ (Kvale, 1996:65). Ensuring confirmability and dependability requires observational data or interviews collected by multiple observers or interviewers as well as different researchers who can cross-check observational findings. However, this research was conducted by a single researcher who maintained consistency in conducting and analysing the interviews. Observations and interviews were also carefully conducted in various settings within the school, at various times of the day and on two to five days of the week in each school.

‘Member checking’ refers to presenting draft transcripts from the interviews to the interviewees in order to confirm and illuminate any misunderstanding (Stake, 1995). Although this method is sometimes used, it was not possible to do this with the participants in
this sample because of the amount of transcripts and the lack of time from the participants. However, as Stake (2006) suggested, I listened to the recorded interviews, checked the notes from the observation several times, and reviewed the notes against the original tape in order to decrease misinterpretation during the transcription and analysis in order to maintain dependability.

5.9 Limitations

In spite of my efforts to design and conduct an exemplary project, a number of limitations could be noted in the design, in the data collection and data analysis process.

The first limitation concerns the generalisability of the study findings. My initial aim was to compare two different organisations, CLIMA and DOMUS, which work with children with ASD. The initial plan changed because CLIMA refused to participate. Thus, this restricted my sample and the study relied solely on obtaining information from children whose inclusion was supported by DOMUS. These children are likely to live in more advantaged socio-economic areas compared to most children with ASD in Mexico. This is because the children with ASD who were the focus of each case study came from families who can afford to pay a fee to the organisation while most families of children with ASD in Mexico cannot afford to pay. Research on the inclusion of other children from marginalised families might provide different results. However, the aim of this study is to introduce successful cases of inclusion in Mexico and barriers they had to overcome. Thus, it is very useful to have some successful examples.

The second possible limitation could be associated with my status as a young researcher. However, stakeholders were aware about my identity as a researcher. They knew that I was an outsider researcher who was carrying out an independent Ph.D. study for educational purposes to help children and not for an economic purpose. The trust and understanding I experienced reflected the fact that stakeholders felt comfortable enough to share their experiences of inclusion with me and let me observe them even when I was not directly involved in supporting children with ASD and had no authority in the school or in Mexico.

The third limitation during the data collection is that two schools (one private primary school and the Montessori pre-school) provided access to the school only for one day. Hence, these schools provided less information and data compared to other schools. In the private primary school, it was not possible to interview the head teacher. In the Montessori preschool, it was
not possible to conduct the sociometry. However, I tried to adjust the time to make sure that I used most of the research methods in each case.

The fourth limitation concerns the range of difficulties experienced by the children in my sample. Not surprisingly, each child is unique and had his/her own profile. Hence, the disability levels of the children with ASD who were the focus of case studies varied in terms of severity. Thus, even within the sample of 9 children, each child’s strengths and difficulties were different and did not necessarily represent all children with ASD. However, having children with different abilities is an advantage because all these differences were helpful in illuminating the ways in which children with ASD from different abilities overcame almost the same barriers and have been successfully included in mainstream schools. In fact, this can provide a foundation for research with a larger sample.

The fifth limitation is that this research and the data analysis were done in Spanish while for the purpose of this dissertation; all quotes were translated from English to Spanish or vice versa. The process of translation can bias the results because the real meaning can be changed by my own interpretation of the data (Sheeny et al., 2005). However ‘having two different views of the world is profoundly enriching’ (Lerner, 2003: 138) because I am a native Spanish speaker and I can see my own culture from a broader view.

5.10 Ethical Issues

The BERA Guidelines on Ethical Procedures in Research (Bridges et al., 2007) and the University Code of Good Research Conduct from Manchester University were followed. An ethical approval form was submitted to the Ethical Committee from University of Manchester to seek the approval to conduct the study before its commencement. This research considers that children with ASD can be more vulnerable compared to other groups of students, first because they are children and second because they have a developmental disorder. The following issues were considered:

a) Confidentiality: Any names of participants (children and adults) included in extracts below are pseudonyms created to ensure the protection of participants’ anonymity. Confidentiality of participants was also of utmost importance. I emphasised that all information would remain confidential and that researcher could not reveal to anyone else any information obtained from any of the participants. Only the general results of the
research could be revealed to the research community but not information about a particular case.

Participant’s Information Sheet and Informed Consent: All participants were given information about the research and asked to sign a letter of consent. A copy of all forms approved by the Ethical Committee from University of Manchester is provided in the appendix (see Appendix A).

Organisation: The researcher contacted the organisation in order to plan the research process, asking them to provide access to all participants. The organisation DOMUS approached the parents and the school to obtain consent for the child and the school staff to take part in the study and for the researcher to be able to discuss the study. The researcher presented a letter from DOMUS. In some schools in Mexico, it is a common practice to get the agreement from parents to do activities during the first days of the school year (in-loco-parentis).

Parents of children with ASD and children with ASD: Parents of the children with ASD received the information sheet, and the researcher asked for their permission to include them in the study (interviews, observations and socio-metric activities) and for them to participate in the interviews. Parents who agreed to participate completed a consent form and signed it (see Appendix B).

Classmates’ parents: The school principals agreed to inform the parents of the classmates.

Classmates: The researcher explained the activity to the classmates of children with ASD and asked for their consent to being observed and taking part in the sociometry activity, including a focus group for secondary school children. School requested permission from parents.

All participants received a letter of information (see Appendix A) notifying them about the purpose of this research. The researcher gave an information sheet to the head teacher, teaching assistants, and parents of the child with ASD to confirm the information they had discussed.

In addition, all participants were informed that all data collected and information would remain confidential, (audiotape recording and notes would be protected). All names were changed using pseudonyms. In addition, the researcher would not report anything said by any of the participants to anyone else. They knew that the researcher would be the only one to analyse the data.
b) Friendship revealed within the sociometric data.  
In addition, consideration was taken with the sociograms in order to avoid children feeling rejected by other peers if they were not selected by their classmates. Hence, peers were asked to write two names of children that they like to work with. They were not allowed to look at other children’s papers. Teachers collected the papers immediately and they were asked not to talk about their preferences.

c) Researcher as non-participants: The researcher was a non-participant observer for a part of the study. The head teacher ensured that I was aware about what should be done if anything happened inside the classroom. As a non-participant researcher, I did not intervene. It agreed that I could intervene only if any of the children were in a risk situation.

5.11 Conclusions

This chapter outlined the methodological context considered during this research design, data collection, and analysis. First, it briefly explained different paradigms in educational research and the rationale behind using a specific paradigm for this research. Second, it reviewed and justified the use of the five research methods (interviews, observations, focus group, sociometry, and records) chosen for this research. Third, this chapter described the population samples and the analysis of the data collected using different methods. The trustworthiness of this study was also discussed. Finally, some limitations and ethical issues raised were explained. In the following chapter, the data that was collected and analysed will be presented on a case-by-case basis, followed by comparing the cases.
CHAPTER 6. RESULTS FROM THE NINE CASES AND DISCUSSION OF CROSS CASE ANALYSIS
6 RESULTS FROM THE NINE CASES AND DISCUSSION OF CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the description and analysis of data obtained from all the interviews with head teachers, teachers, teaching assistants (TA) and mothers from the children with ASD, classroom observations, sociometry measures obtained from classmates, focus groups with classmates and school records. Table 5.2 in the methodology reviews the methods used for each of the nine cases.

Initially, the data was analyzed separately for Preschool, Primary and Secondary schools. Consequently, each section was divided into two main themes, facilitators and barriers. Within these, eighty codes (equivalent to nodes in N-Vivo) were created from the transcribed data (examples of codes are comments reflecting positive attitudes from classmates or lack of training for teachers). From these eighty codes (see Appendix K), seven common themes emerged, each of which was associated with facilitators and barriers, and these are explained in Chapter 7.

This chapter summarizes the barriers and facilitators based on the stakeholders’ responses on a case-by-case basis and by each school age group. See Appendix C for the description and analysis of the data obtained from all the interviews with head teachers, teachers, teaching assistants (TA) and mothers from the children with ASD, classroom observations, sociometry with classmates, focus groups with classmates and school records.

6.2 Preschool Children

6.2.1 Julian

Julian was a four-year-old child. He had been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records). Julian was attending a High Scope system preschool, in a Kinder II class with nine children, female and male of three to four years old. He was included for the first time in this small private preschool with the support of a TA.

Key facilitators of inclusion were that the school and all staff including the teachers were informed about the use of High Scope curriculum. Julian was persevering and pupils were positive towards him DOMUS were keen to involve everyone and the teacher and teaching assistant maintained good relationships with each other. Key barriers to inclusion were the
unequal responsibilities shared by Julian’s teacher and teaching assistant. Furthermore, Julian’s tantrums distracted other children in the classroom. Some classmates’ parents might have been worried that their children could imitate Julian’s troubled behaviour.

6.2.2 Pedro

Pedro was a 6-year-old child diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records). Pedro was attending a Montessori Preschool. This is his second year to be included in this school. He was attending a class with twenty classmates, girls and boys. The staff consisted of two people and Pedro’s teaching assistant. Pedro’s teacher was also the School’s head teacher.

Key facilitators of inclusion were the Montessori educational methodology which allowed him to participate at his own pace by staff being more tolerant. His classmates’ positive attitudes and the head teacher’s interest were important factors contributing to his successful inclusion.

Key barriers to inclusion included Pedro’s noises, which disturbed his classmates. Furthermore, the Montessori system did not invite children to work in teams. The head teacher told the mother that Pedro could not come to school without a teaching assistant.

6.2.3 Daniel

Daniel was a seven-year-old child diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records) studying in a small private preschool, Kinder III with 16 classmates, female and male, of four years old. The classroom had three desks with six children each. He has been attending this school for the last three years with the support of a TA.

Key facilitators of his inclusion included the stakeholders’ support, positive attitudes from classmates, teacher’s commitment to integrate him, low anxiety among classmates, and good relationship between the teacher and teaching assistants.

Key barriers were unequal sharing of responsibilities between the teacher and teaching assistant, Daniel’s troublesome behaviour, the head teacher’s fears, and expensive fees to DOMUS, lack of teacher training and lack of curriculum adaptations.
6.2.4 Summary of key findings for the preschool children

Facilitators:

1. Entire school community and ethos that supports inclusion.
2. Positive leadership from the head teacher who supports the inclusion.
3. Positive attitudes from stakeholders who respect diversity.
4. The length of time the child attended the school – the longer the attendance, the more positive the inclusion.
5. Good relationships and collaboration between the teacher and teaching assistant.
6. The ability of the child with ASD to interact and imitate positive classmates’ behaviour.
7. Teachers who have experience with inclusive education tend to hold more positive views of inclusion.
9. Teaching methods and curriculum adaptations, for example High Scope and Montessori.

Barriers:

1. Behavioural problems of children with ASD.
2. Responsibility for teaching the child with ASD not shared equally between the teacher and TA.
3. Stakeholders’ (teachers, head teachers, teaching assistants, classmates) anxiety from the unknown.
4. Lack of economic resources.
5. The lack of training.
6. The lack of information and awareness.
7. Negative attitudes from stakeholders.
6.3 Primary School Cases

6.3.1 Sebastian

Sebastian was a fourteen-year-old adolescent diagnosed with Pervasive Development Disorder (DOMUS records). He was attending the fifth year of primary classroom along with thirty-five classmates (11 years old), female and male. It was the first year that he is included in a public school with the support of a TA.

Key facilitators of inclusion were the head teacher’s support for the inclusion of Sebastian, his imitation of less disruptive behaviour during class and the support of some of the Sebastian’s classmates.

Key barriers included Sebastian’s behavioural difficulties, Sebastian’s noises that disturbed his classmates, bad relationships between the teaching assistant and teacher and less than ideal relationships between the teaching assistant and classmates, TA’s interactions with the classmates and discomfort that children felt when talking with the TA about Sebastian.

6.3.2 Ian

Ian was a ten-year-old child diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records). Ian was integrated in the third year of a public primary school for three years. He was attending a class of twenty-four children, female and male.

Key facilitators of inclusion included the inclusive school’s ethos, stakeholders’ support of Ian’s inclusion and positive attitudes held by classmates. Furthermore, Ian imitated others’ conduct and socialized and established friendships with other children. Ian had been integrated successfully into the classroom with his classmates. He required some curriculum adaptations. Key barrier was that another classmate has bullied him.

6.3.3 Karla

Karla was an eight-year-old girl diagnosed with a Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (DOMUS records). She was attending fourth grade in a colourful classroom of a private catholic school with sixteen classmates, female and male. This was her second year to be included without the support of a teaching assistant.

One of the key facilitators was Karla’s high level of abilities; thus, she did not need the support of a teaching assistant. The head teacher and all teachers were supportive. She
followed the same curriculum as her classmates, and she was also learning to be patient with her classmates and teacher. Karla was one of the best students in the class. She had learnt some social rules, for example only to kiss people who were close to her and not all the classmates.

No key barriers were identified.

**6.3.4 Summary of key findings for the primary children**

**Facilitators**

1. Entire school community and ethos that supports inclusion.
2. Positive leadership from the head teachers who support inclusion.
3. The length of time the child had attended the school, longer attendance was associated with more positive the inclusion.
4. Academic abilities of the child with ASD.
5. One of the children with high abilities did not need a teaching assistant.
6. The role of teaching assistant and supervision from DOMUS was very helpful.
7. Teachers and classmates’ knowledge and awareness. Teachers who had more experiences with inclusive education tended to hold more positive views of inclusion.
8. Peer awareness of the diagnosis and inclusion.
9. Children with ASD could imitate others’ conduct and learn to interact, or in some cases, behave less disruptively. They could interact, create friendships and achieve positive academic and social outcomes. Mainly, they learnt to adapt to changes.
10. Classmates of children with ASD learnt to respect the differences between each child. They learnt to be patient and supportive and to provide them love.
11. Teachers were more sensitive to children that had ASD. They learnt how to teach and interact with children who had different needs.

**Barriers**

1. Barriers included physical limitations, if a child could not move.
2. Teachers’ lack of appropriate information and training.

3. The relationship between the teacher and teaching assistant.

4. The children’s behavioural difficulties.

5. The role of TA.

6. Children with ASD who presented behavioural difficulties disturbed their classmates by noises or with their tantrums.

7. Acknowledgement of the diagnosis.

6.4 Secondary School Cases

6.4.1 Irvin

Irvin was a tall and physically strong fifteen-year-old adolescent diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records). Irvin was attending the second year of a private secondary school. He was attending a mixed class with twenty-four classmates. He had been included for two years with the support of a TA.

Key facilitators were the school ethos which was supportive of inclusion as were the main stakeholders’. Furthermore, positive attitudes from classmates also influenced his inclusion. Irvin was seen as a friend who could interact with others and learn from others.

Key barriers were that, initially the teacher and classmates were afraid of the unknown, his teacher was lacking competence, and classmates were distracted by Irvin.

6.4.1 Andrea

Andrea was fifteen years old, white, tall, and brown eyed student diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DOMUS records). She was attending the third year of a private secondary school along with 18 classmates, female and male. She had good verbal communication skills. This was her first year to be included in the school with the support of a teaching assistant.

Key facilitators were inclusive school ethos, the school’s previous and positive experience with inclusion, stakeholders’ who supported inclusion, positive attitudes from classmates, and child becoming part of the school. Andrea was very friendly, interacted with others, learned
how others behave and used an adapted curriculum. Teachers learned that they could provide competent support.

A key barrier was that classmates were anxious initially about the inclusion of Andrea.

6.4.2 Hideyi

Hideyi was a white, tall, and strong fifteen-year-old adolescent diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (DOMUS records). Hideyi was in the third year of a secondary school and had high abilities. He showed ritualistic behaviour and it was hard for him to interact with others. He was attending a class with twenty classmates, female and male. This is his first year to be included with the support of a teaching assistant.

Key facilitators were the inclusive school ethos, stakeholders’ support for inclusion, and positive attitudes from classmates. Hideyi interacted with his classmates who perceived him as a friend. Hideyi’s high abilities also facilitated his inclusion. He used the same curriculum as his classmates. Additionally, teachers changed their expectations from negative to positive. Hideyi challenged his classmates because they could value their own abilities.

The key barrier was that Hideyi was bullied.

Facilitators

Some of the facilitators that were found in the study of stakeholders from secondary school included the following:

1. Entire school community and ethos supported inclusion.

2. Positive leadership from head teachers who supported inclusion.

3. Positive attitudes from stakeholders, who share values of respecting diversity, towards the child with ASD.

4. Classmates’ were well informed and aware. Children learned to understand other children’s differences.

5. Teachers who experience inclusive education tend to hold more positive views of inclusion.

6. Classmates’ experience with inclusive education. Classmates perceived the child with ASD as any other friend and found benefits, such as extra time to work.
7. Lack of behavioural problems of children with ASD. Children with ASD developed social and academic abilities. They could imitate others. The ability of the child with ASD to interact changed some inadequate attitudes by imitating positive classmates’ behaviour.

**Barriers**

1. Teachers were not qualified to work with a child with ASD.

2. The lack of information and awareness.

3. Lack of confidence from teachers.

4. Low expectations for children.

5. Behavioural difficulties that could disturb the classmates.

6. The learning process in children with ASD could be slower.

7. Some classmates were uncomfortable interacting with children with ASD who approached them.

8. Classmates’ bullying and discriminating behaviours against children with Asperger’s Syndrome.

### 6.5 Comparison between ages

Mainly similarities were found among the three different age groups, Preschool, Primary and Secondary, in the barriers and facilitators. It is obvious that for all children in the sample, a school ethos with an ASD friendly environment and the positive attitude from teachers, teaching assistants, staff and classmates, made a real difference for them. These children had been educated in mainstream schools. The head teacher, teaching assistant and the teacher facilitated the provision of adequate support for each child in their process of learning. However, classmates of children who were younger were more likely to include children with ASD. In the primary and secondary age groups, one child with ASD in each group had suffered from discrimination or bullying.

Moreover, it was found that expectations are lower in Secondary schools than in Preschool. This could be because expectations in secondary schools are generally higher. Students’
abilities increase in secondary school, and teachers tend to be stricter with the students. For example, in Preschool and Primary schools, higher expectations may act as facilitators of inclusion while in secondary schools; high expectations may act as barrier. Classmates had higher expectations for children with ASD compared to teachers. Although the social interaction with their peers had been developing, the most valuable finding was that their peers had discovered that children with ASD are not only other pupils in the classroom, but also possible friends.

It was evident that in most cases, children with ASD followed a modified curriculum as their classmates. However, Hideyi and Karla were learning with few minor adaptations made to the same curriculum as their classmates.

In most cases, facilitators have been used appropriately. Thus, real progress could be seen from the integration process to a genuine inclusion in the classroom.

6.6 CROSSCASE ANALYSIS

The aim of this section is to present the main findings of the cross case analysis of the data obtained from each of the nine children in the sample. As mentioned in the previous section, the analysis using N-Vivo revealed eighty codes related to the inclusion of children with ASD. During the analysis process, codes were assigned to quotations and comments were included for clarification purposes. Themes were identified in accordance with their pertinence to the research questions. This chapter discusses the key analytical themes and subthemes in relation to relevant literature that highlights key issues supported in the data.

Out of the nine cases in the sample, three children were in preschool, three were in primary school and three were in secondary school. The pre-schoolers were attending three schools that used different educational methods. Julian was studying in a school that uses the High Scope system, Pedro was studying in a Montessori school, and Daniel was studying using the curriculum from the Ministry of Education. Concerning the three children in primary school, Ian and Sebastian were placed in the same class in a public school with the support of a teaching assistant. Karla, however, was placed in a catholic primary school without the support of a teaching assistant. Two of the three secondary aged children, Andrea and Irvin, studied in the same private school while Hideyi attended another private school.

The cross case analysis yielded seven overarching themes, some of which had additional
subthemes. The first theme was associated with family factors while the remaining six themes were school related. All themes contained elements that could act as both facilitators and barriers to inclusion. These seven themes were as follows:

1. Family factors,
2. Children with ASD’s social and academic abilities,
3. School ethos,
4. Role of teaching assistant,
5. The influence of stakeholders’ experience in overcoming anxieties of inclusion,
6. Teachers’ competence,
7. Stakeholders’ attitudes-towards children with ASD.

Each theme and sub-theme could act as a facilitator and/or barrier to effective inclusion. In the discussion that follows, each theme/subtheme is discussed and illustrated using direct quotes to show how they can act as facilitators or barriers.

6.7 Themes

6.7.1 Family Factors

![Figure 6.1 Family Factors](image)

6.7.1.1 Economic Resources

Most parents in my sample were able to afford the fees for the inclusion of their child with
ASD; hence, having the economic resources and income to pay the fees was a key facilitator of inclusion in Mexico.

Indeed, some parents from the sample were initially not able to include their children when they reached school age because of the fees. They also suggested that many other families could not afford to pay for their child to be integrated. The parents that were interviewed believed that all parents of children with ASD would like to have their children included in a mainstream school, but this was not always possible because of the lack of economic resources among families of these children.

‘But it is not fair that only my child can have this opportunity. All autistic children should have that opportunity because they are all kids and they have to play like kids, .....There is something that should happen in all schools. They should see that there are different children and they should understand that everybody is unique. They learn that every child is different.’ Irvin’s mother (Secondary)

‘8,400 Mexican pesos have to pay to the organisation for the integration plus the fees that are collected by the school .....Children stay in the organisation as long as they can afford to. But it is something that upsets me, how many parents can afford it, or has the support from their families or some organisation to include the child?’ Daniel’s mother (Preschool)

‘We have the money to afford Andrea’s integration. It is very expensive. Also you have to consider all the food for the special diet, the vitamins and different therapies. If we did not have money, it would be impossible for us to manage it.’ Andrea’s Mother (Secondary)

During my observation, I had the opportunity to visit Andrea’s home. Andrea’s family was wealthy and could provide Andrea with the best therapies, education and support.

In contrast, lack of economic resources could be a strong barrier for the inclusion of children with ASD. Many parents in Mexico cannot afford to support their children’s inclusion in the mainstream school. Parents need to pay organisations like DOMUS and in most cases a teaching assistant without whom it is not possible for all children to be included.
This research also revealed that many mothers of children with ASD in Mexico were the sole person responsible for taking care and providing for the child with autism and their families.

Some mothers in the sample were the sole breadwinners. In these cases, they had the support of their extended families obtaining only some funding from the government, schools or organisations. However, this support was not consistent and covered, frequently only partially, the inclusion of the child with autism. It was definitely not enough for other needs, such as food or medicines and. Moreover, most mothers had more than one child. Since they had to work, it was difficult for them to be with the child and support him or her.

‘I did not have the money to pay DOMUS fees. So I found an independent place in a house, but it was not an organisation that helps us.’ Hideyi’s Mother

‘There is a case of a husband who left the wife and their child with ASD. The child has a scholarship from an organisation from an Airline but the new owners of this company are not interested in supporting children with ASD. She is a single mom and cannot leave the child alone to go work all day, so the girl has to stop going to DOMUS.’ Daniel’s mother (Preschool)

‘Unfortunately, while there are non-profit-making institutions, they are still quite expensive for parents. However, you can be sure that not all the money that they receive goes for the organisation, everything is for the children. I am sure that half of my salary as teaching assistant is from the fees and the other half is to pay supervisors, material resources [He meant that his wage is low but he understood that provision for children with ASD is expensive].’ Alex, Hideyi’s teaching’s assistant (Secondary)

Although parents have to pay high fees, teaching assistants’ salaries are insufficient. Therefore, many teaching assistants who are certified psychologists cannot stay on the job for a long time.

‘The wage that we received is very low; I will need to change jobs. But parents are already paying a lot and it is very expensive for them, so we cannot ask for more. Some parents stop integrating children because of the price.’ Andrea, Ian’s teaching assistant (Primary).
As mentioned previously, for this research, the sample comprised children and their families who received the support from DOMUS, so they were able to afford the price. However, at the public school that Sebastian and Ian attended, some children with ASD were supported only by USAER, and they were left alone most of the time (due to the absence of a teaching assistant and lack of training from teachers), making it very difficult for them to be integrated. Moreover, private schools seem to be better for children with ASD, because these schools usually offer classes with a smaller teacher-student ratio and bigger classrooms. For example, the public school was too big and crowded for Sebastian. These results were similar to those found by the Red International de Investigadores y Participantes sobre Integración Educativa (Aviles, 2006), which suggested that many schools’ infrastructures were still not accessible and there was a lack of appropriate teaching material as well.

Blanco (2006) and Tuman et al.’s (2008) finding was consistent with the one found in this research, indicating that parents struggle to obtain the money to afford appropriate access to services for children with ASD. Thus, this factor should be considered in order to support children with ASD whose parents cannot afford to pay the fees to include their children.

6.7.1.2 Hope and Faith

Mexico is a country with different religious beliefs; however, one of the most common religions is Catholicism. Five from the nine parents suggested that their religious belief helped the parents and the child find the right diagnosis, the right school, and provided them with the hope that the child can be successfully included.

‘I came to DOMUS and they saw my son and they told me that my son can be integrated in a regular school. And I cried, and I cried. I believe in miracles. And my son came in and they said ok now let’s find a school. Then again, now God was so wonderful again that we came to a school that is part of the X. How I can tell you that I was looking for a school and when I find one, they thanked me for coming. Once again I believe in God, definitely.’ Irvin’s mother (Secondary)

‘God has supported me since I was pregnant. When I started to realize what autism is, I went to a church mass. Irvin’s mother was there and asked us to pray for the mother of children with autism, to pray for those mothers who know and those who do not know yet. I had strange feelings. When I went to DOMUS, I was very scared.'
And I saw Irvin. Irvin always said hello to me at church, it was God who was trying to show me what was happening with Julian.' Julian’s mother (Primary)

As mentioned before, some of the parents from the sample were motivated by their own faith and hope. Prior studies, such as a research by Skinner and Correa (2001), have noted the importance of faith and reported that religious faith in the lives of Latino families of children with disabilities is relevant. Similarly, Hobbs et al. (2008) suggested that religious beliefs of Mexican families made them advocate for the educational rights of their children with disabilities. The present findings also seem to be consistent with other research conducted with parents of children with developmental disorders carried out by Biesinger and Arikawa (2008) who found that both parents were happier if they were motivated by intrinsic religious belief. Indeed some parents in the current study saw the inclusion of the child as a Gift from God, similar to the results of Mahoney et al.’s (2001) study. Parents who have faith tend to be motivated to find the resources and an appropriate school that would include their children with ASD.

6.7.1.3 Commitment from Parents

Most parents in the current study suggested that together with their children, they have to face similar difficult experiences as many other families in Mexico City; however, in addition, they must to navigate the education system in order to integrate the child. Parents, who were committed, achieved the most successful outcomes of inclusive education.

‘First, it is important that parents accept the disability of Daniel because in Mexico, this [diagnosis of disability] is hard to detect and also it is important that parents have the commitment of helping the child. Commitment is required from everyone, but mostly from his mother who was so committed and always tried to find a solution.’ Gabriela, Daniel’s Head teacher (Preschool)

‘Daniel has a family that never stops. Really, they never stopped; it is a family of fighters. For them, it does not matter what they need to do for the wellbeing of Daniel, they will do it.’ Daniel’s Teaching assistant (Preschool)

One of my main findings was that parents who are committed would support and have an active role in the inclusion of their children with ASD. These findings were similar to those by Spann et al. (2003), who suggested that parental involvement is an important factor in supporting their learning.
My findings were similar to Kasari et al.’s (1999) findings, which showed that parents from low economic status were not as committed to their child as parents from high socioeconomic conditions. Indeed the participants from medium to high economic status were most committed to their children.

The above discussion of the three subthemes related to family factors indicates that these can act as a key facilitator for the inclusion of a child with ASD. In summary, families who can afford to pay for inclusive education, who are committed and have faith that their child will make progress are likely to facilitate the successful inclusion of their child with ASD.

## 6.7.2 Children’s level of social and academic ability

![Figure 6.2 Children's Level of social and academic ability](image)

The extent to which this theme acted as a facilitator or a barrier to effective inclusion depended on the academic and social ability of each child with ASD. Most of the time, classmates, teachers and staff are more likely to accept more academic and socially able the child.

### 6.7.2.1 Social Abilities

Children’s behavioural difficulties and types of interactions they have with their classmates, teachers, teaching assistant conditioned the social abilities of children with ASD. If the child presented lack of emotional understanding, difficulties on theory of mind or sensorial difficulties, such as extra sensitivity to light or noise, his/her social abilities were undermined.
‘The child with special needs found the motivation to belong to the group. If the teaching assistant supports the child, the frustrations can be lowered; however it depends on the profile and needs of the child’. Andrea’s Mother (Secondary)

‘For Ian the benefit is that he can see other kinds of behaviour. I was going to send him to a school with other children with SEN, with Down’s syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy. But they showed me that Ian’s abilities were different from those children. When a child with ASD is included, he tends more to be normal as other children. I try to take him to be normal, he is now included in the ceremonies. He was chosen as the king for the Spring Festival (Mexican Celebration when the spring starts), I felt very happy that he was included.’ Ian’s Mother (Primary)

The observations revealed that most children with ASD (except in the case of Sebastian, and in some occasions Julian and Pedro) did not present major challenging behaviour, they imitated their classmates’ behaviour, and they also seemed to enjoy being in the class integrated with other children.

During the focus group, classmates suggested that it was easier to include Andrea than Irvin, because Andrea was more talkative and could express herself better. She was also learning from them. Teachers, parents and classmates agreed that social ability facilitated inclusion in the classroom.

6.7.2.2  Academic ability

Children with High functioning autism or AS were included easily in the school activities. For example, according to the sociometric assessment, Karla’s classmates accepted her, probably because her abilities were higher.

‘Karla, like I said, because of her abilities and her behaviour, she is going to help us have a better academic average on the Government exams.’ Karla’s Teacher (Primary)

Although she is academically able, she still experienced some difficulties during her first months of her inclusion in the school.

‘She kissed both, girls and boys. She needed to understand that boys do not like girls to kiss them. She needed to have limits. It was kind of hard for her to understand.’ Karla’s mother (Primary)
In addition, Andrea (see Table 10) who was not an academically able child, had some social skills and her classmates accepted her well according to the sociometric measurement, and this helped her to be included. ‘Andrea’s dynamism and verbal language expression helps her to be included. Moreover, because she is a girl and girls like to communicate, this helps her interact with the classmates. She helps her own integration..... Classmates are empathic with her because of her dynamism, Andrea is happy; she smiles and her classmates notice and interact with her in the same way.’

Andres, Andrea’s teacher (Secondary)

During the observations, children came close to Andrea and indicated that they considered Andrea a friend, not only a classmate. During the focus group, classmates suggested that Andrea should participate more in activities with them. They wanted her to be seated closer to them instead of being at a desk with the teaching assistant.

In contrast, children with lower levels of academic ability and with severe behavioural problems, such as temper tantrums and noisy behaviour, distracted their classmates from their activities. Hence, it was more difficult for classmates to accept children who presented major challenging behavioural problems and acted aggressively with their peers compared to a child who was calm or cheerful. Furthermore, it was more difficult for a child with a low level of academic ability to be able to socialize with other children.

‘The inclusion was difficult because classmates needed to get used to a child who was screaming or having strong negative attitudes. Pedro throws himself to the floor. The barrier for integration was Pedro’s attitude. Even though you want to integrate him, his behaviour interferes with other classmates’ behaviour.’ Dania, Pedro’s teaching assistant (Preschool)

‘When he was integrated in the mainstream school, other children had problems because Pedro was screaming and other children were upset. The teaching assistant had to take him out of the classroom. Thus, if the Teaching Assistant did not come with Pedro, he could not come to class.’ Dora, Pedro’s teaching assistant (Preschool)
'On some occasions, Julian has been very aggressive and intolerant. He has kicked and hit other classmates. But with the support of his classmates, he has been able to adapt to his environment.' Maria, Julian’s Teacher (Preschool)

‘At the beginning of the semester, he came towards me, and he hugged me in a very strong way. But now, his classmates and I have learned who Ian is and we accept him.’ Gabriela, Ian’s teacher (Secondary)

‘I wish the classmates could stop thinking about Sebastian’s faults; as that he hurts himself and that he can get mad. They could start focusing on how nice it can be to meet him or use non-verbal communication with him. … Josh tries to work with him. Josh is like a light that is willing to interact with him, not only to stay in the same space with him. But all the other classmates move away, or they hide under a table when Sebastian is there.’ Alma, Sebastian’s Teaching Assistant (Primary)

Further evidence of the link between ability and peer acceptance was observed from the sociometric measurement of Sebastian (see Table 6). The data obtained in the class and during the recess demonstrated his significantly low sociometric status. Only 6 out of 30 non-disabled classmates nominated Sebastian as someone they wanted to work with, while 15 of his non-disabled peers said that they did not want to interact with him during class. Indeed, during classroom observations, I noted that classmates accepted Ian more than they did Sebastian, probably because of the behavioural difficulties that Sebastian presented. Interestingly, data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that Sebastian was more accepted by his non-disabled peers out of class. In general, however, classmates were less tolerant with children who have behavioural problems.

In Irvin’s focus group, a classmate suggested that the noises he makes distract them, which made it harder for them to concentrate.

‘When we are in class or taking an exam, he starts to feel excited or he jumps and makes noises, and this distracts our attention or we cannot listen. Or he wants to go to the computer, and he keeps going across the room and you cannot focus and you think I am lost, what was I doing?’ Ernesto, Irvin’s classmate (Secondary)

There is a complex relationship between the level of academic and social abilities. Sometimes, being a child with high abilities does not guarantee peer acceptance. In two cases,
academically able children with ASD were socially naive with limited social skills and awareness. Consequently, their classmates bullied these children. For example in the case of Hideyi, although his high abilities facilitated effective inclusion, his social inclusion with classmates was problematic.

‘Hideyi can be easily influenced. We need to work so he can learn to distinguish between right and wrong. I believe that this experience is helping us.’ Hideyi’s principal (Secondary)

If the child has high abilities and presents less challenging behaviour, the teacher could feel more competent to work with the child. For example, if the teacher has a child who has Asperger’s or High Functioning Autism, like Karla who did not need a teaching assistant to attend class or Hideyi (required a teaching assistant), he/she can feel more competent to work with them than with a child with low abilities and challenging behaviour or hypersensitivity to light or noise.

‘It has been Karla herself, the main facilitator of her integration. She is very brilliant and this helps me a lot.’ Karla’s Teacher

‘Hideyi for me is like a challenge, but it makes me feel comfortable that he is able and hard working. He made me find a new way.’ Alonso, Hideyi’s Teacher

Based on the focus group, Hideyi’s classmates suggested that the teacher should feel more confident because he is able to do many things.

‘He is as capable as we are, why do they make different exams for him?’ Fer, Hideyi’s Classmate

‘There is not a big difference in our abilities’. Juan ‘We are the same.’ David, Hideyi’s Classmate

In contrast, some teachers felt that they were not well trained and competent to work with children with ASD who had low academic abilities and in addition presented hypersensitivity to light or noise and/or challenging behaviour.

‘My experience with Pablo was that he was screaming and I needed to stop him by asking him to stand up. If you are doing an activity that requires you to concentrate,
you get distracted. There are disadvantages, it is hard. They need to get used not only to the child with SEN, but also to the teaching assistant. They cannot be alone, only if you have a teacher that has time and can give enough care of the child. But this does not happen.’ Dania, Pedro’s Teaching assistant (Preschool)

‘There have been different situations with Sebastian, because he has bitten, and hit others in the head. He had a very strong crisis that neither my students nor I have seen, which was him hitting, bleeding, or hurting himself in such a strong way. But I do not have any problem to integrate him, for example in Christmas activities.’ Irma, Sebastian’s Teaching Assistant (Primary)

During one observation, Sebastian disturbed the whole group by hurting himself, pulling his head towards the wall. All children started talking, and they were a little scared. The observation also revealed that other children from the sample, such as Julian and Pedro who were in Preschool, sometimes presented behavioural difficulties that disturbed the classmates. However, the behavioural difficulties were not as extreme as those presented by Sebastian. During the focus group, children also suggested that there are some minor disadvantages with including children with ASD. They associated these disadvantages with their behaviour and ability. For example, they found that some children with autism would steal and eat their food. In other cases, children with autism had difficult time understanding; therefore, peers felt they wasted their time trying to explain. They also told me that Irvin was disobedient and sometimes he distracted the group or got lost and the teacher had to try to find him.

The current study found that stakeholders tend to reject children with ASD who present challenging behaviour. Stakeholders perceived that manifestations of children with ASD, such as behaviour difficulties, can be a barrier to successful inclusion. This finding is similar to those of Monchy et al. (2004) who suggested that children with Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties were socially less included compared to their classmates without disabilities. The outcomes for children with ASD in some of the articles reviewed by Lindsay are similar to those with SEBD (Symes and Humphrey, 2010; McDonnell et al., 2003); however, this depends to some extent on peer support. The findings regarding academic abilities are also pertinent to ongoing discussions that suggests that children with Asperger and children with high abilities can be academically included but sometimes it is difficult for them to be socially included (Symes and Humphrey, 2010).
The above discussion of the two subthemes related to academic abilities and social abilities indicates that child’s abilities can act as a key facilitator of or a barrier to successful inclusion of a child with ASD. Teachers can enhance their teaching by developing activities that would reflect the child’s interest and by responding directly when the child asks for an instruction. The child can also be taught some strategies to increase his or her social skill abilities in order to be less naive and more emphatic with others.

6.7.3 School Ethos

![School Ethos Diagram]

Figure 6.3 School ethos

Schools with an inclusive ethos that embodies and supports learning for a diverse range of students (Hick et al., 2009) tend to support the inclusion of children with ASD. These schools are more flexible, share values and beliefs, and adapt the curriculum to provide the support that the child requires. One factor that supports the inclusion of children with autism and illustrates a school’s positive ethos concerns the shared responsibility of all the participants in the inclusion process.

6.7.3.1 Shared Responsibility

In some of the schools, the participants perceived that the staff shared responsibility for including the child with autism. The staff and teachers did not feel that the teaching assistant should hold all responsibility. Participants had their own role in this process as part of the school ethos.

‘When we came to the school, the principal thanked us because he told us that they were looking for a special kid to be included in his school because they think it would be helpful to other kids. When Carmen and I listened to that, I just cried.'
When they said thank you for considering our school, I cried. How I can tell you that I was desperately looking for a school and when I found one, they were grateful about Irvin’s integration.’ Irvin’s mother

‘I feel perfectly fine, I have not seen any barriers. Whatever I suggest, everyone accepts it, and they are open and nice people. With the parents, we do not have any problem; some parents get mad and protest. Overall, it has been a very nice experience.’ Alex, Hideyi’s teaching assistant

The observations in all schools indicated that schools’ ethos supported children with ASD. For example, in Irvin and Andrea’s Secondary school, the head teacher, teacher and classmates were supportive, and they shared values and beliefs. The head teacher showed a democratic but strong leadership, he was very open, and he was very happy to receive children with ASD. The head-teacher monitored the inclusion process, but at the same time, she accepted recommendations from the teaching assistant, such as letting Irvin and Andrea to take time out of the class and go to the library or to the computer class if they needed it.

‘The principal of the school is a very executive woman [active, decisive]. In the meetings, she always asks what Irvin needs. They are very interested in supporting him.’ Mother of Irvin (Secondary)

‘The teachers and especially the principal should be responsible for the inclusion because he is the one who says what should be done, if he allows a child to join the class and usually all the responsibility is left to the teaching assistant that will provide all the information’. Dora, Pedro’s Teaching assistant (Preschool)

Some stakeholders suggested that the ethos of other schools (not from the sample) were in some cases even negative. For example, Andrea’s teaching assistant suggested that in other schools, children and teachers were not so open to accept the inclusion of a child with ASD.

‘In other schools, this is not happening, they are used to being around regular classmates and they do not want to work with children who have special educational needs. These children can feel rejected…….’ Carmen, Andrea’s teaching Assistant (Secondary)

‘We want more information. We tried to find it in the CAM, it was a nightmare to see that Hideyi could not be accepted in any schools. We went to a Montessori
school, which had integrated children with Down’s syndrome but they did not accept him there… The area that we live is full of schools (she said the names). None of them accepted Hideyi. It was not until I talked to the head teacher of my other child’s school’ Hideyi’s Mother (Secondary)

The support from school was very important in the process of a child’s integration. Schools that had good practices, which included informing, training, valuing and retaining teachers, encourage confidence in the teachers.

‘I talked to all the children, and I told them: Pedro is going to scream because it is the only way he can communicate now. He is not going to be playing when he screams like you do sometimes. He is doing it in order to express that he feels cold or if he wants to sleep. Little by little, he will learn how to do it properly.’ Pedro’s Head teacher (Pre-School)

In contrast, if the school did not agree to integrate a child, it would be very difficult for teachers to include children with ASD.

‘The disadvantage that I saw is that schools do not want to commit. In my school, that does not happen. But in other school that we went to and asked if they could accept Julian, they told us that they needed to hold a school meeting; I think that they closed the doors to Julian because they were afraid of parents, but this is the only disadvantage that I can see.’ Julian’s Mother (Preschool)

‘At the beginning mmm…. It was hard, because the school received Pedro without knowing the diagnosis. They only knew that it was a developmental disorder. I think the school was not prepared because they had never had a case like this’ Pedro’s Mother (Preschool)

Teachers and teaching assistants that shared the responsibility of including the child with ASD could support the inclusion process better.

‘It is teamwork, shared by the teachers, the classmates, and also Irvin’s teaching assistant. Because when Irvin wants to do something, he does it. For example, when he wants to, he cuts, draws, paints. But if he does not want, he folds his arms and he covers his ears. It is a shared job.’ Beatriz, Irvin’s Teacher (Secondary)
The observations revealed that Irvin and Andrea’s school, their teachers, classmates and teaching assistants supported both children, as they perceived their inclusion as a shared responsibility.

However, in other schools, such as in the case of Daniel, Pedro and Julian, teachers would sometimes leave all the responsibility for the child with ASD to the TA. Teachers and mothers suggested that a teaching assistant should support children because TAs support children with SEN in the classroom and enable the teacher to meet the needs of all pupils. Nevertheless, in some cases, if the full responsibility was left to the TA, the child was spending most of the time only with the TA instead of interacting also with the teacher and the classmates. Thus, this affected the inclusion of the child with ASD.

‘It is required to have a TA; he needs to be with someone. I am sure about that because I saw him in school. The head teacher has been very open to the child, but she and the other guide, Alicia (Montessori teacher), do not spend time with Pedro. I felt this. I am not criticizing, but I can understand because they have many children. Because I trained as a therapist in the Montessori system, they are relaxed knowing that she is there. Indeed, for example, on one occasion, I had a disagreement with the head teacher because a TA that Pedro had in the past could not attend once, and I was not aware of this when I dropped off my child at school. The head teacher told me that the child could not stay without the support of the TA. This should not happen.’ Pedro’s Mother (Preschool)

During the observation, I did not have an opportunity to see any interaction between Pedro and any classmate. Interaction was only between him and the teaching assistant. Every child engaged in their own activity. The classroom was very quiet.

The head teacher in the preschool where Pedro was going suggested during the interview that she, as his teacher, wanted to take the main responsibility for teaching Pedro. However, during the observation, it was found that the teaching assistant was doing most of the work. This was something that was also happening with Daniel, whose teacher was keen on supporting him, but the TA was responsible for teaching him. Teachers and teaching assistant needed to be working as a team, and support each other in order to include the child with ASD.
6.7.3.2 Curriculum adaptations

Children with ASD required to be taught with different learning styles and some curriculum adaptations and differentiations that would reflect the needs of the child.

‘In this case, there are some curriculum adaptations or characteristics that have been done with the support of the teaching assistant. I guess that without the teaching assistant, I am not quite sure that he could obtain the same results. If he is guided he could finish the secondary school. To study further, we should think about an organization that could support him and let the teaching assistant come to school with him.’ Hideyi’s Principal (Secondary)

‘Her classmates were learning equations. One of the adaptations involved completing the same equation but in a simpler form and with figures of teddy bears, candies, so she needs to recognize the number and the graphics.’ Carmen, Andrea’s teaching assistant (Secondary)

Indeed, the school records of all the children in the sample indicated that DOMUS coordinator and the teaching assistant had created specific plans for all children. For example, they created strategies to help Sebastian change behavioural difficulties. They suggested to the school that if Sebastian was screaming, the teaching assistant should look him directly in the eyes, ask him to be quiet, make him change places every 45 minutes, and find a place where he could be alone and rest.

Learning styles and curriculum had to be adapted according to the profile and needs of the child with ASD. For this purpose, the assistance was required of an effective teacher and teaching assistant who would be willing to include children by making curriculum adaptations and who would be creative enough to make these changes according to visual aids of a child with ASD. On some occasions, teachers were not so committed to using the appropriate learning style or making the required adaptations to the curriculum.

‘One of the disadvantages is that schools do not easily accept any adaptation to the curriculum, while it does not work in a class. It is not impossible, but we need to work on this in Mexico because we are a deeply-rooted custom country and with great resistance to change.’ Andrea’s teaching assistant

During the observations, I found that almost all teaching assistant were using some strategies to adapt the curriculum using visual aids such as PECS and TEACCH, also RDI. For example,
a visual timetable showing the date and sequence of photos with the activities of the day or the use of computers were found helpful for children in the sample. Most of them sit at a table in the least distracting environment. However, in the public school that Sebastian and Ian attended, this was not possible. Furthermore, in larger schools, such as the one that Irvin attended, a quiet area such as the library or computer cluster was very supportive.

DOMUS records also showed that this organisation were using a Person Centre Planning for each child and most of the time, several adaptations were done for each child who was included. It had to be considered that the curriculum was different in primary, preschool and in secondary school. In preschool and primary school, children had a simpler curriculum in which mainly only one person taught the class the whole day. In secondary school, students usually have approximately seven or more different teachers, a different teacher for each subject, such as Mathematics, Geography, Psychics or laboratories. Each child was unique; thus, each one needed an individualized approach. In the case of Hideyi, who was a child with high abilities, the teacher assigned activities to students and the teaching assistant adapted them for him, for example giving him only three equations to work on instead of five. Emotional skills and understanding were not part of the academic curriculum for children with ASD in any of the school grades in the sample. However, DOMUS records tried to promote RDI as a therapy for children with ASD and provided behaviour management strategies for teachers and teachings assistants. In the afternoon, children were taught some living skills as well. Moreover, teachers and stakeholders should participate more intensely in the adaptation of the curriculum for children with ASD of all school ages.

School ethos was found to be the key facilitator, suggesting that all stakeholders must be involved in the process, (see 7.2.3 p. 177) and this way the process of inclusion will be easier for the child. Head teacher’s role was found to be very important in my study, because the head teacher’s leadership may or may not support the inclusion of a child in a school by helping to change negative attitudes from stakeholders into positive. Prior studies, such as those by Kugelmas and Ainscow (2003) and Leo and Barton (2006), noted the importance of the role of the head teacher. Most head teachers from our sample planned the inclusion of the children and held regular meetings with DOMUS teaching assistant to monitor the process. This was also found to be an important factor in a review by Kalambouka et al. (2007). Curriculum adaptations also had important implications for the inclusion of children with ASD, as these enabled the student to engage with the class (Lee et al., 2009).
The findings of a positive school ethos also acknowledge the role of an effective and strong leaders who would monitor the process and confident staff that would be able to recognize and support the needs of the child. Additionally, the use of curriculum adaptations influenced positively the inclusion of children with SEN.

### 6.7.4 Role of Teaching Assistants

![Diagram of Role of teaching assistant and DOMUS](image)

Eight out of nine of the children with ASD from the sample were included with the support of a teaching assistant from DOMUS. The support of the teaching assistant from DOMUS greatly facilitated the inclusion of the children with ASD. From the observation, I was able to conclude that the TA’s role in Mexico is different to the one in England. The teaching assistant was, for most of the time, the main person responsible for the child with ASD. Trained teaching assistants knew how to make the curriculum adaptations for the child with ASD. This meant that TA knew how to use visual aids and TEACCH and showed the child how to do each activity using language and non-language communication by PECS. TA also used interventions if the child presented behavioural difficulties. For example, TA used ‘time out’ as a stress relief strategy. TA gave information to teachers and classmates on how to interact with the child.

The coordinator from DOMUS who visited the schools once a month to see how the inclusion process was developing also supported this process. This coordinator advised the teaching assistants and the teachers. As a result, head teachers, teachers and classmates had the support of the TA, who could enhance the participation of the child with ASD in everyday activities.
‘It is easier because the child comes with a TA. DOMUS gave them a short course about what autism means’ Leticia, Daniel’s teaching assistant (Preschool)

‘The teacher is usually explaining to Hideyi what he has to work on and how he has to do it. The contribution of Alex has been important. I am not so sure whether Alex was intervening and asking teachers constantly or not. It has been a very natural process. The teachers give the information that they consider appropriate, limited exercises and that is fair. Of course, Alex has been a fabulous filter.’ Hideyi’s Coordinator

Classmates during the focus group suggested that the teaching assistant was a very useful role model that the child with ASD could imitate.

‘Hideyi sees how Alex behaves and he knows that people like Alex and he tries to behave the same way.’ David, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

During the observations, it was found that in most cases, the teaching assistants were taking the role of the main teacher for the child. Children with ASD were very close to their teaching assistants. When the role of the teaching assistant was not clear or not appropriate, the child with ASD could become isolated. However, most stakeholders suggested that teaching assistant’s role was crucial.

‘If you send them to school without the support of a TA, the child little by little gets used to being apart from the teaching assistant, but they could not be totally on their own. They need to be supervised by someone. And there will always be new people or factors and the child will need the support.’ Daniel’s Mother (Preschool)

‘Honestly, I believe that it has been caused by a lack of attention from the teaching assistant. Some circumstances have arisen with the teaching assistant. We saw how she let Sebastian make things that should not be allowed; for instance, she let him eat food from the floor. She is not the teaching assistant that Sebastian needs. I told DOMUS. She needs more training. Her career background was not right to do this….. She felt rejected because I told her what she was doing wrong.’ Sebastian’s Teacher (Primary)

During the observation, the first day that I visited the school, a member of staff opened the door. When I told her that I was going to do a research project, she replied that it was very
important because the teaching assistant was neglecting the child and allowing him to eat food from the bin.

6.7.4.1 Relationship between teaching assistant and teacher

As mentioned before, if the teacher has a good relationship with the TA, they could work as a team. Most importantly, they could help and learn from each other.

‘Alex, the teaching assistant, is never intrusive; he only asks when it is needed, when he cannot understand something or has a different opinion he asks me. He is precise, clear and quick.’ Samuel, Hideyi’s coordinator (Secondary)

During the observation, it was found that Alex, Hideyi’s teaching assistant, respected the role of the teacher. He was supporting Hideyi but at the same time, allowing him to be as independent as possible.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, negative relationships between the teacher and the teaching assistant were a barrier to effective inclusion. Both formed a team and if communication between them was ineffective, this could lead to a poor inclusion of the child with ASD. Teachers could feel overloaded and the child with ASD could be neglected.

‘The principal barrier has been the lack of communication and lack of empathy between me, the teaching assistant, and the mainstream teacher. I cannot understand why, it could be our personalities. I do not dislike her as a human being; however, we have different codes and ways of communication….. It is not only her, I am guilty as well. But neither one of us has ever yielded our own way of thinking to avoid coming into conflict.’ Alma, Ian’s Teaching Assistant (Primary).

6.7.4.2 Relationship between teaching assistant and classmates

The relationship between teaching assistant and classmates was an important facilitator. When children saw that the teaching assistant engaged openly with peers, they felt freer to interact with the child with autism. Additionally they felt more confident to ask any questions regarding how they could help children with autism.

‘The teacher should be not so strict since the beginning, because if she is like a soldier, the classmates would not come near Irvin.’ Kristina, Irvin’s teaching assistant.
‘The teaching assistant should support the interaction with classmates. If you do not interact with them, you will get apart from others. If Andrea does not have that communication ability and you do not support it, classmates lose interest. It is a shared job. I have seen that on some days when they are taking exams or I have a lot of work. But I came and started to talk with them again.’ Carmen, Andrea’s teaching Assistant

In contrast, if a respectful relationship between the classmate and teaching assistant has not developed, the classmates would not feel so confident to integrate the child with ASD.

‘The children now behave very differently from the way I behaved when I was their age. Thus, it has been very difficult for me to interact with them. If they do not have empathy with me, it is difficult for them to empathise with the child with ASD. I tried but it is a different world.’ Almudena, Sebastian’s teaching assistant (Primary)

During the observation, I found that the other students did not welcome Almudena, Sebastian’s teaching assistant. She was not friendly with them, thus children preferred not to interact with her or with Sebastian. Indeed, the teacher told me about an event where a child in the class was asked by Almudena, Sebastian’s teaching assistant, to stop discriminating against Sebastian. The teacher asked the teaching assistant not to talk to the child any more. However, Almudena took the child to a classroom, closed the door and asked her not to tell anyone about it and the parents complained.

According to the literature review and the results of this study, the work of teaching assistants is crucial for the inclusion of some children with ASD in Mexico. However, it is interesting that there is so little research about the role of teaching assistants in Mexico or Latin America with Escobedo (2011 being the only article that I found on the subject. The findings from my research confirmed that teaching assistants’ role is similar to the activities that Escobedo’s article suggested in that they indicated that most teaching assistants supported the academic activities, social interaction, and curriculum adaptations and provided information about how to include the child with ASD to teachers and classmates.

The results of this study also appear to be consistent with a growing body of international evidence. For example, studies conducted in the USA and Europe indicated that the teaching assistant, is often is one of the main facilitators of the effective inclusion of children with ASD partly because some of these children require one-to-one tutoring (Young et al., 1997).
However, the status of the teaching assistant from DOMUS in Mexico was equivalent to higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs) in England. All teaching assistants had a Degree in Psychology or Education. Another important finding of this research revealed that the relationship between the teacher and teaching assistant is crucial for the effective inclusion of the child. This results were similar to those by Fox and Farrell (2004) who provided a review of the teaching assistants’ role. In contrast, other studies claimed that the teaching assistants’ role is only complementary (Blatchford et al., 2007; Blatchford et al., 2009).

Most teaching assistants in this study had a positive relationship with teachers. These results were similar to those by Devecchi and Rouse (2010) who reported positive examples of collaboration. Tensions between the teacher and teaching assistant were notable only in one out of the nine cases mainly because the teaching assistant lacked training and usually isolated the child from the classmates. Accordingly, the teacher had a less positive attitude towards his inclusion. This result was similar to the findings from Mackenzie (2011). These data must be interpreted with caution because it has not been established whether the power dynamic difficulties between Sebastian’s teacher and teaching assistant were just particular to this case or were generalisable to other cases. Moreover, it was important for teaching assistant to build rapport with the teacher and classmates. This would facilitate the process of inclusion of the child with ASD.

6.7.5 The Impact of Stakeholders’ Experience in Overcoming Anxieties about Inclusion

![Diagram of the impact of stakeholders’ experience in overcoming anxieties about inclusion.](image)

Figure 6.5 The impact of stakeholders’ experience in overcoming anxieties about inclusion.
Most stakeholders (classmates, TA and teachers) who participated in this study had no previous experience with the inclusion of children with ASD. Hence, they felt some anxieties about the process. However, as the data below illustrates, the longer the inclusion process lasted, the less anxiety the stakeholders experienced. Consequently, the inclusion became more successful.

### 6.7.5.1 Head teachers’ anxieties

Head teachers tended to be anxious and not confident about the teachers’ skills to handle and meet the needs of children with ASD, as many teachers did not sufficiently support the child with ASD because they thought this could affect the other children.

> ‘The head teacher told Daniel’s teaching assistant that she was worried that Daniel could cry, scream or have a difficult experience. But with time she realized that Daniel’s behaviour was all right. After some time, the teacher did not pay any attention to this prejudice.’ Kristina, Daniel’s teacher (Preschool)

### 6.7.5.2 Teacher’s anxieties

Teachers could be anxious about losing their autonomy inside the classroom because of the presence of a child and a teaching assistant. Thus, they could feel that the teaching assistant judges their performance in the classroom and develop negative attitudes towards the TA and children with ASD. This was more likely to happen if they had not experienced the inclusion of a child with disabilities in the classroom before.

> ‘Before he came, her Spanish teacher and I were scared. As I said ‘I was afraid’, we did not know how we were going to do it because if you got to know us both, you can realize that each one has a strong personality. I have a loud voice, like screaming. So I thought I was not going to be able to scold them. But it was not like that.’ Kristina, Daniel’s teacher (Preschool)

The anxieties from teachers, as shown below, came from the lack of information and training. They could feel stressed about the unknown.

> ‘I think that the problem with the teachers is that the lack of awareness makes them feel afraid, when you hear the word autism, you visualize the movies, documentaries or interviews that you have seen. You see the classic child who is moving forward and backward, who does not speak and is odd and lonely. I talk to the teachers and they
ask me how they should treat them. The teacher asks me in a fearful way. I feel that this happened because she is not aware. There is a need for training and also for encouraging teachers not to be afraid, because this produces apathy and the teacher can be rude with the child and the parents.’ Karla’s mother (Primary)

The data related to teachers’ experience and anxiety is relevant to the next theme involving teachers’ competence (see below 7.2.6).

6.7.5.3 Anxieties experienced by parents of children with ASD

Parents of children with ASD are often worried that classmates, classmates’ parents or teachers in the school might reject their children.

‘Imagine that they would tell him something. Children can be so cruel that I was worried but now I have seen that they accept him.’ Ian’s Mother (Primary)

d) Anxieties experienced by parents of children with ASD’s classmates

Parents of classmates of children with ASD could be afraid that the behaviour of a child with ASD could affect the outcomes of their children or that they would do something inappropriate to threaten their children. However, at the same time, they know that they have a right to be educated in a public mainstream school.

‘The mother of a child from the school where Sebastian was included would leave her place in the queue every time that I was queuing. Thus, one day, I asked her why she got out of the queue every time I came. She replied ‘Because I do not agree that your child is studying at this school’. So I answer, ‘Whenever you want to know what autism is, ask me. The ASD is not an infectious disease. But I have to tell you that my child has the same right to be here as your child’. Next day she apologized to me and we are good friends now.’ Sebastian’s Mother (Primary)

‘After I had Julian, I became more sensitive. You realize that head teachers never told them (classmates’ parents) that a child has a difficulty because they are scared that they would take their children away from the school.’ Julian’s Mother (Preschool)
6.7.5.4 Classmates’ Anxieties

Stakeholders can experience anxiety when they had never experienced inclusion of children with ASD. As is well recognized, people are often afraid of the unknown or because of the lack of information or experience. The fear could act as a substantial barrier that should be overcome in order to achieve a successful inclusion of children with ASD in schools.

‘DOMUS made a presentation about Hideyi in the school. I understand that people were afraid that Hideyi can be told by someone to do something more dangerous, but he has not been in that situation. He is normal, he is an adolescent and he likes girls. This event helps us know who the authority figures are. He liked a primary girl and touched her. She felt that he was harassing her and went to the director. So it became a problem forHideyi.’ Alex, Hideyi’s teaching assistant

Classmates might be afraid of the child with ASD because he/she may appear very different from other classmates without disabilities.

‘Sometimes I felt a barrier from the classmates because if you are afraid, you do not know how to treat people. It is natural to feel fear against the unknown. This is why they react.’ Hideyi’s teacher (Secondary)

Additionally, the focus groups revealed that classmates had concerns about the idea of inclusion because it was something unknown for them.

‘To be honest, when they told us that we were going to have Andrea in the class, it was awkward because we did not have Irvin in the class. Thus, in the beginning we were a little afraid because we saw a video in which children hurt themselves.’
Answer from Andrea’s classmates in focus group (Secondary)

Another child suggested that he was afraid to interact with Irvin, the child with autism. In fact, with time and experience, he learned to accept Irvin.

However, stakeholders’ attitudes became more positive as they found that there were positive benefits for children with ASD, teachers, teaching assistant and classmates.

‘This experience that starts with fear has ended in a marvellous experience. I would expect to give this kind of experience to other people but without coming to extremes that the experience can be negative and that we need to limit these experiences.’ Alex, Hideyi’s teaching assistant
‘It was a traumatic experience for teachers in the beginning because of the lack of information and experience or because they found it terrifying to make a mistake. They felt that someone was watching or keeping an eye on them. However, little by little, with experience, they understood that it was an opportunity for both Andrea and Irvin to be part of the community. I only found benefits.’ Andrea’s principal (Secondary)

‘I am amazed. Again, this shows that the classmates do not have a problem compared to the adults. Children do not do anything else than give love and respect. They had a positive attitude, and they have learnt a lot, but they have changed through this experience and that is important.’ Irvin’s principal (Secondary)

From Irvin’s focus group, classmates suggested that the experience had helped them learn about inclusion and helped them be more positive and accepting of children with ASD. The experience helped them become open minded when meeting other children with ASD and accept diversity as part of their life. They also learned to help others.

‘I learnt that each one has different abilities, I saw it by meeting Irvin and Andrea. I thought that all children with ASD were like Irvin, but it is not like that.’ Luisa, Irvin’s classmate (Secondary).

‘I was talking with my uncle and aunt. They told me that they never had an experience like that. That before people used to say that children with autism were hyperactive or crazy people…. Neither of my parents knew how to share an experience like this, but we know it. We will be able to share with our children this kind of experience. A lot of people do not know how to react to autism until this.’ Ernesto, Irvin’s classmate (Secondary).

The experiences of Hideyi’s classmates had been positive; therefore, they learned to be open to include other children with ASD.

‘We do not know if we are going to have this kind of experience with people with autism again. Thus we are now prepared if this happens’. Fer, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘Yes, we will accept someone else with autism’ All the group
The lack of experience and the lack of information could create negative attitudes from stakeholders that could result in a poor implementation of inclusion. Hence, teachers and classmates might maintain a negative attitude, thinking that inclusion could not work. This became a negative or vicious cycle.

‘At the beginning, I was a little concerned because I did not know how the integration will be like inside of the classroom. But with this teacher, I had observed that the child could work with the group. This teacher sits Julian with others at the table.’ Maria, Julian’s Teacher (Preschool)

‘I consider that we are not used to accepting people with special educational needs so they can feel rejected or not welcomed. It is possible that J cannot perceive that. But sometimes I think that Julian feels that he is welcome here and that we love him.’ Maria, Julian’s Teacher (Preschool)

Stakeholders can change their negative attitudes based on their experiences because they get to observe positive outcomes for children with ASD. The main outcome of the inclusion of children with ASD inside the classroom was that they could become pupils who could learn, develop their communication, interact with other children, and they became part of the group while learning to become as independent as possible.

Stakeholders had also found benefits for the classmates of children with ASD after they experienced inclusion. One of the principal benefits for children was that they could socialize with other children.

‘The advantages for them are that they can socialize and they get used to be in the society. For us the advantage was learning to interact. Because sometimes we do not know how to include these children, we learn how to do it based on the activities that you suggest.’ Ian’s and Sebastian’s head teacher (Primary)

For classmates, the benefits were that they could value their life and challenge their own capabilities to study.

‘Classmates understand why they should make the most of the school. They can see with Andrea that what she is learning now will help her to be integrated in a job one day according to her abilities, like painting toys or assembling boxes. So they reflect about their own potential and about the importance of valuing everything. It
is a blessing to have Andrea in the school (Beatriz starts crying).’ Beatriz, Irvin and Andrea’s coordinator and teacher (Secondary).

‘For his classmates, it is an opportunity to live with someone like him. I always tell them that all of us are different. Do other children have a difficulty with equations? Irvin is good for some things and sometimes other activities are hard for him. His classmates love him’. Beatriz, Irvin and Andrea’s Coordinator and Teacher (Secondary)

‘For his classmates, the benefits are that they can realise that every child can be different. They can learn to respect others and to have values’ Karina, Julian’s Teaching Assistant (Preschool)

The results of three secondary age focus groups with classmates suggested that after they experience the inclusion of a child with ASD in their classroom, they realized that there were benefits from this process. For example, they reported that Irvin, Andrea and Hideyi (children with ASD) supported them during the school activities, that classmates received more attention from the teacher, and that they had a new friend. They were also more aware about developmental disorders. Irvin’ peers, for instance, perceived great contribution from his inclusion because he was participating and supporting them in their work as another member of the team.

Pupils learned that each person, with or without autism, is unique. In addition, children with autism have opportunities to learn from their peers. Therefore, the relation between children with ASD and their classmates is reciprocal.

‘When we grow up and if we have a child with autism near, we will know how to react. It is helpful for us because we learn to accept people. We learn how to interact with different people. This helps us grow as people.’ Laura, Hideyi’s classmate

Children reported that one of the advantages of being with a child with autism is that they got the attention from teachers and teachers gave that group more benefits, for example more time or support.
‘Teachers gave more time to the group that is working with Hideyi. We can change more things and have more time. This situation gives some benefits to this group.’

Laura, Hideyi’s classmate

One example from the focus group in which Irvin was participating is that children thought that his inclusion involved only a number of people because he was always interacting with the same individuals. They suggested that more children should be interacting with him. The experience helped them open their minds to meet other children with ASD and accept diversity as part of their life. They were learning how to help others and treat them in the same way as other children. The most important point was that classmates considered Irvin their friend and not only another classmate.

During the focus group with Andrea, one classmate suggested that he had learned how to interact with her, which would help him in the future if he had a child or a friend with autism.

‘If I have a child with ASD, I will know how he is and how to interact with him. Or another friend I will treat him nicely.’ Andrea’s classmate (Secondary)

The statements above indicate that stakeholders’ anxieties decreased after some time, as they realized that the child became more socially accepted. This finding is consistent with Wiener and Tardiff’s (2004) research, which showed that children with SEN can develop better friendship skills. Buysee and Goldman (2002) also found that children with SEN have more playmates when they are included in the mainstream school. Teachers who included children tended to become more sensitive towards diversity. They would also learn different strategies to work with children with ASD and would develop their own teaching skills. They tended to develop their awareness and understanding of how to interact with children with autism. Furthermore, they learned to respect diversity, value their own possibilities and abilities to learn, and express their feelings. ‘They thought that children with ASD were absent from their lives; the ones that could learn from the experience were given a gift. We realized that they are children like anyone else and that you get exasperated in the same way as you would with other children.’ Irvin’s teaching assistant

‘For the teachers and the classmates to know that there are children with these characteristics, that there are not only typical children, there are several variants.'
That it is possible to interact with them, to learn and know about them.’ Irvin’s teaching assistant

One of the main findings was that stakeholders of children with ASD reported anxiety about the new experience of including them. This is similar to the findings by Plaisance (2007) in France who found that the difficulties arise primarily due to fear of what is different. This author suggests that mainstream teachers should be trained to work with children with SEN in order to achieve a successful inclusion. Another finding consistent with this study’s findings reported that many parents present anxiety about the inclusion of their children with SEN (Spann et al., 2003).

In some cases, stakeholders overcome anxiety with experience and become more confident with the process. Therefore, another key facilitator of successful inclusion is simply having the opportunity to experience it.

6.7.6 Competence of the teacher

The previous theme on the impact of teachers’ experience with inclusion on overcoming anxiety overlaps with this theme. Teachers in mainstream schools who thought that they were sufficiently competent to teach children with ASD were more willing to teach these children compared to those who thought that they were unable to support children with ASD. Most of the time, some Mexican mainstream teachers were not well trained or prepared to include
children with autism, which was associated with a lack of confidence in their abilities to teach children with SEN, particularly children with ASD.

6.7.6.1 Teacher’s Training about ASD

Only few of the teachers in this study were trained during their career to work with children with SEN. Some, however, continued their training after they took up their post, although this is not usually regulated or approved. The quality of such training may vary; some of this training lasting only for two hours. Upon the completion of this training, teachers can be financially rewarded by Carrera Magisterial (refer to chapter on Mexican Education). Indeed, most teachers depended on the teaching assistant to learn how to use appropriate teaching strategies and learning styles that were more appropriate for the child. Teachers also depended on the teaching assistant to know how to manage challenging behaviours and support the child with a tantrum. The teacher helped the child develop better tools to interact with others. Again, teaching assistants knew more about the use of effective communication methods, such as the use of PECS and TEACCH.

‘The training is needed; more than just to raise awareness we need a formal training. Definitely the characteristics that these children have are very different from other children’. We need not only training, but also to be aware of what autism is.’ Hideyi’s teacher (Secondary)

During the observations, it was found that one of the teachers from Ian and Sebastian’s Primary school had been trained during her undergraduate studies and he had been very interested in trying to support children with ASD. He understood the developmental disorder, and he was also trying to make curriculum adaptations for Ian and for Sebastian according to the needs of each child.

In contrast, teachers who did not receive appropriate training usually did not feel competent to work with children with ASD because they did not know how to interact and make curriculum adaptations, or what learning style to use with these children. In some cases, all responsibility was left to the teaching assistant. The child could be neglected and indeed could be dangerous to him.

‘Honestly, I believe that it has been caused by a lack of attention from the teaching assistant. Some circumstances have arisen with the teaching assistant. We saw how she let Sebastian do things that should not be permitted, for instance, she let him eat
food from the floor. She is not the teaching assistant that Sebastian needs. I told DOMUS. She needs more training. Her career background was not right to do this.... She felt rejected because I told her what she was doing wrong.’ Irma, Sebastian’s teacher (Primary)

‘If the integration process is done the wrong way, and a child is attempted to be integrated without knowledge, this can become a bad experience, and it is when the child does not want to continue anymore. What happens is that we are still not ready for inclusion in Mexico. Although there are some documents signed by the government, schools are not prepared for the inclusion, neither are the families.’ Karen- Julian’s teaching assistant (Preschool)

6.7.6.2 Information and awareness

Teachers that have appropriate information tended to be less anxious about teaching children with ASD, and they usually realized that it is a good experience. Additionally, all stakeholders benefitted from it.

‘DOMUS came and gave information and presentations to the school. I think this raising of awareness was helpful. I thought it was going to be difficult because they are children from secondary school but it was not hard.’ Carmen, Andreas’ teaching assistant (Secondary)

In contrast, the lack of information could cause classmates and teachers to be scared or anxious about the unknown. In return, this could also produce negative attitudes toward the child with ASD. Appropriate information and awareness was a very important in changing attitudes towards inclusion.

‘There is always ignorance about what is happening. We are always living in our small place. When we went out of this small place and we faced reality, first, we were scared, later, we faced it and we acted in an aggressive way. This is usually created because of our ignorance. But when people were informed, they tried hard, and not barrier existed that could not be destroyed. I did not find any obstacle or barrier to integrate Irvin; it was only lack of information. Although one barrier could be that teachers don’t know how to interact with him. They do not know about
any curriculum adaptations. They do not go so deep. It could be the only barrier that I can see…….’ Irvin’s head teacher (Secondary)

‘More information is needed and more children should be included. But it should be compulsory that every school has children with SEN or ASD. The head teacher should do it without asking teachers if he or she wants it or not.’ Kristina, Daniel’s Teacher (Preschool).

‘There is no information; they do not know what autism is. They also see a lonely child, which is a genius who knows a lot of mathematics when it is not like this. The good point is that because they have an awareness session about ASD, the teachers had a little idea of what this was.’ Julian, Teaching assistant (Preschool)

I will come back to this subtheme when discussing another theme (Stakeholder’s attitudes).

6.7.6.3 Confidence

Teachers who were more confident and committed to their role would tend to support and participate more in the inclusion of the child with ASD, because they knew how to do it and would try to look for information and training to integrate the child.

‘We are all teachers and it is our job to give him a place, maybe find some material if the teaching assistant does not have it. We are the ones who must take that role. We need to include them in our activities. Because he is one of the group.’ Karime, Julian’s Teacher (Preschool)

During my observations, I found that Karla was always asking the teaching assistant how to integrate Julian into the group because she was very committed and interested. In contrast, teachers who did not feel confident to manage a classroom with children with ASD thought that they are not qualified to work with children with ASD. They were afraid that children with ASD were different from other students. These teachers doubted their abilities to teach them.

‘I felt that the teacher depended a lot on the TA. I felt that the teacher had not been involved. Until one day that the TA could not come and the teacher did not know how to work with him. It was very difficult for the teacher to cope with him.’ Julian’s mother (Preschool)
‘When they told me that I was going to have a child with autism as a student, I thought oh my… and what is autism? Later I received some information and that was all. Now I have realized that he is a student like all others.’ ‘I feel how I can respond to that and I did not know how. An incident happened. Every time he went to the toilet a child asked Ian to pull his pants and underpants and he bullied Ian.’ Gabriela, Ian’s teacher (Primary)

6.7.6.4 Interest to work with children

Teachers who were committed and interested to work with children with ASD tended to have a more positive attitude toward inclusion because they were willing and trying to learn and support the child more in the inclusion process.

‘The whole experience has been great. I like everything. Teachers suggest a lot what we should do. You do not feel alone in the process. They know more or less what Andrea can do so they have great ideas; they help you a lot and make you feel part of the team. It is great. It is not only Andrea and me.’ Carmen, Andreas’ Teaching Assistant (Secondary).

The lack of confidence could prevent teachers from being interested in working with children with ASD. Sometimes when an experience seemed to be too challenging, some people who were scared seemed to lose interest, preferring not to do anything. Nevertheless, as we mentioned previously, the experience could give the teacher more confidence to work with children with ASD again.

‘I cannot do anything if the child does not understand. I will be losing a lot of time to teach them something that could not be right. I considered that if a child has a tendency for learning something, for example computers, their learning should be focus there.’ Laura, Irvin and Andrea’s Teacher (Secondary)

‘For 20 years that I have been working as a teacher, it is the first time that I am working with a child with SEN. It is possible that I was reluctant or I never thought that this could happen. At first, I was afraid. Afterwards, it was a challenge. First, it is necessary to understand what is happening and how we can help them. I know that out of the 100% devoted to support, I have been supporting very little and I rarely sit with him’. Julian’s teacher (Preschool)
One of my findings was that teachers with more positive attitudes felt more competent and tended to include children more effectively. In contrast, inadequately trained teachers feared, had negative attitudes, and felt overloaded by taking care of a child with SEN. This study produced results, which corroborate the findings of many previous studies conducted in Canada by Winzer and Mazurek (2011) who reported that teacher’s attitudes changed from negative to positive after they had experienced inclusion.

In Mexico, some teachers can be trained by Carrera Magisterial; however, according to research by Lopez-Acevedo and Salinas (2000), this training does not really support the academic achievement of the regular students. This result is similar to the findings of Joyce et al. (1991). Blanco (2006) also reported that teachers who did not receive sufficient training and lacked qualifications needed to support children with SEN can affect the inclusion process. This was exacerbated if there is no differentiation of learning styles, rigid basic curriculum, or a lack of teamwork among teachers, teaching assistants, and school’s staff. Teachers who believe that they are competent and that they can support the child will tend to have more positive attitudes and adapt the curriculum according to the needs of the child. These findings are similar to those of Sharma et al. (2008) and Palmer (2006).

A key facilitator of inclusion of children with ASD is having a teacher who feels competent because she or he is qualified, informed and confident and who is interested in working with children with SEN.

**6.7.7 Stakeholders’ Attitudes:**

![Figure 6.7 Stakeholders’ Attitudes](image-url)
A key factor leading to the success of inclusion of all children with SEN is the extent to which classmates, teachers and teaching assistants accept them. It is not surprising that the existing data provide evidence that the level of acceptance or rejection from stakeholders, classmates and teachers, is extremely relevant for the success of inclusion. Hence, a major facilitator of inclusive education is the stakeholders’ acceptance of children with ASD while the stakeholders’ rejection of children with ASD acted as a barrier.

Teachers’ attitude has been perceived as the consequence of teachers’ expertise and competence. The following section refers to attitudes from stakeholders more generally. Other main factor leading to positive or negative attitudes was the information that stakeholders had about both ASD in general and specific child in particular. Therefore, these two topics, teacher’s attitude and information they had about the child appear in two different themes.

### 6.7.7.1 Classmate’s Attitude toward children with ASD

Classmates in most schools had a positive attitude towards children with ASD. Almost all teachers and staff that I interviewed said that the classmates appreciated having a child with autism in the school, and this could be seen from the way they acted towards the child.

‘I was amazed because since the beginning, no children were doing gestures or saying not to come near them. On the contrary, all children are very nice, very interested and they come to ask if they can do something.’ Carmen, Andrea’s Teaching Assistant (Secondary).

‘It has been really useful for Irvin in the social area to change some of the peculiar conducts of autism and teach him to read. It has been useful to identify with his peers and to belong to the group…. If he should be staying in another place, different than a school, I could probably find more disadvantages for him because the interaction helps him a lot.’ Teaching assistant Irvin (Secondary)

According to sociometry, it has been found that Sebastian had a lower sociometric status compared to Ian who was studying in the same school but in a different grade. This could be a result of Ian having better abilities and more space in the classroom than did Sebastian. Sebastian’s class had 30 children, compared to Ian’s class with only 17. Sebastian’s classroom in the primary public school was very small and crowded, and they had two children with ASD, one teacher and two teaching assistants. The classroom was very warm,
crowded, and noisy, and there was not enough space for Sebastian to be alone. Sebastian presented behavioural difficulties. He was sensitive to noise so he could get anxious. Because he could not express his feelings, he tended to throw tantrums. I think these factors affected Sebastian’s acceptance negatively because he would distract his classmates.

During the focus group, many classmates suggested that they were very happy about the opportunity to be with Andrea and that she was one of the group’s members. During the observation, it was also found that children come to spend time with her and smile. Some of the children eat lunch with her during the recess.

‘Andrea is a very cute and tender girl. Andrea is paying attention to everything you tell her when we are doing any work. She responds if you ask her something, not with a lot of words, but she answers. We taught her to dance ‘La Macarena.’

Fernanda, Andrea’s classmate (Secondary)

Classmates from the Irvin’s focus group perceived that the contribution from the child with autism is rich. One of the benefits was that the child with autism participated and supported them in their work and that interaction with him made other children happy. Previously, a child suggested that he was afraid of how he could interact with the child with autism, but over time and with experience, he learned to accept the child with autism.

‘The first day that I saw him, I was afraid. But now, I am more in contact with him. I know how he reacts and how he does everything. When Irvin is working, it is very nice. He made things in a very different way from how we do it. When we are doing teamwork, Irvin works and helps us, and according to his abilities, he supports by cutting or drawing. In a way, he lightens the work with his help. I like working with him very much, and I am one of those who spend more time with him’. Ernesto, Irvin’s classmate (Secondary)

During my observations, I also found that classmates were keen to spend time with Andrea and Irvin during the class as well as the recess. The sociometric data also suggested that classmates liked to interact with Andrea and Irvin. Andrea had slightly higher sociometric status compared to Irvin who was studying in the same grade but in a different class in the same school. Overall, 15 out of 19 non-disabled classmates wanted to work with Andrea while only 14 out of 24 non-disabled classmates who wanted to work with Irvin. Classmates’
negative attitudes could also act as a barrier to effective inclusion, as Pedro’s mother indicated.

‘First, I heard some of his classmates saying oh Pedro is here, cover your ears, and they covered their ears. They are naive. But the classmates’ parents never take out their children from the school even though they think Pedro could be harmful. There has not been another barrier.’ ’Susana, Pedro’s Mother (Preschool)

Sebastian’s classmates tended to have more negative attitudes towards his inclusion than did Ian’s classmates towards Ian’s inclusion. This could be because Ian presented less challenging behaviour compared to Sebastian.

During one observation, I found that Sebastian was isolated and on some occasions, he was rejected by most of the peers. Sebastian liked to stay in his own world. Some classmates were scared when he started screaming. They moved far when he was close or went to the back of the class. They did not speak with him. This might have been because Sebastian had hit one of his classmates. Hence, classmates were worried that he could hurt them.

Another example from my observations during the Children’s Day Festival at Ian’s and Sebastian’s Primary school was that after Ian broke his leg and returned to school in a wheelchair after several weeks of home treatment, all the children from his classroom surrounded him and wanted to play with him. This was also seen in the sociometric assessment, which indicated that peers accepted Ian more than they did Sebastian.

6.7.7.2 Teachers’ attitude

As mentioned previously, teachers’ positive attitudes encouraged the inclusion of a child among the classmates. Accordingly, teacher’s leadership and positive attitude influenced classmates’ acceptance of the child with ASD. If the teacher had a negative attitude towards the child, classmates tended to reject the child with ASD. The school ethos supported the inclusion of the child. Head teacher and teachers with positive attitudes provided the teaching assistant with the resources in order to help children with ASD in class each day.

‘The biggest barrier that I found since I had been in special education is the attitude towards children with Special needs from all stakeholders, teachers, classmates, the principal and special education teachers as well. There have been good experiences and others not so good. And several experiences have been bad
experiences. We are not in an inclusive process now. The child is inside of the school but is not totally integrated. We had all kinds of experiences, but there is still a lot missing’ Laura, USAER Special Education Teacher in Ian’s and Sebastian school (Primary)

In contrast, even though children with ASD were not able to communicate their opinions and express their feelings, the stakeholder’s perception was that some of the children from the sample experienced feelings of rejection from different stakeholders, such as classmates, teachers or parents of other children. Indeed, teachers who had negative attitudes towards children with ASD felt less confident with child’s integration. Thus, teachers did not encourage classmates to interact or accept the child with ASD.

‘I don’t mind if these guys are in my classroom, but if they asked me to mark them, I am not qualified to do that, only if all children were like that, but that would not have any meaning. I would need to be swimming upstream. I believe that objective is different.’ Lidia, Irvin and Andrea’s Teacher (Secondary)

6.7.7.3 Level of information and awareness about ASD

Teachers who were informed about ASD and those who were aware of the consequences of the condition and knew how to work with these children, tended to have more positive attitudes towards them. Thus, they would be more likely to integrate the child with ASD.

‘It has been very helpful that the teaching assistant comes with him, also to raise awareness with the teachers. Most of the teachers who disagreed at the beginning are happy now with the results because Hideyi has better grades than most of the other classmates.’ Hideyi’s Coordinator (Secondary)

From Andrea’s focus group, the classmates said that being informed about ASD had been helpful for them. They knew how to take care, support children with ASD and accept diversity.

‘I have an uncle with Down’s syndrome, and it is very beautiful to interact with those people. If I find another person with autism, I will know how to do it. You listen to people saying that people do not deserve to live. It is like a normal child with different abilities than yours.’ Luis, Andrea’s classmate (Secondary)
In contrast, if they were not aware of ASD, they would tend to be more negative toward children with the condition.

‘I feel that the concept is not well defined yet. Some people understand it as integration while others understand it as…. they can be inside of the group but wish they were not there. He is there but like if he does not belong.’ Liliana, Irvin’s Teaching Assistant (Secondary).

‘Sometimes teachers are not interested because they have no training.’ Hideyi’s Mother (Secondary)

‘I think training is very important because there are different levels of severity on the autistic spectrum disorder, and many times, other children have some autistic characteristics. However, we were not aware because we do not know and we are not specialists in diagnosing. You require qualifications and strategies to do that.’ Adrian, Julian’s Head teacher (Preschool)

During the focus group, children suggested that although they received some information about ASD, they required more information in order to know how to include Irvin during the classes.

‘We were not prepared to help him. To interact in a better way with him, we were not informed how to do it.’ Fernanda, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘Some classmates could exclude him or reject him because they did not know how to interact with him.’ Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘Sometimes I listen to children saying do not come closer because they kick, and there is discrimination against them when they do not know them. They treat them differently because they have autism. They are ignorant and they do not know what this is. We received a talk but it was not enough. But if they really give them a chance to meet them, they will know that they are people with different abilities. I feel bad when I listen to this kind of bad comments. But I think that these people are ignorant to be criticizing without really knowing who they are.’ Ingrid, Andreas’ Classmate (Secondary)

Lack of appropriate information and experience with studying with or teaching children with ASD could be a key factor in the emergence of discrimination and bullying. Children with
high functioning ASD or Asperger’s could feel a stigma and awkwardness and be left feeling that they do not belong to a group. Hence, they would try to do everything that others tell them in order to please them, thinking that they would be accepted.

‘I feel how I can respond to that and I did not know how. An incident happened. Every time he went to the toilet children asked him to take his knickers off and they bullied Ian’. Gabriela, Ian’s Teacher (Primary)

‘Unfortunately, in this culture, we can abuse and we laugh at others. I can hardly see Hideyi in a job twenty years from now. DOMUS made a presentation about Hideyi in the school. I understand that people were afraid that Hideyi can be told by someone to do something more dangerous, but he has not been in that situation. He is normal, he is an adolescent and he likes girls. This event helps us know who the authority figures are. He liked a primary girl and touched her. She felt that he was harassing her and went to the director. So it became a problem for Hideyi.’ Alex, Hideyi’s teaching assistant

During the focus group, classmates suggested that teachers compared Hideyi with other students, which was a way of discrimination. They would like teachers to treat Hideyi like any other student.

‘It is not that teachers exclude him or something like that. But I think that they are afraid of Hideyi’s disorder. They are comparing him with us. They have said even Hideyi can do it better than you….He is as capable as us, why do they make different exams for him?’ Fernanda, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘The teacher told Fernanda that even Hideyi does things quicker than her. As if Hideyi were different from us’ Frida, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘Imagine that a teacher is telling that someone is irresponsible and tell them that even Hideyi is better. Like saying how bad is Hideyi and you are worse?...We are equal.’ David, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

‘There is not a big difference in our abilities, I agree with my classmates. Teachers should not discriminate; he has the same abilities as us’ Juan, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)
They believed that other classmates were not aware and lack information. Classmates recognized that Hideyi was naive, and that he could easily imitate bad conduct. That was why he could be easily bullied.

‘For example, something that bothers me too much, very much is that the information should not be only given to the group, it should be given to all high schools, secondary and even primary. Hideyi touched a girl on two occasions. The girl complained and they suspended him. But it was not only their fault; it is the lack of information about him. The teachers have not taught them...They spit water and he saw that and did it as well and he was also suspended.’ Fernanda, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary)

6.7.7.4 Stakeholder’s expectations

Expectations of stakeholders of children with ASD were lower in the initial stages of inclusion. After a while, stakeholders realized the potential and the abilities of children with ASD.

‘There was a month when he was in the top seven students in the group. In that moment, you think what is happening to the other children. I think the facilitator is that teacher changed his expectations from negative to positive.’ Hideyi’s coordinator

‘Because I think Hideyi has all the potential. In fact, Hideyi has brilliant abilities that can surprise you. He has a good memory to remember birth dates.’ Hideyi’s principal (Secondary)

‘I have seen many advances in him. Daniel says hello, goodbye, gives kiss. This allows his classmates to hug him or touch him and play with him in the yard. They choose him as a team member. They included him in class and sport activities. They said I am in the team with Daniel. He has made all this advances in socialization, this would have otherwise been very hard. Because he is letting others break his structure.’ Leticia, Daniel’s teaching assistant

During one focus group, Hideyi’s classmates suggested that they believed in his abilities. I found that his classmates had more expectations and thought more positively about the future of children with autism. This could probably be because teachers and the staff have either
heard of or had firsthand experience with the failure of children with these conditions in the past. Therefore, they had decided not to have great expectations. However, it seemed as if their classmates knew better what job would be suitable for Hideyi in the future.

‘Because he is always telling us what is happening, he could give the news.’ Frida, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary).

‘Or he has a great memory so he could be a History teacher because he knows a lot of dates.’ David, Hideyi’s classmate (Secondary).

Teachers may have low expectations about the abilities of children with ASD, thinking that they are not able to do many things; thus, they might think that children with ASD will not benefit from the learning experience. Consequently, they do not support and challenge the child to do his or her best.

‘I cannot do anything if the child does not understand. I will be losing a lot of time to teach them something that could not get. I considered that if a child has a tendency to learn something, for example computers, their learning should focus on that.’ Laura, Irvin and Andrea’s Teacher (Secondary)

‘I don’t think he will be able to go to high school or college because he will always need the support of a teaching assistant’ Julia, Hideyi’s Teacher (Secondary)

‘In the beginning, they thought that the child was not going to be functional. Hideyi shows with his conduct that he is very different.’ Hideyi’s principal

During the focus group in Hideyi’s secondary school, classmates suggested that teachers have low expectations of Hideyi. Classmates see Hideyi as being as capable as them. They think that he could get a job in an office or in a library. Most of them saw him with a brilliant future. One male classmate said he admired him, and he mentioned that Hideyi is interested in others. Furthermore, I found that Hideyi was capable to do many activities just as the other classmates.

The findings indicated that expectations are lower in Secondary school than in Preschool, which could be because the students’ abilities increase by secondary school, and teachers are stricter with them. For example, in Preschool and Primary school, parents could have higher expectations, which could facilitate inclusion while in secondary school; their expectations could be lower and act as a barrier.
6.7.7.5 Mexican Doctors’ Belief Systems during the Diagnosis

Most parents suggested that in Mexico, it is very difficult to find an accurate diagnosis. Very often, doctors or psychologists have given a wrong diagnosis. Some mothers in the study were sure that their children had autism while doctors suggested that it was just a result of the parents’ marital problems, or in another case, they believed that the mother was mentally ill and obsessed. Thus, parents could end up feeling guilty during the diagnosis, and after the diagnosis, they could have doubts about the abilities of the child and have low expectations about their children. This influences the inclusion process because doctors told the mother that their children would not be able to do anything.

‘Doctors can make parents feel guilty during the diagnosis because doctors ask if you were loving with the child, whether you hugged them or not. My husband is an anaesthesiologist and he felt guilty because he was exposed to different substances that can produce autism.’ Karla’s mother (Primary)

‘The doctor told me, ‘Look at your child like furniture, it is better if you try to educate your other children and take care of your husband.’ Daniel’s Mother (Preschool)

‘There were two or three doctors’ comments that were very hurtful with our own pain. Their diagnosis was that my child was never going to be functional. Never. That he was not going to be able to write or read, or do anything. After giving him therapy, they said we should give him medication.’ Hideyi’s Mother (Secondary)

During the process of inclusion, some professionals believed that Irvin was a child with autism and that he could not achieve. A professional told his mother that she needed to accept that her child was not going to succeed.

‘People from CLIMA were very lovely people, very careful but they told me that my child will be autistic, autistic for the rest of his life. They told me that there will not be any possibilities. He will be playing with glue, with flour, with flowers, with beans; they convinced me that my child could do very slowly.’ Irvin’s mother (Secondary)

The most interesting finding was that although some professionals, such as doctors, had negative attitudes towards some children with ASD, most mothers decided to include their
children in a mainstream school. It was found that most stakeholders, such as classmates, teachers and teaching assistants, had positive attitudes towards children with ASD. They also suggested that any child with ASD has a right to be included, but when it comes to practice; they found that it is more difficult although not impossible. This finding is similar to Guajardo’s study (2010) in which 89% of the participants had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN.

A key theme is that stakeholders who are informed and have adequate expectations of children with ASD have more positive attitudes towards their inclusion. If the teacher and classmates liked the child with ASD, their attitudes served as a basic foundation for being able to have a friendship or any relationship (Bukowski et al., 2000).

Only some stakeholders had a negative attitude toward children with ASD because of the challenging behaviours or ASD-related manifestations. Indeed, children can be rejected. Rejection is ‘a negative form of affect associated with a child’s desire to be away from another child’ (Bukowski et al., 2000: 12). This means that children may feel disliked by other children, or in some cases, may experience a feeling of being ignored or not invited to play with them during the recess or in the playground. However, it is interesting to notice that in seven cases of the study, children with ASD had a positive experience. Further factors leading to undesirable outcomes were negative and discriminatory attitudes against children with ASD. Some stakeholders suggested that children with ASD could be neglected or bullied even if they have high abilities or have been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

This finding is similar to that of Blanco (2006) who found negative attitudes and discriminatory attitudes towards children with SEN. Moreover, Symes and Humphrey (2011) found that children with ASD had been bullied by their classmates. High functioning children whose developmental disorder was disclosed to staff and other pupils tended to experience more positive inclusion in a research by Ochs et al. (2001).

In addition, another finding was that positive teacher attitudes and the way in which the teacher interacted with the child with ASD influenced interaction between child with ASD and his/her classmates. This was similar with the findings from Norwicki and Sandieson (2002).
6.8 Conclusion

In any country around the world, successful inclusion of a child with ASD will depend on different factors. However, the data analysis showed that stakeholders in Mexican schools (teachers, teaching assistants, head teachers, coordinators, parents, and classmates) could act as a facilitator or a barrier to successful inclusion. Successful inclusive schools from the sample were those that maintained a positive school ethos. These schools were more flexible, used different strategies, and the teachers’ perception of working with children with SEN was seen as part of their own job – similar to the findings from Farrell et al.’s research (2007b).

In the previous section, we explained the process of inclusion in Mexico. If most of the factors are present, the inclusion process is more likely to be successful, allowing children categorized as having ASD to participate in the mainstream schools.

First, stakeholders suggested that family factors that should be resolved in order for the child to have a place in the school. Parents should be able to afford the fees, commit to the inclusion and have hope for the future in order for the child to be placed in a mainstream school with the support of DOMUS or a similar organisation that integrates children with ASD.

However, there are still some fears from different stakeholders. This is partly due to a lack of experience, as most of the teachers had never experienced the inclusion of a child with ASD in a mainstream school. This indicates that many of the stakeholders had not received proper training or information. On the other hand, most of the teachers and classmates admitted to being afraid of the unknown. Teachers feared that they would not be able to teach children with ASD because they were not competent. Thus, they tended to have negative attitudes towards children with ASD. In turn, negative teachers’ attitudes were associated with negative classmates’ attitudes.

Furthermore, many teachers also tended to leave all responsibility regarding the inclusion to the teaching assistant; thus, the teachers did not get enough experience in working directly with the children. If the teacher does not get this experience, it could lead to a vicious circle. They do not actually participate in the child’s inclusion; therefore, they do not have the opportunity to gain experience that would increase their confidence to take part in the process. The only way to break this circle would be to encourage teachers to stop fearing the unknown and become familiar with it. It was easier for teachers if they were appropriately informed and trained and had a greater awareness of the inclusion of children with ASD. They tended
to have more positive attitudes towards children with ASD. This reflected the fact that all the stakeholders in inclusive schools need to show a positive ethos about diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Teachers and staff should engage in good practice inside the classroom and in the entire school. Thus, teachers should share the responsibility with the teaching assistant and integrate the child with the classmates. Classmates would perceive the positive attitude from the teachers and staff, who are the key role models for the students. Thus, classmates would accept and interact with the child with ASD. This would help the child be socially included more effectively.

There is still a gap between the theoretical vision of inclusion and the actual practices of inclusive education. It may be necessary to change the schools’ ethos, use different learning styles, and provide a more flexible curriculum. Furthermore, additional support may have to be provided. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to find the facilitators that would explain the extent to which the inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico is possible and identify the barriers in order to remove any obstacles that restrict access to education of children with ASD in order to enhance the participation of these students.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS
7 CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter begins by discussing the relationship between the main findings and the research questions. Next, the limitations of this research are considered, together with the relevance of the findings for children with ASD supported either by DOMUS or throughout Mexico. The chapter concludes with a review of the implications for further research and some personal reflections about the research process.

7.1 Relationship between Main Study Findings and Research Questions

This thesis explored various facilitators of and barriers to the inclusion of children with ASD. The following two questions are linked because if any of the facilitators of inclusion is missing, any of these themes may turn into a barrier that must be overcome.

To what extent, and in what ways, can children categorized as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder be supported within mainstream schools in Mexico?

What facilitators support the inclusion of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder into Mexican mainstream schools?

What are the barriers that should be reduced in order to achieve successful inclusion for these pupils?

‘Inclusion’, in this research, was defined as the ‘process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging often by addressing institutional factors and working generally on school development’ (Florian, 2007: 543). Evidence for the study relates to this definition in a number of ways. For example, the overall pattern of data from the case studies suggested that children with ASD had been successfully included in mainstream schools with the support from DOMUS by breaking down different barriers to participation. Seven from nine schools had been addressing some institutional factors by implementing an autism friendly environment that would welcome children with ASD. The head teachers from these schools supported the inclusion, and the schools developed an inclusive culture. Many teachers and teaching assistants responded to the needs of children with ASD, for example, using different educational methods, such as TEACCH and visual learning styles. Most of the stakeholders shared inclusive values that respect diversity and perceived the experience of inclusion of children with ASD as positive in the nine cases. The staff and classmates supported the participation of the child with ASD. Most of the findings
supported that the development of these schools supported the participation and successful inclusion of these nine children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder within mainstream schools in Mexico.

The key facilitators of and barriers to successful inclusion could be encapsulated within the following seven themes that were discussed in the previous chapter:

1. Family factors,

2. Children with ASD's social and academic abilities,

3. School ethos,

4. Role of teaching assistant from DOMUS,

5. The impact of Stakeholders’ experience in overcoming anxieties about inclusion,

6. Teachers' competence,

7. Stakeholders' Attitudes towards children with ASD.

The first theme related to family factors. One of the main findings was that DOMUS supported parents of children with ASD by who can afford to pay the fees. However, the key question is what happens to the children with ASD whose families cannot afford to pay the fees for inclusion. These children may drop out from the educational system, as they either attend a special school or stay at home without attending school at all. As UNESCO reported about Latin America, ‘Educational deficits are part of the social structures of systematic marginalization of particular population groups. In this sense, education is not able to aid in compensation for other social differences; rather it contributes to reproducing them.’ (OREALC 2007:132). Thus, it is important to address financial barriers to improve and develop the inclusive education of children with ASD in Mexico. The legal frameworks to enforce the right to education are frequently not practiced, or if they are, there are still many challenges.

Another facilitator of inclusion the commitment of families of children with ASD, illustrating that parental involvement is very important in order to support the child with ASD. All families in the current study were committed to doing their best to engage the child in the
educational system. Partnership between the parents, school and DOMUS created the best atmosphere to overcome any barrier during the inclusion of the child because each of them knew that they formed a team. The support that these families gained from religion provided a strong sense of hope and faith.

The second theme related to the children's social and academic abilities. Stakeholders perceived that ASD-related manifestations, such as behaviour difficulties, could be a barrier. Children with ASD who were included usually adapted to the education system, and they became accepted by their classmates; however, inclusion of those who present challenging behaviour was more difficult. This challenging behaviour may interfere with creating positive relationships. Consequently, classmates were more likely to reject such children. Children with high level abilities, although they were still naïve, could cope better with the requirements of the school because of their academic skills. However, at the same time, two children with high abilities were bullied by their classmates in the current study.

The third theme related to school ethos. Schools that were continually changing and became increasingly flexible were more open to fulfil the needs of all children and supported more children with ASD. All schools from my sample were Autism-friendly, this related to factors such as the head teacher’s leadership, the shared responsibility for the inclusion from the teacher, the teaching assistant and the school. Head teachers in this study were school leaders who supported the inclusion of children with ASD. They also helped change negative attitudes of stakeholders. They encouraged teachers and teaching assistants to take joint responsibility for the child with ASD. It is highly recommended that teachers become more involved in and responsible for the inclusion and education of children with ASD.

The use of curriculum adaptations was very important in order to engage the child with the class. In this study, some children with ASD were still receiving a parallel curriculum while others were working with curriculum adaptations. Teaching assistants used systems such as TEACCH and PECS to favour visual learning styles. RDI was also used to support their social skills. Staff from DOMUS was teaching children not only academic topics, also daily living skills.

The fourth theme related to the role of the teaching assistant from DOMUS. In this study, most children with ASD in my study required one-to-one tutoring and a teaching assistant who supported the child in academic and social activities. The teaching assistant’s role was to
inform children and teachers about how to interact with the child with ASD and respond to their concerns. The relationship between the teaching assistant and teacher or classmates was also found relevant to effectively support the inclusion of the child.

The fifth theme concerned the effect of stakeholders' experience on overcoming anxieties of inclusion. One of the more significant findings that emerged from this study was that initially, stakeholders were anxious about the inclusion of children with ASD, but they were likely to overcome it or at least reduce it as they participated actively in the inclusion process of a child, gaining self-confidence and even changing their own attitude from negative to positive. Stakeholders could present anxiety because for most of them, inclusion was something unknown. Moreover, parents were worried that their children with ASD would not be provided with the same help as in a special school. For example, one of the teachers from one of the secondary schools told me about her reluctance to include Hideyi in the school. Now she acknowledged that she had made a mistake because Hideyi had been able to be included and this had been a great experience. Classmates' anxieties were also reduced, and they decided to give the child with ASD a chance and relate to him/her as a new classmate and friend.

The sixth theme concerned teachers' competence. Many teachers felt that they were not competent enough to support a child with SEN because they lacked qualification or information. Teachers and teaching assistants should be trained during their career and encouraged to be creative to undertake differentiation and modifications to the curriculum with an individualized approach, for example, an ASD Person Centre Planning in order to enable them to respond to the needs of all children. Ultimately, the aim or objective is to respond to diversity in education, regardless of whether or not a child has a disability. The teamwork between the teacher and the teaching assistant and the school's staff can affect the inclusion process positively.

Thus, my main recommendation to teachers and stakeholders in Mexico and Latin-America is that most of their feelings of incompetence and anxieties will fade away as teachers and classmates respond to these challenges in a more positive way. Most stakeholders who tried to respond to challenges associated with inclusion valued the experience of helping the child with ASD succeed.
The last theme involved stakeholders' attitudes towards children with ASD. Although stakeholders' attitudes were mostly positive, in everyday activities, it was difficult for teachers and classmates to deal with the challenging behaviours or ASD-related manifestations. Indeed, some stakeholders could hold negative attitudes and discriminate against children with ASD who present emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some schools lacked awareness and understanding of how to include children with ASD into the schools. As a result, DOMUS came to the schools to provide more information to all stakeholders in the form of small seminars to clarify any doubts and misunderstandings that could create barriers. Teachers of children with ASD who felt competent and received training tended to have positive attitudes. Thus, teachers who had experience could interact with the children with ASD and support the inclusion of these children in a more effective way, and this encouraged other children to relate to the children with ASD. As we know, one of the main goals of inclusion is to facilitate the interaction of the child with ASD with their classmates. Moreover, teachers with experience participated fully in the process, working as a team with the teaching assistant and hence collaborating on curriculum adaptations.

The findings suggest that in this study, inclusion has been largely successful in most of these schools. In particular, they have made significant advancements in including children with ASD. Indeed, most of the accounts can serve as exemplars for effective inclusion in Mexico. Different facilitators support the inclusion and participation of children with ASD and help break down barriers. For example, the head teachers, teachers and classmates in this study were open to receive children with ASD, and the curriculum was flexible enough to address their needs. Moreover, attitudes toward children with ASD changed and became more positive. However, some barriers were also noted, for example, teachers still needed to share the responsibility with the teaching assistant as well as a number of important changes and several courses of action need to be made, such as provision of training for teachers, in order to provide similar quality education to other children with ASD in Mexico. This issue will be discussed in the implications section.

### 7.2 Additional Limitations of the Study

In addition to the limitations of this research discussed in the methodology section, other limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings of this research.
Although I collected data from a broad range of stakeholders using different methods, the bulk of the findings were drawn from the interviews and focus groups. Fewer findings were based on my observations, the sociometry, and DOMUS records to which I referred only in a few cases. I collected a huge amount of data and had to be selective with the information on which the results of this research are based.

The second limitation was that only one organisation, DOMUS, supported the sample of children with ASD. This skewed the findings in that they considered only the attitudes towards children with ASD of stakeholders who came from high-income families and were able to pay the fees. Hence, the results of this investigation do not include data from children with ASD who were included by USAER or those who did not have the support of another organisation. Efforts were made to invite other organisations to be able to compare the findings but they were not willing to participate. Consequently, it is not possible to extend the results to the Mexican population of children with ASD.

### 7.3 Implications for children with ASD included by DOMUS and throughout Mexico

The research provides a deeper understanding of how inclusive education of children with ASD works in Mexico City with the support of DOMUS. The inclusion supported by this organisation was successful in most of the cases. Thus, it was helpful to explore the facilitators and barriers of inclusion to know the factors that may contribute to the successful inclusion of children with ASD in Mexico in order to develop policies and implement strategies that would improve the quality of the education for these children.

These findings enhance our understanding of how inclusive education can be improved. Therefore, the following recommendations should be helpful for those who are involved in developing educational policy in Mexico.

1. Professional training for teachers should include information about SEN, ASD, inclusion and practical experience of teaching these children. This is crucial for an effective inclusive education policy. Program for Transformation and Academic Strengthening of Normal School has been developing professional teaching in Mexico. However, this will require an extra effort and investment from the government and teacher training organisations in order to re-orient their pre-service and in-service teacher-education programs to incorporate an inclusive ethos. Carrera
Magisterial should be part of compulsory training that should be provided for teachers and teaching assistants by professionals in Mexico. In particular, teachers and teaching assistants need training to learn to meet the needs of each child with SEN and ASD according to their profile. Incentives for teaching assistants and teachers should be offered to improve their salary and living conditions. In addition, teachers should be provided with extra educational materials so that they do not have to pay for them from their own salary. All of this should enhance teachers and teaching assistants' roles in both schools and government. The implementation of all these strategies should break the vicious circle, which leads to anxiety, and enable the teachers and teaching assistants to feel more confident and motivated.

2. In particular, all necessary steps should be taken to support and inform teachers and teaching assistants that inclusion is operating in the schools. Stakeholders should be provided with programs that would increase their awareness of inclusive education. This would enable them to hold positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN, particularly children with ASD. Stakeholders should be informed about strategies for including children. Awareness rising will help teachers feel more confident and competent to work with children with ASD, and this will help classmates interact more successfully with children and develop an attitude of tolerance towards diversity.

3. Inclusive Schools should develop a positive ethos in order to share inclusive culture and values and an autism friendly environment to support the inclusion of children with ASD. They should have an open door policy and be adapted to and welcome children with ASD. This will require head teachers to be strong democratic leaders who support the work of teachers and teaching assistants. Moreover, all staff members and all children should understand and accept the policy of inclusion within school.

4. The responsibility for including children with ASD should be shared between the teaching assistant and the teacher. Both should actively participate to adapt the curriculum to include children with ASD. These curriculum adaptations should implement the use of aids to favour visual learning styles and differentiation of the
curriculum in order to enhance the education of the child. Schools could invite other stakeholders and in some cases teachers and staff to participate in designing the curriculum. The curriculum has to be adapted to be inclusive according to their particular needs and teach children using flexible methods. It is also important to include informal activities where the child with ASD can learn social skills to interact with others. Transition from preschool through primary and secondary schools should be monitored. It is important to understand that inclusion is an ongoing process that should be evaluated continuously.

5. Schools should adopt some specific educational Programs that are used to support children with ASD in other countries, in particular TEACCH and PECS. In addition, it is relevant to implement helpful strategies, such as `Circle of Friends', and promote a buddy system to provide children with ASD with someone of their age who can teach them interact and develop relationships with classmates, teachers, and teaching assistants. Furthermore, it is crucial to promote anti-discriminatory attitudes, mainly by using an anti-bullying program, for example the one by Olweus (2005) as well as to support the child with ASD by using circle of friends and role playing to teach them strategies to respond in assertive ways (Sullivan, 2000).

In my personal opinion, which is not directly linked to this study but based on my general research experience, an extended literature review and my own background as a Mexican citizen, I strongly believe that changes to the academic system need to be made as well as to the social awareness in order to achieve a real educational commitment towards inclusion. Moreover, this has to reach all sectors of the society, rich and poor.

1. International Conventions signed and ratified by the Mexican government and promoted as national legislation and policies should not remain in inspirational rhetoric. Mexican laws should be enforced and reflected in practice.

2. I think there should be an increased investment in public services to support inclusion and eliminate barriers. It is important to understand that inclusion in Mexico does not require the government to spend large amounts of money. However, the budget for education should be invested more strategically. The Mexican government requires efficient budgetary allocations for inclusion of children with ASD.
Inappropriate human resources practices in the Mexican educational system, where vacancies can be passed on from one generation to other without an objective interview process, should be eradicated, as sometimes people are not even working in these posts. The failure to hire teachers is especially problematic and is one of the reasons for not providing children with ASD with teaching assistants who could support their inclusion in mainstream schools. Teachers’ vacancies should be given to teachers and teaching assistants who are qualified to support children with SEN and ASD.

3. Awareness campaigns about SEN, ASD and inclusion should be conducted through the media throughout the Mexican society. Parents and community members need to be involved; therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness in the society by providing information about SEN. Children need the support of all stakeholders in order to learn different social skills and interact with other classmates.

4. The physical environment for children with ASD should be improved. Children with ASD should be placed in well ventilated, less crowded classes with fewer children, and smaller schools that are likely to be less noisy. Each classroom needs to have a special place with a table for children with ASD and the teaching assistant as well as a designated resource room that could be a helpful option during the recess, although the child should never be left segregated from other classmates.

Overall, the findings offered suggestions on improving inclusive education in Mexico and addressing the needs of children with ASD. These recommendations should help the stakeholders, including parents, professionals, head teachers, teachers and teaching assistants, ensure the best provision of inclusion for children with ASD who present characteristics that are very different from those of other children with disabilities. This should influence local services for children with ASD that are provided by DOMUS, USAER or other non-profit organisations in Mexico City and hence enable more children with ASD to be included in mainstream schools.
7.4 Further Research

This research raised many questions that require further investigation, and it serves as a foundation for future studies on inclusive education in Mexico. It is recommended that further research address the following areas:

First, further studies should be conducted with a larger sample of children with ASD from a broader range of areas and backgrounds attending public and private schools supported also by other organisations or USAER.

Second, further research could focus on teachers’ perceptions of inclusive education in public schools with or without the support of USAER to increase policy makers’ awareness of the inclusion provided by these public services.

Third, this study did not address the perception of children with ASD about their own inclusion into mainstream school. Further work needs to be done to establish whether the child with ASD is academically and socially engaged in the process. More information on how children with ASD are experiencing the inclusion would help us improve the process of inclusion. The voices of children with ASD have to be heard.

Fourth, classmates without disabilities should participate in research on inclusion because they should have more to contribute to the outcomes of children with ASD and also for their own benefits and advantages of the process. This will help the researchers identify the advantages and disadvantages for all the stakeholders in engaging the inclusion process.

Fifth, it would be interesting to compare experiences of inclusion of children with ASD and children with other developmental disorders within the same age group in Mexico to establish whether the same facilitators and barriers appeared in the inclusion of other children with other disabilities.

7.5 Final Personal Reflection

I think that it was helpful to be a researcher with a Mexican cultural background and to be a Spanish native speaker. I am a Mexican citizen and I have lived in this culture and values so I can reflect on my own experiences, beliefs and faith. It is possible that a researcher with a different background would not have interpreted the data in the same way. However, I must
admit that writing a dissertation in a second language was a great challenge, but at the same time, it was an opportunity to structure my thoughts and ideas in order to express myself and get my meaning across as effectively as possible.

I think it was an advantage that I spoke the same language as the people in my sample because having lived in the same culture, I knew what they meant and what they were trying to express. At the same time, I could see my own culture from a broader perspective because I had been living in an international community for the previous four years. My encounters with many different cultures in England helped me see everything from a broader perspective. Entering the schools, I was well aware of my identity as a researcher. They knew that I was an outsider researcher who was carrying out an independent Ph.D. study for educational purposes to help children and not for an economic purpose. I think this was also very helpful for me because I was able to establish a relation with them based on trust and understanding, which was reflected in the fact that stakeholders felt comfortable enough and very open to share their experiences of inclusion with me, allowing me observe them.

This research helped me realize the great need for so many children to be provided with quality inclusive education, and that it is possible for stakeholders to change their thinking from negative to positive after having experienced inclusion for children with ASD. I think that the changes I suggested are crucial for supporting the success of inclusion of children with ASD. As Mahatma Gandhi said, ‘You must be the change that you want to see in the world.’ Overall, this experience touched me in a professional and personal way. In my further career, I will bring the learning experience along with me. I have realised that it is valuable to confront and overcome personal anxieties to experience new things and make further achievements.
References


Cambra, C. & Silvestre, N. (2003). Students with special educational needs in the inclusive


Muris, P., Steerneman, P., Meesters, C., Merckelbach, H., Horselenberg, R., van den Hogen,


Presidencia de la República. (2011). Different interventions for the support of the Law for


Dear Teacher or Parent:

This is an invitation to take part in a research study conducted by Miss Myriam Mojica Martinez, BA in Psychology, MA in Special Educational Needs, current Ph.D. research student from the School of Education in University of Manchester, UK.

The title of this research is The Inclusion of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Mexico and the aim of this research is to know about inclusion into mainstream schools of children with autistic spectrum disorder and the perception of the environment. Also the aim of this study is to obtain the degree of PhD.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1. **How your child was chosen?**

Your child was chosen to participate with a group of 8 children more and their social environment. The children who were chosen were those that are included in mainstream schools by Centro Educativo Domus.
If you choose to participate, your child will be participating in a study case. The researcher who may have access to children has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check. The research will be conducted in the school where the child is included.

Your child’s participation would involve an informal interview observation from 15 to 30 minutes. Observation of children with ASD, classmates and teachers will be conducted during one day of lesson. The sociometric activities will last for 30 minutes.

Parents and teachers will be asked to be involved in an interview. Each interview will last from one to two hours. That will be audiotape recorded. All the recordings will be destroyed after 2 years. If there is any school record of the child with autism, the researcher will attempt to see this file.

It is important that you notice that all data collected will be analysed by the researcher. The information will remain confidential and store in a locker. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. However if you concerned about any risk, you have the right to avoid or stop participation at any moment or miss out any question that you do not feel comfortable with. You can request the results of your child if you are interested in.

The outcomes of this research will help to know the perceptions about inclusion and which barriers should be reduce in order to included more children with autism into Mexican mainstream schools. The results of the research will be published in a dissertation thesis and papers. However names will not be revealed by using pseudonyms.

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Contact for further information

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any moment in the following address:

Myriam Mojica Martínez
PhD student  University of Manchester
E-mail: Myriam.MojicaMartinez@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
Phone: UK Mobile: 07868282776 Mexico (Home):56877571

If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research please contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
Appendix B. Consent Form

The Inclusion of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Mexico

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below. Please return the completed form to your organization, as soon as possible.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio/video-recorded.

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.
I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant                                    Date                                      Signature

Name of person taking consent                         Date                                      Signature

Contact E-mail:________________________________________
Appendix C. Overview of Case Studies

The appendix provides the following information for each child:

- General data for the child.
- General data for the school: mission, vision and values.
- General data obtained from the interviews with parents, teachers, teaching assistants.
- General data from school observations conducted in the classrooms and playground.
- General data from sociometric data.
- General data from focus group.

Preschool Children

Case Study 1: Julian

Julian school’s mission states that the Institution is ‘created to support the family in comprehensive education of their children through a system of interactive learning that will bring effective tools for facilitating their discovery so they can find their vocation and destiny’ (School web page).

The school implemented the High scope system. ‘The system applied in this school relies on a High Scope Curriculum, which is the theory of active learning of Jean Piaget, which asserts that knowledge emerges from the interactions of the child with other objects, children and adults. The interactions were scenarios whose settlement, environment and provision of training materials promote effective learning experiences’ (School web page). Activities create strategies for stimulating challenges from which developmental skills for the child emerge according to his/her potential and his/her interest.

The system helps adults focus their attention on fostering development education in children, that is, on fostering ‘initiative, independence, confidence, creativity, intelligence; as well as attitudes and values to interact at a social level.’ ‘The practice of the system entails daily planning and evaluation sessions. Adults promote care for children, which is given by professionals in continuous process of updating in order to facilitate and improve the performance of the children’ (School web page).
Interview data

Julian’s Mother

Julian’s mother reported that it had been very difficult to obtain a diagnosis. However, the inclusion process of Julian was easier because some friends from the family invited Julian to be integrated within this school. She also said that inclusion of a child with autism could change the life of this child because the child learnt to communicate and interact with others.

‘The inclusion in mainstream schools is important because they have the opportunity to live with other children. Children naturally seek others and try to invite them to play with them. Children are generally sympathetic. It is important to them because they learn languages or words through imitating others, as any other child’ (Julian’s Mother; Autism, Preschool).

Julian’s Headteacher

During the interview with the head teacher, she said that she was very committed to support Julian’s inclusion.

She told me that she had invited Julian because she met his mother in the catholic church. She thought that this could help Julian in his development.

‘A child with autism might lead a more healthy life by being included in a mainstream school.’

Julian’s teaching assistant

The teaching assistant said that the school had an open doors-policy to support the inclusion of Julian. She was impressed by the conduct of the classmates who accepted Julian among them. She said that it was incredible that although sometimes Julian could distract his classmates, these young children could understand Julian and did not mind or react against Julian’s behaviour.

‘I have not seen any disadvantage for his classmates. At times, Julian’s behaviour might disrupt the class. The students can be distracted and see Julian instead of the teacher. But the children already know him and know that there are moments in which Julian does not feel well.’
Julian’s teacher

The teacher said that she was very glad to integrate Julian into the school, and that she had been learning a lot from the teaching assistant. However, she did not feel prepared to include Julian without the support of another adult because she had other children in the classroom that had special needs. She was very nervous to participate in the interview.

‘At the beginning, it was like any other problem. Children were a little distracted by the bad moments of Julian when he resisted to sit or be tolerant of his teaching assistant or when he badly badly or became ill. However, they got used to it’.

Observation Data

Observation of Julian lasted for two days in his classroom and the playground. Both the classroom and the playground were not big but the classroom was nicely decorated and had a lot of games and fun activities for the children.

1st Day

Julian was integrated in every activity. His classmates tried to play with him. They started the day singing a song. During this time, the teaching assistant gave Julian some time to do some puzzles in order to relax.

Planning and activity to improve memory:

All children chose a game that would help them develop their language and improve their interaction skills. The teaching assistant spent some minutes with each child. Julian chose the building area where children were playing the house. Julian loved to have a blanket over his head in order to simulate a small house. They could play with some shoes; he was also adults’ shoes.

Non-language Development

Julian made a circuit with quilted figures, and he passed through all the figures. It seemed that he enjoyed this place when he was alone. The class held a session of music. A little girl liked to play with him during the recess and always called him to come to play with her.
2\textsuperscript{nd} Day.

Julian came and he was angry. He was hitting his teaching assistant. He worked during the class but at some moments, he started to cry. During the recess, he moved far from other children to the edge of the playground. However, one of the girls came after him, hugged him and wanted to play with him. He went further into the corner but the girl insisted on playing with him.

3\textsuperscript{rd} Day

He was angry when he came to the classroom in the morning. He was hitting the teaching assistant and crying because he had not slept well the day before. He ate his lunch alone and played alone in a corner rather than interacting with others. After that, he engaged in some activities.

**Sociometric data**

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**Table C.1 Julian’s Sociometric Data**

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Julian’s significantly high sociometric status. Julian was nominated by 7 out of 7 of his non-disabled classmates who wanted to work with him.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that Julian was equally accepted by his non-disabled peers because 7 out of 7 wanted to play with him.

From the sociometric measures, it could be seen that classmates liked to interact with Julian during the class as well as during the recess.

**Case Study 2: Pedro**

Pedro lived with his mother, a director of Human Resources in an important organisation, and his father, at that time unemployed. He did not have any brothers or sisters.

Pedro had been a premature baby and had several health problems. As a result, he had to stay in hospital for long periods. The mother reported that when he was 2 and half years old, he
had changed from being a very lovely child to a very strange child. At first, his parents thought he could not hear and went to visit some neurologists. Finally, in the nursery, a teacher told them that he seemed to be autistic. The parents obtained another evaluation of Pedro in DOMUS and they confirmed this diagnosis.

He was integrated in a Private Montessori school. It was a house with two big classrooms. The staff consisted of two people and Pedro’s teaching assistant in the classroom. Pedro’s teacher was also the School’s head teacher.

School

Philosophy:
‘The fundamental principles of the MONTESSORI pedagogy are based on autonomy, independence, initiative, ability to choose, the development of the ability to choose and of self-discipline. Other aspects addressed in this methodology are order, concentration, respect for others and for him’ (School web page).

Vision

‘The vision of our school is to teach people to have high self-esteem, be self-confident, trust others, develop abilities to make decisions, and take responsibility; being sure of what they want and when they become adults being aware of what they are.’ (School web page)

Mission

‘Our mission is to be a committed institution to the education of its students in all aspects, primarily formative and cultural areas. Thus, our aim is to respect children without ever touching their emotional and personal dignity by providing a work environment for its self-satisfaction with freedom and discipline’ (School web page).

Pedro’s Mother Interview

Pedro’s mother told me that she was not sure about the benefits for the child. However, she thought inclusion had been a good process in his development. She spoke of how difficult it had been for her to be working and at the same time to be taking care of a child with autism. However, she also told me that if she did not have the job, it would have been impossible for her to integrate Pedro in a mainstream school because it was very expensive to pay the school fees.
‘I think, although I can't say how much, I think that it helps him to be with mainstream children, you could not say what he had learnt from whom but I am sure he had learnt it from the integration process.’

Teacher and Head teacher

The teacher told me about the inclusion of Pedro during the interview. She suggested that the inclusion of a child with ASD was very useful for raising awareness of what ASD was as well as of how they could interact with him. She would also rather not have a teaching assistant inside the classroom because in the Montessori system, it was better that the child could be without the support of a teaching assistant all day to increase the freedom of the child.

‘The children learn the equity and diversity when they have classmates with special needs. They learn that we are all equal and deserve the same respect and equal treatment. They are small children and when they go into a shopping centre, these are the children who will not be shocked by a child with special needs. They see it so naturally.’ Teaching assistant

Dania

Dania was Pedro’s teaching assistant. She was a language therapist specializing in Developmental Disorders and neuro-psycho developmental problems. She had finished the degree one year ago. She mentioned that approaching Pedro was difficult for her at first. However, she suggested that this was a great opportunity for him to be included.

‘For me, it is a very good option for these children. It is not only about including them in the academics but also in the society.’

Dora

Pedro’s teaching assistant Dania got another job; therefore Dora, his current therapist, was going to the school with him for the last months of the year. During the interview, she told me that she thought that Montessori had been a good education model because it did not force Pedro to keep up with his classmates; instead, he could work at his own pace while being included with more children.
‘Everything is at his own pace, the school respect his development. Also I think that the classmates are already aware of the situation and that Pedro can now stay in a place with other children’.

Observation Data

The observation with Pedro lasted one day because the school did not allow anyone to visit the school for more than one day. I observed Pedro during the class and outside in the playground.

Children engaged in their own activity. The classroom was very silent. Adults did not speak to each other, they only whistled. They were listening to classical music. Pedro sometimes screamed but it appeared the children were used to it. Some children talked to each other but Pedro did not interact with any of them. Indeed, I was not able to observe any interaction between Pedro and any classmates. It appeared he only interacted with his teaching assistant. The teaching assistant helped Pedro go to the toilet. Pedro rejected the teacher and looked tearful, touching his eyes. He started working because the teaching assistant told him that he had to work. He started roll the thread into small balls. However, he stopped working and finally he lay on the desk.

For the second activity, he pinned the needle into a small pillow. The teaching assistant invited the child to touch the needle and pillow. Sometime he touched her ears and yelled, and he also said no. Another child came to see Pedro. Pedro saw him but continued with his work. He did not interact with this child. The teaching assistant congratulated him and gave him a kiss. He found my pen and started playing with it. The teacher asked him to write on the small blackboard. Pedro drew and cleaned the blackboard. The teaching assistant took him to the shelves in the room so that he could take the material, he took the material back to the right place.

There was no interaction with other children during the entire day. However, the principal told me that when it was his turn, he gave his lunch to all the children.

During the recess, he did not play with other children. He observed all other children. He fell on the floor and hit his head. He liked to move, so the teaching assistant took him out of the classroom. He stared at the fish. Pedro only said a few words, for example, when the teacher called him, he only said ‘come’.
Comments:

Because of the educational method of the school, Montessori System and because the time allotted to research in this school was not sufficient, it was not possible to do sociograms

Case 3: Daniel

Daniel School’s mission

‘is to provide quality bilingual education and equity to all children, inviting them to know more, to be interested and motivated to learn through play, enhancing their reflexive and mathematics’ thinking’ (School web page).

Vision

‘is to be a prestigious and competitive school. It involves attempting to reach the best, promoting the entire development of pupils with a team of head teachers, teachers and parents who are committed to fulfil the individual needs of each child, encouraging the development of abilities, habits and values of children for a lifetime’ (School web page).

Daniel lived with his mother who was thirty-seven years old and she had a BA, but she was not working. His father was forty years old, and he was an architect. Daniel’s little brother, who was four years old, went to the same school but was in Kinder I.

His mother reported that a psychologist diagnosed Daniel with autism when he was one and a half. She told them that the child had emotional difficulties because of the problems between parents. Finally, his diagnosis was definitely confirmed at three years of age. She thought that Daniel’s development would have been better if he had been diagnosed one and a half years earlier.

Interview data

Interview with Daniel’s Mother

During the interview, Daniel’s mother was very open and it was one of the most emotional interviews. She suggested that she was ‘a mother of one special and a one normal child’ (Daniel’s mother interview). Thus, she had learnt a lot from both experiences. She suggested that it had been very useful to integrate her child because it had been not only enhancing the independence and development of the child but also support for all the family, as they were
able to have a more ordinary life. She also said that her family had been supportive, helping them pay for Daniel’s school fees. She realized that for most parents, it was very expensive and difficult to integrate a child with autism.

‘The integration gave us a healthier life for the family. For me it was healthier, to take my son to school regularly with mainstream children during regular hours, and then try to handle the child as a regular child, and he tried to adapt himself because life is not so structured and , all the time you have changes’ Daniel’s mother

Head teacher

‘It has taught Daniel’s classmates that there are children with Special Educational Needs. Maybe now, when they cross paths with a child with SEN, they no longer stare feeling sorry for him because they had realized that Daniel is also a child; he just has different needs and that is why he has a teaching assistant. They are not scared anymore to see Daniel shouting or maybe hitting.’

Teaching assistant

She had been Daniel’s teaching assistant for the last two years. She told me that she felt very happy because she had been witnessing many changes in Daniel’s behaviour and abilities since his inclusion. She also thought that teachers needed to participate more in his inclusion, because sometimes she felt that teachers lacked commitment. They were working with other children and if she was not there, it was difficult for the teachers to help him.

‘I have seen many advances in him. Daniel says hello, goodbye, gives kiss. This allows his classmates to hug him or touch him and play with him in the yard. They choose him as a team member. They include him in class and sport activities. They said I am in the team with Daniel. He has made all this advances in socialization; this would have been otherwise very difficult because he is letting others break his structure.’ Teaching Assistant Leticia

Teacher

During the interview with the teacher Karime, she suggested that she knew that it was the teacher’s responsibility to include Daniel and not only the responsibility of the teaching
assistant. She felt that she was committed to the process and she would like to participate more.

‘We are all teachers and it is our job to give him a place, maybe provide him with material if the teaching assistant does not have it. We are the ones that have to cover that role, and we must take that role. We need to include them (children with SEN) in our activities, because he is one from the group.’

**Observation Data**

Daniel was observed for three days, in two different classrooms and in the playground.

1st Day

Daniel sat with the girls, and they kissed him. He outlined the lines. He could outline the letters with the support of the teaching assistant. He made figures. Although he could get distracted sometimes, in a few minutes, he worked perfectly. Classmates seemed to be used to him, his moving hands or noise he made.

In the English class, he approached the blackboard to compare different numbers, the first number he did with the help of classmates. Classmates helped him say which animal it was; they always helped him.

He ate his lunch, went out and came back to the classroom. He repeated after his teacher, for example, the day or weather, and he was also able to express when he needed to go to the toilet. In the Spanish class, he did not interact with the teacher as much as he did with the English teacher.

**Sociometric Data**

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*Table C.2 Daniel's Sociometric Data*
Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Daniel’s significantly high sociometric status. Overall, 11 out of 13 of Daniel’s non-disabled classmates wanted to work with him. Only one peer wanted to work with him sometimes and another one did not want to work with him.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess also showed that 11 out of 13 Daniel’s non-disabled classmates wanted to play with him while two classmates liked to play with him sometimes.

From the sociometric measures, it could be seen that classmates liked to interact with Daniel when he was in the class and when he was in the recess.

**Primary School Cases**

Sebastian and Ian studied in a Public primary School.

**School**

**Mission**

This school is an ‘inclusive organization that promotes the quality and equality to develop competencies for life and educate upright citizens who can achieve all their potential during the different levels of the basic education’ (School web page).

**Vision**

‘The school has a team of respectful and collaborative professionals, who are committed to promote the competence’ development in order to enhance the students’ optimum achievement’ (School web page).

**Philosophy**

‘Respect, participation, and commitment to facilitate a pleasant interaction and acceptance between teachers and students, to promote a collaborative work in which proposals enhance the common well being, and to bring to action the job proposals’ (School web page).

**Case Study 4: Sebastian**

Sebastian lived with his mother who was working at home and with his brother who was a 10-year-old student. His father had died in a car accident while Sebastian ended up in the
hospital for four months as a result of this accident. His mother said that he ‘is a miracle of life’.

_I believe the theory of vaccines. Sebastian was a child who could spoke full sentences but overnight, he stopped listening and paying attention. I played with him with stickers. Suddenly, he could not play. I went on vacation for a week and when I returned, it was like he was not himself anymore. He had a very strong infection, they gave him the triple and the next day he was not my son anymore’_ Sebastian’s mother (the mother believes that Sebastian has developed the disease because of the MMR triple vaccine).

The teaching assistant suggested that he had adapted to the school quite easily because this school was rigid, systematic and conservative. He can not tolerated noise made by others, especially from those who were not well known to him. New classes were difficult for him because he preferred routine. When he started the computer class, he was angry without reason.

Moreover, the teacher and teaching assistant had many disagreements, and they could not communicate with each other.

**Interview Data**

**Interview with Sebastian’s mother**

Sebastian’s mother suggested that although the school had been very helpful, it had been very difficult for the family to integrate Sebastian in this school. Public schools were not well prepared to receive children with learning difficulties.

_‘I had many barriers, starting with the Ministry of Education. I can tell you that I never thought that Sebastian would be studying in a public school. You have probably been told that he was integrated at a private primary school until fifth grade. DOMUS then looked for a school and found a space in a public school. We have been struggling because it was even more difficult in public schools compared to a private school. Since USAER does not have the proper knowledge, they are not open to learn from DOMUS about how they should educate a child with autism. I feel that they need training. It is partly responsibility of the parents to tell USAER that my son has these features. I see that there are tremendous spaces, some gaps from heaven to Earth. Then I think there was a unit in the school with the_
Interview with head teacher

During the interview, the head teacher suggested that Sebastian was well integrated and that most classmates accepted Sebastian in the group. However, the biggest barrier had been the lack of communication between the teacher and the teaching assistant because both of them had different personalities.

‘The advantages for them (children with ASD) are that they can socialize and they get used to being in society. For us it is to learn how to interact. Because sometimes we do not know how to include them, in that case we learn how to do it from the activities that you (DOMUS) suggest’ (Sebastian’s principal).

Interview with teaching assistant

The TA felt that her own personality had not helped the inclusion of Sebastian in the school. She was not used to big schools. She admired how Sebastian had been able to cope with the public school, but at the same time, she felt guilty that she had not been able to communicate with the teacher and classmates, because this could have helped Sebastian’s integration in the classroom.

‘It has been wonderful to see how slowly Sebastian has tried to tolerate having so many classmates, the noise and the heat and to learn to follow instructions’.

‘I feel guilty, no, no. I mean the right word is responsible for the failures about these bad situations. I could integrate him better, but it is very difficult because they are many children, and Sebastian has his own personality. Sebastian is Sebastian and he is a boy that if he feels good energy from you he will do it, but if not, he will not do it. He is different and this can be difficult for others to understand’.

Interview with teacher

The teacher told us how difficult it had been to integrate Sebastian in the classroom. Although she was open to receiving him in her classroom, she never expected it was going to be so difficult to handle the emotional and behavioural difficulties that Sebastian presented.
In addition, she thought that it had been more difficult because of the lack of communication between her and the teaching assistant.

‘Sebastian stimulated himself with sounds like AAA that he shouted very strongly, which has affected the classroom. Suddenly, my students and I realized that it was hurting our heads. I told them sorry, I know it hurts but I cannot try to silence Sebastian. Before the teaching assistant asked Sebastian to be silent, a classmate asked him this. For me, to ask Sebastian to be silent caused disruption in the class and we lost the context.’

This teacher was a special educational USAER’S teacher responsible for all children with special needs who did not have a training teacher. She explained how difficult it could be to support all the children with SEN integrated in this school.

‘USAERS are the units of service in regular education and these groups were formed because inclusion policy requires an interdisciplinary team made up of a psychologist, a language therapist, a social worker and a special education teacher. The teachers would ask me, ‘you are my Advisor and the child’s, right? Are you not going to work with him individually? Are you not going to take him from the class?’ Because this, is what teachers requested first. I know that for them, this was a moment where they could take a break. Definitely, as I told you before, their hope was that you would return them without the disorder. Teachers think that if the child does not work, they are worried about how they will be able to work with him. It was difficult to face the challenge. Moreover, there are other committed teachers in this school. Usually these teachers were the ones who could help the child a lot.’

Observation Data

Sebastian was observed for three days, inside the classroom, during the gym class, at the playground during the recess as well as at ‘the Children’s Day Festival’.

1st Day

Sebastian underwent individual therapy from 8:00 to 9:00 AM because he needed some time to relax. He made a lot of sounds, saying Mother (mama), but without trying to call his mother. He liked to smell the hair of the girls.
Concerning sensorial activities, the teaching assistant tossed balls to him and he touched them. He also walked in the Stilts.

He presented emotional and behavioural difficulties, for example, he hit his head against the wall because he did not want to eat breakfast and then he became angry because he was hungry.

He was comparing cards with equal names. He made some cards, but he got bored. He got distracted easily, but he tried to pay attention again. He laughed, came closer and started laughing. He saw the TA. The TA used TEACH and PECS. They used some blocks (times) and reinforcements.

Some of the general activities in which Sebastian engaged included putting the bottle caps in an empty egg box, taking some objects out of sacks, or threading.

2nd Day.

Sebastian’s mother brought him into the classroom. He started to cry and the teaching assistant did not know if it was because he had not eaten breakfast or if it was because he had missed his mother.

The teaching assistant gave a foot massage to the child. He made many sounds, like ‘ma, ma, ya, ya’, without any real meaning.

Sebastian behaved differently with the therapist and with the teaching assistant. He took some objects out of sacks and then put other objects back inside. He liked the swing and the merry-go-round. He threaded figures and made noises.

It was evident that the teaching assistant and teacher had many communication problems. The teaching assistant did not try to integrate the child within the group while practicing for an event. If Sebastian was annoyed by the noise, the TA took Sebastian to a room far from the classmates.

During recess, he ate and moved far from other children, to the edge of the playground, without interacting with others.

3rd Day: ‘Children’s Day Festival’

This day is a free day for children to have fun and enjoy. There were special activities.
The teacher invited Sebastian to participate but he did not want to participate. The noises annoyed him, and the teaching assistant supported his decision not to spend time with his classmates. The teacher was angry and tried to keep Sebastian close to the group.

**Sociometric Data**

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*Table C.3 Sebastian’s Sociometric Data*

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess supported Sebastian’s significantly low sociometric status. Only 11 out of 30 non-disabled classmates wanted to work with Sebastian compared to 8 of his non-disabled peers who did not want to interact with him during class and 10 that only wanted to work with him sometimes.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that Sebastian was less accepted by his non-disabled peers because only 6 of them wanted to play with him, 9 of them liked to play with him sometimes and 15 did not want to play with him at all. This means that his level of acceptance among his classmates was low. Moreover, he was accepted less during recess time when playing at the playground than during the class.

**Case Study 5: Ian**

He lived with his mother who was a nutritionist. His parents were divorced. Ian refused to associate with his father, towards whom he developed an inexplicable negative attitude. He was a single child and had no brothers. He did not do any activity during the evening because he always stayed at home. He was very close to his grandfather. Ian was observed when he came back school after two months of being in rehabilitation after he sprained his ankle.

**Interview with Ian’s mother**

Ian’s mother suggested that the school had been very open to support all Ian’s needs. She also told me that classmates and teachers took special care of Ian. However, she was not happy about all the changes in teaching assistants that Ian had had during the last year. She was also worried about the possibility of changing the teaching assistant in the next school year.
‘Ian has been in this school for the last three years, everybody loves him so much, the teachers, the classmates ask him to play with them; not only their classmates, but also children from other grades. They take care of him. If he needs something, the school allows it. He had recently had an accident and broke his leg, and the schools were planning to take the entire group to a classroom in the first floor in order to help Ian.’

**Interview with head teacher**

The head teacher suggested that Ian’s inclusion had been great, and he was just like any other child in the school. The only difference was that he came with a teaching assistant. He expressed different attitudes towards his classmates when he was experiencing changes of routine.

‘We are grateful that DOMUS gave us this great opportunity because it included the child with autism as well as our children. The children are feeling great.’ Ian’s principal.

**Interview with teaching assistant**

The teaching assistant suggested that although Ian was included in the school, teachers still lacked training and information. The teaching assistant told me that her salary was only £200 (Mexican $ 4000) per month working from Monday to Friday. She provided therapy in the evenings only two days per week and she earned the same £200 (Mexican $ 4000). Therefore, she had decided to leave the position of a teaching assistant.

‘Most teachers believed that the profiles of both children with autism in this school, Ian and Sebastian, were the same. Thus they were expecting to be able to treat and interact in the same way with them, but it was not happening and they wondered why not.’

**Interview with teachers**

The teacher told me that although Ian had been integrated, they experienced a situation with a child from an upper grade who was following Ian to the toilet every time he went on his own and was asking Ian to pull his pants and underpants down, making fun of him. One of Ian’s classmates told the teacher and the teacher became aware of the situation and talked to this child. He never did it again.
-The gym teacher suggested that: ‘It has been a very grateful experience to be with Ian. I think that it has been the same for the classmates. Ian has achieved incredible things. Once I saw him doing a difficult activity exactly as all the classmates, coordinating his hands and feet. I said Wow.’

**Observation Data**

Ian was observed for two days inside his classroom and playground during the recess and ‘the Children’s Day Festival’.

**1st Day: The Children’s Day Festival**

All children were happy that Ian came back to school after he had an accident that had hurt his feet, although he was using a wheelchair. Children were taking turns in taking him around the playground of the school. He participated in one of the carnival games of the Children’s Day Festival, eating doughnuts. His classmates seemed to be supportive of him. They were dancing because of the celebration, and they were pushing the wheelchair around the classroom and eating. He was interacting with his classmates. He was talking with them and they were hugging him. One girl in particular was playing with him.

**2nd Day**

Ian said hello to me and he asked me my name. His timetable was the following: Calendar, Play with flour, Cut paper, Word, Massage, Spanish, Outline, Massage, Recess, Drawing, Mathematics, play with play dough.

‘Musical ball’: During this game, children were passing a ball around while a song was being played; when the song stopped, whoever had the ball was the one to leave the game.

The teacher inside the classroom made an activity to integrate the children. The relationship between teacher and teaching assistant was good.

‘Hot potato game’: The teacher asked the children to pass the ball around to all classmates, when the music stopped, the child who was holding the ball lost, and the child was asked to hug someone or answer something. Ian kept the ball, so he lost. One of her friends said ‘Ian, please go to the front’. He stood up and he had to answer some quick questions, such as what he liked to eat. He answered meat and rice. ‘Who are your friends?’ He answered Luis, Andres, Carlos, Daniel, Rodrigo (he mentioned many of the classmates’ names).
The teacher told him to hug someone. Next child who lost had to receive a hug from someone else. Teacher asked Ian to hug him. Ian came to the front and gave this child two hugs. Although this child did not like hugs, he did not say anything to Ian.

Activity with flour: Ian wrote some numbers, letters and figures in a container full of flour. For example, he was doing happy and sad faces. During the class, some of the classmates came to the table to see what Ian was doing.

Recess:

He ate his lunch alone, some children were around but he did not interact with them. He did not run with the others.

His curriculum was similar to his classmates’ curriculum most of the time; however, at that moment, he had been away in recovery without coming to school for two months, so it was going to take him some time to catch up. Therefore, he was working on the same activities but in shorter periods.

**Sociometric Data**

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**Table C.4 Ian’s Sociometric Data**

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Ian’s significantly high sociometric status. Overall, 14 out of 17 of his non-disabled classmates wanted to work with him. Only two people wanted to work with him sometimes and no children indicated that they did not want to work with him.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that Ian was equally accepted by his non-disabled peers because 13 out of 17 wanted to play with him, 3 sometimes liked to play with him, and none indicated that they did not want to play with him. This means that his level of acceptance among the classmates was high during the class and during the recess in the playground.
Case Study 6: Karla

School

She is studying in a catholic school. The school did not want to provide further information about the school. She was accepted in this school, because her older sister was attending this school.

Interview Data

Interview with Karla’s mother

The mother was concerned that as time passed and Karla’s classmates developed normally, they would become aware of a bigger difference in her language. Thus, they could discriminate against her, and she would no longer be so well integrated by her classmates. She also said how she was trying to help her child.

‘We try the Son-rise Program, it is a therapy in the United States in which the therapist interacts with the boy with autism by imitating many things, if the boy turned the plate, the therapist turned the plate until the boy obtained a personal communication with her. It is the Son-rise program? It is a treatment in USA. I did not know about the treatment but in an empirical way, I did it. She was crying and I needed to teach her that this was not right without punishing her because she was not going to understand. Therefore, I imitated her crying and I asked her. Thus, it looks pretty, no? She stopped crying.’

Interview with teacher

The teacher suggested that Karla was not her most difficult case inside the classroom. She thought that Karla was a very good student. She said that she had more cases of children to be worried about, for example, children whose parents were divorcing and they were presenting greater behavioural difficulties compared to Karla who had an autistic spectrum disorder.

‘Perhaps classmates think that she does not speak or that… also I had another very small child who did not speak well. Then they related Karla more or less with this other child. However, Karla was very intelligent, and she was ready very fast. She was a wonder girl, and then they did not relate her with any other problem. They usually correct her.’
**Observation Data**

Karla was observed during one day in the classroom and in the playground. I was permitted to be there only for one day because school did not allow more visits.

Karla did not need a teaching assistant. She was socially and academically well integrated. Karla came inside the classroom like all her classmates; she stood up to return a book. During this day they were being tested with the Enlace Assessment (assessment for all the primary students in the country). Karla asked for help from the teacher. Karla needed reinforcement from the teacher at several points.

The teacher had to explain little by little. Karla read perfectly but she easily got lost so the teacher had to point out her mistakes. The teacher taught the class without making any change. Karla spoke with her classmates, with one child in particular, to ask for some games. Another child spoke to her. Karla asked questions to the teacher and asked for the teacher’s permission to leave the classroom. Karla had symbolic play. Karla worked, painted, and looked at the blackboard. Her drawings had nothing to do with the class theme. Karla did not use PECS or TEACCH.

For some days when Karla just start school, it was difficult for Karla when the teacher was absent, she would cry, but now she was dealing better with that situation. For example, when the teacher did not come to school because of broken leg, Karla explained the reason to other children.

**Sociometric Data**

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*Table C.5 Karla’s Sociometric Data*

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Karla’s sociometric status. Overall, 10 out of 16 non-disabled classmates wanted to work with her and five did not want to work with her.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed similar results as sociometry during class, because 9 out of 16 wanted to play with her, one wanted to play sometimes, and five
did not want to play with her. This meant that Karla’s level of acceptance among her classmates during the class and during the recess in the playground was similar.

**Secondary School Cases**

**Irvin and Andrea**

**School**

Irvin and Andrea were attending a private school. This school was associated with an upper class because it was private and expensive.

**Mission**

‘The mission of the school is to help students grow into well-rounded individuals with high academic achievement using a holistic and humanistic culture to develop their abilities, talents and potentials. Its strength is in its values, love of the truth, justice, freedom and peace, with the aim to reach their potential and continue to learn for their whole lives. This means the application of the universal values of honesty, equality, responsibility and harmony’ (School’s web page).

**Vision**

‘The vision of the school is to become an innovative educational establishment with the most prestigious scientific, technological and artistic facilities, sustained by self-discipline, respect for others, patriotism and the core universal values at the heart of their practices. The school has a quality standard, with indicators to evaluate every teacher who is part of the institutional policy towards continuous improvement’ (School’s web page).

**Case Study 7: Irvin**

He had developed his nonverbal communication and in this way, he interacted with others. He showed ritualistic behaviour, doing things repeatedly. For example, he watched the same video of Dumbo or any video of Walt Disney many times a day on the computer. His cognition was not the same as that of his classmates’. He was learning with a parallel curriculum.

Irvin came from a catholic family, a father who was retired, a mother who was working independently and a twin sister who was the same age and was a student. He had been
studying at School X. After the diagnosis, this school did not agree for Irvin to remain at the school. Irvin entered an organization for children with autism called CLIMA and was not integrated for three years. Then he came to DOMUS, and he was integrated in a primary school.

The mother said that Irvin had been born without any disability; he was a typically developing child who was usually laughing. However, at the age of eighteen months, Irvin had the vaccination for MMR. After the vaccination, he came home sick. She believed that the MMR vaccination caused the problem, as Irvin was not ready for it at that time.

Irvin’s mother stated that he returned ill from the doctor. The family thought it was normal. He was not feeling well. Then, he was not responding when his name was called. Dramatically he stopped caring about his family. He forgot how to speak when he was one and a half years old. They went to the doctor, and they were told to wait. When he was two years old, the doctors conducted hearing tests. The parents started going from one doctor to another. Finally, he was diagnosed at three years of age by a pediatrician from a hospital in Boston. Since that moment, Irvin’s parents changed his diet and he started to exercise everyday for one and a half hours. He was put on the medications Risperdal and Capetespal.

**Interview Data**

**Interview with Irvin’s Mother**

The mother felt very grateful to the school because the head teacher, teacher and classmates had been really supportive of Irvin. The head teacher told her that they were waiting for a child like Irvin to be integrated in the school.

‘When we came to the school the principal thanked us because he told us that they were looking for a special kid to be included in his school because they think it would be helpful to other kids. When Carmen and I listened to that, I just cried. When they said thank you for considering our school, I cried. How can I tell you that I was desperately looking for a school and when I found one, they were grateful about Irvin’s integration.’ Irvin’s mother
Interview with Head teacher

The head teacher believed that it was a blessing that a child with autism was included in everyday activities because it had helped raise awareness among the classmates, and they had learnt to embrace the values of everyday life.

‘Particularly since DOMUS offered this opportunity to me, I am the one who has to be thankful. You are doing us a favour. Given how society is not aware of the special needs of other people who need us, we need them to see real life.’ (Irvin’s head teacher).

Interview with Coordinator

The coordinator believed that the inclusion process had been possible because of the support of all stakeholders, and especially the ability of Irvin to react in the classroom. She also spoke about how nice it had been for the teachers and classmates to have the experience of including Irvin in the classroom.

‘It is teamwork involving the teachers, classmates and also Liliana, the teaching assistant. If he wants to do something, he does it. For example, he cuts, draws, or paints whenever he wants. However, if he does not want to, he folds his arms and covers his ears. It is a shared job’ (Berna, Irvin’s Teacher).

Interview with teaching assistant

The teaching assistant suggested that the inclusion experience had been rich and that she had only experienced positive reactions to his inclusion. She told me how helpful it had been to have the support of the stakeholders.

‘I feel great; I have not seen any barrier at all. If I suggest that we should do something, they do it. Everybody participates and helps. They were nice and very open people. We do not have any problem with the classmates’ parents. In other schools, sometimes it has not been such an enjoyable experience’ (Teaching assistant).

Observation Data

Irvin was observed for three days. He was observed in classroom with different teachers and during the recess in the small restaurant at the school. I was able to see the interaction
between Irvin and his classmates and teachers. They were very nice and helpful with him. They had been learning how to approach him and accept him without feeling irritated if Irvin disrupted the class or something distracted his attention.

1st Day

Ernesto came and asked Irvin if he had brought the material. Irvin had his own desk. Some of Irvin’s classmates were in the room. They said hello to him and tickled him. He showed his PECS to the classmates. The classmates sat in different groups.

Classmates seem to have a good relation with Irvin. Irvin touched the hand of one of his classmates to say hello. Irvin also touched the hand of his teacher. He made some drawings, the classroom was noisy, and so Irvin covered his ears to protect them from the noise. Most teachers were close to Irvin but the Spanish teacher only came when he asked for her.

Mathematics’ class: The teacher did not attend, so he stayed with a friend. In a different day, he interacted with the teacher when she graded his work. This teacher pushed him to work hard.

Recess: During the recess, Irvin was interacting the most with his classmates at the small School’s restaurant. However, he was always interacting with the same people.

During the recess, Irvin, Andrea, their teaching assistants and often the same children were sitting in the same place. One of the classmates asked Irvin for some money to buy food. The teaching assistants told Irvin to give the other child the money. The classmate said he would never forget to pay Irvin.

2nd Day

Ethics class

Irvin stayed silent while engaging in an activity inside the circle. The teacher asked Irvin to say her name until he said it right. He also interacted with the teacher when he took his work to the teacher.

Computer class

Most of the time, Irvin liked watching videos of Disneyland. In this case, the teaching assistant tried to adapt the curriculum using a software program, to compare figures.
Gym class

Irvin did not like sports, so he avoided this class, as he did not like to exercise. In this class, the role of the teaching assistant diminished with the presence of some of the classmates and the teacher who helped Irvin do the activities.

Sociometric Data

It was easier for the classmates to interact with Irvin during the recess than during the class time.

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Table C.6 Irvin’s Sociometric Data

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Ian’s medium sociometric status. Overall, 14 out of 24 of non-disabled classmates wanted to work with him. Only seven people wanted to work with him sometimes while two did not want to work with him.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed 10 out of 24 wanted to play with him, 8 wanted to play with him sometimes and two did not want to work with him. From the sociometric measures, it can be seen that fewer classmates preferred to interact with Irvin during the recess than during the class. Many possible factors could have affected this outcome, such as the following: he sat far from his classmates and children preferred to play and interact not only eat lunch at the playground during recess.

Focus Group: Irvin’s peers perceived that the contribution from a child with autism such as Irvin was rich because he was supporting them in their work. A child suggested that he was afraid of how he could interact with the child with autism. In fact, with time and experience, he learnt to accept Irvin.
Pupils learnt that every single person, with or without autism, was unique and it was a rich experience to interact with everyone. In addition, the child with autism had the opportunity to learn from their peers. In this way, they all learnt from one another.

Children found that one of the advantages of being around a child with autism was that they got the attention from teachers who gave their group more benefits, for example more time or support.

Children also mentioned some minor disadvantages, for example, they reported that children with autism might steal and eat their food or try to cut their food for them. Sometimes, it was difficult for children with autism to understand what peers were saying, feeling that their time has been wasted. They also told me that Irvin was disobedient and sometimes he distracted the group or got lost so the teacher had to find him.

Children thought that only few people supported Irvin’s inclusion because he was always interacting with the same people all the time. They suggested that more children should interact with him. The experience helped them open their minds to meeting other children with ASD and accept diversity as part of their life. They were learning to help others and treat them in the same way as other children.

Children learnt to understand other children’s differences and accept diversity.

The most important finding was that Irvin’s classmates considered him their friend, and not only another classmate.

‘I like that Irvin is with us in the classroom, I am one of the children who is closer to Irvin, and he is my friend. I cannot see any disadvantage of having him here’

(David, Irvin’s Classmate).

Case Study 8: Andrea

Andrea came from a wealthy family. Her father was an executive, her mother worked as a volunteer and her twenty-year-old brother was an undergraduate student. They had lived for many years outside Mexico City but moved back this year.
Interview Data

Interview with Andrea’s mother

The interview with Andrea’s mother lasted for two hours. She was doing some voluntary work to integrate children with special needs and she had been training people in the Son-Rise program who could provide therapy for her child. She had been working hard to find methods that would enhance Andrea’s socialisation and teach her to be more independent. She also told me about how expensive it could be to have a child with autism. She said:

‘For Andrea it is very important. In this way, she can learn to behave when she is integrated. It is great that we can go to a restaurant now. Her quality of life improves every day, as she can feel integrated everywhere. She can go to the shows, theatre and cinema. She is learning how to react in each of these places. These are the benefits of the integration.’

‘The biggest barrier is the lack of money. It is very expensive to have a special child. If you want to give them the best opportunities to become included, it is more expensive to have more therapies. It is very difficult for families of children who are living in poverty. The economical resources are an important aspect. The diet, medicines, school, integration, and therapy are very expensive.’

Interview with head teacher

The head teacher believed that including children with autism had been a blessing and he had learnt a lot from the experience. He also told me how difficult it was for the teachers in the beginning because they felt that a new teacher (teaching assistant) y in the classroom presented a threat. On the contrary, later, teachers found that it was not difficult and that they should continue practicing inclusion in the classroom. This experience was beneficial to all classmates, not only the child with ASD.

‘In the beginning, it was a traumatic experience, because of the lack of information and experience. Teachers would also find it terrifying to make a mistake. They feel that someone was watching or keeping an eye on them. However, little by little, they understood that it is an opportunity for both Andrea and Irvin to be part of the community. I only found benefits’ (Andrea’s principal).
Interview with the coordinator

The interview with the coordinator was very emotional. She cried at the end and told me that it had been a great experience. She was convinced that everyone who was part of the process had learnt a lot.

‘I cannot see any disadvantage, the entire community benefitted’ (Beatriz, Andrea and Irvin’s coordinator).

Interview with teaching assistant

The teaching assistant told me about the inclusion process of Andrea as well as about the government’s job and the lack of resources that prevented the integration of many children with autism in the country.

‘The principal advantage was for the peers. This school gives these children the chance to practice the values in which the school believes. They learn from the daily life, without much theory. They are aware, conscious and open’ (Carmen, Andrea’s teaching Assistant).

Interview with gym teacher

This teacher was very interested in the inclusion of children with autism. During his interview, he told me that he had learnt a lot and became more open to teaching children with autism.

‘For the entire community, inclusion is very important because it increases the awareness of what special education means. Everybody can now understand in one way or another what it means to have autism and how we can interact with an autistic child’ (Andres, Andrea’s Teacher).

Observation Data

Andrea was observed for two days. She was observed in the classroom with different teachers and during the recess in the small school restaurant.
1st Day

Andrea was drawing on a piece of paper using different colours. A classmate asked the teaching assistant for a pencil and she advised her to ask Andrea. Andrea gave him pencil of another colour, the classmate asked Andrea for another colour and Andrea gave him the right one. The classmates said hello to her by touching her hand.

Spanish Class:

She recognized dates with the support of TEACCH calendar. She is able to cut and pasted in her notebooks. She answered promptly when the teacher asked her a question.

During lunch, Andrea sat with Irvin. She smiled at everyone and ate her lunch. She did not initiate interactions with others, but if someone came to talk with her, she was friendly.

Mathematics class: She worked on incomplete sequences from 1 to 10. She made big-sized puzzles.

2nd Day

The mother asked me if I could assist Andrea in school after the TA had had an accident. I accepted and tried to do the same activities that Andrea did with her TA one day before. She was friendly with me.

First, I used some of the TA materials that involved, for example, working with the calendar and the weather. Andrea was drawing on a piece of paper and afterwards, she worked on some puzzles.

**Sociometric Data**

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*Table C.7 Andrea’s Sociometric Data*

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Andrea’s significantly high sociometric status. Overall, 15 out of 19 of her non-disabled classmates
wanted to work with her. Only two peers wanted to work with her sometimes, and one did not want to work with her.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that 12 out of 19 non-disabled peers wanted to play with Andrea, six liked to play with her sometimes and two did not want to play with her. This means that her level of acceptance among her classmates was higher during the class than during the recess in the playground.

Focus Group:

Most of Andrea’s peers saw her inclusion as a gift. The class was begging the coordinator for the opportunity to include her in their classroom. Classmates suggested that it was easier to include Andrea than Irvin because Andrea was more talkative and could express herself better. They had learnt a lot from her.

They did not find any disadvantages from the inclusion of Andrea. However, they would have liked Andrea to participate more in the activities with them. They wanted her to be seated closer to them instead of being at a desk with the teaching assistant.

One of the classmates said that Andrea was good friends with him. He had learnt to interact with her, which would help him if he had a son or a friend with autism in the future.

Case Study 9: Hideyi

Hideyi came from a family with a father who lived in Japan, a mother who stayed at home, one thirteen-years-old sister and a ten-year-old brother who attended primary school. Hideyi’s mother and father were divorced. The father did not provide any money to support the family. The breadwinner of the family was the grandfather. He was the sole provider for Hideyi, his mother, his sister and brother.

School Educative model.

‘We are an educational community, open to the students, their families and our society. Our priority is the learning, attention and evolution of our students’ cognitive and emotional abilities to help them find their happiness’ (School’s web page).
Mission

‘To educate honest people and help prepare them for a successful life with behaviour inside or outside of the school that is coherent and according to the universal values’ (School’s web page).

Vision

‘To assist each classmate in a cyclic process of Learning, Growing and Changing’ (School’s web page).

Interview with Hideyi’s Mother

Interview with Hideyi’s mother conducted in Hideyi’s house lasted two hours. In the interview, the mother disclosed how they had learnt that Hideyi had autism. She told me that when the family returned from Japan, the mother noticed some changes in Hideyi. He cried a lot, he did not speak and he isolated himself and avoided interaction. If someone tried to see him, he did not respond, and he displayed odd behaviour. They went to the Centre for Human Communication to have hearing tests but he was ok. During the following weeks, when Hideyi was three and a half years old, they discovered that he had autism.

The Centre for Multiple Attention did not accept him because he had high abilities compared to other children at the Centre. Thus, it was very difficult for his mother to integrate Hideyi in mainstream schools, as regular schools did not accept him either.

The mother said that a head teacher who was a priest at a catholic school made them wait one month and never talked to them about the inclusion of Hideyi. It was not until she asked at the private school where his older sister was attending that she managed to find a place for Hideyi, which is where he is until now. He was learning according to the same curriculum as his classmates, requiring only some adaptations.

Every interview with the staff of the school took place in the playground or offices, and they lasted approximately one hour each.

Interview with head teacher

The head teacher was one of the pioneers in supporting the inclusion of Hideyi. Although he had some difficulties during the process, he thought that it had been a good experience. He
suggested that he might not be able to integrate a child who did not have Hideyi’s high abilities.

‘It was a challenge to convince all teachers about the inclusion. However, as we met Hideyi, we realised that we had more doubts in our minds that we should have.’

**Interview with the coordinator**

The coordinator had a very positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with autism and expressed his interest in participating in the interview. He claimed that the classmates had a great experience with the inclusion of Hideyi and talked about the importance of the teaching assistant’s role. However, he also talked about some difficult situations that happened because of Hideyi’s personal history. Someone in his family had special needs and did not have many work opportunities. Therefore, he thought that it would be difficult for Hideyi to find a job because of the discrimination in the society.

‘Alex, the teaching assistant, is never intrusive; he only asks when it is needed, when he cannot understand something or wants to ask me about a different situation. He is precise, clear and quick’.

**Interview with teacher Julia**

This teacher suggested that she did not feel prepared to integrate a child with autism. She did not have the opportunity to listen to the conversations or attend any training so she did not want him to be integrated. After gaining invaluable experience, she realised that it was not as difficult as she envisioned; however, she still did not have enough confidence in her abilities as teacher of these children.

‘We should be responsible for integrating these children, but it was hard to integrate people with autism.’

**Interview with teaching assistant.**

The teaching assistant, Alex, felt satisfied with the work that he had been doing to integrate Hideyi. His job had mostly been to make some curriculum adaptations, to be nearby and to be a positive male role model for him. On the other hand, he had tried to give him independence and to support Hideyi’s interaction with his classmates.
'The process of integration is going well. It is not 100% but we can say that it is going at a 90%. It does not depend on Hideyi or his classmates. It has to do with a context. It is different in each school, from those in the south to those in the north of the city.' Hideyi’s teaching assistant

**Observation Data**

The observation of Hideyi lasted two days. He was observed in the classroom, in the small coffee shop and in the playground.

1st Day

Hideyi’s private school is a very big school. He wrote and had classes with his classmates. He answered perfectly. The teaching assistant was sitting not so close to Hideyi. Hideyi was paying a lot of attention, he did not laugh with the jokes.

Teaching assistant Alex came close to Hideyi to give curriculum adaptations. Hideyi was allowed the freedom to be himself. Alex was sitting near Hideyi but not too close. He was sitting by the wall all the way in the back, where he could see all the classmates and the teacher, but without being in the corner or in the middle where everybody could observe him.

English class: He used the same books as his classmates. The teaching assistant participated more in this class compared to the other classes. Hideyi participated in reading some dialogue from a book. When the teacher asked Hideyi, he used some colours, figures and dots or, the teaching assistant explained Hideyi if he has any doubts. His classmates had a good relationship with the teachers. He participated in the blackboard with the support of Alex.

Mathematics class: He did graphics with some changes or adaptations by joining dots.

2nd Day

Teacher asked the class to divide into small groups. Hideyi had not been elected into a group; instead, the teacher chose a group for him. He was exposed in front of others. Teaching assistant explained to him all the things that he could not do by himself.

Recess: Hideyi spent some time in recess, eating chips and drinking coke. His play was symbolic, but he could not play soccer with the other guys. He stopped others from playing because he stood with the ball without passing it to other classmates. People could hit him
with the ball and he would not move or complain. I found more empathy from the girls than from the boys.

**Sociometric Data**

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<tr>
<td>In recess</td>
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<td>7</td>
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*Table C.8 Hideyi’s Sociometric Data*

Data obtained from sociometry in the class and during the recess demonstrated Hideyi’s medium sociometric status. Overall, 6 out of 15 non-disabled classmates wanted to work with Hideyi. Six classmates wanted to work with him sometimes and one did not want to work with him at all. Two children did not answer.

Data obtained from sociometry during the recess showed that four out of 15 classmates wanted to play with him, seven liked to play with him sometimes and two did not want to play with him.

From the sociometric measures, classmates preferred to interact with Hideyi when he was in the class rather than during the recess. This was probably because he had high abilities at school, but it was difficult for him to interact in the playground.

**Focus Group**

His classmates thought that the benefit of focus group was that Hideyi could learn to socialize. They were against discrimination and believed that he was part of the group. One of the advantages for his classmates was that they had been learning about autism and about being more tolerant of people with special needs. They also experienced how to care for others. However, some misunderstandings about this disorder still persisted.

The classmates suggested that there were some disadvantages because they did not have proper information on how they could interact with a child with autism, which could cause Hideyi to be excluded. They could feel frustrated because Hideyi’s learning was slower compared to theirs and because he did not do some activities in the same way. Moreover, his approach could make people feel uncomfortable.
His classmates suggested that teachers compared Hideyi with other students and they thought this was discrimination against him. They would prefer his teachers to treat Hideyi like any other student. They believed that the teaching assistant was an important role model that the child could imitate.

His classmates believed that other classmates in the class and peers in other classes lacked information. They said that other classmates lacked information. Hideyi could easily imitate bad conduct. His classmates recognized that Hideyi was naive, and he could easily be bullied. However, his classmates’ experience had been positive so they were open to inclusion of other children. They treated Hideyi differently, but they saw him as being as capable as them. In a way, one male pupil said that he admired him and indicated that Hideyi had interest in others. Most of them saw him with a brilliant future.
Appendix D. Example semi-structure interview for Teachers.

These are draft interviews schedules that I developed as part of my pilot study and also partly from other researchers from Manchester University that are working in this area.

The aim of this interview is to find indicators and perception about inclusion from teachers and teaching assistants. Thank you for being willing to take part in this interview, I will appreciate if you can answer these questions.

Inclusion

Do you have children with SEN included in your classroom?

What do you think about inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream school?

Which are the advantages of inclusion?

Which are the disadvantages of inclusion?

What are the barriers for inclusion?

Who in this school do you feel is responsible for ensuring the inclusion and appropriate provision for pupils with ASD?

ASD

What experience do you have working with pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders?

What are the strengths of the children with autism did you have work with, and which are their challenging areas?

What are your expectations about children with autism?

Curriculum adaptations

How do you work with them?

How did you include them?

What teaching strategies do you think works better with children with autism?
Training

Did you have been trained to teach children with SEN? Yes (go to question number) No (go to question)

What sort of training and how long was the training?

Do you have any comments? Finally thank you very much for your time.
Appendix E. Example semi-structure interview for Parents.

The aim of this interview is to find indicators and perception about inclusion from parents of children with autism. Thank you for being willing to take part in this interview, I will appreciate if you can answer these questions.

Inclusion

What do you think about inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream school?

Which are the advantages of inclusion of your child in mainstream school?

Which are the disadvantages of inclusion of your child in mainstream school?

What experience do you have while trying to include your child?

What are the barriers that you have cope to be able to include your child?

Who in the school do you feel is responsible for ensuring the inclusion and appropriate provision of your child?

Do you feel comfortable with the support that your child received in school or do you feel your child need more support?

We already discussed about inclusion, would you mind if I ask you some personal questions about your child?

What are the strengths of your child and which are their challenging areas?

What are your expectations about your child?

Do you have any comments?

Finally thank you very much for your time.
Appendix F. Semi-structured Observations

Name of pupil being observed:

Class:

Context/reason for observation:

Date:

**Interaction Observation**

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**Name of School:**

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**Group:**

**Time of Observation:** morning, afternoon:

**Setting:**

**Duration of observation:**

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Appendix G. The children in my Class-Working

Below is a list of all children in your form group. For each person we would like you to say HOW MUCH YOU LIKE TO WORK WITH THEM IN CLASS. You can see that there are four choices for each person. You would tick the ‘?’ box. If you do not like to work with them, tick the ‘NO’ box. If you like to work with them sometimes, tick the ‘Sometimes’ box.

Please provide an answer for each person in your form group. When you get to your own name, simply cross it out. There are not right or wrong answers, and your responses will be treated as confidential.

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Source: Wendy Symes, University of Manchester
Appendix H. The children at Break

Below is a list of all children in your form group. For each person we would like you to say HOW MUCH YOU LIKE TO SPEND WITH THEM AT BREAK OR LUNCH. You can see that there are four choices for each person. You would tick the ‘?’ box. If you do not like to work with them, tick the ‘NO’ box. If you like to work with them sometimes, tick the ‘Sometimes’ box.

Please provide an answer for each person in your form group. When you get to your own name, you need to simply cross it out. There are no right or wrong answers, and your responses will be treated as confidential.

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Source: Wendy Symes, University of Manchester
Appendix I. Section of Interview with Cristina mother of Irvin

(All names have been changed)

C=Cristina

M=Myriam

M: What are the advantages of including Irvin in the mainstream school?

C: My son started to grow quickly and play with other children, something he had never done before. He was smiling; he was wearing his uniform Saturday and Sunday. We had to take him out of the closet because he wanted to go to school.

He loved the kids and the kids loved him. It was just extraordinary, I did not care if he learned how to write or read, I just wanted him to interact with other children his age. Until this day, it has been a blessing.

Today, his teacher told me that my son is learning to play table tennis with other kids in middle school, where he is right now. How can I tell you how thankful I am to God that we have that opportunity? Nevertheless, it is not fair that only my child can have this opportunity. All autistic children should have that opportunity because they are kids and have to play like kids, and normal kids, whatever that means, should learn how to live with special children. So yes, I would love to work at the SEP (Ministry of Education) that would give me an opportunity to go with an authority to different schools and tell them to open up. When they open up, they are not helping only our children; they are helping their children because their kind of life would change dramatically as well.

Other children realize how fortunate they are. They must learn to wait for someone who is not so fast, and they learn to interact in an incredible world where everybody is different.

M: Of course, do you find any disadvantage about including a child with ASD in mainstream school?

C: I have not found one reason for not including children, it does not hurt anybody, it helps everybody. It is a blessing. Honestly.

M: Which are the outcomes you have seen in your son?
C: I saw benefits, like seeing Irvin using his uniform on Saturday and Sunday because he wants to go to school. Do you believe that? He suffered when we have vacations because he loves to be in school and play with other kids. This is the world that we open. He is happy! My sister came, and she noticed the difference in Irvinito, that he smiles not only at us but at others. I mean that is wonderful.

It will probably help Myriam to see how he interacts with our dog into our house. We have a dog. He must be between 8 and 9 years old, what the pediatrician told me. They have such good communication because none of them speak, but they have such communication that when Irvinito is mad, the dog will stop him. The dog does not allow him to be aggressive with us.

For example, when Irvinito had a cold and we were cleaning his nose, Irvinito got mad and the dog stood up and did not permit Irvin to do something aggressive.

It is incredible. They are touching commonly. The dog makes him stand up and takes him to the bathroom. It is a super dog. The doctor told us that this happens because both cannot speak. They just love each other. It is incredible; they are touching each other constantly. Irvinito is touching him or the dog is touching him.

M: How was Irvin before the inclusion, he did not have this kind of approach?

C: No, Irvinito was a child who was beyond listening to us. He would let us hug him. I took his hands and feet.

I was always cuddling with him, every night with classical music; I would take his hand and be the closest I can be with him. He only likes to watch certain movies about Walt Disney and that is it.

Let me tell you something that happened. He starts fighting with her sister when they were going to school because he wanted a toy and his sister wanted the same toy. I loved that because they were fighting, they were interacting for the first time. They were interacting, otherwise, he would only be playing with glue, flour, beans, doing things that would keep him in his world without eating, coming out, and being like everybody else. Because in the school he was attending, they were all different, he was not like them.
Before, all his classmates were of different age. Even last year, we pay a special teacher to be with him. He was still not doing anything to interact with other kids. As soon as we put him in new school, he began to interact with other kids.

I want to tell you something that the nun told me: ‘Cristina when your child came in, I was very worried, but then I saw the kids in the recess. Irvinito would be in the middle and all the kids around him. By the end of the year, Irvinito will be one of them.’

It was beautiful; it was a blessing because my child will be interacting with others. He was part of that. I cannot tell you have thankful I am. We feel that Irvinito was born totally normal, laughing until he had the MMR, and after the MMR he became ill.

I took him to the doctor. I think the problem was all this vaccination for which he was not ready. He got the MMR vaccine at 18 months. He was not ready probably. He return from the doctor’s ill, we thought it was normal that he was not feeling well. Then he was not turning when we called his name. Dramatically, he stopped caring about us.

He forgot to speak. This was one year and a half. We went to the doctor and he told us to wait a little more. At two years old, we started taking him to ear doctor. Everybody started telling us that maybe the boys take longer to speak. We started going from one doctor to the other. Unfortunately, we lost one year of therapy before we went to Boston.

M: Why did they tell you that Irvin had Attention and Deficit Disorder?

C: Because the doctor did not know what he was talking about, he was supposed to be a really good doctor to support children with autism. For example, X is a very elegant doctor in ‘Las Lomas’ (Wealthy area in Mexico City). He was out of his mind. We told him we want to go to the United States, and he said ‘You need to wait, wait’.

We found a therapist and a pediatrician who told us go. Five doctors were waiting for us. We were lucky, most of the time it takes 7 months to get an appointment. We only waited 3 months to have an appointment from the day we inquired. They did not do exam, they simply took my two kids into a playpen and observed them. Then they said, guess what, your child is autistic. I told them no way, you have not seen how my child kisses me, but they insisted that he is autistic.

I told them I want another opinion. The next day we got another opinion from other doctor. They made some physical exams and he said again, ‘He is autistic’.
We went to a children’s hospital in San Diego, where it was supposed to be a nice doctor, Nora. For three years, I would take a plane to Tijuana and cross the border to go to San Diego every three months. She just kept giving us different medications and one day she told us there is nothing else we can do now.

We started with a doctor called X, received money from the government because he suggested that the MMR is the cause, and he can find a treatment. At first, he examined Irvinito to know what was happening in his brain. He has mercury, antimony, in his blood, which had to be from the MMR, and then gave us the free gluten diet.

M: Which food cannot Irvin eat?

C: No dairies, no sugars and no gluten, no bread. We have bread now without gluten. Here in Mexico, we have tortillas.

I am thankful because in Mexico, we have tortillas that have a lot of calcium. He did not need extra calcium.

M: At what age was Irvin diagnosed?

C: We lost one year, he was diagnosed at three and after we lost three years more in CLIMA until we came here to DOMUS. I always said that it was my mother who just died and that she was an angel who kept telling me to move on, move on. You can just stay there. More on and I do it. I am very happy, there are very nice people here; they have a different view about what children with autism can and cannot do. You can see a great difference between the older and younger children with autism. I love to see the young ones. There is a child whose mother speaks English fluently, I recommend you to interview her. Her child is so incredible, she will probably forget about diagnosis of autism soon if she has not done it already. She received the diagnosis very early, and that makes big difference. The diagnosis, what to do with it? For us, it has been the diagnosis, the change in diet; it changed our way of life. My son exercises everyday for one hour and a half. We had medication with Risperdal and Capetespal and Petesdral. Risperdal, they have it in England, helps to control his moods swings. Irvinito does not have a problem with the change of routine. However, whenever he gets very difficult, we have to change the medicines. He takes one and a half in the morning and almost two at night so he can go to sleep. Children with autism have problems going to sleep. Irvinito has a bedroom with windows so I can see what he is doing but he has to sleep with the door closed because if he has the door open, he will open all the doors, turn on all
the lights see us all and laugh when we come to him. That would happen over and over until I would have a heart attack [The mother actually had a heart attack]. Now, whenever he needs to be alone, he can go to his room and close the door. And now he is an adolescent mmm and he is doing things adolescents do, so I have to put a curtain. But that is ok; I know what he is doing because I have another child of the same age.

Here is his room and next room is his sister’s room. Next is my room and from my bed, I can see and listen what he is doing. I love my child deeply.

M: Of course. You have made a great work with the child.

C: Let me tell you something there is a doctor in LA. He was a very important doctor who talked about the causes, he died some years ago, let me tell you his name. He told that he never met a child with autism in Mexico who were not affectionate.

Children with ASD are different because mothers in Mexico love to hug their kids. I just love to put my kids in the tummy, I use my tummy to put close to me. I have a nanny to carry one of them. So they can hear my heart. Irvinito is a very affectionate child. He will do everything to receive kisses and tickles; he loves to play. If he is a bad boy, or he did not want to make something, I told him I would not play with him peak-a-boo. He loves to play peak-a-boo. When he cried, he did not receive anything. Mexican mothers change our children. We did not accept that he will never be affectionate with us. Even if I work, I will come back and give love to them. They are all affectionate and accept love.

Have you met Temple Grandin? She said that she has autism and she cannot accept anybody else hugging her, thus she has a machine that can hug that is not a problem with our kids. It can be probably something that can help other children in other countries.

Myriam, you told me that you came to see Irvin when he was 6. Irvin came immediately. In Mexico, it was 2nd. year of secondary. No, it was in another school. When he finished sixth grade, children took a school picture, all children were there and the one that was smiling the most was my son. All kids around were trying to hug him.

M: How did you find this school?

C: Carmen told me in this school X, we have a similar child there, so we tried there. I paid off. It is a beautiful school, everything is wonderful there. The other one was just as wonderful as
this. The nun, the children, everybody, I cannot tell you how happy, thankful and blessed I am.

M: Concerning the responsibility of the Irvin’s inclusion, you told me that staff from DOMUS came to school. But who is responsible for the inclusion of Irvin?

C: I would like you to talk with the director. You will not believe it. When we came to the school, the principal thanked us because he told us that they were looking for a special kid to be included in his school because they thought it would be beneficial to other kids. When Carmen and I listened to that, I just cried. When they said thank you for considering our school, I cried. How I can tell you that I was desperately looking for a school and when I found one, they were grateful about Irvin’s integration.

Once again, I believe in God, definitely. The principal of the school is a very executive woman. At the meetings, she will say what Irvinito needs. We only have to coordinate. For example, this year Irvinito was in first year. She said Irvin would not be in the same classroom as he was last year. I asked why? She told me that she wanted everybody to know him. So this year, he has two classmates, one from the last classroom and one new this year.

They change so in that way everybody knows him. He is having friends in second year of secondary school in A and B groups. Next year, he will be in group C. He will have friends in all groups. Thanks God, Irvin cares about others, he is very sensible. You can kindly told me the differences you have found between him and other classmates. He is a happy child. He never worries about anything. We worry but he enjoys his life.

He knows we love him. I tell him every day. Remember I told you I had a heart attack. When I was dying, I thought I never told them enough how much I love them. Because when I am not with them, I want to tell them all the time. Therefore, every day I tell them both how much I love them. Irvinito knows that we accept him the way he is. We push his sister and push him.

M: How is the relationship between them?

C: Isaura loves him, she is in school X. Last year she started the middle school and the big boys from DOMUS came and everybody. She was four years old. She said my name is Isaura, and I have an artistic brother, not autistic. Everybody laughed and asked his name and she said Irvin
Isaura told me, you know mom, the school wants more children like Irvin coming to the school. Ma Carmen can other kids come. Carmen accepts and they can see how the big range of children can be. This is something that should happen in all schools so everybody can see that there various types of children with autism. Because it hurts! They learn that every child is different.

M: Taking about the teaching assistant, do you think they have enough training to work with Irvin or do they need more? What do you think?

I did not like the first one. After her, they came two wonderful women, very nice people. The first one has always made terrible comments. Thank God she is not here anymore. She was against children with autism. She was a mean person and she was only interested in how she could benefit from these children.

M: You can change the teaching assistant if you do not agree with the one you have. I know you have Lorena as a teaching assistant now?

Yes, we have Lorena, she is marvelous and in the afternoon we had another maestro called Juan. Next year, Lorena will probably be replaced because she has been with Irvin for two years. DOMUS coordinator thinks that it is enough time, and those are the rules, so I cannot do anything. But I think Lorena is such a sweet young lady. She was two years with maestro Leticia and two years with Lorena. I am totally confident when he is with these two girls.

M: Do you think that Irvin has a great opportunity to be included?

C: Yes, he has.

M: But we know that many children do not get such opportunity. They should be in a place that would give them a lot of love, but I know that the economic part is important. How you manage this?

C: Oh….., yes let me tell you. We spend one complete salary on Irvin. My husband is retired and plus one salary goes directly to Irvin, all the rest is for the house. All our life has changed. The way we live, what we eat, where we go, our vacations change. If we have vacations, all because there is always more therapy that he needs to have. I will love to have therapy on the weekend, on Saturdays afternoon. However, I cannot pay, no more. Saturdays, the father and the son go to the park, going to see the horses.
Then he is with us, but he watches too much TV and plays too much on the computer. I do not like it. But right now, I cannot pay any more. In the summer, when the school closes, I cannot pay a special teacher every day. I am looking for a job, but I always find jobs that either are very far from my home or require very long work hours, so I decide not to take them. Sorry God, I need something near my home. My husband had cancer also. He has been undergoing the chemotherapy and radiation. He has not been well, he is getting better, but we spent very difficult year and a half. So right now, I cannot. I would really love to bring him to gym classes, to do this and that, but I cannot. It is impossible. I cannot, we do not have vacations. In December, we went to visit my mother in law because she invited us. My idea is that the only one who can travel is my daughter. She deserves it. Is not her fault she is my child. Therefore, whenever we have money, we invest in her summer.

M: Do you think this can be a factor that causes that other children cannot be included?

C: It’s not only that, bread that Irvinito can eat is 70 pesos. Not everybody can pay that. I am happy that we have my maid who can help us with Irvinito. She is sweet, but not everybody can pay for a house cleaner. She stays with him on Saturdays if I want to take a nap. Irvinito is full of energy. He can do everything. But I get retired at 52, I should have had my children 20 years ago. No 14 years ago. This can stress the parents a lot, the need for money, for therapy, for medicines. Medicines are very expensive.

M= Do you ever think about sending Irvin to a public school?

C= Thank God we did not need that, so we decided on our priorities, which involve food, therapy and school. That is our budget. We also went to Oxygen therapy. He always feels itchy, we did not know if he will be able to stay in a tube without moving for two hours. I do not keep anymore with him. We spend the first twenty hours, actually 40 hours in 20 days giving him Oxygen Therapy. I sold a car that we did not need, and I paid for more hours because I wanted to pay for more hours. Then the doctor said no more, because autistic children can have seizures. So we stopped that.

M: What are Irvin’s strong points and areas that he should improve?

C: Ok, his strong point is that when he likes something, he will do it. Although he does not speak, he will find the way to have what he wants. That means that to get your attention, he will read, write, he will do it. Other than that, he is very affectionate and he will do everything to be with us. That is very good. Me as a catholic, let me tell you that he has been
a blessing because he has been taking me directly to God. Directly in a way I cannot tell you.
I have been studying theology and just last night, my theology teacher told us that all these
kids are the special complement of God because they show us the love of God. Children love
us without expecting something back from us, just because they want to love, and it is God’s
nature to love this way. His weak point is the language; he is using words, very few words,
like 30 good words. He is not interested in writing, even on the computer or something else.
He does not realize that writing will help him.

M: Does he love to use computers?

C: Yes, there was a time we could not let him use the computer. He sat in front of the
computer and changed the program of the computer so we were not able to use. We needed to
take the computer, and I did not know how he got in, not the same way such as you and me.
He would open the computer and go directly inside the program and the area he wants. You
would ask Irvinito what he is doing and he would not tell you. We have to stop that computer.
We set up a password but now he knows it. He is good with the computer, he is fast.

He goes inside the program. I say he is brilliant. He wants to go on YouTube to watch
Dumbo movie. So we have to give him a reason to go on the computer to do something else.

M: What do you think will be the future for Irvin in 1, 5 and 20 years?

I believe in miracles, and I am praying for one. I want my son to be happy, that is what I want.
What I want for him when he finishes the high school is that I would find a university for him.
I am not going to stop. I want him to go to a university because I think it is a nice place for
young people like him. After university, I want to find a place for him to work in whatever he
wants. I pray to find it before I die, find an excellent residence for him to live and do
whatever he wants to do. I want the same for my daughter. I want her to be happy. I want the
same for both in a different way.

My dad helps me a lot. We went in San Diego with his credit card. Because mine does not
have the limit for all the hospitals, we went in the States. I called him to tell him that Irvin
was autistic. He called me back and said, Cristina, take my card, go and have a nice dinner. I
told him did you listen to me, he is autistic! He answered, yes; please go back, we are going
to make it. He pushed me.
For three years he paid for our flights, for everything that we need, when we went to another hospital in Michigan. If you need the money, take it. Cristina you have to make it, go, go, go!

He was wonderful. He died two years ago. They made a nice couple with my mom for 50 years. I had many people helping me. I think God sent me this child because he believed that he needed us. He saw that he could trust us, and I had to respond to that. I could not cry and think what Irvinito would do when I die. Everything I have to do, I need to do it right now. I am trying that Irvin do the diet, study everyday; every day I went on the Web and see what is new. I have to do something.

The minute I will be with God I have to say, God I did everything I was able to do.

(C starts crying)

M: I believe that you did everything you can; you have been making a great work. I am sure that special children like Irvin have special mothers like you.

C: Thank you for considering me. Your work will help all children. In the future, you can tell us what they are doing in England.

M: Of course, I will send all the information that I have. Thank you very much for the interview, and we will be in contact.

M: Bye

C: Thanks,

Bye.
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<td>Female 1 Pamela</td>
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<td>Male 1 Miguel</td>
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<td>Interviewer: Myriam</td>
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**Interviewer Myriam:** Thanks for participating. Eight students are participating so I will appreciate if we listen to others when they are speaking. To start I will like to ask what is your opinion about the inclusion of Irvin?

**Female 1: Pamela** *(Start laughing)*

**Female 2 Patricia:**

N I prefer not to say anything; I am always the one who speaks.

**Interviewer Myriam:**

Can you please talk about the experience of including Irvin in the class? This information is only for my Ph.D project, nobody else will listen.

**Male 1 Miguel:**

The first day that I saw him, I was

| Change of attitude towards child with ASD |  |
afraid of trying. But now I am more in contact with him. How he reacts and how he does everything. When he is working it is nice, he made things in a totally different way of how we do it. I am very happy of working with him and I am one of the guys who share more time with him.’

Female 3 Judith:

‘When we are doing team work, Irvin works and help us according with his abilities, he support by cutting or drawing. In a way, he lightens the work with his help.’

Interviewer: Did you find any benefit from the inclusion?

Female 4: Lorena

Yes, I learn how we can help and include them In the right way. I mean that I know now how to react in different situations.

Feeling of caring others.
Appendix K. Thematic Analysis

(1) Data familiarisation, for example

C: I would like you to talk with the director. You will not believe it. When we came to the school the principal thanked us, because he told us that they were looking for a special kid to be included in his school because they think he will be helpful for other kids. When Carmen and I listened to that, I just cried. When they said thank you for considering our school, I cried. How I can tell you that I was desperately looking for a school and when I found one, they were grateful about Irvin’s integration. (Possible code: Positive attitude)

(2) Generation of initial codes,
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## Case I: Irvin

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<td>II. Attitude from staff</td>
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<td>III. Attitude from classmates</td>
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<td>IV. Relationship between classmates and teaching assistant</td>
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<td>V. Educational Styles</td>
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<td>VI. Curriculum Adaptations</td>
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**Uniqueness of case situation**
for program/phenomenon: Irvin is a successful case of inclusion

**Relevance of case for cross-case Themes:**
Theme 1 H Theme 2 H Theme 3 L Theme 4 H Theme 5 H Theme 6 H

**Possible excerpts for cross-case report:**
Irvin file, secondary school file

**Comments:** During the observations, Irvin is included by his classmates. Teaching assistant used curriculum adaptations to support his inclusion
# Phase II Cross Case


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### Facilitators

- **School Ethos**: X X X X X X X
- **Attitude from staff**: X X X X X X X X X X
- **Attitude from classmates**: X X X X X X X X X X
- **Role of TA**: X X X X X
- **Relationship Classmate and TA**: X X X X X
- **Training**: X X X X X
- **Raise awareness**: X X X
- **Gender of teacher**: X
- **Shared responsibility**: X X X
- **Cv adaptations**: X X X
- **Head teacher attitude**: X X X X X X

### Barriers

- **Lack of awareness**: X X X X X X X X
- **Lack of economic**: X X X X X X X X X X
- **Lack of information from classmates**: X
- **Benefits to classmates**: X X X X X X X X X X
- **Advantages Child with ASD**: X X X X X X X X X X
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(3) Searching for themes,
(4) Reviewing themes,
5) Defining and naming each theme for example:
Appendix L. Example of Sociograms

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