Responding to student diversity: A study of the experiences of “foreign-speaking” students in secondary schools in Cyprus

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Abstract

This thesis examines the responses of the educational system of Cyprus to increasing student diversity. The study it reports was set in a sensitive socio-political context, within which the previously homogenous Greek-Cypriot society faced an unprecedented and unanticipated rise in net migration rates from the mid-1990s. The need to respond effectively to the challenge of increasing population diversity and to issues of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversification was evident within the wider Cypriot society, and was reflected within the educational system. Despite this, there is an identified gap in knowledge and research on the topic of increasing student diversity in Cyprus.

With these concerns in mind, the research focused on exploring the experiences of secondary school students of ages 11-14, who had recently arrived in Cyprus and were categorised as foreign-speaking. The aim was to explore factors hindering and promoting these students’ inclusion in schools through identifying barriers and resources to their presence, participation, achievement and socialisation.

The study used a qualitative exploratory case study design. Data were collected in three secondary schools through a multi-method approach that considered the views of various school stakeholders, particularly the “voices” of foreign-speaking students regarding their school experiences. Data analysis involved the constant comparative method which allowed the consistent scrutiny of findings from various research methods using a theoretical framework based on the idea of inclusive education. A model was developed and used to discuss the perceived barriers and resources to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion. Barriers and resources were identified as stemming from educational policy, educational practice in schools and classrooms, students’ traits and characteristics, and finally students’ home and community environments. The barriers created a context of inequality of opportunities for foreign-speaking students’ school experiences and future life achievement in comparison to their other classmates.

The findings of the study provide a basis for evaluating exclusionary pressures that prevent foreign-speaking students from engaging meaningfully with their school lives equally to other classmates, and propose that inclusive education within the Cypriot educational context can have a wider scope that does not rest only with traditional research on special needs education. It also confirms the importance of conducting contextualised educational research on issues of inclusion, as relevant literature presents inclusive schools as organisations that should address challenges in reflection to their own cultural and political context.

The thesis also suggests that the identified barriers and resources have implications for policy and practice that need to be addressed in order to adopt more inclusive educational pedagogies for foreign-speaking students, and considers it important that the formulation of any response should be informed in reflection to similar international studies. Its implication lies with identifying unused resources that could otherwise be mobilised to enhance schools’ response to increasing diversity. Finally, it makes recommendations for future research on the identified resources for promoting inclusion. Such research should be directed at further exploring the factors contributing to providing equal educational opportunities for all learners within an approach that promotes respect for diversity and considers diversity as a source of inspiration and learning.
Declaration

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This work could not have been completed if not for the continuous encouragement and motivation of the people close to me. Thank you to all those who have been there at both the good, as well as the bad times during this long process.

The presented work is dedicated to the schools and research participants who have contributed to the gathering of evidence and their interpretation, something that shaped my understandings on the topic of diversity and all its challenges within educational systems. This has been an inspiring journey because of them!
Chapter 1 - Introduction

The area of interest

In commencing the writing of this thesis, I feel that I have to address the very imminent topic of outlining the reasons that sparked my interest in investigating the topic of schools’ response to increasing diversity within student populations, as seen through the lens of the inclusive education paradigm. This has in fact not been an easy task to complete, since it has been difficult to pin-point a single incident that resulted in this. However, this question urged me to reflect on my life experiences and admit to the curiosity that I had for things that were “different” to what I was brought up to know.

Coming from Cyprus, a small island in the Mediterranean, has definitely shaped my overall outlook on issues of diversity. In many respects, Cyprus seemed to withstand the passage of time almost unchanged until recently, with the native population adopting a somewhat isolated way of living. Accordingly, I had always perceived the mantle of the Cypriot society as “shielded” from the proportion of multi-cultural exchange that one could observe in other European counties, with older generations being determined to maintain the traditions and customs that were passed on to them. The seemingly innate endeavour of Cypriots to pronounce their national and religious identity, as well as to maintain their customs and traditions intact from “outside” influences, is a phenomenon often viewed within small societies that have an enhanced sense of community spirit.

Specific to Cyprus, the turmoil within its historical and socio-political context testifies to how Cypriots constantly faced the need to fend off foreign invaders, who frequently imposed their way of life on the island’s native population. Nevertheless, this phenomenon of a society closed-off to “foreign” influences seems to progressively wither with each generation. This was inevitable following Cyprus’ membership to the European Union in 2004, and the consequent increasing migration rates recorded over the last ten years.

The experience of growing up in this “homogenous” society was what initially stimulated my interest in attending university in the great metropolitan city of Toronto, Canada. With Toronto being home to people that originally came from many different countries across the world, living there for four years offered me the opportunity to explore a vastly multicultural lifestyle. At the University of Toronto I studied alongside students of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, who in seemed able to maintain and celebrate their distinct traditions in Canada within a context of respect for diversity.
Ultimately though, my focus on the topic of inclusion within educational institutions, and specifically for the educational opportunities offered to students educated in schools with increasingly diverse student populations, emerged during my post-graduate studies at the University of Manchester in England. While studying for the degree of MEd Special and Inclusive Education I was not only given the opportunity to become a member of a diverse student community, but to also study aspects of diversity within academic institutions.

These experiences allowed me to reflect on my earlier years of education within Cypriot schools, and to question whether schools in Cyprus are in fact catering to the needs of their increasingly diverse student populations. My earlier images of educational institutions involved images of segregation of the few “foreign” students from the majority of the native student population. For example, the curriculum marginalised students in cases when native students had advanced Greek literature lessons whereas the “Other” (Said, 1993) students had lessons in Greek language. There was also a distinction in students’ experiences when, for instance, students who were not Christian Orthodox had to participate in Religious Education lessons that were irrelevant to their religious identity.

These contrasting examples allowed me to understand that students belonging to minority groups were mainly integrated within the wider educational context of Cyprus, and were not provided with opportunities to acquire a pedagogically and personally meaningful educational experience. In my opinion this could have been overcome through adopting more inclusive educational practices, since inclusion involves a continuous process of identification of ways to respond to student diversity, through identifying and eliminating barriers as a means to monitor learners who face exclusionary pressures (Ainscow, 2005). Since barriers to students’ inclusive pedagogical experiences, or lack thereof, are bound to emerge in students’ talk, one way to identify and address barriers to students’ inclusion, is through making a conscious effort to account for students’ perceptions on this topic.

My research within schools commenced through my participation in a collaborative school-based inquiry project in a primary school in Manchester that investigated the inclusion of ethnic minority children (Eliadou et al., 2007b). The project led to the collective conceptualisation of using drawings to promote “student voice” through research (Eliadou et al., 2007a), a method that was later used in my dissertation research. Following this project, I conducted two pilot studies using the same research agenda, which grounded my interest in exploring schools’ responses to increasing student diversity, through investigating the inclusion of students who were perceived as being subjects to exclusionary pressures.
The first pilot study to my PhD was the research I conducted as part of my MEd Special and Inclusive Education dissertation in one primary and one secondary school in Cyprus (Eliadou, 2007). This study enlightened the context within which my PhD research was going to take place. The most important lessons involved the understanding that Cyprus had only recently moved in the direction of changing its policies on educational integration of students that differed from the majority of the student population, through focusing on adopting more inclusive educational philosophy and policies. Identifying efforts to adopt more inclusive educational practices was encouraging, since this is something which is internationally recognised as a platform through which schools can combat discriminatory attitudes and create welcoming communities for all students (UNESCO, 1994). However, a careful overview indicated that Cyprus is in the early stages of transforming the theories of inclusion into practice, or towards creating an educational context where the needs of non-native students are met equally to those of native students.

In summary, this work provided the opportunity to analyse the theoretical framework of my PhD study and to test the research instruments I intended to use in my PhD research, and offered insights into the difficulties faced by students who were not part of the ethnic majority in their schools (Eliadou, 2007). Looking for potential barriers to students’ inclusion revealed students’ lack of Greek language skills and negative perceptions of classmates and teaching staff towards them, as affecting students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation. The study ascertained the need to further investigate this topic and to account for both students’ and teachers’ perspectives in detail.

Following this work, I conducted a second pilot study for the degree of MSc Educational Research, at the University of Manchester (Eliadou, 2008). The research took place in an English secondary school and explored the experiences of students who were considered to have English as an additional language (EAL). Access to the school was gained through my involvement as a research assistant in the Centre for Equity in Education (University of Manchester), something which ensured prolonged engagement in research at the school. Through this study I developed my research skills further by piloting multiple methods aimed at capturing the views of students with limited access to the formal language of education used in their schools. Overall, this study allowed me to further explore the experiences of students educated within a school faced with issues of increasing student diversity, enhanced my conceptualization of what factors might be presenting barriers or resources to promote students’ inclusion, and shifted the focus towards the practical use of appropriate methodology for capturing students’ views on inclusion.
With this brief introduction, I have outlined the factors which in retrospect I believe have progressively encouraged me to focus my PhD research on the topic of inclusive education in schools amidst the context of increasing student diversity.

**The purpose of the study**

The primary purpose of the study reported in this thesis was to conduct an in-depth exploration of how three secondary mainstream schools in Cyprus appeared to respond to the phenomenon of increasing student diversity pertinent to the increased migration rates recorded in Cyprus over the last ten years. Within the methodological framework of exploratory case study research, the context of each school was scrutinised to reveal added pressures that emerged in the light of increasing student diversity. Emphasis was placed on using a methodology drawing on the theoretical framework of inclusive education focused on allowing students to present their own perspective on their schools experiences.

With this in mind, Figure 1.1 provides an overview to the conceptual framework underlying this study. Adopted from the Manchester Inclusion Standard (2004), factors that can be regarded as “Indicators of Inclusion” in schools involve students’ presence, participation and achievement. I have added to this conceptualisation the factor of student socialisation, as I consider it to be integral to any students’ inclusion within educational institutions. Within this framework, I consider the factors that appear to compromise the “Indicators of Inclusion” as entailing barriers to inclusion. Similarly, factors that appear to promote the “Indicators of Inclusion” are regarded in this study as resources to inclusion.

![Figure 1.1: The study’s conceptual framework. This diagram presents how the study set out to identify factors acting as barriers or resources to students’ inclusion, by compromising or promoting students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation.](image)

To follow a similar pattern as that of my pilot studies, the selected student participants belonged to groups that were deemed as subject to exclusionary pressures within their respective schools. In this case, student participants were secondary school students of ages
They had recently arrived in Cyprus, and were categorised as foreign-speaking since they lacked the basic skills in Greek, the official language of instruction in Cyprus.

The terminology adopted within the thesis in reference to the student participants was derived from discourse used to address this subgroup of the student population within the Cypriot educational context (see Figure 1.2). This framework was purposefully adopted in an attempt to “stay true” to the specific context through which this research emerged. However, such references are used with caution and in acknowledgement of the potentially negative outcomes that might arise through the use of generalised linguistic terminology to pronounce difference between the native and non-native students at school.

When seen in this light, the research attempts to fill the gap identified in the literature relevant to the inclusion of foreign-speaking students educated within mainstream Cypriot secondary schools. With scant literature focused on aspects of inclusive education beyond the field of special needs, and existing research focusing on primary instead of secondary education, the study proposes that inclusive education in Cyprus can have a wider scope to address issues beyond special needs education. Instead, inclusive education is presented in this thesis as a discipline through which the perceived exclusion and marginalisation of any student within educational institutions can be addressed.

**My role as the researcher**

This study explored the school experiences of groups of foreign-speaking students in three mainstream secondary schools across Cyprus during the academic year of 2009-2010. The timeframe of the research is outlined in Appendix 1. The research participants were primarily foreign-speaking students, followed by school head-teachers, teachers and...
support staff. From the schools selected, the first was located in the capital city of Nicosia, whereas the other two were located respectively in the cities of Larnaca and Paphos. The selection criteria for each school will be explained in the methodology chapter.

Cohen et al. (2007, p.79), claim that an important element to the research design is to account for the politics of the research. This involves acknowledgement of issues, such as who the researcher is and what their role in the research process was. Within this particular study I feel that I have adopted multiple roles in my identity as a researcher. Amongst the first lessons drawn was the challenge entailed in the process of negotiating access to schools and research participants. In fact, requesting access to schools as a student and not an academic resulted in denied access in the first schools I contacted (see Appendix 2).

Head-teachers in these schools spoke of existing collaboration they had with professors from Universities in Cyprus, to whom they “could not deny access to participants”, and the already-established projects that required constant coordination from staff and extensive use of resource, and the consensus between staff was that students from vulnerable groups being “overused” as research participants. When faced with the decision of providing consent for foreign-speaking students to participate in research, these head-teachers stated that in their belief it was unacceptable to waste valuable teaching time when it came to students from vulnerable groups, who were already “disengaged” from learning.

Failing to successfully negotiate access, entailed having to employ alternative strategies to gain access to participants without losing fieldwork time, and provided insights to the context of educational research in Cyprus. This led me to be sensitive to a slight “resistance to research” within schools in general, and more so towards younger and less experienced researchers. However, I soon realised that negotiating access to schools successfully could be enhanced through establishing positive relationships with certain school staff, prior to requesting access to student participants directly from the head-teachers. The lack of such collaboration hindered the successful process of requesting access to schools and the loss of fieldwork time during the negotiation process.

Moreover, it is necessary to acknowledge that as a researcher I was a Greek-Cypriot researching the experiences of “foreign” students. In this case, questions can be raised regarding the subjectivity of my ability to interpret and portray the “true” perspective of the student participants. Taking these issues into consideration, various measures were taken to improve the validity of the findings presented in this study.
**Research questions**

In summary then, this study focused on providing an insight into Cypriot secondary schools’ response to increasing student diversity through exploring the experiences of foreign-speaking students in three secondary schools. More specifically, it set out to address the following questions:

1. How are secondary schools responding to increasing student diversity?
2. What are the barriers to the presence, participation achievement, and social inclusion of foreign-speaking students?
3. What resources could be used to support the inclusion of these students?

**Structure of the thesis**

The following chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to inclusive education in response to increasing student diversity within schools. The chapter commences with presenting the challenges of increasing student diversity in Cyprus, and goes on to review international and Cypriot literature relevant to inclusive education. Chapters 3 and 4 outline the processes of developing the methodology used, and the process of analysing and interpreting the collected data. Chapter 5 presents the model derived through the process of data analysis for describing the barriers experiences by foreign-speaking students. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 provide accounts of each of the case study schools, along with findings relevant to barriers to inclusion collected primarily from student participants.

In turn, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 outline the identified barriers to student’s inclusion across the three schools, as these were perceived by teaching staff. Findings are presented and discussed following the format adopted in the derived model presented in Chapter 5. Specifically, Chapter 9 presents the perceived barriers to inclusion relevant to schools and classroom practice, with reference to barriers identified within “regular classrooms” in contrast to “language support classes”. Chapter 10 outlines barriers stemming from the national policy relevant to inclusive education; and Chapter 11 outlines barriers perceived as relevant to students as individuals, as well as their home and community environment. The final chapter draws together the findings of the study. In so doing, it provides a statement of its contribution to knowledge and its specific significance to the Cypriot educational context, as well as to the field of inclusive education within educational settings in general.
Chapter 2 - Literature review

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to reviewing literature relevant to the topic of responding to increasing diversity within educational contexts. The first section outlines the challenge identified with respect to responding to increasing diversity in Cyprus. This is achieved through discussing relevant strategies in terms of policy, practice and research that have been implemented. Through this analysis, it is noted that whilst Cyprus has attempted to enforce its own response to increasing diversity, there has been an overreliance on strategies implemented within the wider international educational agendas. Moreover, the relevant response was developed through the framework of multicultural education.

Since this study has used the theoretical framework of inclusive education to explore the response towards diverse groups of students in Cyprus, the second section of this chapter presents an overview of international literature associated with this discourse. I proceed to explain why a framework relevant to inclusive education has been used instead of that of multicultural education. Finally, I explore research findings of international and Cypriot studies, and present the factors identified as affecting the effective implementation of inclusive strategies. This is achieved through a focus on barriers and resources to inclusion relevant to the provision of equal educational opportunities to diverse groups of students. I conclude by drawing attention to a gap in knowledge that my research attempts to fill.

Responding to student diversity in Cyprus

This section contextualizes the thesis by outlining the challenge posed by increased student diversity in Cypriot schools in reflection of increasing diversity within the Cypriot society\(^1\). This is achieved through discussing the relevant strategies in terms of policy, practice and research that have been implemented as primary measures aimed to overcome this challenge. In this light, factors that have been identified to act as barriers to the inclusion of foreign-speaking students, as well as resources to promote equal opportunities to education are presented.

\(^1\) Following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the island has been de facto partitioned into two areas. Since this study has taken place in secondary schools located in the area of the island which is under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, and not the area under Turkish occupation, the term ‘Cypriot society’, and any subsequent contextual analysis undertaken in this text, refers solely to the population residing in this area. For further information on the political situation on the island you can refer to CIA (2009) and MOFA (2006).
The challenge of responding to student diversity in Cyprus

Until recently Cypriot society was relatively homogenous (Angelides et al., 2003). The noticeable homogeneity was a consequence of the political instability reigning over the island following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The period which followed the invasion resulted in high migration rates, with large numbers of Cypriot citizens fleeing Cyprus due to the political instability on the island. In addition, most citizens belonging to the Turkish-Cypriot community who had resided in the area presently controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, chose to seek refuge in the occupied area of the island (as seen in Figure 2.1), in fear of repercussions from the Greek-Cypriot community.

![Map of the island of Cyprus](image)

**Figure 2.1:** Map of the island of Cyprus. The white shaded area is under the effective control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus and the blue shaded area is under Turkish occupation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>No. of people</th>
<th>% of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek-Cypriots</td>
<td>684,000</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish-Cypriots</td>
<td>90,100</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Residents</td>
<td>178,000</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1:** Estimates and percentages of the population composition of Cyprus in 2011. This table presents the number of people belonging to the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot ethnic communities, and the number of foreign residents (CySTAT, 2011).

The demographic shifts taking place after the war in conjunction with the low immigration rates recorded in the following years, established an extremely homogenous Greek-Cypriot community in the area controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. More precisely, the 2011 census of estimated the total population of the island as 952,100 (CySTAT, 2011). This figure does not include the estimated 160-170,000 people that
arrived in Cyprus as illegal settlers from Turkey residing in the occupied area (CySTAT, 2011). The estimated composition of the total population of Cyprus, which depicts the population sizes of the two ethnic communities on the island as compared to “foreign” residents\(^2\), is presented in Table 2.1. These statistics indicate that approximately 20% of the population of Cyprus is currently composed of foreign residents, confirming the claim made that the Cypriot society has not maintained its previously homogenous character. Table 2.2 summarises the net migration rates recorded in Cyprus between 1988 and 2008.

**Table 2.2:** Net migration rates recorded in Cyprus between 1988 and 2008. These estimates present the difference between recorded immigration and emigration rates (CySTAT, 2007; Gregoriou *et al.*, 2010) and indicate the progressive increase in residents of Cyprus over the past two decades, with consequent increased diversity in the ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition of the population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Net migration rate (Number of people)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Net migration rate (Number of people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>+ 257</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>+ 4 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>+ 4 526</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>+ 3 960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>+ 8 708</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>+ 4 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>+10 559</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>+6 885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>+ 9 999</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>+12 342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>+ 8 000</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>+15 724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>+ 7 000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>+14 416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>+ 6 000</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>+ 8 671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>+ 5 300</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>+ 7 390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>+ 4 800</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>+3 595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>+ 4 200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The drastic increase in diversity is further confirmed when focusing on statistics specific to the increase in numbers of foreign residents. For example, in 2007 foreign residents constituted 14.3% of the total population of Cyprus (CySTAT, 2007), whereas in 2011 they constituted 18.7% of the total population (CySTAT, 2011). It is necessary to consider the relevant socio-political changes that took place of the last twenty years when accounting for the increased immigration rates and demographic changes in Cyprus. In essence, the first reason leading to this effect was the relative political stability achieved after the 1974 war in the late 1980s. Another contributing factor was the accession of Cyprus to the European Union (EU) in 2004, which has provided added opportunities for immigration and employment to people coming from EU member states. As a result, Cyprus presents the highest rate of population growth in comparison to the other EU countries, when considering both the natural population growth, as well as the positive net migration rates recorded since 2004 (CySTAT, 2011, pg. 21).

\(^2\) In this thesis the term “foreign” residents will be adopted to refer to individuals who do not belong to the two major ethnic communities of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriots or Turkish-Cypriots), in order to adopt the same terminology as that used within Government reports (CySTAT, 2005; CySTAT, 2007; CySTAT, 2011).
Explaining these trends, Angelides et al. (2003) suggests that during the last decade there has been a rise in the numbers of economic immigrants from European and Asian countries, as well as an increase in the numbers of people from the Greek Diaspora who chose to resettle in Cyprus. Additionally, nationals from neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine tend to arrive in Cyprus as asylum seekers to avoid the political turmoil in their countries (Angelides & Leigh, 2004; Gregoriou et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) attribute part of the increased diversity to the resettlement of a considerable number of Turkish-Cypriots to the non-occupied area of Cyprus. What seems to have instigated their resettlement was the opening of the borders separating the occupied and non-occupied areas of Cyprus. The ability to move freely between the two partitioned areas has provided Turkish-Cypriots with opportunities for a better quality of life and has therefore increased their migration rates (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

In conclusion, as a consequence of the recent socio-political changes which have resulted in increased immigration rates and relevant demographic changes, contemporary Cypriot society no longer presents a homogenous entity (Papamichael, 2009). The Greek-Cypriot community that was once left in relative isolation after the 1974 Turkish occupation has been abruptly coming into contact with increasing numbers of people who have different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The evolving multicultural character of the Cypriot society has created a context of political and social imbalance. In effect, increasing diversity in Cyprus has imposed a plethora of previously unfamiliar challenges, such as for example the mounting records of racist and xenophobic behaviours and the lack of tolerance for others who are different, towards which the government seems not to have implemented an effective response (Angelides et al., 2004b; Messiou, 2002).

These challenges are not only restricted to the wider societal context but are also reflected within the Cypriot educational system. Over the last decade schools in Cyprus have been faced with an unanticipated increase in the diversity of students they cater for. At the time of my fieldwork, 6% of the total pupil population in primary schools and 7.3% of the total pupil population in high schools was comprised of foreign students, coming mainly from the former Soviet Union (MoEC, 2009b). Demographic changes have severe implications on population compositions in schools across Cyprus, with some schools catering to small numbers of foreign students while others cater predominantly to foreign students. This has repercussions for the proper functioning of schools (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).
In spite of evidence of increasing multicultural pluralism amongst student populations within Cypriot schools, increasing diversity has only been presented as an issue of concern requiring an effective response as late as 2001 (MoEC, 2001). However, in order for Cyprus to improve its educational system in alignment with the protocols prescribed by the European Union, and as a means to deal with the challenge of increased student diversity, it needs to embrace the idea of educational change. This is in agreement with Angelides & Leigh (2004), who propose that relevant educational change should prescribe reforms in policy, practice, research, and finally in the educational content offered in schools.

The next sections examine closely the strategies employed in response to increased student diversity at the time this study was conducted in Cyprus. The elements of educational policy, practice and research will be examined in the light of their contributions within the governmental response towards increased student diversity in schools.

**Educational Policy**

Despite evidence for increasing student diversity and all potential challenges for educational practice especially over the last decade, there was initially no reform in school policy in reflection to the newfound diversity and multiculturalism within schools. The delayed initial response adopted, came only as a countermeasure towards the blatantly obvious effects of increasing student diversity as those are described below.

Amongst the most commonly cited reasons dictating educational reform in response to increased student diversity were issues such as racism, ethnocentrism, bullying, and the marginalisation of many foreign students in schools (Angelides et al., 2003; Angelides et al., 2004b). Local media were often critical of the inability of schools to promote a climate of “smooth co-existence” between Greek-Cypriot and foreign students (Gregoriou, 2011). In many cases, however, the reports presented less favourable images of the “Others” (Said, 1993), and as a result propagated an ethnocentric perception towards all foreign citizens. For example, strong emphasis was frequently placed on incidents of anarchy, looting, and illegal behaviour associated with foreign citizens (Sigmalive, 2011).

In addition to issues of racism and xenophobia, a second major issue of concern was the achievement gap observed between Greek-Cypriot and foreign students (Angelides et al., 2004b; Messiou, 2002). Such evidence indicated that educational change was necessary, and had to be directed towards providing equal opportunities for learning to all children.
Nevertheless, prior to addressing the specific policies adopted in response to increased student diversity, it is necessary to explain how the Cypriot educational system operates.

The educational system of Cyprus is extensively centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) controlling all educational and administrative matters. Issues of curriculum reform, book provision, allocation of resources, and pedagogical policies are determined and controlled by the MoEC (Angelides et al., 2004a; Symeonidou, 2002b). The ministry’s control over schools is expressed through the Inspectorate and the school head-teachers. With all strategies monitored by the MoEC, the responsibility and authority of school head-teachers and local school boards to enforce effective changes in school practice seems to be less developed in Cyprus in comparison to other countries (Angelides et al., 2004a). This allows one to rightly assume that unless reform is initiated by the MoEC, there is little room for individual attempts towards educational reform.

In agreement with the previous statement, a centralized response was adopted shortly before Cyprus’ accession to the EU, with the MoEC using for the first time the rhetoric of multicultural education to acknowledge the diversity within Cypriot society at the beginning of the 2001 school year (Philippou, 2007). Multicultural education therefore became the predominant framework though which schools in Cyprus would be reformed in response to educational provision for foreign students (Angelides et al., 2003).

Papamichael (2009) adds that in order to ascribe to norms relevant to human rights, antiracism and multicultural education adopted within the EU, the Cypriot government introduced the policy on Intercultural education in 2001 with the Report Intercultural education in Cyprus. Even though this report was primarily concerned with teaching Greek as a second language and promoting respect for diversity (Roussou & Hadjiyianni-Yiangou, 2001), it introduced a yet different theoretical framework besides that of multicultural education through which the MoEC attempts to respond to increasing student diversity have been shaped. Accordingly, I propose that the initial attempts for educational reform were in-coherent, since documents dispensed to schools from the MoEC presented conflicting discourses that were relevant to the different theoretical frameworks adopted.

Additionally, there seemed to be a clash between the newly-introduced agendas of multiculturalism and interculturalism, and the already established educational agendas that promoted students’ Greek national identity. For example, some documents advocated the
need to respect diversity in schools, whereas other documents presented the promotion of the “national identity” as a primary educational target (MoEC, 2001), and the “continuation of the Greek nature of education as a prerequisite to ensure the development of the Greek national identity of students” (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). I, therefore, suggest that these accounts reflect a non-inclusive agenda towards ethnic diversity and a disposition towards assimilating foreign students into the dominant Greek-Cypriot culture.

Adding to this argument, Zembylas (2010) claims that critical discourse analysis of policy circulars from 2002 to 2008 revealed competing discourses of intercultural education in terms of policy implementation. He elaborates by indicating the lack of conceptual clarity spanning policy documents in terms of the intended agenda, as well as how this should be enforced in practice. He concludes that “the majority of constructions of intercultural education are grounded in conservative multicultural ideas of culture and difference, with fewer liberal and pluralist views as a result of Cyprus’ membership in the EU”.

Even though discrepancies could be detected in the reform agenda of the MoEC, one could see that through most of the initial strategies adopted the primary aim was to offer foreign students support in learning the Greek language. Since Greek is the official language of instruction used within mainstream schools in Cyprus, it was assumed that support in learning Greek would allow foreign students to achieve “a smoother transition in the Greek-Cypriot society” (MoEC, 2005; MoEC, 2006; MoEC, 2008a). The enforced strategies entailed the education of “foreign-speaking students” in regular classes alongside their Greek-Cypriot classmates, with interventions designed to allow their withdrawal from regular classes to receive Greek language support lessons (MoEC, 2006).

Another strategy enforced involved the attempt to distribute foreign students evenly across schools in each district, and schools were in turn requested to distribute students evenly across various classrooms. The aim was to enable teachers to support the differing needs of all students more effectively (MoEC, 2008b). Additionally, the MoEC attempted to raise awareness and promote respect for diversity by disseminating information regarding “the way of life, patterns of thought and attitudes of people who differ from the majority population” (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). With that, multicultural awareness was placed at the forefront of the educational agenda and schools were provided with educational material such as books and teaching manuals (MoEC, 2008a, p.38-39).

Reference to the term regular classes aims to distinguish between lessons covering curriculum subjects that are mandatory for all students and specialised support lessons offering additional support to a subgroup of students, such as language support lessons offered to foreign-speaking students.
It is important to note that these strategies were set in place within the context of primary education, with no reference in the mission statements of the MoEC to an agenda for secondary education. The sole reference acknowledging the need for a similar response in secondary schools lies with the claim that students must be encouraged to “acquire new attitudes, such as tolerance and respect for others and their culture” (MoEC, 2008a, p.45). Through this analysis it can be rightly assumed that the above-mentioned initial attempts for school reform were enforced in haste, without thorough planning, and in an attempt to overcome the most obvious and immediate challenges posed by increasing student diversity. Papamichael (2009) criticizes the urgency with which the government adopted strategies of educational reform, indicating that strategies implemented in response to student diversity have predominantly failed.

Explaining this, Angelides et al. (2004b) claim that the MoEC appeared to be inactive in dealing with “contemporary issues of multiculturalism and mapping out a national educational policy that would effectively confront racist and xenophobic behaviours that have become common in Cyprus”. In agreement, Papamichael (2009) quotes that the 2006 Commissions for Educational Reform in Cyprus concluded that “the ideological and political context of contemporary Cypriot education remains narrowly ethnocentric and culturally monolithic”, and ignored the multiculturalism of Cypriot society. I would therefore propose that the initial response to increasing student diversity was limited in scope since it addressed primarily issues of racism and language difficulties, whereas it failed to effectively address all aspects of students’ school lives. I also suggest that the initial response was vague, since it appeared to promote conflicting messages as to its aim to promote respect for diversity through multicultural or intercultural education, in contrast to promoting the Greek national identity of native students.

However, Symeonidou (2002b) adopts a more positive stance when suggesting that the concept of the inclusion of minority groups in Cyprus will become an integral part of the educational system and will replace attempts to merely integrate students from minority groups in schools. Despite this wishful thinking, the overall promotion of multicultural education has only been a recent educational priority in Cyprus (MoEC, 2005; MoEC, 2006; MoEC, 2008a), with its discipline and practice being given limited attention. This is confirmed by the lack of research on issues of multiculturalism (Angelides et al., 2003; Angelides et al., 2004b; Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007), which has only recently attracted attention into the role of education and pedagogy in shaping individuals towards becoming respectful of increased diversity (Angelides et al., 2003).
For example, Angelides et al. (2007) suggest that the marginalisation of foreign children is often the result of teachers’ lack of training in multicultural issues (Angelides et al., 2004b). Roussou & Hadjiyianni-Yiangou’s (2001) report also acknowledges that many teachers seemed concerned about the lack of training required when working in schools catering for diverse student populations. Contrary to these reports though, Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) studied the usefulness of teacher in-service seminars and discovered that 35% of the practitioners interviewed were unaware of seminars that were on offer. In this case, the act of critiquing the lack of in-service teacher training is contradicted by the fact that some teachers were unaware of in-service training sources available to them.

This takes us into another area of critique that further explores the inability of many teachers to respond positively to the needs of foreign children. On occasion, questions have been raised in regards to teachers’ possible unwillingness to accept “children who came from different countries and spoke different languages to that of the dominant culture’s children” (Angelides et al., 2007), despite lacking appropriate training. Relevant claims have been posed by Aneglides et al. (2004b), who suggest that many teachers aim to fully assimilate foreign children into the dominant culture in an attempt to carry out their practice smoothly, therefore disregarding values of respect for diversity within schools.

In conclusion, it has been suggested that one way to improve the government’s response to increased diversity is by not only changing the processes and structures that determine the policy, but also to modify the existing education policies on multicultural education (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). Accordingly, this change should begin with the structures of the ministry becoming less rigid and inflexible and staff being open to new ideas, one of which should be the development of research on this topic (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). Taking into consideration the acknowledged gap in terms of literature and research on the topic of increasing student diversity, my research intends to shine light on factors affecting the provision of equal opportunities to education for all students within Cypriot schools. Since the first place to investigate the enforcement of school policies is none other than the actual schools and its classrooms, the following section will review existing literature relevant to educational practice relevant to student diversity within Cypriot schools.

**Educational practice**

Having discussed the policy framework set in place in response to challenges of increased student diversity within mainstream schools in Cyprus, it is now necessary to explore why
educational policy has been criticized as not translating into corresponding educational practice. To begin with, Angelides et al. (2004a) suggest that the educational system of Cyprus appears not to value diversity. Instead, “there is a tendency to emphasize similarity and to reinforce associations with individuals who have similar abilities, skills and appearance”. Consequently, it is often the case that individuals who appear different from the majority of students are marginalised and often excluded from teaching practice.

In a study aimed at exploring the attitudes of Greek-Cypriot students towards foreign students, Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) the following factors of every day school practice appeared to affect the school experiences of non-indigenous students:

- The number of foreign students concentrated in some classes;
- The age at which foreign students were introduced into mainstream schools;
- The content of the curriculum;
- The language used for teaching & language support measures;
- Teachers’ perceptions about the strategies in place and modes of “best practice”;
- And, the potential need to provide foreign students with psychological support.

Taking into account that the research of Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) is one of a few studies that has explicitly investigated factors that appear to be affecting educational practice relevant to issues of diversity, these factors have to be further elaborated. Accordingly, this study identified that the attempts of the MoEC to ensure that foreign students are distributed evenly across districts, schools and classrooms to minimize disruptions to teaching and learning have failed since foreign students are concentrated in certain schools and classrooms. This results in school work suffering and creating delays with delivering the curriculum with direct repercussions on teaching and learning. It is, therefore, not surprising that native students often declare that they would prefer to attend schools which do not cater for foreign students (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

It has also been noted that foreign students admitted to schools at a younger age appear to obtain better academic results than students enrolling within Cypriot schools at an older age, possibly because they adapt quickly and more easily to the new lifestyle and how the schools are run in Cyprus (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). Another reason lies with the teaching and learning using the Greek language at a younger age when the curriculum demands are less compared to the curriculum demands in higher classes.
Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) confirmed that the main strategy adopted in response to foreign students’ academic and social needs involved language support. During this time foreign students are removed from their regular class in order to attend Greek language support lessons. According to the researchers, teachers interviewed on their experience of working in classrooms with foreign students claimed that language support could be improved through providing clearer goals on how to teach Greek to foreign children. Teachers also claimed that language support is not sufficient to improve students’ academic performance or to include them in the school community. Additionally, most teachers suggested that other factors were also linked to students’ underperformance and inability to become accepted in the school community, as follows:

- The academic experiences students acquired in their previous educational system;
- The pressure to adjust/assimilate to a completely new lifestyle;
- The socio-economic status of the family (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

The above-mentioned factors indicate that many teachers presented as factors influencing students’ academic and social inclusion issues that are outside the teachers’ control. I was therefore not surprised to read that there was disagreement among teachers about the best strategy for promoting foreign students’ inclusion. Accordingly, 70% of the interviewed teachers suggested that students should be immediately integrated in schools so as to enhance inclusion, and 30% claimed that students should learn Greek before school enrollment (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). These findings indicate conflicting perceptions in terms of “best practice” to be used in the context diverse classrooms.

On the other hand, suggestions to improve educational practice regarding student diversity involved paying attention to the learning and psychological difficulties these children might face when pressured to integrate in a new culture and not speaking the Greek language (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). The provision of necessary psychological support has been raised with other authors as well. For example, Papamichael (2009) considered this a critical strategy since foreign students seemed to struggle with the fact that the Cypriot educational system often ignored their cultural backgrounds and their relationships with Greek-Cypriot classmates were often characterised by intolerance.

Moreover, it has been argued that it is necessary to improve the quality of teaching offered within mainstream schools through modifying the provision of initial training and in-service training of teachers (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). In addition, it has been suggested...
that even though the leadership styles adopted within multicultural schools in Cyprus are fairly conservative (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010), leadership practice could be improved with the purpose of providing more inclusive education (Angelides et al., 2010; Zembylas, 2010; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010).

Finally, other proposed measures revolved around the use of qualitative research methods along with collaborative models of inquiry and the introduction of action research for school improvement. These measures were deemed suitable for shedding light on the complexities that schools face in their attempts to respond positively to student diversity, as well as investigating ways to improve teachers’ practice (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). To address suggestions requesting the input of educational research aimed at identify ways to enhance any response towards increasing student diversity, the following section will outline the reality of educational research relevant to this topic in Cyprus.

**Educational research**

In most European countries, research tends to inform and direct developments in the field of education. However, educational research in Cyprus is considerably limited, and most projects are quantitative in nature (Angelides & Leigh, 2004). This phenomenon is disquieting given that the outcomes of research might help to identify and improve ineffective policies and practice relevant to increasing student diversity. Research can also explore factors which have been acting as barriers to the successful inclusion of foreign students, as well as shine light into factors that can be mobilized as resources for inclusion.

Taking this into consideration, it has to be acknowledged that during the last decade there have been efforts to develop policy and practice for multicultural education in Cyprus. However, not all efforts rely on the findings of research on this topic. This could explain why some researchers claim that instead of promoting equal opportunities to education for all students and respect for diversity it appears that the assimilation of foreign children into the dominant culture is being promoted (Angelides et al., 2003; Messiou, 2002; Messiou, 2006; Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007; Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). In cases that assimilation is not achieved, foreign students are frequently marginalised within educational institutions (Angelides et al., 2004b).

Consequently, there is widespread dissatisfaction among researchers, teachers and parents on how multicultural education is implemented in Cyprus (Angelides et al., 2003;
Angelides et al., 2004b). The paradox is that educational research on this topic is limited, despite the increasing numbers of foreign students in mainstream schools (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) confirm that most research around the discourses of multicultural education and inclusive education focus on the topic of teachers’ attitudes and their everyday practice. Suggestions for future research concentrate on exploring practices relevant to equity, social justice, racism, cultural pluralism, and diversity; as well as on identifying ways to engage in dialogue, inquiry and reflection to improve educational practice in response to this topic (Angelides et al., 2007).

In the absence of sufficient research relevant to issues of diversity, the Cypriot government has relied heavily on borrowing ideas and policies for educational reform from international educational agendas, and specifically those of Greece and England (Liasidou, 2008). Outlining the socio-political context giving rise to this phenomenon, Liasidou (2007a) claims that given the British long-term colonisation over Cyprus, the overarching influence of English legislation and practice is not surprising. During this time, the Cypriot government adopted any British proposed curriculum modifications unless, these were perceived as opposing Cypriots’ Greek identity. Meanwhile, policy-borrowing extended to Greek educational policies in alignment with historical and ethnic reasons that stemmed from the desire of Cypriots for unification with Greece prior to the independence of Cyprus in 1960 (Liasidou, 2007a). The overreliance on Greek educational policies has been criticized as producing an ethnocentric, nationalistic and by implication static educational system (Angelides et al., 2003), which fails to promote respect for diversity.

Given these historical and political circumstances and subsequent policy-borrowing from Greece and England, Cyprus has uncritically introduced policies into an educational context which was historically and politically unprepared to implement them. The educational discourses identified as underlying the government’s attempt to tackle issues of diversity within mainstream schools are those of multicultural education and intercultural education. However, the discourse of multicultural education is most prominently used within policy relevant to the education of ethnically diverse students.

In more detail, this discipline emerged in the United States in the 1960’s in response to social movements and demands from minority groups, like the struggle of African-Americans for political rights and elimination of racial discrimination (Angelides et al., 2003). The discipline’s practice and significance has changed greatly over the years since it
is arguably responsive by nature to events, movements, and demographic shifts in societies in which it is practiced (Ramsey et al., 2002).

Multicultural education is defined as the process “oriented at the creation of learning experiences that foster educational equity, an awareness of and respect for the diversity of our society and the world, and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable society” (Ramsey et al., 2002). Ramsey (2002) argues that these learning experiences are relevant to all children and their families, to all pedagogical, curricular and administrative decisions taken, and all aspects of local and national educational policies of a country.

In one study, Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) draw on five models that indicate how multicultural education is practiced in schools and how the lives of students are affected. These models are presented below:

1. The Acculturation model: prescribes that any political & cultural minority groups are absorbed by the dominant/native population if they want to participate equally in the dominant society.

2. The Incorporation model: entails that the ethnic, cultural and religious differences of ethnic minority groups are recognized and respected by the host society, when their differences are not considered to be threatening to the host society.

3. The Multiculturalist model: permits the creation of an educational and societal framework in which every civilization exists and develops without the risk of losing its unity & cohesion. The educational curricula consider the language & cultural differences among students and foster an environment of respect, understanding and acceptance of cultural differences.

4. The Anti-racist model: focuses not only on individual attitudes as the multiculturalist model does, but also considers group attitudes. Emphasis is placed on institutional processes and changes that can occur in the educational system with the modification of attitudes and values held by the wider society.

5. The intercultural model: suggests that within the educational system there should be development of an empathetic attitude towards difference and in order to empower people to cultivate values that go beyond notions of race and the “state”. The model requires that educational practices should be directed towards the development of intercultural respect through the mutual learning among indigenous and non-indigenous citizens.
Within the framework of multicultural education, Angelides et al. (2003) suggest that children in multicultural schools must maintain their home culture and language, and should ultimately continue to thrive in them. At the same time it is recommended that non-indigenous students have the opportunity to learn the language and culture of the host society. More importantly, by the time that students leave school they should have acquired the necessary skills for social, academic, political and economic success; and they should have learned to appreciate others irrespective of skin colour, language, and religious identity (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

In summary, the way in which the Cypriot government has tried to respond to the issue of increased student diversity resembles the strategies employed in Greece. Angelides et al. (2004b) claim that the educational practice in both Greece and Cyprus treats the diversity of “foreign” pupils as an intrinsic deficiency of the students that has to be treated quickly in order for these children to become assimilated quickly into the dominant culture. The use of both discourses of multicultural and intercultural education within educational policy, practice and research relevant to increased diversity in school populations, has proved challenging in various ways (Liasidou, 2007b). The use of multiple discourses (Fulcher, 1990, p.16), has prevented the Cypriot educational system from adopting a uniform strategy when attempting to tackle this issue. In my opinion this has the following adverse effects:

- It provided the flexibility for people in administrative positions at the MoEC to act according to their vested interests with regards to policy implementation;
- It created confusion as to how policies should be perceived and implemented by practitioners;
- Finally, it limited the emphasis that should have been placed on the topic of increasing student diversity since the initial response did not involve the implementation of a single and comprehensive strategy as the result of relevant educational research.

Amidst this theoretical confusion and the extensive reference to the framework of multicultural education within Cypriot policy documents, my research uses the framework of inclusive education to analyze the response towards increased student diversity. The following section presents the framework of inclusive education and suggests why this framework has been selected as the most appropriate for conducting research in this study on issues of educational diversity.
The framework of Inclusive Education

This section provides an overview of the framework of inclusive education, in an attempt to indicate the reasons why it is considered relevant for studying the educational provision offered to ethnically diverse students, as well as to analysing school practices aimed at providing students with equal opportunities to education. Emphasis will be given to factors which appear to be acting as barriers to the provision of an inclusive educational experience to diverse student populations. Moreover, factors which make the educational experiences of these students more inclusive and promote respect towards the ethnic diversity will be identified. The analysis of this discourse will allow me to shine light into the way in which Cyprus has tried to enforce its own agenda to promote an inclusive educational experience to foreign-speaking students in Cypriot schools.

Inclusive Education

In trying to define the framework of inclusive education, it should be noted that great confusion exists regarding the definition of inclusion within different educational settings (Ainscow, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). This confusion rests in part with the fact that inclusion has been defined in a variety of ways within international educational agendas (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Clough & Corbett, 2000; Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). Ainscow (2007), explains that the confusion persists even if inclusive education is listed as a priority within many educational agendas worldwide.

At the same time, discourse of inclusive education has been used to address a range of issues perceived as an educational priority specific to the context of different countries. For example, a priority in economically poorer countries lies with equipping schools and classrooms with relevant resources that are necessary for teaching and learning, as well as with ensuring the presence of millions of children in schools, who otherwise do not see the inside of a classroom (Bellamy, 1999). Contrary to that, more affluent countries are faced with different sets of challenges, often being more preoccupied with children leaving school without any worthwhile qualifications due to low academic achievement, or dropping out if curricula are perceived as irrelevant to their lives (Ainscow et al., 2006a).

Nonetheless, it is widely agreed that inclusive education, as a theoretical framework for educational policy and practice, originated in the attempt to integrate students categorized as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) into mainstream schools (Ainscow, 2005), and
its definition is entrenched in educational agendas that are concerned with the education of children considered to have specific disabilities (Ainscow, 1998; Allan, 1999; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Batsiou et al., 2006; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Fulcher, 1990; Lewis & Norwich, 2005; Phtiaka, 2000).

Despite this confusion in defining inclusive education, I suggest that inclusive education is perceived internationally as a discipline grounded within the realm of human rights approaches to education, and draws on values of equity (Ainscow et al., 2007; Bartolome, 1994; Blackmore, 2006) and social justice (Artiles, 2006; Gill & Chalmers, 2007). Such discourses reflect the United Nations’ global strategy for “Education for All” (Lewin, 2007; UNESCO, 2000), which entails that the right to education should be extended to all children. This discourse is strongly endorsed within the Salamanca Statement, which argues that schools with an inclusive orientation are the “most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994). Through such references, inclusive education initiatives seem to place a particular focus on groups of students, which in the past have been excluded from educational opportunities. These groups include children living in poverty, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, and those with disabilities or SEN (UNESCO, 2003).

The most widely used definitions refer to providing all students with equal educational opportunities, in which they can thrive and receive meaningful education, irrespective of students’ ethnic and cultural diversity. In spite of that, Ainscow (2005) attempts to offer a more comprehensive definition of inclusion as a continuous process involving the identification of better ways of responding to student diversity. Inclusive education is an approach to education embodying certain values (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 5). It is therefore concerned with all learners and with identifying “barriers” (Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 5), and with removing barriers by targeting ineffective educational policy and practice to ensure the presence, participation and achievement of all students in schools, particularly for students at risk of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 5; Manchester City Council, 2004).

In summary, the broad view of inclusion is concerned with all children; it addresses issues of presence, participation and achievement; it presents inclusion and exclusion are intertwined since inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion; and inclusion is a never-ending process since no school can be in a perfect state of inclusion given the constant presence of exclusionary pressures in schools (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 25).
This latter definition most closely reflects the meaning assigned to inclusion in this thesis. Furthermore, this has shaped the theoretical framework through which the response to increased student diversity has been explored in this study (refer to Figure 1.1), has contributed to the formulation of my research questions, and defined the methods of data collection and analysis, as will be described in the following chapter. The next section explains why I have adopted the framework of inclusive education instead of that of multicultural education in my attempt to explore the response of the Cypriot educational system to increasing student diversity.

**Inclusive rather than Multicultural Education**

In this study it was proven to be extremely difficult to discuss notions surrounding the implementation of *inclusive* and of *multicultural education* in a way that presents these disciplines as two completely separate entities. As previously discussed, there is extensive reference to the framework of multicultural education within Cypriot policy documents in relevance to increasing student diversity. However, Cyprus seems to have started to adopt a more inclusive educational philosophy and policy. More specifically, over the last ten years Cyprus was faced with an urgency to move towards the direction of inclusive education in an effort to follow international trends in the field, and as a means to achieve the standards in education required for its membership in the EU. This is evident when considering some policy documents that draw on the framework of inclusive education.

Nonetheless, careful scrutiny of relevant policy documents reveals that unlike patterns in the international educational agendas inclusive education in Cyprus has not been used as a medium to investigate the educational experiences of diverse groups of students. Instead, inclusive education within Cypriot policy documents and educational research is primarily concerned with the education of children categorized as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), whilst neglecting other elements of diversity within student populations, such as differences in ethnicity, language, religion and culture. Specifically, the term “inclusion” seems to have replaced any reference within government documents to the term “integration” in regards to students categorised as having SEN (Angelides et al., 2004a).

Even though inclusive education emerged in association to special needs education, this discipline has progressively become a more comprehensive one. As mentioned previously, international discourse of inclusive education dictates for educational provision that caters for the needs of *all* pupils and the promotion of respect for the diversity observed within
educational settings (Farrell, 2000). In this case, it presents a movement against all kinds of exclusion and a reaction against the practice of social inequality (Petrou et al., 2009). In agreement, Liasidou (2007b) claims that inclusion should be conceptualised as aiming to provide effective education not only to disabled children but to all children irrespective of differences. This author notes that by no means should inclusive education be perceived as a new name for special education within mainstream schools, since the new definition does not limit the themes that inclusive education can address.

Consequently, I would argue that Cyprus is far from adopting the inclusive agenda set within international contexts. I would venture to go a step further to suggest that Cyprus has failed to reflect on and learn from the experiences of other countries which have dealt with issues of inclusion longer. Despite the current discrepancy that seems to underlie the use of the discourses of multicultural and inclusive education in Cyprus in contrast to international trends, it is a matter of time for Cyprus to follow in the footsteps of educational reforms occurring internationally as it has done in the past. I shall therefore suggest that inclusive education will replace in time the discourse of multicultural education when it comes to exploring issues of student diversity in schools.

For example, if inclusive education refers to a continuous process involving the identification of better ways of responding to student diversity (Ainscow, 2005), then essentially this infers that relevant educational practice will be directed towards promoting educational equity, and an awareness of and respect for diversity. Interestingly, this is according to Ramsey (2002) the aim of multicultural education. Moreover, Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) refer to multicultural education as requiring the development of educational systems which besides being culturally relevant, have to be inclusive in nature rather than exclusive. I would therefore argue that the issues addressed within the discourse of multicultural education could be comprehensively addressed through the inclusive education discourse.

In conclusion, this study will use the framework of inclusive education to explore the response to increased student diversity within schools in Cyprus. Finally, since this study has set out to explore potential barriers and resources to the inclusion of foreign-speaking students, as indicated in Chapter 1, the next sections present findings from international published work on factors identified as barriers and resources to the inclusion of foreign students, with a progressive focusing on barriers and resources identified in the scant published research in Cyprus.
Barriers to the inclusion of foreign students

As described in the previous section, certain factors within schools, communities and local or national policies act as barriers to learning and participation, and lead to children’s marginalisation. According to Dyson et al. (2002), barriers to inclusion can be related to curriculum, school and classroom organisation, assessment, or more generally to cultures, policies and practices. More specifically, when considering the definition of inclusive education adopted in this study, any factor compromising students’ presence, participation and achievement in school (Ainscow, 2005; Manchester City Council, 2004), is considered to be a barrier that hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education. The next section begins to outline identifiable barriers to inclusion through investigating factors compromising the formulation and implementation of inclusive educational policies.

Barriers relevant to educational policy

In considering possible barriers it is important to first of all focus on the impact of policies. In particular, it is necessary to acknowledge that policies often have a narrower scope than the broad definition of inclusive education. Accordingly, instead of addressing the individual needs of each student within schools they are restricted to addressing the needs of groups of students within educational institutions. One example is the frequent preoccupation of inclusive education agendas with the needs of students categorised as having SEN (Ainscow, 1998; Allan, 1999; Batsiou et al., 2006; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Fulcher, 1990; Hatzikakou et al., 2008; Hatziyiannakou, 2007), meanwhile disregarding practices that could affect a greater diversity of student groups within school.

As a result, issues of student diversity in terms of variability in ethnicity, language, religion and culture, are often addressed within other theoretical frameworks, such as those of multicultural (Angelides et al., 2003; Angelides et al., 2004b; Arber, 2005; Ball & Troyna, 1987; Fullinwider, 2001; Gallagher & Pritchard, 2007; Gregoriou, 2011; Ramsey et al., 2002; Troyna, 1985; Troyna, 1987) and intercultural education (Angelides et al., 2003; Gobbo, 2008; Gorski, 2008; Gundara & Portera, 2008; Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2007; Portera, 2008; Roussou & Hadjiyianni-Yiangou, 2001; Walker & Shuangye, 2007).

In some cases, educational systems seem to be adopting policies that reflect the wider connotation of the definition of inclusion when addressing issues of diversity (Ainscow,
Another barrier to inclusive practices is the vagueness of policy documents in terms of the ways to implement the theoretical framework of inclusive education into practice. For example, teaching staff are often required to implement inclusive practices, but in the absence of a universal definition of what the term entails and a coherent policy framework through which to effectively enforce relevant policies, the way in which teachers enact inclusive policies depends on their understanding of the concept (Sikes et al., 2007). In agreement, Allan (2008, pg. 25) suggests that in the light of unclear guidelines on ways to implement inclusive strategies into every day practice, vague policy adds to the confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion experienced by teachers. Consequently, one can assume that vague policies are inevitably transient and subject to shifting interpretations, with their implementation remaining at large a subjective issue.

Underlying competing agendas within educational policy present another barrier to inclusion. For example, schools in England are often criticized for the alternate emphasis placed on strategies aimed at “raising standards”, in contrast to policies preoccupied with “promoting social inclusion” (Florian & Rouse, 2001; Rouse & Florian, 2006). More specifically, students that are considered to have English as an additional language (EAL) are expected to improve their academic performance despite lacking basic skills in the English language (Butcher et al., 2007; DfES, 2005b; DfES, 2007; Franson, 1999; Robinson, 2005). As a result, this often reinforces exclusive tendencies and limits attempts towards an inclusive response to student diversity (Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 114). Accordingly, it has been suggested that educational policy should be rely on principles of equity instead of the “narrow conceptions of economic rationality” (Barton & Armstrong, 2008, pg. 6).

In addition to competing discourses, discourse in educational policy acts as a barrier to inclusion if it draws on a “deficit” model through which to address the needs of various groups of students (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 17 & pg. 99; Strain, 1995). More precisely, policy discourses can often be exclusionary in nature when addressing inclusion by distinguishing between groups of students that are more included compared to “Other”
groups of students that are subjects of inclusive policies (Barton & Armstrong, 2008, pg. 158). Armstrong (2008, pg. 6-7) explains this further by suggesting that educational policy is frequently entrenched within perceptions “which are based on the construction of normative ways of thinking about teaching and learning, and desirable outcomes for education”. Moreover, Ainscow et al. (2006a, pg. 17) conclude that the processes of categorisation within policy documents and the practices associated with them, act as barriers to the development of a broader view of inclusion.

Having provided an overview of barriers associated internationally with inclusive educational policy, I needed to consider what this meant for schools. In summary, I took the following ideas relevant to the Cypriot context as a starting point for my investigations:

- The centrality of the educational system and top-down approach to the dissemination of power to schools from the MoEC of Cyprus prohibits innovations in the educational system with regards to student diversity (Angelides et al., 2004a; Nicolaidou et al., 2006; Symeonidou, 2002a);
- People in charge of reforms in the educational system fail to understand the complexities of schools and their cultures, leading to ineffective changes (Angelides & Leigh, 2004; Angelides et al., 2004b);
- The policy adopted in regards to expatriates and foreigners “considers the difference in the education and background of other students as a deficiency that has to be overcome quickly so that these children can be assimilated” into the school culture (Angelides et al., 2004a);
- There is lack of academic and psychological support offered to foreign students (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007);
- The curriculum is heavy, inflexible and determined extensively by Cyprus’ political context (Koutselini, 1997; Kyriakides, 1999), which contains racist information (EUMC, 2006), as well as nationalistic elements (Angelides et al., 2004b).

I now move on to consider barriers associated with educational practices.

**Barriers relevant to educational practice**

In a similar way to exploring barriers stemming from educational policy, in this section I draw attention to barriers identified internationally as affecting educational practice through compromising teaching and learning in schools. Accordingly, I address barriers
posed by the use of non-inclusive leadership styles, ineffective teacher training, inflexible curricula, and finally, the lack of resources that could be used to promote inclusion.

The first factor reviewed in this section is the contribution of educational leadership to the promotion of coherent responses to diversity. The importance of leadership in the adoption and implementation of inclusive practices has been widely cited (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Angelides et al., 2010; Bailey & Du Plessis, 1997; Blackmore, 2006; Blair, 2002; Johansson et al., 2007; Riehl, 2000; Walker & Shuangye, 2007; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010). An uncompromised commitment to inclusive education is considered to be a prerequisite towards promoting inclusive practices and identifying barriers to inclusion in schools (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004). A relative lack of such a commitment from school leaders is therefore seen as a barrier to promoting inclusive responses to increasing diversity.

Another prerequisite to creating schools with “inclusive cultures” is, according to Ainscow et al. (2006a, pg. 115), the need for leaders who are “charismatic” and can offer “transformative” responses to issues of inclusive education. If that is the case, leaders can set in place a range of “organizational conditions” that focus on promoting inclusion (Ainscow, 1998; Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 38; Ainscow et al., 2007). For example, they could encourage the use of “distributed” leadership styles through which a range of individuals are encouraged to participate in leadership functions (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 39; Angelides et al., 2010). On the contrary, it is argued that leadership styles through which the responsibility of success or failure of inclusive strategies rests solely with the school head-teacher, counteract the development of shared leadership and participatory styles that are necessary for developing inclusive practices (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 88).

Besides issues of leadership, an additional barrier to effectively promoting inclusive pedagogies in schools is the lack of appropriate teacher training on issues of inclusion and diversity. To that extend, many authors stress the significance of reforming teacher education programs for inclusive education as a means to improve educational equity (Angelides et al., 2006; Artiles & McClafferty, 1998; Butcher et al., 2007; Florian & Rouse, 2009; Florian et al., 2010; Halsall, 1998; Hopkins, 2002; Magos, 2006).

Teacher training for inclusive education is, therefore, deemed necessary since teachers are essentially the individuals who enforce inclusive policies in schools (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 52). In addition, relevant teacher training is assumed to encourage educational
practitioners to promote respect for diversity and help reduce prejudice and discrimination in schools (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). Finally, it has been argued that appropriate training might alleviate some of the stress that teachers are facing when required to put inclusive policies into practice (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). However, while in many other European countries primary and secondary teacher education programs have been revised to address issues of social and educational inclusion (Florian & Rouse, 2009), this has not been such a prominent topic of concern in Cyprus.

Furthermore, teachers’ practice is frequently compromised by the presence of inflexible curricula, presenting an additional barrier to inclusion. Many researchers draw attention to the need to reform curricula in ways that encourage the participation of all students and promote respect for diversity (Ainscow, 2007; Arber, 2005; Gravelle, 2000; Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2007; Koutselini, 1997; Kyriakides, 1999; Mitchell & Brumfit, 1997). Relevant suggestions include the narrowing of curricula and their deflection from the broader understanding of achievement (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 87); refraining from using curricula as a means to promote restricted national identities that do not reflect the reality of increasing diversity across countries (Koutselini, 2008; Koutselini, 1997); reforming curricula to reflect the increasing diversity across countries, such as addressing the needs of bilingual learners (Franson, 1999; Gravelle, 2000; Mitchell & Brumfit, 1997); and finally, avoid the strict monitoring of curricula by allowing flexibility for teachers to modify the curriculum to reflect the needs of diverse groups of students (Kyriakides, 1999). Angelides (2004a) argues that a curricular reform in response to increasing diversity through the framework of inclusive education, could focus on overcome the final barrier of the lack of resources that could be used to promote learning and participation of diverse groups of students in schools.

In summary, then, the following ideas related to barriers associated with practice specific to the context of Cyprus suggested further starting points for my investigations:

- Ineffective leadership styles not aimed at promoting inclusion (Angelides et al., 2010; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010);
- Teachers recognize the need to assume leadership roles as part of their professional development but face many challenges towards achieving this (Nicolaidou, 2010);
- Ineffective teaching approaches used in mixed-ability classes do not acknowledge the multiculturalism of modern classrooms (Angelides & Leigh, 2004);
- The lack of material and human resources available to support and sustain demanding innovations relevant to student diversity (Nicolaidou et al., 2006);
- The lack of proper in-service training for educational staff on issues of inclusion and multiculturalism (Angelides, 2005; Petrou et al., 2009);
- Language barriers compromise foreign students’ academic achievement since academic assessment is in Greek and is also applied to a set of national standards that tend to marginalize students coming from cultural backgrounds which are different to the Greek dominant culture (Petrou et al., 2009);
- Language difficulties act as a barrier to students’ socialisation also (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007);
- Finally, language barriers often prevents parents from providing academic support to their children (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

Next, I consider literature that focuses on barriers that are said to be associated with school cultures.

**Barriers relevant to school cultures**

The development of inclusive practices can be viewed in terms of educational policy and practice, as well as school cultures (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 16). Ainscow (2013) suggests that there is a body of critical literature highlighting the problems and complexities that emerge when schools attempt to develop greater inclusion. Accordingly, these literatures draw attention to the “internal complexities of schools as organisations, and the constraints and contradictions that are generated by the policy environments in which they exist” (Ainscow et al., 2006a). More specifically, it is proposed that in order to expose aspects of educational exclusion, particular emphasis should be placed on characteristics of schools as organisations that stimulate and support the interrogation of what inclusive education implies as requirements for practice, and as a result “foster inclusive educational cultures” (Ainscow, 2013).

Ainscow (2013) and Ainscow & Sandill (2010) cite as relevant to this discussion the suggestions of Skrtic’s (1991), who claims that schools that are most likely to respond to student diversity in positive and creative ways, are those that adopt “adhocratic configurations”. Accordingly, in these schools collaborative practices in teaching and learning are mobilised, and teachers are encouraged to critically reflect on their practice and reform it in ways that are responsive and flexible to the needs of all students.
As seen in the section relevant to policy barriers, certain “organizational conditions” are required for promoting inclusive cultures in schools. In detail, these involve among other factors the use of distributed leadership styles; high levels of staff and student involvement; joint planning; and a commitment to forms of enquiry that promote collaboration and problem solving among staff to identify more inclusive responses to diversity (Ainscow, 1999; Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 38). I would argue that the absence of these factors constitutes barriers towards promoting inclusive cultures within schools.

The above-mentioned suggestions are confirmed by the findings of a review of relevant international literature carried out by Dyson et al. (2004), which identifies the importance of an “inclusive school culture” in attempts to effectively promote inclusion in schools. In summary, the general principles proposed as mediating school organisation and classroom practice for the development of inclusive cultures are as follows:

- The removal of structural barriers between different groups of students and staff, such as achieving some degree of consensus amongst adults regarding values of respect for difference and the commitment to offering all students with equal opportunities for learning;
- Encouraging a high level of staff collaboration and critical reflection and inquiry on practice;
- Similar values and commitments could extend into the student body, and to parent and other community stakeholders, to encourage a participatory approach towards promoting inclusive cultures;
- The dismantling of separate programmes, services and specialisms, while developing pedagogical approaches that enable students to learn together rather than separately;
- Inclusive values should be adopted by school leaders, who should, in turn, aim to employ leadership styles that promote collaboration between staff, and encourage the active involvement of parents and the community in school practices.

In agreement with the suggestions of Dyson et al. (2004), I would suggest that negative attitudes and perceptions held by various stakeholders within schools constitute barriers to promoting inclusive school cultures, and frequently indicate underlying notions of prejudice and discrimination within schools, in reflection to attitudes held within the wider society (Angelides et al., 2003; Felice, 2002). For example, the often low expectations for the education of groups of students at risk of exclusion and marginalization can serve as
barriers to inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 30). Explaining this, Tomlinson (1997),
draws attention to the idea that students from minority groups are not usually desirable
“commodities” for schools, resulting in these groups’ exclusion and marginalization within
educational settings. In agreement, Molto et al. (2010) address the topic of pre-existing
beliefs held by novice teachers which are difficult to change unless they undertake relevant
training on issues of inclusion. It is significant to evaluate the overall cultures of schools in
studies of inclusive education, since the creation of inclusive school cultures is one way to
ensure the sustainable development of inclusive practices (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 24).

Such approaches are congruent with the view that inclusion is essentially about attempts to
embody particular values in particular contexts (Ainscow et al., 2006a), and frequently
offer specific processes through which inclusive developments might be promoted. In this
light, discussions of inclusion and exclusion can make explicit the values which underlie
the process of reform in schools that aim to adopt more inclusive practices. Inclusive
cultures, underpinned by particular organisational conditions, may therefore make those
discussions more likely to occur and more productive when they do occur (Ainscow,
2013).

Reflecting on literature on school cultures, then, I suggest a further series of factors to look
out for relevant to the context of Cyprus as I carried out my study summarized as follows:

- Negative teacher attitudes towards student diversity pertinent to the historical,
social and cultural context of Cyprus (Angelides et al., 2004b; Phtiaka, 1999),
leading to cultural misunderstandings and lack of preparation to deal with highly
diverse classrooms (Papamichael, 2009);

- Prejudice among Greek-Cypriot students as a common phenomenon, with these
students often failing to understand that currently reference to the term “Cypriot”
does not have the restricted meaning assigned to it when the Cypriot society used to
be more homogenous. Instead a broader meaning reflecting the multicultural
character of the Cypriot society should be adopted (Philippou, 2005);

- Stereotypes, prejudice and ignorance affect Greek-Cypriot students’ understandings
of diversity (Papamichael, 2009), something which often leads to discrimination,
racism and xenophobia against non-indigenous classmates (EUMC, 2006; Politis-
newspaper, 2006). This often leads to the social exclusion and the marginalization
of foreign students within schools (Angelides et al., 2004a; Messiou, 2002);
Bullying of foreign students is a common phenomenon, and is often directed towards the manner in which students dress, the financial difficulties of their families and their skin color (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007);

The lack of mechanisms for educational research on inclusive education (Angelides & Leigh, 2004).

Specific to the context of Cyprus, I can conclude that within the few research studies addressing issues of inclusion in response to increasing student diversity, barriers have been identified as compromising inclusion relevant to educational policy, educational practice, and the promotion of inclusive cultures within schools. Angelides (2004) has suggested that in order to overcome barriers and to provide a unified and efficient response to increased diversity within Cypriot mainstream schools, it is necessary to reform current approaches to education starting with a reform of the MoEC.

This could be achieved by positioning the appropriate people to the administration of the ministry, by making policies on multicultural education clear to all stakeholders, and more importantly, by providing appropriate initial and in-service training to teachers who have the potential to create a more positive school experience for foreign-speaking students through cultivating an ethos or respect for diversity (Angelides et al., 2004a). This essentially means that in order to minimize barriers to inclusion, structural changes must be achieved, in which policies, practices, and school curricula are modified in such a way that allows schools to cater for a diverse student population (Ainscow, 2002). Such suggestions indicate that attempts should be directed at identifying factors that can act as “resources” to enhance the inclusion of foreign students. In turn, the next section outlines resources that have been suggested as relevant to promoting inclusive policy, practice and school cultures in international educational agendas and in Cyprus.

**Resources promoting the inclusion of foreign students**

As mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, one way to counteract barriers to inclusive education is to mobilize strategies which aim to “create inclusive cultures”, “produce inclusive policies”, and “evolve inclusive practices”, through relevant educational reform (Ainscow, 2002). Reference will therefore be made below to the factors that can be considered as resources to promoting inclusive education for all students.
To this extend, inclusive schools are considered to be problem-solving organizations with a common mission which emphasizes that learning experiences should be provided to all students (Avramidis et al., 2002). Avramidis et al. (2002) argue that such schools employ teaching staff who are committed to working collaboratively to create and maintain a climate conductive to learning. Teachers essentially assume responsibility for all students in their class, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities for presence, participation, achievement and socialisation within their daily school experiences. In terms of relevant teacher training that could enhance the promotion of inclusive education, Symeoniou & Phítiaka (2009) argue that when designing teacher education programs a good resource to be utilized is the innate knowledge that teachers have about their teaching practice.

Ainscow (1997) has coined some of the factors that could be mobilised as resources to promote inclusive educational practices, and which could be directed to respond to students’ diversity. These include the appropriate planning and co-ordination of inclusive practices; effective leadership in schools, with the head-teacher establishing common goals to be met and building consensus among the teaching staff on targets to be met; and ensuring that all key stakeholders (pupils, parents, educators, and the wider community) are involved in policy formation relevant to inclusive education. On the topic of leadership for inclusion, Riehl (2000) adds that leaders should be concerned with building relationships of collaboration between schools and the surrounding communities. Devecchi & Rouse (2010) also suggest that a useful resource is enhancing collaboration between members of staff, such as the teachers and teaching assistants within a classroom.

A lot of emphasis has also been placed on promoting collaborative modes of teaching within educational settings (Ainscow et al., 2004; Angelides et al., 2007; Gill & Chalmers, 2007), and engaging within collaborative action research projects (Ainscow et al., 2004; Angelides, 2001; Angelides et al., 2005; Angelides et al., 2008; Mitchell-Williams et al., 2004). The desirable outcomes of collaborative modes of teaching and of inquiry would be to create principled interruptions that will mediate critical thinking and reflection on educational practice (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 118-143). Explaining this further, Ainscow et al. (2006a, pg. 143) claim that the use of “evidence-stimulated reflection” allows practitioners to interrupt their thinking, and reflect in order to rethink existing discourses on the topic of inclusion. This essentially allows practitioners to reappraise possibilities that they might have overseen and use them to “move inclusion forward”.

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Some resources to inclusion have also been identified within the Cypriot context and can be utilised to promote the inclusion of diverse groups of students. These stem from inclusive school cultures, as well as educational policy, practice and research. Suggestions relevant to educational policy involve those of Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) that requests that educational policy be directed towards producing educational programs that can help citizens to accept diversity as a countermeasure to racism in society. Angelides & Leigh (2004) have also suggested that the educational context and curriculum should be harmonised with that of other EU member states, through adopting approaches linked to the values of democratic education and respect for diversity. Finally, Papamichael (2009) advocates for the reform of the educational system in ways that establish appropriate initial and in-service teacher training, which may provide teachers with the tools to reflect on their own assumptions and attitudes and work towards promoting respect for diversity.

Resources relevant to educational practice involve according to Angelides et al. (2008) the differentiation of planning of lessons so that class activities are individualised to address the needs of all students in a class. Lesson planning could be the product of collaboration and reflection between different teachers to ensure that the needs of all students are met (Angelides et al., 2008). A variety of teaching mediums could also be used to make teaching and learning meaningful for all students and encourage their participation. Moreover, teachers should be encouraged to assume leadership roles and take ownership of their own practice, with distributed leadership styles used to promote increased parental and community involvement in students’ school lives (Angelides et al., 2008).

Other resources associated with educational practice have been identified by Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) and involve the introduction of more collaborative methods of teaching to enhance the academic performance of foreign students, since these methods have been cited as able to decrease the performance gap between foreign and indigenous students. One final resource referred to the provision of psychological support services to help foreign students overcome potential emotional and social problems they might while they try to adapt to a new culture (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007). Finally, the only resource identified as referring to the promotion of inclusive cultures within schools referred to the implementation of bilingual support programs in an effort to provide opportunities to foreign students to embrace and present their own cultures to Greek-Cypriot students as well (Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).
Conclusion

At this stage I would like to reflect on the fact that this study was exploratory in nature and my intended purpose was to maintain an open mind when investigating which factors might be implicated in compromising or promoting students’ inclusion in schools in Cyprus. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge here that to allow for the required flexibility in the research design adopted with the aim to reveal a wider range of barriers and resources to students’ inclusion at school, at the early stages of this research I did not draw on literature specific to migrant learners or to additional language learners beyond the context of Cyprus. The contribution of this study to the fields of migrant and additional language learners will instead be discussed in reflection to the study’s findings in the final chapters of the thesis.

However, within this chapter I have drawn on relevant literature in order to examine the educational context of Cyprus in terms of its responses to increasing student diversity. I have explained that this analysis was partly informed by ideas related to multicultural education. Most importantly I have explained my rational for investigating this topic using the framework of inclusive education, which regards the identification of barriers and resources to inclusion as a significant step towards reforming educational systems to adopt an inclusive philosophy. More specifically, I have argued that the ideas around barriers and resources in response to increasing student diversity can be utilized to analyse strategies directed towards the provision of equal opportunities to education, and the promotion of the presence, participation and achievement of diverse groups of students. I have also indicated what the existing literature suggests about all of this in relation to Cyprus.

At first glance, the content of this chapter seems to imply that the Cypriot educational context is unprepared to cater for the needs of diverse student populations within mainstream schools. Conscious of the danger of this limiting the focus of my research, I attempted to maintain an open mind, whilst at the same time using the ideas that gleaned from my reading as reference points as I went about gathering evidence. In doing this, I have stressed that there are limited examples of educational research on the topic of responding to increased student diversity in Cypriot schools. In particular, I have identified a gap in knowledge with respect to how stakeholders such as government officials, teachers, parents, students and whole communities might be implicated into forming a unified response to address the challenges posed by increasing student diversity in schools.
The research described in subsequent chapters sets out to fill this gap in knowledge in a three-fold way. First, this was achieved through researching the barriers and resources affecting the response to increasing student diversity within Cypriot schools through the framework of inclusive education rather than multicultural education. Second, my study adopted a qualitative instead of a quantitative research design to analyze the factors that could potentially be acting as barriers and resources to inclusion in-depth. Finally, the topic of increased student diversity was investigated through considering the perspectives of foreign-speaking students through the use of pupil voice oriented research techniques. Having established a framework and determined a series of ideas that presented starting points for my research, in the next chapter I explain the methodology that was employed.
Chapter 3 - Developing the Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature relevant to educational practices used, both internationally and in the context of Cyprus, to address the needs of schools catering to ethnically diverse student populations. References to pedagogies of equal opportunities to education for all students irrespective of diversity through the lens of inclusive education, constituted the theoretical framework informing this study. Based on this, a research design was constructed which aimed to identify the barriers that compromised “foreign-speaking”\(^4\) students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation in schools.

To address the proposed research questions set in Chapter 1, the adopted design focused on exploring the response to increasing student diversity within selected case study schools by identifying barriers and resources to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion. A multi-method approach to data collection was used, which combined methods eliciting the “voice” of students, such as drawings and a participatory photography task combined with focus group discussions, with more traditional research methods, like student observations and interviews used to offer a different vantage point of students’ school experiences. The next section indicates how each method was conceived, developed and implemented during fieldwork, and outlines the rationale for using each of the selected methods.

The research design

I decided to use a qualitative research design in this study, since it was considered appropriate for exploring the “voices” of students on what factors compromised, as well as promoted, their inclusion at school. Moreover, a qualitative design was employed since the agenda was exploratory in nature and called for a methodology that would investigate particular educational contexts extensively but also flexibly.

In more detail, the use of an exploratory design was considered necessary, based on the fact that published research on the topic of the inclusion of foreign-speaking students in Cypriot mainstream schools was limited, no published work existed relevant to the context of secondary education, and as a result, no reference to a similar design could have been

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\(^4\) Term used in reference to non-native students who have most recently arrived in Cyprus and are enrolled in schools without having even the basic skills in the Greek language, which is the official language of instruction in mainstream Greek-Cypriot schools.
made. Acknowledging that the research topic was especially context-bound since each case study school was expected to respond to increasing student diversity using different strategies, the design had to be flexible and adaptable to the varying research contexts that would be encountered during fieldwork. Consequently, investigating this topic required the use of a methodology allowing an in-depth exploration of a limited number of cases.

To allow for the required element of flexibility, the study adopted an exploratory case study design (Yin, 2003, p.6-8). This offered opportunities to act on preliminary hunches that emerged through the pilot work conducted prior to the onset of this research, and to subsequently “discover theory by observing a social phenomenon in its raw form” (Yin, 1994, p.6). Agreeing with Yin (2003), Robson (2002) suggests that case study methodology lends itself to the use of flexible designs, suited particularly to conducting exploratory research. Choosing this design allowed for the fieldwork and data collection processes to inform any modifications to the design, as well as the final formulation of the study’s research questions and hypotheses.

At the end of this overview, it has to be noted that the exploratory design used in this study has employed a constructivist epistemology, since qualitative research supports the notion that “reality” is socially constructed. Despite varying terminology in reference to constructivist (Robson, 2002, p.27), interpretive (Schwandt, 1994), or naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) designs, Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 10) state that there is no “one reality” of a given situation. Instead there are multiple constructions of meaning stemming from a researcher’s interpretation of how research participants construct stories in their attempts to make sense of the world, which are in turn used by researchers to construct “knowledge”. In agreement with Denzin and Lincoln (2003a, p. 305), I think that “knowing” is a process upon which we “form abstractions or concepts”, and that knowledge is not “discovered” but is in fact constructed. The construction of concepts to interpret experiences is continually re-evaluated in reference to new experiences. Moreover, we understand our interpretations of the world through a social lens, via shared understandings, practices, language etc. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 305).

Having explored the underlying characteristics of qualitative research, the following section outlines how the selected case study methodology was implemented and addresses potential limitations.
**Case study methodology**

As mentioned in the previous section, this study focused on conducting an in-depth investigation of case study schools with ethnically diverse student populations, and targeted the educational practices employed in response to increasing student diversity. Case studies have been used widely in educational research and are deemed suitable for studying in detail highly complex phenomena within specific socio-cultural contexts (Stake, 1995; Verschuren, 2003). More specifically, a *multiple case study* (Yin, 2003), or *collective case study* design (Stake, 1995) was employed. This came as an outcome to considering that differences in the number and ethnic composition of foreign-speaking students in schools across Cyprus required studying more than one school if a holistic and comprehensive picture of the factors affecting students’ inclusion was to be painted.

Using three case study schools, namely Socrates, Aristotle and Archimedes Gymnasium, meant that the findings from three distinct contexts could be considered separately. However, evidence from each school could also be compared to the evidence collected in the other two settings. Moreover, particular students would serve as “nested cases” within the case of each school (Yin, 1994), adding a relevant complexity to the design. However, the collective analysis of the emerging evidence within various stakeholders in each school, and across the three schools, supported a comparative approach of data analysis.

Quintessentially, case study research permitted the development of detailed and in-depth knowledge about a small number of related “cases” (Robson, 2002, p. 89). This methodology seemed most appropriate to use for this investigation, since case studies entail that particular attention is paid to the data generating context (Yin, 2003, p.4). As an outcome, the elaborate exploration of each school context was expected to illuminate the barriers and resources to the school experiences of foreign-speaking students.

Nevertheless, the reliance of case studies on data which is highly contextualized is quoted as one of the possible limitations of this methodology. One of the most prominent critiques is that case study research does not allow for the generalizability of findings to other cases beyond the context in which the research was conducted, unless these are extremely similar to the cases studied (Bell, 2006, p.11-13; Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.253-256). However, the exploratory nature of this study ascertained that any evidence with regards to the processes affecting the inclusion of foreign-speaking students in Cypriot schools would be extremely insightful despite the potential lack of generalizability.
An additional critique is that researchers can select what data to record and what data to analyze and present at the end of the study (Cohen et al., 2007, p.254). This often results in failure to report on equally important information that has been collected. Such concerns raise questions regarding the "politics of the research", such as who the researchers are, what role they are adopting in the research process, and the interests of the researchers. Therefore, despite attempts of case study researchers to be reflective of their practice, there is rarely any completely unbiased study of such kind. Further ethical considerations involved in case study research will be considered in detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. The following section looks at specific issues relevant to the research framework.

**Sampling strategy**

Three factors considered while selecting the case studies involved the appropriate number of schools to used, the age group of students participants, choosing between primary or secondary schools, and finally, the number of foreign-speaking students per school and the ethnic composition of that subgroup of the student population. With multiple criteria influencing the case study selection, the sampling strategy became one of *purposive sampling*, since selection involved that the cases presented particular characteristics that were valuable for investigating the specific topic (Cohen et al., 2007, p.115).

In this research the first factor influencing the sampling strategy was the number of schools to be used. The decision to have three case studies was due to the need to use a sufficient number of schools to produce an in-depth investigation of the educational context of Cyprus, in parallel to the need to finish the fieldwork within the set timeframe. A second factor was the students’ age group, resulting in three Gymnasia or "lower secondary schools" being selected as case studies. The decision to avoid selecting Lyceum or “higher secondary schools” catering to 15-18 year-old students was based on the awareness that these students were often busy preparing for exams and therefore might not have had the necessary time to participate in research. Selecting secondary over primary schools was based upon the hunch that secondary school students would have had a longer exposure to educational contexts and so would have further developed their perceptions on schooling.

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5 Secondary schools in Cyprus are categorized as lower secondary schools (Gymnasia) if they cater for students of age 11-14; and as upper secondary schools (Lykeia) if they cater for students of age 15-18.
This hunch emerged in relation to the findings of my first pilot study, which will be outlined in detail later in this chapter. The findings of this work suggested that, often, the negative perceptions of Greek-Cypriot students towards non-Greek-Cypriots affect the latter groups’ participation and socialisation at school. Practices of exclusion have been the focus of *inclusive education* (Allan, 1999), and so selecting secondary rather than primary school students was expected to yield more insightful data if processes of exclusion existed and influenced how students perceive “Otherness” (Said, 1993). This term is used in this thesis to emphasise the perceived notions of diversity by the majority population in terms of race, class, religion, culture and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 421).

Finally, the criteria for school selection addressed the ethnic composition and numbers of the non-native students. The three case studies varied in terms of the size (low; medium; and high numbers of non-native students), and the ethnic composition of the non-native population (homogenous: with non-native students predominantly belonging to one specific ethnic group; mixed: with non-native students belonging to more than one ethnic group; and a heterogeneous population: with non-native students presenting a very diverse group in terms of ethnic composition).

Consequently the study was designed to explore the possibility that the number of non-native students or the homogeneity within these groups affected their inclusion. The case study chapters to follow will in turn provide information about the specific context of each school, such as the number of students and the ethnic composition of the student population, as well as other factors which guided the decision of selecting them as the cases in which to conduct fieldwork. I will now turn to the presentation of the research methods employed within this qualitative research design for the purpose of capturing foreign-speaking students’ perspectives on the factors influencing their inclusion at school.

**Methods of data generation**

A multi-method approach was used to collect data in this study. The methods used were selected based on my pilot study findings, which suggested that the combination and interaction of the specified methods could yield valuable insights on students’ experiences of inclusion and exclusion at school. When selecting my research instruments I drew from Ainscow’s (2002) research of inclusive practices in education, in which he defined the following criteria relevant to conducting educational research: the identification of forms of inquiry which are flexible to deal with the uniqueness of particular educational
contexts; the ability of each instrument to produce trustworthy findings; and the findings produced being worthy of wider attention.

The overall methodology was particularly relevant to my research questions since it allowed me to identify barriers to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion, as well as resources that could create a framework for identification of inclusive practices. All research instruments were constructed in reference to the indicators provided by the Index for Inclusion (Appendix 3). In essence, traditional methods of qualitative research, such as student observations, interviews and focus groups, were combined with more innovative methods of conducting research with student participants. The latter methods involved forms of visual research, such as a drawing and a participatory photography task. The appropriateness of using each method for the particular inquiry, the complexities involved, and the practical application of these methods are elaborated in the sections that follow.

**Student observations**

Observation was the method used at the onset of the study start exploring students’ inclusion at school in terms of overall presence, participation, achievement and socialisation, as well as to enhance my own understandings of the research context I would be investigating. Observing students in their educational environment at the initial stages of the research appeared to allow students to become familiar with me and become used to my presence within their classes. This cultivated what I believe to be my most important field relations with the research participants, which subsequently resulted in conducting my research with as few difficulties as possible. Using observations was appropriate for this design, since observations permitted the gathering of “live data” from naturally occurring social situations, and thus I could look into what was taking place in context rather than relying on second-hand accounts (Cohen et al., 2007, p.396).

However, observations are critiqued on the basis of providing data on behaviours that occur solely in one instance, with no observation being the same as another (Bell, 2006, p.194). Therefore, caution was taken when interpreting the collected data to avoid over-generalizations of the findings. Moreover, reporting findings from observations might often be subject to observer bias if the accounts produced reflect the researcher’s underlying assumptions and ideological commitments (Robson, 2002, p. 102).

To avoid this discrepancy, a research diary was kept with detailed record of my personal ideas, questions, thoughts, and insights emerging during the data collection and analysis
process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this case, my research diary provided a valuable record of all research patterns and activities taking place during the fieldwork (Bell, 2006, p.173), which were presented in a format that could be easily revisited to ensure that consistency was maintained between all observations carried out with different students.

Within this study the aim was to observe at least three classes of students in different lessons for two weeks. This ensured that approximately a total of 60 native and non-native students were observed in each school. Due to older students’ heavier academic schedules, observations were mostly conducted in regular first year classes with appropriate participants’ consent. Meanwhile, foreign-speaking students were also observed in Greek language support lessons, with observations conducted throughout the fieldwork stage.

A semi-structured observation schedule has been used for this investigation (Appendix 4). The use of semi-structured observation schedules allowed for the required flexibility within this exploratory research design. Hopkins’ (2002) recommendations on how to use observations in classroom research were particularly useful when constructing the observation schedule. Essentially, five broad categories relevant to analyzing students’ school experiences were listed as components to be observed. In detail, tallied recordings with relevant notes were produced on student’s behavior, student-teacher and student-peer interaction, and student-task aptitude. Secondary elements observed involved teaching style, sitting arrangement, frequency and type of group work, and student socialisation.

Students were also observed during breaks. This allowed the recording of variability in students’ behaviour with regards to different social contexts. During observations carried out outside classrooms, the existence of friendship groups was recorded, since this might have been potentially indicative of any form of social exclusion. Since the research focused on the identification of barriers and resources to students’ inclusion, the ultimately aim was to observe factors affecting students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation. Findings from the method of observations offered an initial glimpse into the factors compromising or promoting students’ inclusion in each of the case study schools.

**Interviews**

Interviews with individual students and other stakeholders were also conducted to explore students’ school experiences, since interviews allow participants to offer their own perceptions and interpretations of the world (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349), with emphasis
placed on the meaning that particular phenomena have for the participants (Robson, 2002, p. 271). Interviews were used to offer additional insights on the social context within which the research was carried out. The issues investigated during interviews had been raised during pilot work, or had emerged during the observations carried out previously at each of the schools. Consequently, the focus was placed on what foreign-speaking students, as well as teaching staff perceived as the barriers or resources affecting students’ the presence, participation, achievement and socialisation at school.

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.352), interview styles differ in the level of structure allowed. In this study a semi-structured interview schedule was used (Bell, 2006, p.159). The use of a semi-structured schedule (see Appendix 5), was preferred to an unstructured one. Even though the latter would offer maximum flexibility, using a semi-structured schedule enabled a degree of consistency between the topics of discussion. The interview schedule was prepared in reference to literature on inclusive pedagogies and the Index of Inclusion (see Appendix 3), as well as to data collected from the observations conducted.

A framework of both closed and open-ended questions was employed in order to focus the interview on issues which needed further scrutiny. In each interview I allowed myself the flexibility to alter the wording and order of questions according to the demands and context of each interview (Bryman, 2004, p.319). Participants were also encouraged to discuss other relevant issues as they saw fit, with probe questions used as follow-up questions to obtain clarification to participants’ comments (Cohen et al., 2007, p.361).

All interviews took place within school premises so that the interview setting would be familiar to students. They lasted only half an hour so that disruption to teaching and learning would be minimized as much as possible. Students were withdrawn from only one lesson that they thought would least affect their achievement with the permission of their teachers. Interviews were tape-recorded to make data transcription easier and prevent loss of data. The field notes of the interview process offered complementary text data for analysis at a later stage of the research process. To minimize the distortion of data, all interviews were transcribed in full (see example in Appendix 5), and the translation of the transcripts from Greek to English prior to analyzing and presenting the data was subjected to the scrutiny of two English teachers who are native Greek-speakers.

In all schools, three foreign-speaking students were selected to be interviewed for short periods of time to obtain additional information on their school experiences. It has to be noted that interviewing foreign-speaking students proved to be difficult due to students’
language difficulties. In conclusion, the more image-based research methods generated more insightful data from student participants in contrast to interviews.

Table 3.1: Data on teacher participants in interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Socrates Gymnasium</th>
<th>Aristotle Gymnasium</th>
<th>Archimedes Gymnasium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers &amp; Lessons taught</td>
<td>Ms Georgia-Head Teacher</td>
<td>Ms Evridiki-Head Teacher</td>
<td>Ms Athena-Head Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Eleni-Deputy Head Teacher</td>
<td>Ms Vera-Deputy Head Teacher</td>
<td>Mr Theodoros-Deputy Head Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Marilia-Language support</td>
<td>Ms Nefeli-Language support</td>
<td>Ms Hermione-Language support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Magda-Greek</td>
<td>Mr Agesilaos-Biology</td>
<td>Mr Yiannis-Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Alexia-Ancient Greek</td>
<td>Mr Marinos-Physics</td>
<td>Ms Aphodite-Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Amelia-English</td>
<td>Mr Costas-Art</td>
<td>Ms Luta-Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Angelos-Technology</td>
<td>Ms Aysha-Translator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most elaborate and useful interview data was collected from teacher participants (see Table 3.1), such as schools’ the dead-teachers, deputy head-teachers of the Greek language department, Greek language support teachers, and various subject teachers. Interviews with teachers yielded insightful information regarding the strategies used in response to student diversity, as well as perceived barriers and resources to students’ inclusion.

**Drawings**

In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on involving students in research, since children are considered to be both worthy of investigation and as having the right for their “voice” to be heard (Einarsdottir et al., 2009). Researchers preoccupied with using research in ways that enhances “student voice” have attempted to identify innovative research methods that provide the potential to carry out research with student participants (Mitchell, 2006; Thomson, 2008). Relevant methods align with the conceptualisation of children as social agents and cultural producers (Mitchell, 2006), such as through research involving children’s drawings. Recent research has, therefore, moved away from the psychological stance of describing children’s drawings in terms of developmental sequences, and towards considering drawings as expressions of meaning and understanding (Einarsdottir et al., 2009). Nonetheless, there are relatively few published studies that have used drawings as an alternative way to understand children’s knowledge and experience, and even fewer where children are invited to be co-interpreters of their own images (Leitch, 2008).
The first image-based research technique employed in this study was a drawing task. This method was used as an innovative research tool with the potential to promote “student voice”. This method was developed and used in previous research on the topic of investigating students’ social inclusion, more specifically racial inclusion, in two separate research projects (Eliadou, 2007; Eliadou, 2011; Eliadou et al., 2007b). The method allowed the creation of a pictorial representation of the social relationships of students within each school studied (Bukowski et al., 2000), and offered a tool for studying social interactions.

Whenever researchers have used drawings in research, they claim to have been provided with an invaluable tool for eliciting children’s perspectives on their life experiences, especially when children are encouraged to discuss their drawings (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Leitch, 2008; Mitchell, 2006; Thomson, 2008). Incorporating drawings in research has been useful since drawing is an activity with which most children engage in their everyday lives (Einarsdottir et al., 2009), and so it is pleasurable (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Leitch, 2008; Mitchell, 2006; Thomson, 2008), it does not require the use of complex technology (Mitchell, 2006), and is particularly effective to use with children who have difficulty in expressing themselves (Eliadou, 2007; Eliadou et al., 2007b; Thomson, 2008).

This characteristic of using drawings in research, proved to be highly constructive in my study when considering that there was no “common language” between myself and student participants (Mitchell, 2006). As already specified, most student participants in this study had recently arrived in Cyprus and had not yet acquired the basic linguistic skills in the Greek language, which is the official language of instruction in schools. Using an image-based research technique proved to have less linguistic demands on the participants and was therefore more enjoyable. Moreover, relying on the production of visual rather than text data minimized the strain involved in interpreting and analysing the data collected.

Despite the positive elements incorporated within research designs using children’s drawings to promote “student voice”, these methods often raise varied concerns. Leitch (2008) offers an extensive account on concerns regarding the use of innovative research methods that researchers need to address, such as for example who and what is depicted in the drawings. To account for these issues, researchers need to reflect carefully upon their ethical purposes, experience, training and capacities for facilitation and support when considering the use of image-making and relevant narrative in their studies (Leitch, 2008).
Amongst the researcher’ ethical responsibilities lay the need to obtain informed consent for student participation. Specific to the use of drawing, researchers have to ensure that a “safe container” is established within the research process. This is achieved through clarifying the boundaries of who will be involved and how images will be used within the research; establishing specific timings within which the research will take place; informing students that there is no right or wrong image; and emphasising that no higher value will be placed on the aesthetic merit of the images when selecting whose “voice” is going to be heard. Finally, it is suggested that the researcher responds dynamically to children’s drawings by being genuinely interested in the child’s images and the meanings they ascribe to them, rather than trying to identify a “correct answer” to the question posed (Leitch, 2008).

In this study, students were asked to record the names of five “close friends” and the names of five “other friends” using a pre-planned drawing template. The drawing template and the processes of data collection and analysis are presented in Appendix 6. Participants from both regular lessons and language support lessons were given twenty minutes to complete the task. Accordingly, any differences in social interactions between these two settings could be identified and explored. The task was provided in three language support classes and three first-year classes at Socrates Gymnasium, three language support classes, one first-year and two second-year classes at Aristotle Gymnasium, and finally, in three language support classes and two first-year classes at Archimedes Gymnasium.

Table 3.2 Statistics of students participating in the Drawing task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Socrates Gymnasium</th>
<th>Aristotle Gymnasium</th>
<th>Archimedes Gymnasium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of student participants in the drawing task</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-speaking</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native; no language support</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of students selected by classmates as friends who did not participate in the task</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-speaking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native; no language support</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of students depicted in sociograms</strong></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Useful statistics relevant to students that completed the drawing task per school are presented in Table 3.2, such as the number of students that produced a drawing and whether these were native students, non-native students that did not require language
support, or non-native foreign-speaking students in need of language support. After the completion of the drawing task and the relevant data analysis, students were asked to comment on their drawings and their socialisation patterns in a focus group discussion that took place after the participatory photography method was undertaken.

**Participatory photography**

Participatory photography is an innovative method used particularly within social science research due to its potential to elicit “student voices” (Harper, 2002; Kaplan et al., 2007; Miles & Kaplan, 2005; Moss et al., 2007; Prosser, 1992). Elliot (1991) argues that while the perspectives of staff and parents are often well represented in qualitative educational research, the perspectives of students are marginalized, and often ignored. To account for this discrepancy, Kaplan et al. (2007) suggest that, not only can school-based participatory photography be used as “student voice” tasks capable of exploring students’ experiences, they can also be used to explore notions of students’ inclusion and exclusion at school.

Accordingly, within participatory photography projects students can become engaged in research in a meaningful way either as the subjects of research, co-researchers, or as researchers of their own experiences. These characteristics of participatory photography research led me to use it as one of the fundamental methods employed in this investigation to explore students’ school experiences in order to explore barriers and resources to their inclusion at school. Participatory photography allowed me to achieve this since it required participants to take and interpret their own photographs, in order to address and share important aspects of their lives and experiences (Kaplan et al., 2007). Contrary to traditional forms of educational research, participatory photography participants rather than “outsider” researchers guide the research process (Kaplan et al., 2007), offering a “voice” to individuals or groups of people who are not normally listened to (Wang et al., 1996).

Research designs using participatory photography are primarily qualitative, and photography is often combined with forms of interviewing, to allow for the in-depth interpretation of the photos taken (Harper, 2002; Kaplan et al., 2007; Miles & Kaplan, 2005). Accordingly, Harper (2002) acknowledges that combining images with narrative within the boundaries of visual research, can produce different symbolic representations. In this way, “photo elicitation” techniques are considered to involve deeper elements of the human consciousness relevant to eliciting memories associated with seeing the pictures, and remembering when or the context in which pictures were taken.
What made this method so attractive in my research design was the ease of use and the lack of practical skills required for student participation, making it a particularly accessible method that does not rely on language or literacy competencies (Moss et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been established that the creation of visual images such as drawings, photos and posters by children can lead to rich individual and collective narratives. Used in this way, stories and narratives of children’s experiences are made readily accessible by the use of visual image-making (Leitch, 2008).

Despite the perceived advantages of participatory photography, the method is not without limitations. For example, in offering the freedom to students to take photos in schools, there is often the risk of abuse, misuse and manipulation of images (Kaplan & Howes, 2004). On that note, Prosser (1992) claimed that photos in image-based research can be categorize as positive or “safe”, and as negative or “unsafe”. Positive photos are those that can be informative about the experiences of students at school, but which have no negative connotations associated with students’ school experiences. On the contrary, negative pictures are the ones that present a less favorable side to students’ school experiences.

Kaplan (2008), confirms that students’ positive images and commentary often make a worthy subject of discussion. Whereas positive images are undoubtedly worthy of attention, they are often less interesting than their negative counterparts, in terms of illuminating contradictions and issues of power which usually remain unacknowledged in student voice accounts (Kaplan, 2008). In contrast, “unsafe” images are those that most stakeholders might be unwilling to accept as valid portraits of students’ experiences.

This issue raises ethical concerns pertinent to the role of the researcher that has to be constantly negotiated within research projects, especially if conflicts emerge (Kaplan, 2008). For instance, the researcher’s responsibilities often rest with schools in terms of the type of data produced and whether this can potentially harm a school’s reputation. At the same time responsibility can also reside with the research participants, since participation in this study should ensure that students’ voices are promoted. Amongst other ethical concerns are the issues of who owns the images after they are produced. Thomson (2008) questions whether student participants are the rightful owners of the images produced, or whether the researcher retains the right of publication of images as they see fit. To address this issue, Walker et al. (2008) support the notion that the decision about what to publish does not rest with the researcher alone but needs to involve all participants.
Moreover, most researchers demand that there is awareness of the ubiquity of new digital technologies and that with the widening access to material published online it is easy for children’s images to be misused (Kaplan, 2008; Thomson, 2008; Walker et al., 2008). To account for these issues it is essential that researchers recognise that they cannot provide guarantees about the ways in which images might be used. However, they can judge where access to images can be restricted through screening out images that can expose participants or by blurring out peoples’ faces (Walker et al., 2008).

Despite concerns, participatory photography became one of my most valuable methods. The method involved only foreign-speaking students receiving language support lessons as participants. In this study, participatory photography required students to capture their own photographs, and subsequently to select some photographs for interpretation. The structure of the project involved conducting meetings with the head-teachers in each school to negotiate the topic of the project and discuss issues of ethics and my responsibility as an outsider researcher to each school. Having obtained permission to execute the project, a workshop was held with the participating students to discuss the following issues:

- Obtaining informed consent for participation in the project (Clark et al., 2010);
- The practical use of disposable cameras;
- The theme of the project: photographing places students liked or disliked at school;
- Ethical issues, such as the limitations as to where students could roam while photographing and what could be photographed (i.e. no students or teachers), and issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Clark et al., 2010);
- Information on how photographs would be used and interpreted by both the students and the researcher.

To make this process more comprehensive to students and to allow for a narrative of their school experiences to develop, students were asked to produce posters to portray the “positive” or “negative” things affecting them at school. While students were constructing their posters they were asked to “think aloud” and to describe the process of selecting the photos used, and the rationale for their selection. These discussions were tape-recorded the conversations were transcribed to facilitate the analysis of the process. Following the poster construction, students participated in a focus group discussion, in which they exchanged ideas on their interpretations of the images their images with other students (examples in Appendix 7). Kaplan & Howes (2004) claim that the interpretation of photographs is a subjective process, since students take ownership of the images they produce.
Nonetheless, I would suggest that interpretation can become a social process if students are asked to offer their understandings on photographs taken by peers. In this sense, photos served as a stimulus for commentary and interpretation (Kaplan et al., 2007). Most literature indicates that a methodology that uses participatory photography is based on principles of “reflection” (Kaplan & Howes, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2007; Miles & Kaplan, 2005), since interpretation comes through children’s eyes. This in effect minimizes the impact of the researcher’s pre-existing assumptions (Harper, 2002).

**Focus group discussions**

Following the participatory photography project, focus groups were conducted to offer the means to explore in depth the perceptions of students on factors affecting their inclusion at school. Focus groups are often used as a research technique which allows the collection of data through group interaction, on a topic already determined by the researcher (Morgan, 1996). The dialogic nature of the emergent discussions allows for the co-construction of meaning between the interviewees on the topic investigated (Overlien et al., 2005). This was the last research instrument employed with student participants as a means to allow interpretation of the photographs taken in the participatory photography task. However, they allowed for insights on the findings generated through all research methods to emerge.

Specific to this study, focus groups provided an additional “student voice” that allowed students to express their perspectives on their school experience. This method allowed me to exploit the natural dynamics of school settings by “using the group interaction of students to generate data” (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p.4). Since students are often perceived in their collective group identity, employing an instrument which allowed the exploration of students’ perspectives when interacting as a group would be required to reflect on the uniqueness of this aspect of students’ identity (Eliadou, 2007).

Focus groups are considered appropriate to use when exploring people’s opinions, concerns and experiences. According to Barbour & Kitzinger (1999, p.5), participants are invited to generate their own questions, frames and concepts and pursue their priorities on their own terms. This could ensure ownership of the findings from participants, and I therefore expected students to be eager to contribute if directly asked for their own opinion on a specific subject (Eliadou, 2007), since previous pilot work identified focus groups as particularly useful if used in combination with participatory photography (Eliadou, 2008), since students talked about their photos without being asked specific questions, as with interviews, improving contribution from student participants who faced language barriers.
However, an issue of concern involved the number of participants for each group. Relevant literature suggests that group should consist of 4-12 people (Wilson, 1997). For this study I decided that group size should be restricted to 4-5 participants. Otherwise the student groups might have been difficult to manage. Problem with participant “recruitment” were easily overcome in this research because students “congregated naturally” in each research site (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987). In particular, focus groups involved only foreign-speaking students. The fact that participants belonged to pre-existing groups and the discussions took place in their own classes ensured that they felt safe and comfortable. In addition, all students were informed that they could choose to participate, and were explicitly informed about the nature of the study and what was expected of them (Eliadou, 2007).

Group composition was also an issue of concern. Groups had to be carefully balanced in terms of age, gender and ethnicity of the respondents (Bell, 2006). To address this I selected students from the same class, and therefore of the same age. Since participation was conditional upon the limited return of parental consent forms, all respondents irrespective of gender or ethnicity were considered as participants. One focus group was formed in each case study school, with students participating in a half an hour discussion. Discussions were conducted within the language support classrooms in the presence of language support teachers. During the focus groups I offered only a starting point for the discussion and some probing questions (Robson, 2002). In addition, all discussions were tape-recorded with the consent of participants, and I recorded notes in my research diary to ensure that data could be later interpreted relevant to the context in which it was generated.

**Summary**

This chapter has presented the epistemological framework underpinning this case study research design, by explaining how the research methods of observation, interviews, drawings, participatory photography, and focus group discussions were used within this design for the generation of data aimed at capturing the perspectives of foreign-speaking students’ experiences within mainstream Greek-Cypriot schools. The potential limitations and ethical concerns pertinent to the overall methodology and each research method have been critically reviewed and accounted for. Finally, the rationale for selecting the specific methodology and research methods, along with the way in which these were employed to provide answers to the research questions posed by this study, were outlined. The next chapter presents the methods of data analysis that complement each data collection method used, and measures to ensure that the study was trustworthy and credible.
Chapter 4 - Working with the collected data

Introduction

In this chapter I first address the measures taken to establish the study’s trustworthiness and credibility, since such concerns spanned both the data collection, as well as the analysis stage of my research. Following this account, the ways in which findings from each method were interpreted using the constant comparative method of data analysis are outlined. Finally, I conclude this chapter with presenting the major obstacles underlying the data analysis stage of this research.

Establishing trustworthiness and credibility

An important parameter to conducting my research involved attempts to establish trustworthiness and credibility in the methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. On that note, Bryman (2004, p. 273) suggests that a “good researcher” ensures that “research is conducted according to cannons of good practice”. Similarly, any study is scrutinised on whether the data collection and analysis were executed according to criteria that enhance trustworthiness. Such criteria aim to minimize bias in the design, and that credibility checks ensure that the investigation offers an appropriate construction of the participants into the research context (Anfara et al., 2002).

Since the research design employed in this study employs a constructivist epistemological framework, which assumes that any aspect of social reality can be constructed, it can be argued that it is the process of accounting for the study’s trustworthiness that will determine its acceptability by others. For this purpose several measures have been taken to enhance the trustworthiness of this research. This study draws on relevant techniques proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.289-331) aimed at promoting credibility in the findings, such as using measures of: pilot studies; prolonged engagement & persistent observation; triangulation techniques; and member checking; as well as the use of a reflective research diary. These measures are elaborated in the following sections.

Piloting

As suggested in Chapter 1, pilot work was conducted in a variety of educational contexts, and served to explore the topic of student diversity both in primary and secondary schools, as well as in schools in Cyprus and in a school in England. The theoretical framework of
the research was investigated using all of the employed research methods, which were subsequently modified according to the needs of this PhD research. In the light of prior pilot work, I confirmed that the research instruments used indeed promoted “student voice”, and to that extend allowed data collection and interpretation relevant to identifying barriers and resources affecting the inclusion of foreign-speaking students in schools.

**Prolonged engagement & persistent observation**

Two months were spent conducting fieldwork in each school. Such prolonged engagement allows time for the researcher to identify instances of misinformation and decide whether such an occurrence is deliberate or unintended, as well as to build relationships of trust with the research participants that might be able to minimize the potential of being misinformed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.303). Additionally, dividing the fieldwork conducted in each school into two distinct fieldwork sessions entailed the scrutiny of particular participants’ accounts on the two separate occasions. Therefore, discrepancies between prior and subsequent accounts were readily identified and were further explored.

Through prolonged engagement within the specific contexts studied, the technique of “persistent observation” was used to identify characteristics that were most relevant to answering my research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.304). This was achieved through using the constant comparative method of data analysis, which permitted the continuous scrutiny of data to trace emergent themes on the barriers and factors promoting students’ inclusion at school. Stemming from this, irrelevant information was eliminated and the focus shifted to information that would be of relevance to this study.

**Focusing on student voice**

In addition to a prolonged engagement with the research participants and persistent observation within the set research context, previous pilot work (Eliadou, 2007; Eliadou, 2008; Eliadou et al., 2007b), indicated the importance of eliciting children’s views on their educational experiences and the relevant practices and policy-making that directly affects their school lives, instead of solely relying on the researcher’s interpretation of a given context. Lewis (2001) claims that there is great interest in eliciting the views of young people specifically in the arena of the inclusive education.

Similarly, this study aspired to use a research design that promoted student “voice”. In agreement with Messiou (2002), I would claim that “those who really experience inclusive
or exclusive educational practices are the children”. The “student voice” tasks utilized in this study have been employed to ensure that more trustworthy and credible results were collected, since the students were the credible source of information for investigating the particular topic. In this case, combining research methods such drawings and participatory photography has provided a more trustworthy method of data generation by accounting for students’ own perspective on their school experiences. Student participants were allowed to both generate and interpret most of the data collected, in an attempt to minimize the influence of any pre-conceived assumptions that might have otherwise biased the findings.

**Triangulation**

Denzin (2003b) defines triangulation as an approach to conducting research that uses “multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies”. This study employed various measures of triangulation as a means to enhance trustworthiness and credibility; namely, those of using multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple methods and multiple sources of data in order to examine the research topic from variable standpoints (Cohen et al., 2007). More specifically, this study considered the relevance of the framework of multicultural education to the topic of increasing diversity in schools in Cyprus, but settled with utilizing the framework of inclusive education instead.

Moreover, an exploratory case study research design employing a multi-method approach to data collection was used, which utilized the methods of observations, interviews, a drawing task, and a participatory photography task paired with focus group discussions. Finally, the study relied on multiple sources of data. In addition to considering students’ “voice”, this study has taken into consideration the opinion of a variety of stakeholders in the face of various teaching staff in each school. It has to be acknowledged that the completion of this study could not be achieved devoid critically reflecting on my own observations of school life as an additional source of data and interpretation.

**Member checks**

At the end of my fieldwork in each school, I ensured that the findings and interpretations from the conducted observations, interviews, focus group discussions, students’ drawings, and finally, participatory photography were returned to student and teacher participants. The participants retained the right to scrutinize the tentative interpretations I had arrived at and ensured that what was portrait was indeed what they intended to say. This form of
“member checking” involves the strategy of returning to the research participants and presenting them with materials such as transcripts, accounts and interpretations that the researcher has arrived at (Robson, 2002, p.175). Essentially, the findings of the research were submitted to the social world under study for confirmation that the investigation was correctly understood, interpreted and re-presented (Bryman, 2004, p.273).

**The reflective research diary**

The final means of ensuring critical reflection against my personal interpretation of the research context and data was to maintain a research diary throughout the study. This was arguably a valuable strategy towards enhancing trustworthiness. The diary served as a detailed record of my personal ideas, questions, thoughts, and insights emerging during the research, which at later stages became integral part of the data collection and analysis process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Moreover, the diary served as a record of all research patterns and activities taking place during the fieldwork (Bell, 2006, p.173), which were presented in a format that could be easily revisited. This permitted the reconstruction and presentation of a thick description of all stages of the research process. Research diaries can therefore become tools of self-assessment (Robson, 2002, p.258), which can drive and enhance the research so long as they ensure critical reflection.

In conclusion, multiple techniques have been used in this research to ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the data. The following section outlines the data analysis and interpretation stages of the research.

**Analysing the collected data**

This section offers an overview of how the data collected was organized, accounted for and interpreted. This involved making sense of the data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation by noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al., 2007, p.461). Relying on a qualitative design meant that this process would almost inevitably be interpretive, and would involve a “reflective and reactive interaction” between the researcher and the de-contextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter (Cohen et al., 2007, p.469). The following presentation of data analysis techniques used for each research method offers accounts for the data analysis process and reveals how the findings, which are presented in subsequent chapters, have emerged.
**Analysing observation data**

The categories included in the semi-structured observation schedule to guide the recordings of specific students’ behaviours, offered a first step towards analyzing observation findings. The tallied recordings of students’ behaviours and interactions were analyzed to produce the frequency of each behaviour. Nonetheless, it was soon revealed that this analysis would produce data irrelevant to the study, unless the context giving rise to the recordings was accounted for. My field notes, though, provided records of perceived reasons and the context giving rise to specific behaviours (excerpt in Appendix 4). A summary of themes drawn out from each observation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 470) was compiled as a further step to analysis. The latter recordings incorporated some of my own assumptions about the data and, therefore, formed a preliminary step towards data interpretation. The themes that emerged through analysing observation data were compared and contrasted at a later stage to data generated through other research methods.

**Analysing data from interviews & focus group discussions**

Interview and focus group discussion data had been tape-recorded, and field notes were kept during each session. All recordings and field notes were transcribed to generate text data. All transcripts were translated from Greek to English prior to data interpretation. Each interview yielded one set of transcribed notes for each student or teacher participant (example in Appendix 5). Focus group discussions yielded one set of transcribed notes for each group, in which the responses of participants about the posters constructed as part of the participatory photography project can be readily distinguished (see Appendix 7).

According to the idea of Barbour & Kitzinger (1999, p.173-186), transcribed data can be analyzed as “talk”, since the act of transcribing interviews and focus group discussions turns the data into written text (Silverman, 2000). Specific attention was paid to the “narrator” was in each instance (Hyden & Bulow, 2003). This served to identify whether the answers produced in focus groups offered the “collective” and agreed upon perspective (Smithson, 2000) of all participants, or the opinion of a “dominant” speaker (Bell, 2006, p.163). In addition, “diverse voices” were highlighted to identify the perspectives of groups of people from different cultural backgrounds (Smithson, 2000).

The ultimate step prior to interpreting the data was to organize it into meaningful categories, since according to Evans (2002), the creation of categories is important for the development of reflective practice and can lead to theory development. The technique of
coding data was used in an attempt to reduce the copious amounts of data collected into manageable and easily interpretable information. Essentially, the categories selected for interpretation reflected the purpose of the research, were exhaustive and mutually exclusive, and were derived from a single classification principle (Evans, 2002, p.157-200).

In order to trace themes through the data, an “open coding” technique was initially used. This involved scrutinizing data line-by-line in search of actions that answered the research questions. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 260), this technique ensures that the researcher engages in a process of constantly negotiating the meanings to be assigned to findings; asks questions about the data; identifies gaps in the data collection and subsequently indicates when there was a need for further data collection.

The data analysis process also involved the technique of “axial coding” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.260). This involved reassembling data in new ways and making connections between categories and subcategories emerging through the data. This method is pertinent to linking data to the conditions which gave rise to a specific category, its context, the social interactions through which it was handled and its consequences. More importantly, it involved engaging with and analyzing the data in a constant comparative method. Categorizing data using codes facilitated comparisons between and within the categories produced, mediating the development of relevant theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 1996, p.79). In this study, coding was closely linked to the definition of inclusion presented previously. Ultimately, during the data analysis process I focused on identifying factors affecting the inclusion of foreign-speaking students, by identifying barriers and resources to their presence, participation, achievement and socialisation at school.

**Analysing data from drawings**

Prior to analyzing the data derived from the drawing task, the names of all students depicted on drawings were coded in order to preserve their anonymity. The unique codes assigned to students indicated their gender, age and ethnic background, in ways that made it possible to trace codes back to drawings if information on specific students was required.

Since the data collected had a visual format, it was subsequently analyzed within a sociometric analysis framework to produce a pictorial representation of students’ social relationships at school. Sociometry holds a prominent place in research literature relevant to children’s social development. Bukowski et al. (2000) claim that sociometric analysis
should account for the fundamental dimensions of “acceptance” and “rejection”, indicated by the positive or negative links students have with their peers. Accordingly, when studying social networks it becomes apparent that there are people who are highly liked; people who are highly disliked; and people who are liked by a few and disliked by a few peers (Bukowski et al., 2000). Similarly, an in-depth analysis of relationships depicted as “friendships” in the drawing task used in this study, would reveal interactions within school social networks indicative of social inclusion or exclusion of students.

Bukowski et al. (2000) claim that measurements of acceptance and rejection within social networks can be produced through the use of the “nomination technique” and the “rating scales” technique. The nomination technique involves students being asked to identify peers to whom they are attached (index of acceptance), and peers whom they dislike (index of rejection). The rating scales involve students’ evaluation of each of their peers using a rating scale which adopts terms representing liking and disliking.

This study made use of the nomination technique when asking students to nominate the peers with whom they socially interacted. In this case, the drawing task explored measures of acceptance, but no direct measures of rejection. I intentionally avoided using measures of rejection, since the context of the small sample in students’ classes might have contributed to enhancing the exclusion of some students, if any, by directly revealing their rejection by other peers. To compensate for not accounting for measures of rejection, the focus group discussions that followed the participatory photography method were used to illuminate further issues of students’ social inclusion or exclusion in their respective class.

To conclude, Crosnoe (2000) suggests that if researchers can map out students’ social relationships by tracing direct links between the peers that students nominate as friends, then the researcher can envision the social world of the students. Presenting the social arrangements depicted in drawings into sociograms (see Chapters 6, 7, 8 and Appendix 4), allowed me to discuss the social inclusion of foreign-speaking students in their schools. The interpretation of the sociometric analysis was subsequently compared to findings emergent through the observation and interview methods.

**Analysing data from the participatory photography project**

Harper (2002) proposes that the analysis of visual data allows for visual representations of the “culture under study”. Rose (2001, p.32) acknowledges that visual imagery involves images constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledge, with their
analysis requiring the researcher to adopt critical thinking relevant to the agency of the image, and the social practices and effects of its viewing by various audiences. Finally, Mitchell (2006) claims that analyzing visual data calls for attention towards the content of the image, as well as to the circumstances of its production, circulation and consumption. Accordingly, the posters constructed during participatory photography were explored to reveal whether the selected photos and their portrayal of students’ positive and negative school experiences had underlying cultural or contextual connotations. The analysis in this study draws primarily from the work of Kaplan & Howes (2004), Kaplan et al. (2007), and Kaplan (2008), which engage students in the data analysis and interpretation processes.

In more detail, three distinct types of data were generated. The first comprised of the actual photos that participants took. The analysis began with students’ categorizing photos into those used in posters and those disregarded. Subsequently, students engaged in a second mode of categorisation when choosing pictures according to the topic of places they liked, in contrast to places they disliked at school. The constructed posters representing aspects of students’ school experiences gave rise to the third type of data. These findings were analyzed and interpreted in conjunction with the final narrative data produced from focus group discussions. The data analysis encouraged the constant comparison of different types of data prior to and during the interpretation of findings, as presented in the next section.

The constant comparative method of data analysis

Multiple methods of data generation were used at variable times during fieldwork, and data analysis occurred simultaneously to data collection. To gain a deeper understanding of the context generating the data, I decided that constant comparisons of data would guide both the data analysis and interpretation stages of this research. Using the constant comparative method to data analysis allowed me to compare the data acquired from each newly introduced research instrument to data collected from previously applied research methods. Emerging themes and categories derived from constant comparisons were used to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1 (Cohen et al., 2007, p.493).

Corbin & Strauss (2008, p.73) suggest that constant comparative methods are useful when incidents found to be conceptually similar are grouped together under one descriptive concept. Identifying properties that are specific or shared between emerging themes allows examination of data based on similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.81). Moreover, methods in which conceptual categories are developed from emerging data, are further elaborated during fieldwork, and in which the researcher continues to categorize
data throughout the data analysis process, are usually used for theory development within grounded theory approaches to data analysis (Bell, 2006, p.186; Cohen et al., 2007, p.493). Using this framework was integral to identifying barriers or resources to students’ inclusion within the complex and multi-method design adopted in this study, and to confirm discrepancies or similarities between the findings.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the attempts taken to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of this study and outlined the data analysis methods used for the multiple research methods. It indicated how the constant comparative method was adopted to explore collected data in order to answer the proposed research questions of the study. It has to be acknowledged that large amounts of data was generated from the various methods, so immersing myself in the constant comparison of collected data proved to be extremely difficult. An initial glimpse into the data analysis showed that perceived barriers to inclusion were relevant to the categories of national policy, school and classroom practice, students’ personal characteristics, homes and community environments.

A deeper analysis made me realise that it was impossible to allocate all barriers to only one category. During data interpretation I understood that the complexity in data analysis was due to the interaction between factors underlying the various dimensions of students’ school experiences. To overcome difficulties encountered in the data analysis and interpretation, and to address the effect of interaction across the assigned categories, I adopted a model aimed at providing a more comprehensive discussion and interpretation of the barriers to students’ inclusion. This model is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5 - Model of barriers experienced by “foreign-speaking” students

Introduction

In this chapter I present the model that emerged through the analysis and interpretation of findings relevant to the school experiences of recently arrived foreign-speaking students in the three case studies. Using a visual method to represent emerging themes was considered necessary during the early stages of analysis, which as explained in the previous chapter involved analyzing copious amounts of data whose interrelation was not readily identified. The model has since been re-conceptualized and re-formulated to allow for a comprehensive way to discuss findings relevant to my research questions.

Developing the model

In this study I set out to explore the response of the Cypriot educational system to the unexpected increase in student diversity in the case study schools, more specifically the response towards foreign-speaking students. Developing a model allowed me to compare, contrast, and present in a more coherent manner the views of research participants on perceived barriers and resources to these students’ presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation. To have an effective and coherent discussion of the findings, barriers and resource to inclusion were thematically categorised. Appendix 8 offers outlines the reflective process that occurred while analysing the collected data, which resulted in deriving a model for presenting my findings.

According to the thematic analysis carried out, the barriers relevant to students’ presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation appear to act at three levels, as follows: the “National Policy” underlying the strategies implemented in schools as a response to increasing student diversity; “School & Classroom” level factors, with specific attention paid to the processes of teaching and learning; and finally, other contextual factors that appear at a first glance as irrelevant to the school context but a closer look illuminates their effect on students’ school experiences. This latter category refers to barriers which are specific to students as individuals, as well as their home and community environment, collectively categorized as “Students, Families & Communities”. The interconnected nature of these ideas is illustrated in Figure 5.1.
It has to be noted that the thematic analysis through which this model was conceptualized was more evident in the data collected from teachers rather than students. This is primarily the result of language difficulties that spanned the discussions with students. However, a comparison of the teachers’ and students’ perceptions pointed to the three distinct levels of analysis, within which barriers, and as a projection of the barriers potential resources, to students’ inclusion appear to nestle.

A Model for explaining the barriers experienced by students

![Figure 5.1: Model used for the discussion and interpretation of findings. This model was derived from the thematic analysis of data and represents three dimensions of analysis and discussion within which barriers to students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation were identified. Using a Venn allowed representation of the interaction of factors that seem to transgress the boundaries of the three dimensions.](image)

Even though the initial stages of data analysis presented separate levels of analysis through which barriers could be identified and resolved, a more careful analysis and interpretation revealed that in many instances themes associated with national policy, school and classroom practice, and finally, student, family and community factors, are actually closely interconnected. Indeed, it is the interaction between factors spanning these categories that added complexity to analysing and discussing the findings of this study. At the same time, it justified the need to discuss all levels of analysis despite not having collected comprehensive data for each one separately.
Using the model

In the following chapters I look in turn at each of the dimensions represented in this model, and I discuss perceived barriers compromising students’ presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation at school in reference to this model. The analysis begins with the presentation of extensive accounts of the case study schools (Chapters 6-8), which are progressively focused on drawing out students’ views on their overall school experiences. To complement students’ views with the perceptions of other stakeholders, I also explore barriers to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion as perceived by teaching staff in schools. Continuing the discussion, I situate identified barriers according to the dimensions presented in the derived model. This begins with exploring *school and classroom practices* to indicate what barriers seem to compromise teaching and learning within regular and language support classes in the schools studied (Chapter 9). Realising that ineffective school and classroom practices are correlated with discrepancies underlying the national policy adopted in response to increasing student diversity, the context of *national policy* and relevant strategies, and how these are implemented and interpreted in schools is also outlined (Chapter 10).

Nonetheless, the identification of barriers would be incomplete if I were to neglect the exploration of a final factor of analysis that at a first glance does not appear relevant to policy or school and classroom practice; the factor of students’ home and community environments. Therefore, despite not having collected explicit evidence specific to “students’ home and community environments”, this dimension of analysis appears to affect students’ school lives, and so is briefly explored in terms of identifying barriers to students’ inclusion (Chapter 11). Throughout this analysis it is useful to remember that students remain at the centre of the three dimensions included in the model presented in Figure 5.1, since their school experiences are influenced by existing school and classroom practices, the national policy addressing issues of diversity within schools, and finally, their experiences as individuals as these are shaped through their home and community environments.
Chapter 6 - First Case Study: Socrates Gymnasium

School context

Socrates Gymnasium was located in an older part of the capital city of Nicosia, close to the United Nations’ buffer zone, which distinguishes the area monitored by the Cypriot government from the area that is under Turkish occupation (see Figure 2.1). Even though this used to be an industrial area, the demise of local industries transformed it into a residential one. Most nearby houses looked old with no attempt made to renovate them. Surrounding buildings also served as education centres, with one kindergarten, one primary school, and two Lycia (upper secondary schools).

The school was built in the late 1950’s. The main entrance was across a busy street leading to a reception lounge with sitting arrangement for parents, visitors and support staff. Surrounding the lounge were two staffrooms designated for smoking and non-smoking staff respectively, the head teacher’s office, and offices of deputy heads. Outside the lounge was a canteen, football grounds used for gym lessons or by students during break time, and a long corridor along which classrooms were situated on two levels, 16 classrooms on the ground floor and 10 on the upper floor. Walking towards the classrooms you could see extensive construction work for renovation and the building of an indoor gym. Within school premises there was a small chapel across the back yard, pronouncing the Christian-Orthodox religious identity of the island’s native population. The parking lot behind the chapel served as the school’s second entrance, and was locked fifteen minutes after the school day commenced to prevent unauthorised entrance or exit from the school.

Within the nearby community, most resident families originated from a variety of Eastern-European countries. This area was not highly attractive to native families besides those already living there and attracted many immigrant families looking for affordable housing. Following government policy for free compulsory education for children up to the age of 16, migrant children are entitled to free primary and secondary education within their local schools (MoEC, 2009a, p. 319). Since the school’s student intake relied heavily on locally resident families, student composition reflected the diversity within its surrounding community. Socrates Gymnasium therefore catered to one of the highest ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in Nicosia (MoEC, 2009b).

Across the two years of data collection there had been a 7% increase in the intake of non-native students. In the years 2008-2009, 87 out of 494 students were non-native (18% of
student population) (MoEC, 2009b), with this number increasing drastically to an intake of 120 non-native students out of 477 students (25%) in the year 2009-2010 (MoEC, 2010) when this research was conducted. Figure 6.1 represents student diversity at Socrates Gymnasium in 2009-2010. This is evident in the number of different countries represented, with students coming mainly from Eastern-European countries like Georgia, Russia, Romania, and Ukraine, as well as the Middle-East, Asia, Australia and the U.S.A.

![Graph representing student diversity at Socrates Gymnasium. It depicts the nationalities and numbers of non-native students enrolled in 2009-2010. The inset graph compares the number of native students to non-native students.](image)

During 2009-2010, out of the 120 non-native students enrolled, 60 had attended Cypriot schools for at least a year and were thought as able to cope with the demands of secondary education without receiving language support. The remaining 60 students had recently arrived in Cyprus. From these, the 21 students with the lowest scores on a language evaluation test were perceived as requiring Greek language support, whereas the remaining 39 did not receive language support.

Students eligible for language support were allocated into respective levels of language ability, and were withdrawn from regular lessons to receive 8 hours of language support, out of the 37 school hours offered to students per week. Descriptive information of the composition of students receiving language support is provided in Table 6.1, with diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic and cultural background amongst this subgroup of students being clearly evident. It is important to note that 12 students (57%) were auditing classes.

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6 Recently-arrived foreign-speaking students were entitled to *audit* lessons and be exempt from in-class participation or taking tests, due to their perceived difficulties with the Greek language. In cases that students chose to conceal their “auditor status”, that student was perceived as a “regular student”, with equal academic requirements and expectations as other classmates.
Table 6.1: Statistics relevant to students receiving language support at Socrates Gymnasium. The asterisk (*) marks students auditing lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginners’ level</th>
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Taking into consideration the previously homogenous character of secondary school student populations, catering to the needs of such highly diverse populations would undoubtedly prove quite challenging. What potentially made the schools’ response to increasing numbers of non-native students more complex was not only the ethnic, but also linguistic and cultural diversity. On that note, I will explore teachers’ perceptions of diversity at Socrates Gymnasium in the following section.

**Perceptions of diversity**

Since the response to increasing student diversity at Socrates Gymnasium would essentially be enacted through teachers, it would be useful to identify the perceptions of teachers regarding diversity. Observations during my first visits to the school revealed that issues of *diversity* addressed a variety of topics. Notions of “difference” included two students who faced mobility issues and spent breaks in the school lounge with their allocated support teachers, isolated from other students. In addition, some native and non-native students were perceived as having different educational needs to their classmates since they participated in the support programmes of “*stiriksi*”\(^7\) and “*alphavitismos*”\(^8\), aimed at providing students with equal opportunities to education. However, most teachers considered student diversity as concerning students coming from a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Catering for the needs of students from such diverse backgrounds was a new phenomenon for Cypriot schools and as such, it manifested as a prominent challenge that the school had to overcome.

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\(^7\) A “learning difficulties programme” enforced by the MoEC as a special education strategy to provide students with support in core lessons like Modern Greek, History, Maths and Physics (MoEC, 2009a, p. 317).

\(^8\) A “learning difficulties programme” enforced by the MoEC to promote literacy (MoEC, 2009a, p. 318).
Taking this argument further, most discussions on diversity focused on students categorised as foreign-speaking. Being non-native, having recently arrived in Cyprus, and requiring support with the Greek language, emphasised the distinction between some students and the rest of the student population. Foreign-speaking students were also distinguished from non-native students who had lived in Cyprus longer, attended Cypriot schools, and had acquired the language skills required for classroom participation.

Consequently, at Socrates Gymnasium I was directed towards exploring the topic of student diversity from the aspect of the inclusion of foreign-speaking students. Following this, the school’s head teacher introduced me to the deputy head-teacher organising the respective language support programme, who in turn introduced me to the Greek language teacher. A collaborative network was built between the two teachers and me, which allowed me to successfully complete my fieldwork within the assigned timeframe. To gain better insights into the school’s attempts to promote an inclusive educational experience to all students, I present next the school experiences of some of the foreign-speaking students at Socrates Gymnasium. This account aims to portray students’ perceptions on school life and illuminate factors that potentially affect their teaching and learning.

**The students**

At Socrates Gymnasium I was given the opportunity to explore in detail the school life as this was experienced by three foreign-speaking students attending the intermediate level of language support, namely Kozet, Eve and Sarah. Kozet came from Iraq and attended first year of secondary education; Eve came from Syria and attended year 2; and finally, Sarah came from Syria and attended year 3. These girls participated in all research methods involving students at this school. Insight into their respective school experience was primarily gained through the method of participatory photography.

The posters represented in Figures 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 were constructed respectively by Kozet, Eve and Sarah. Discussions revealed that all girls considered communal spaces like the school lounge and the library as places they liked, since they could spent time with their friends there. In this way, socialisation with friends came to the forefront as a factor encouraging their inclusion. Preferred spaces for socialisation included areas that provided shade against the hot Cypriot weather, or places that were not easily monitored by teachers, thus providing privacy to students. Amongst the students’ least favourite places were areas
where construction and renovation work was taking place. These areas, which were originally hang-out places for students were now off limits for health and safety reasons.

![Figure 6.2: Poster constructed by Kozet.](image)

![Figure 6.3: Poster constructed by Eve.](image)

![Figure 6.4: Poster constructed by Sarah.](image)
Despite the interesting information that can be extracted merely by looking at students’ posters, most insight rested with the focus group discussion that complemented the poster construction. This discussion provided access to students’ personal accounts of their school experiences. Highlighting issues affecting students’ experiences, the following section explores photographs that sparked interesting conversations or were common in all posters but had different connotations attached to them.

To begin with, a primary topic of concern involved the way in which students defined their religious identity at school. Accordingly, the photograph that sparked the most intriguing conversation between the girls depicted the Greek-Orthodox chapel (Figure 6.5), that served as the ceremonial place where mass was held to celebrate ethnic and religious holidays. During such ceremonies all students were escorted by teachers to attend mass, with the chapel being associated with promoting the religious and national identity of Greek-Cypriot students. Therefore, government policy and school regulations demanding that all students should attend mass during national or religious celebrations, failed to acknowledge and appropriately respond to religious and ethnic diversity among students.

A heated conversation commenced between the girls, who were all Muslim, when Kozet explained why she used this photo to represent places she did not like at school (Figure 6.2), while noticing that on the contrary Eve and Sarah depicted this as a place they liked at school (Figures 6.3 & 6.4). Kozet was surprised that her classmates attached a positive connotation to a Christian church, and thought that the other students had misinterpreted the instructions of the task due to language difficulties.

![Figure 6.5: Photograph of the school’s Christian Greek-Orthodox chapel.](image-url)
The following excerpt from their discussion raises concerns regarding appropriate responses towards the ethnic and religious diversity of non-native students in schools:

**Kozet:** …On places you like you put the church? You do it wrong…Miss tell them again what means ‘I like’ and what means ‘I don't like’….

**Eve:** But I like…

**Kozet:** Why? This is Christian and we are Muslim. You can't like church!

**Eve:** Why I can't like it? I like…when we go there I sit outside with friends.

**Kozet:** Not right! You are not “good Muslim” if you like this church….what will your family say if I tell that you like the church?

**Eve:** I don't go inside….so why I am bad Muslim?...

**Sarah:** Miss, one day it was cold and I didn’t want to stay out so I went inside but stay at the back. And it was…different….the singing was nice….this means I am a bad Muslim?

**Kozet:** You went in the church? This is bad….is sin to go in Christian church.

This conversation reflected underlying aspects affecting non-native students’ lives within Cypriot school, such as their struggles to preserve and define their national and religious identities, which on a first glance remained hidden. Eve and Sarah apparently enjoyed missing lessons and spending time with friends outside the church, with Sarah even claiming that she liked going inside the church. However, Sarah’s positive response towards religious diversity was perceived by Kozet as reflecting Sarah’s loss of her own religious identity, and as a great “sin” towards being a Muslim. When seen in this light, Kozet appeared as un-accepting of religious diversity when she so eagerly dismissed the idea of spending time outside the chapel. This debate revealed the inner struggles that students face through experiences that appear to threaten their national or religious identity, and which promote their differences in contrast to the rest of their classmates.

The contribution of Miss Marilia, the language support teacher, to this debate was invaluable, since it revealed that some students’ struggle to promote their national and ethnic identities when residing in a foreign country extended beyond the borders of schools into students’ immediate community. In her opinion, such behaviour was encouraged within students’ homes. For instance, Miss Marilia was aware that Kozet came from a family that was really strict on issues of religion and avoided socialisation with non-Muslim families. This indicated that there was a conscious effort stemming from Kozet’s home environment to remain segregated from the realities of Cypriot society. According to Ms Marilia, Eve and Sarah gave the impression that their families were more inclined to “merge” into the Cypriot society. These examples suggest that issues of inclusion are possibly affected by factors stretching beyond the school context. Likewise, to fully understand barriers to students’ inclusion, it might be necessary to consider community and home-environment related factors.
Moving on, amongst the photographs that were commonly used in posters to identify places the girls enjoyed included the school lounge, where students could spend time with their friends (Figure 6.6). The lounge was the area that most students passed through when coming into school in the morning and leaving school in the afternoon. It was a colourful area which contrasted the blunt classrooms. It was also a very vibrant area. Students often visited the lounge during breaks, despite knowing that they were not allowed to be there unless they needed to see a teacher. This was the place to go if students required help with administrative issues, or if they had to discuss problems with specific lessons. Furthermore, it was the area used to offer individual support to students with reading and writing (programme of ‘alphavitismos’) or with specific lessons (programme of ‘stiriksi’), so becoming the place where foreign-speaking students spend a lot of time in.

![Image of school lounge]

**Figure 6.6:** The school lounge.

Discussions revealed that the area was attractive to students since it was enclosed and provided shade during hot weather. It has to be noted that weather in Cyprus is very warm with temperatures rising over 35ºC especially during spring and summer. This directed attention to the lack of appropriately shaded areas for students to use during breaks. With students being asked to vacate classrooms during breaks to prevent instances of vandalism and to allow teachers on yard duty to supervise them, the school lounge became a suitable place to spend breaks with friends during hot weather.

It was also interesting to note that all girls used photos of the construction sites across the school (Figure 6.7) to represent places they disliked. During fieldwork I noticed the extent of the renovation work carried out at Socrates Gymnasium in parallel to the building an indoor gym. The work was expected to finish before the school year begun but was nonetheless progressing at a very slow rate.
Students’ comments on construction work were mostly directed at the loss of social space for students. Due to the extensive work taking place across the school students were prohibited from using a large part of the school yard. This essentially affected students’ daily school lives especially with regards to their social interactions, as exemplified below:

**Kozet:** …is ugly…
**Eve:** When they do this work we cannot go there because is danger! So half the school is closed and no student can go there at break…
**Sarah:** One time we went behind the church in the parking place close to the building work and the teachers came and started yelling to leave from there.

Finally, it was interesting to observe that students hesitated to take photos inside classrooms. They claimed that they did not feel comfortable to ask teachers’ permission to photograph classrooms. Despite this, they talked about lessons they felt they could achieve well in and suggested that these did not demand high linguistic abilities. As a result, practical lessons like maths, art, and gym where amongst their favourite lessons, whereas lessons like Greek and History were causing them anxiety. Often, the lessons that students enjoyed included those in which they had good background knowledge, as displayed through increased in-class participation and achievement on tests. This is in agreement with the suggestions of Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) presented in Chapter 2 on the importance of the academic experiences that students acquire in their former schools.

In summary, the previous account offered insights into the school experiences of Kozet, Eve and Sarah, and it created portraits of their school lives by identifying issues that affect their inclusion. Taking a glimpse into students’ school experiences revealed their struggles
with promoting their national and ethnic identities in a school that caters to a predominantly Greek-Cypriot and Christian Orthodox student population. This confirms claims that the Cypriot educational system remains highly ethnocentric and monolithic despite increasing diversity (Angelides et al., 2003; Papamichael, 2009).

Moreover, it directed attention to the topic of foreign-speaking students’ academic achievement in relevance to lessons they enjoyed and did not demand high linguistic abilities, confirming the suggestions of Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou (2007) that foreign-speaking students’ language abilities affect their every-day school lives. Finally, it addressed students’ preference of certain places across the school according to the opportunities they offered for socialisation with other classmates. This draws attention to the significance of students’ socialisation in studies of inclusive education (Eliadou, 2007; Eliadou, 2008; Eliadou, 2011; Eliadou et al., 2007a). Taking this argument further, I explore in-depth the school experiences of Eve in the following section.

_Eve’s story_

Eve was 13 years old girl from Syria who attended the second grade of secondary education. She arrived in Cyprus from with her family one year before this research was conducted, in which she attended the first grade of this same school. The decision to leave Syria was contingent on her father already living and working in Cyprus as a car mechanic. To keep the family together, her mother decided to take her three children and move to Cyprus as well. According to Eve, she did not mind moving to another country or changing schools, but leaving her friends and family behind proved challenging.

Being keen to clarify the most important obstacles she had to face when enrolling at school, Eve mentioned that no teacher introduced her to the practical aspects required for participation in daily school activities. For example, she was given a timetable of lessons she had to attend but was not shown where classrooms were located. Moreover, the timetable was in Greek, and so she did not know what lessons she had to attend or what books to bring to school. According to the following excerpt, Eve overcame these challenges when another Syrian girl, Sarah, showed Eve around the school and translated her timetable. Nonetheless, she suggested that school administration could have informed her that there were other Syrian students that could help with her adjustment at school:

“...I didn’t know the school…I thought it was like Syria… here very different because you go to different class to have lessons and you have to know what lesson you have and what class to go…Sarah, she tell me what lessons are and showed class…”
An important parameter to adjusting to a new school appeared to be the student’s age upon arrival and length of residency in Cyprus. Arriving in Cyprus at an older age was thought to negatively affect the student’s ability for academic and social adjustment. Eve compared her school experiences to those of her younger siblings and concluded that because they attended primary education, they were already more proficient in the Greek language. As a result, they enjoyed their school experiences more; therefore, identifying the opportunity to attend primary education as a potential resource to recently-arrived foreign-speaking students. Likewise, having been in Cyprus for a year allowed her to learn some Greek and enhanced her opportunities for academic achievement and socialisation.

Her greatest challenge therefore involved linguistic difficulties. She claimed that language was implicated in all aspects of school life. Consequently, being unable to speak or write in Greek had adverse effects on her inclusion. What was primarily affected by linguistic difficulties was her potential for socialisation, and as a result Eve socialised only with other Syrian students. It was not until she learned to speak Greek that she was able to expand her social network, something which she perceived as crucial to enjoying school.

However, even when acquiring basic Greek language skills, the way in which she was perceived by classmates reflected the fact that she came from a different country and had language difficulties. These findings confirm relevant arguments in the literature on the effect of classmates’ perceptions of non-native students and the inclusion of the latter group (Angelides et al., 2004a; Messiou, 2002; Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007; Papamichael, 2009; Philippou, 2005). Explaining this, Eve mentioned that other students initially perceived her as “foreign” and as unable to communicate with them. Her struggles with language in her attempts to make friends and build a supportive network for a smoother transition to her new school are indicated below:

“…most difficult is to make friends….I didn’t know how to make friend and how to speak to explain what I want… no friends when I come…I have friend from Syria only before I am friends with people in class….but they say I am foreign and I don’t understand….then I speak little Greek and we talk and I make new friends”

In parallel to affecting socialisation at school, her inability to communicate in Greek was perceived as affecting her academic progress as well. According to Eve, linguistic difficulties affected her ability to adjust to her new school and compromised her school performance due to: limited comprehension that decreased her in-class participation and ability to make associations with material learned previously; limited her verbal communication, which in turn, affected her engagement and learning with the material
taught, the ability to ask questions, and limited her ability to present any skills acquired through previous schooling; and finally, her limited writing skills compromised her ability to indicate any acquired learning in a lesson.

Eve proceeded to distinguish between lessons that she enjoyed and lessons in which she could achieve well in. Accordingly, she mentioned that she liked Greek lessons in general, and more specifically language support lessons offered by Miss Marilia. The reasons cited were that “you have to like it” because Greek language spans all aspects of life in Cyprus and, therefore, “you need it”; and that “there I meet my friends”. Nonetheless, she indicated that Greek was a very difficult lesson to achieve well in. Following that, she claimed that the level of Greek language ability she reached during last year’s participation in the language support programme did not provide her with an equal opportunity for academic performance in language-dependent lessons in comparison to other classmates.

Amongst the lessons she enjoyed and felt she could perform well in according to her academic abilities were the secondary lessons\(^9\) of art and gym; as well as the core lesson of mathematics. Her justification for liking maths lay with the fact that she was able to rely on knowledge acquired in her school in Syria and associate it with material taught in Cyprus, offering her added opportunities for comprehension and successful performance on tests. It was also specified that being requested to solve equations facilitated test completion since it relied on using basic maths skills; compared to having to solve theoretical problems, which relied on using language to comprehend and provide correct answers to problems.

Relevant to students’ in-class participation and achievement, Eve considered the “auditor status” assigned to foreign-speaking students as important to discuss. She understood that while auditing classes she was exempt from participation in lessons and exams, and perceived this as positive because her language abilities compromised her academic achievement compared to her classmates. Nevertheless, a negative outcome of her auditor status was the cultivation of an enhanced notion of “otherness” between herself and her classmates. In spite of intending to change her status, she acknowledged that having been an auditor in lessons she would always be perceived differently. In addition, auditing lessons throughout secondary school would prevent her from receiving a school leaving certificate or attend university in the future. Therefore, she intended to concede her auditor status and to complete her final year at Socrates Gymnasium as a regular student.

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\(^9\) Secondary lessons, as opposed to core lessons, are those in which successful participation and achievement is not detrimental to determining students’ progression to the next academic level.

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She was nonetheless anxious of failing the exams due to language barriers, which would require her to repeat her second year of secondary school as a regular student or progress to the third year as an auditor. Accordingly:

“…I was auditor in class...teachers told me that I get no grades and is good when I don't know Greek…but now I want to be graded...if I get good grades I get paper to say I can go to next school and university so I want to be regular student...if I don't do good I have to be in second grade again next year...very scary....”

Eve’s account on her school experiences shone light on some of the complex realities of the educational experience of foreign-speaking students. Conversing with her allowed me to identify some of the barriers that compromised her participation, achievement and socialisation at school. However, she also provided an account of factors perceived as resources to her inclusion. Amongst these factors was the recognition that Cyprus provided improved economic opportunities to her family. Eve suggested that her father found “better work” than in Syria and that her family was “living better”. Acknowledging these opportunities seemed to motivate her to focus on the attributes positives of her school experience, and to have high aspirations for becoming a doctor in the future.

Moreover, participating in lessons that she enjoyed, found personally relevant and felt she could achieve well in, appeared to enhance her motivation to learn. Participating in free afternoon Greek language lessons offered by the ministry within the school’s premises provided her with added exposure to the language. Finally, her father’s ability to help her with school work and teaching her how to communicate with her peers in Greek proved to be fundamental to her initial adjustment in her new school. This illuminates the influence of factors lying outside the schools’ borders and into students’ homes and communities that have the potential to enhance students’ inclusion within schools.

In my opinion, another valuable resource was Eve’s ability to make friends. When asked to reflect on her school experiences when she first enrolled at school her comment was: “I have friends now”. Such a statement indicates the importance of socialisation to feeling included within a new educational setting. Meeting students from the same ethnic background as her, especially through participation in the language support programme, was considered invaluable. As a result, it seemed to enhance their adjustment at school in terms of relying on fellow-students to introduce them to the practical aspects of school life. In Eve’s case it also led to receiving academic help when classmates translated for her concepts and words that she had difficulty to comprehend into her mother tongue. In summary, Eve’s story illuminated a series of factors perceived as barriers and resources
implicated in students’ academic and social inclusion at school. The following section offers an in-depth account of foreign-speaking students’ socialisation patterns at Socrates Gymnasium, and their mediating role relevant to promoting students’ inclusion at school.

**Social patterns at school**

Since socialisation appeared as an important resource to students’ inclusion, the following section will explore social patterns at Socrates Gymnasium. This aims to illustrate that inclusion in its broader definition does not reside solely in attempts to promote the students’ presence, participation, and achievement (‘academic inclusion’), but should also rely on promoting a positive social context through which students can mobilise resources that encourage their adjustment at school (‘social inclusion’) (Ainscow *et al.*, 2006a).

To achieve this, portraits of social patterns as these existed at the time of fieldwork are presented in this section. I present only one pictorial example of a sociogram below, while I present the remaining sociograms and their analysis in Appendix 6. The example presented in Figure 6.8 depicts the social relationships of five boys and two girls attending the beginners’ level of language provision. These were the most recently arrived students, with limited Greek language skills. The web of social relationships presented indicates that students mainly self-selected each other as friends. Most relationships appeared to be mutual (indicated by two-direction arrows). Thus it could be argued that the language programme offered added opportunities for socialisation. However, socialisation beyond the language support class involved interactions only with other non-native students.

What was interesting to identify was that teachers had also been selected as friends by three students. More specifically, this involved the teacher providing language support and a maths teacher. When students were asked to explain these choices they said that they felt comfortable in the classes of these teachers, and that the teachers “understood them”. The boy who selected the maths teacher as a friend mentioned that he usually misbehaved when he attended regular classes. However, feeling that this teacher approached him in a friendly manner he decided that he was going to respect him and not misbehave in his lesson. The two girls who selected the language teacher as a friend suggested that they trusted her and talked to her about the difficulties they had at school. Such findings direct attention to further exploration of the type and importance of teacher-student relationships, since these might be relevant to promoting the inclusion of foreign-speaking students.
LEGEND:
Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
Blue ovals = teachers.
One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

Read the code assigned to each oval as follows: i.e. 1.M.2.A1.Bulgaria;
1= serial number provided to each individual whose name appeared on a drawing;
M= distinction of gender (M= Male; F= Female);
2= year of secondary education attended by student (students are in year 1, 2 or 3
according to their age);
A1= level of Greek language support received if needed by foreign students (A1=
beginners class; A2= intermediate class; A3= advanced class)
Bulgaria= country of origin of foreign students; the GC symbol indicates Greek-Cypriot students.

Figure 6.7: Sociogram depicting social relationships developed between students attending the beginners’
level of Greek language support.

The remaining sociograms (see Appendix 6) confirmed the finding that students attending
language support tended to self-selected each other as friends. This indicates that
participation in the language programme promoted socialisation and friendship
development. It was noted that most foreign-speaking students tended to select primarily
other foreign-speaking students as friends, and that this form of selection could have an
underlying correlation to students’ ethnicity, country of origin, and religion. For example,
students who originally came from the same country or had the same religion seemed to have the same group of friends. Exceptions were observed relevant to the length of residency of foreign-speaking students in Cyprus, and the level of their Greek language skills. The more advanced their language skills were, the more likely it was that foreign-speaking students would form friendships beyond their language support class. At the same time, this was often restricted to other non-native students not receiving language support.

Social patterns within regular classes have also been analysed to provide further insight on aspects of social inclusion at Socrates Gymnasium. This analysis revealed that students within regular classes tended to form homogenous friendship groups. For example, native students selected mainly native students as friends, whereas non-native students selected mostly non-native students as friends. In the few cases where native and non-native students mutually selected each other as friends, such relationships primarily involved boys rather than girls, as well as non-native students who did not receive language support.

The findings from sociograms revealed that recently-arrived foreign-speaking students tended to socialise within homogenous groups including only students from their language support lessons. This can potentially be attributed to language barriers; students’ frequent withdrawn from regular classes in which the rest of their peers were educated; and their short length of residency in Cyprus. Meanwhile, foreign students living in Cyprus longer seemed to primarily select other non-native students as friends, but on occasion social interactions extended to native students as well. Finally, native student tended to socialise with other students from their regular classes, possibly because they spend more time in this context. Consequently, the act of withdrawing foreign-speaking students from regular classes for language support, essentially: pronounced their differences to the rest of their classmates; limited their presence in regular classes; and, limited their opportunities for socialisation with other students, meanwhile compromising their social inclusion.

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter presented the research context of the first case study school. With an overview of what constituted student diversity at Socrates Gymnasium, the focus was placed on presenting portraits of foreign-speaking students’ school experiences by presenting the accounts of Eve, Kozet and Sarah, as well as exploring patterns of social interactions. This analysis illuminated factors acting as barriers and resources to these students’ inclusion at school, and provides a basis for discussion in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 7 - Second Case Study: Aristotle Gymnasium

School Context

Aristotle Gymnasium in the district of Larnaca formed the second case study of the research. Selecting a school from a different district than the first school was in support of the exploratory nature of the research, which entailed the investigation of variable research contexts. The school that was built in the 1960’s, was located in the older parts of the city of Larnaca. Multiple education centres were located nearby, such as a local kindergarten, primary schools, another Gymnasium and a Lyceum. The school drew its student population from the nearby residential area.

Noticeable efforts had been taken to make this school a welcoming place and to mask the sense of dilapidation emerging through the aging building, with special care given to the school’s front garden. Different types of trees, bushes and flower pots were scattered across the school’s entrance, the parking lot, and the upper balcony used as a corridor to direct students to their classrooms. This colourful sight created a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere upon entering the school. The back yard enclosed the school canteen, as well as the football and basketball grounds used for gym lessons or by students during breaks. This area was not well kept compared to the front of the school, with just a few trees scattered across it and graffiti work decorating the walls. Viewing the concrete-layered yard surrounded by steel bars to prevent unauthorised entrance and exit to the school, created the opposite effect to the welcoming feeling generated when entering the school.

The school’s main entrance led to a welcome lounge with a side-door leading to the back yard, across which administration offices and the head-teacher’s office were located. Walking along the lounge you could see the theatre used for celebrations and assemblies, the offices of deputy head-teachers, and one staffroom. Across this area were the teachers’ cafeteria and the second staffroom. Further along were the classes for music, computers, technology, home economics, and art. A staircase led to the remaining classrooms, where surprisingly enough, there was a designated classroom for language support.

Exploring the characteristics of the area in which Aristotle Gymnasium nestled revealed that, unlike Socrates Gymnasium, increasing diversity in the resident population was exacerbated not solely by increasing numbers of economic migrants, but due to increasing numbers of asylum seeking families. With the area becoming less attractive to native families due to the aging character of the houses, it attracted non-native families looking
for affordable housing. In this case, most asylum seeking families came predominantly from middle-Eastern countries like Palestine, and Iraq; whereas, economic migrant families came from Easter-European countries like Georgia, Bulgaria, and the Ukraine.

With student composition reflecting the demographic patterns of the school’s surrounding community, the idiomorphic characteristics of the student population of Aristotle Gymnasium differed to that of Socrates Gymnasium. This mediated the exploration of a different context relevant to increasing student diversity.

Catering to one of the largest ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse populations in the city of Larnaca (MoEC, 2009b), this school presented an ideal case study to my research. In the two years that data has been collected through the Ministry of Education, there has been an approximate 9% increase in the number of non-native students. In view of that, in the year 2008-2009, 35 non-native students were enrolled at this school out of a total of 352 students (10% of the school population) (MoEC, 2009b); with this number increasing to an intake of 69 non-native students out of 355 students (19% of student population) between 2009-2010 when this research was conducted (MoEC, 2010).

Figure 7.1: Graph representing student diversity at Aristotle Gymnasium. It depicts the nationalities and numbers of non-native students enrolled in 2009-2010. The inset graph compares the number of native to the number of non-native students.

Figure 7.1 offers an account of student diversity at Aristotle Gymnasium for the year 2009-2010. In detail, out of the 355 students, 286 were Greek-Cypriots and the remaining 69 came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Non-native students constituted approximately 19% of the student population, with the majority coming from Iraq and Palestine as asylum seekers, and Eastern-European countries as economic migrants. Diversity within this group was evident in the number of different countries represented amongst them.
A closer look reveals that between 2009-2010, out of the 69 non-native students 27 had attended schools in Cyprus for at least one year and were perceived as not requiring language support. The remaining 42 students had arrived in Cyprus recently and required language support. Similar to Socrates Gymnasium, these students were allocated into respective levels of language ability and were withdrawn from regular lessons to receive on average 8 hours of language support per week. Descriptive information about the student population receiving Greek language support is provided in Table 7.1, which indicates the diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic and cultural background amongst this subgroup of non-native students at Aristotle Gymnasium. Nonetheless, students classified as asylum seekers of Palestinian and Iraqi backgrounds were predominantly represented amongst students receiving language support. Interestingly enough, 37 of the students receiving language support (88%) were categorised as auditors and not as regular students.

Table 7.1: Statistics relevant to students receiving language support at Aristotle Gymnasium. The asterisk (*) marks students auditing lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginners’ level</th>
<th>Intermediate level</th>
<th>Advanced level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boy*</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boy*</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Boy*</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Girl*</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section explores teachers’ perceptions of diversity at Aristotle Gymnasium as a first step towards identifying the school’s response to increasing student diversity.

**Perceptions of diversity**

In a similar approach to Socrates Gymnasium, during my first visits to Aristotle Gymnasium I was eager to discover how *diversity* was perceived within this school. Confirming findings from Socrates Gymnasium, aspects of difference rested with students who participated in the programmes of “*stiriksi*” and “*alphavitismos*” aimed at providing individual support with specific lessons, and with reading and writing respectively. In addition, most teachers at Aristotle Gymnasium related student diversity to increasing
numbers of students coming from a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, in the same way that teachers perceived diversity at the first case study school.

With increasing diversity relevant to foreign-speaking students in need of language support perceived as presenting challenge to teaching and learning, I commenced my fieldwork in collaboration with the deputy head organising the language support programme and the language teacher providing the support lessons. To provide an overview of the school’s response to the increasing student diversity I proceed to portray a comprehensive picture of foreign-speaking students’ school experiences at Aristotle Gymnasium.

**Portraits of foreign-speaking students’ experiences**

This study aimed to identify foreign-speaking students’ perceptions on barriers and resources to inclusion. Offering a glimpse into students’ school experiences is therefore required in order to present a complete image of the response to increasing student diversity, since students were primarily affected by any relevant strategies used. Due to communication challenges, interviews with students were not conducted. Instead, a class of eleven foreign-speaking students attending the beginner’s level of language support contributed significantly to my research. Insight into their respective school experiences was primarily gained through participatory photography and the subsequent focus group discussion on the topic of “places they liked at school and places they did not like”.

Table 7.2: Information on the ethnic composition, gender and year group of student participants in the participatory photography project. Pseudonyms are used to maintain students’ anonymity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student participants for participatory photography project</th>
<th>Beginner’s level of language support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name and gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Moustafa; Boy</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hakan; Boy</td>
<td>Palestinian (lived in Armenia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Khalet; Boy</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Emine; Girl</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mariam; Girl</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ayshe; Girl</td>
<td>Palestinian (lived in Armenia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Nouria; Girl</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mboret; Girl</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Nihat; Girl</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Karolina; Girl</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Karina; Girl</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 presents descriptive information about this group of students, to allow better understanding of who these students were. Overall, six posters were produced during the participatory photography project, a selection of which is presented below. The remaining posters are presented in Appendix 7.
The posters presented in Figures 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 were constructed by five students in the class. The first two were constructed by two students each, whilst the last poster was produced by one boy. Similar to the findings from Socrates Gymnasium, discussions with the students revealed that their favourite places involved areas where they could socialise with their friends, such as the school lounge, the football grounds and the parking area. These were the places where students opted to spend their breaks at, since they were often unsupervised by teachers.

Students’ least favourite area was the theatre because it was associated with school assemblies and celebrations. The school canteen and the two large trees located at the edge of the football ground, presented controversial places of preference. Students’ posters included many photos of bulletin boards scattered across the school that displayed students’ work. Some students portrayed the boards which displayed the work of foreign-speaking students in a positive light, whereas others displayed these boards negatively.

![Figure 7.2: Poster constructed by Nihal and Karolina.](image1)

![Figure 7.3: Poster constructed by Ayshe and Karina.](image2)
Students’ decorations were fascinating to observe, with animated faces drawn to display positive and negative perceptions of areas across the school, and flowers and hearts represented places students liked. Moustafa (Figure 7.4) drew a football after expressing his intend to become a football player, thus personalising his poster compared to those of his classmates. Students also inquired whether they could draw their countries’ flags with all but one poster depicting relevant flags. In cases that posters were jointly constructed, each student was represented by drawing the flags of the countries they came from.

A focus group discussion complemented the participatory photography project and was aimed at enlightening the identification of barriers or resources to students’ inclusion. Anticipating that language barriers might compromise this discussion, students’ posters were used to elicit students’ responses to places they liked or disliked across school. The following photos provided the most interesting discussion amongst this group of students.

For example, Figure 7.5 represents one area of the back yard of Aristotle Gymnasium that was depicted in all posters. The tree shown was located at the farthest corner of the yard and was partially hidden from sight from the main school building. Students that enjoyed this area went there to socialise with their friends. On the contrary, younger students and especially Muslim girls tended to avoid this area. Their explanation involved reference to fear of getting into trouble with teachers because students went there to smoke.

Discussions revealed students’ differing opinions about this area, with some students suggesting that they enjoyed spending time there while others tended to avoid it:
Interviewer (I): Why don't you like this place?
Khalet: Miss here under tree they smoke and I don't like to go. They think you will tell teacher so they don't let us go there.
I: Do the teachers know that students smoke?
Hakan: Yes. Sometimes they see them and punish them.
I: Do you like this place or not?
Moustafa: No. Why to like this? They yell at me when I go. The older students…
Nihal: I never go there. Smoking and fighting is problem there.
Karolina: My friend goes so I go with her. We talk. We don’t do anything bad!

Figure 7.5: The back yard of Aristotle Gymnasium.

Another area prominently used in students’ posters was the school canteen (Figure 7.6). With regards to this area, students complained that there were not a lot of things available to purchase, the products available were not familiar to them, and that they spend a lot of time queuing in order to get something to eat. Therefore, many opted to bring food from home and tended to avoid this crowded area.

Figure 7.6: Photograph of the school canteen at Aristotle Gymnasium.
I was surprised to see that most students used photos of bulletin boards placed across the school in their posters. One such case was the bulletin board located in the language support class (Figure 7.7). This board contained a sign which read “[Μάθημα Ελληνικά]: Greek lesson”. The upper left corner included the flag of Iraq and the right corner the flag of Palestine. These flags represented the ethnic background of the majority of foreign-speaking students receiving language lessons in this class. Some of the students’ work directed at promoting respect for diversity through messages such as “[ειρήνη]: peace” and “[φιλία]: friendship” was also showcased. Students’ comments for using this photo in their posters rested with “it is our own work” (Nouria), and “it makes you feel like home to see your flag” (Mboret). The feeling of ownership when students’ own work was displayed was important to them, especially if their ethnic identities were promoted.

On the lower right corner of this board there was a poster representing the general agenda of the Ministry of Education with topic “Solidarity and management of migration flow: Organisation of special classes for learning the Greek language for students who are third country nationals”. The school evidently took part in this programme which was co-funded by the European Integration Fund. Around the school a lot of displayed work indicated the school’s attempt to promote respect for diversity. For example, posters in the school’s main lounge included messages such as ‘Creativity and innovation against discrimination’ and European Union sponsored events urged students to be “united in diversity”.

An entire board was even dedicated to portraying school events that foreign-speaking students had participated in (Figure 7.8). Unlike preference for boards displaying their personal work, most students appeared to dislike this board. Amongst the reasons cited for
this were: the fact that on religious grounds girls could not be portrayed in pictures, and that students disliked being so openly represented on school boards. This indicated a contrast between having their work displayed and being displayed on boards themselves, and raised questions on culturally appropriate ways to display the participation of non-native students in school activities. Contrary to students’ opinions, teachers perceived this as a way to praise the students for participating in school events.

Figure 7.8: Board depicting school events that foreign-speaking students participated in.

In relevance to places that students liked or disliked at school, a distinction between the places that girls preferred compared to places that boys preferred was identified. More precisely, boys appeared to like the football grounds where they played with friends, with most girls avoiding the area since it provided no protection from the warm Cypriot weather. Girls liked the lounge area outside the head teacher’s office instead, which provided shade and sitting arrangement for students and was used as a meeting place between friends. Some boys liked this area but most said that they avoided it since it was associated with visiting the head teacher’s office on disciplinary grounds.

Besides revealing information about places that students liked or disliked at school, focus group discussions allowed me to gain insights into other school experiences of foreign-speaking students at Aristotle Gymnasium, and to shine light on factors which appeared to act as barriers or resources to their inclusion. For example, irrespective of areas of preference across the school, most students seemed to enjoy their school experience. Commonly cited reasons included the fact that school attendance ensured that students avoided household chores or working to support their families; with the primary reason being nonetheless the opportunity for socialisation with other peers. However, the most important barrier to students’ academic achievement and socialisation appeared to be
language difficulties. In this case, lacking skills in the Greek language was seen as affecting their communication with teachers and classmates, as well as their ability to participate and achieve well in lessons:

**Interviewer (I):** What is the most difficult thing for you when you are in a school?  
**Karina:** Greek miss.  
**I:** Ok so the language.  
**Karolina:** Miss I understand and can speak little now. Read and write is difficult for regular class. I sit there…I learn nothing…I cannot show what I know…

The lessons in which students seemed to have the poorest academic performance were highly depended on language for comprehension and assessment, like History or Ancient and Modern Greek. Moreover, the skills they were developing in the Greek support classes were deemed insufficient to allow them to cope with the demands of curriculum subjects. It becomes evident in the following excerpt that the language support programme, which had been the government’s primary response towards foreign-speaking students, was judged by students as ineffective to enhance their academic achievement at school:

**Interviewer (I):** what lessons are the hardest?  
**Karolina:** …Ancient Greek…History…Greek  
**Hakan:** History, and Greek  
**Khalet:** History and ancient Greek  
**Moustafa:** Modern Greek  
**I:** Why do you think these are difficult?  
**Hakan:** Language…difficult Greek  
**Khalet:** Miss if you not know language you can't understand lesson so lesson looks difficult. In my country I have no so difficult lesson because I know language

All students were aware that to receive a school leaving certificate they needed to become regular students at some stage during their secondary education. It was nonetheless revealed that not many foreign-speaking students aspired to conceit their auditor status to that of a regular student on claims that language barriers prevented them from coping with any syllabus taught in Greek. In the few cases that students explicitly proclaimed their intention to become regular students, they felt that they had limited potential to achieve this. As a result, one student claimed that to avoid the language challenges she anticipated to face within Cypriot higher education institutions, she would study journalism at a Russian University instead:

**Karolina:** I want to be proper student next year; to get school degree I have to take test in all lessons at end of year and do well. But how can I do test all in Greek?  
**Interviewer (I):** Does this worry you?  
**Karolina:** Very much. So I have to be auditor again…I want to be journalist and go to university in Russia, not here… Is easier with language and I can find job.  
**I:** Are you planning to come back to Cyprus after or stay there?
Despite some students perceiving their auditor status as presenting a barrier to their future academic and employment opportunities, most students did not appear concerned. The majority of students in this class, and specifically children from asylum seeking families, appeared somewhat indifferent to their academic progress. Most suggested that they preferred to remain auditors throughout secondary education in order to continue their education along with their year group. One important factor implicated in students’ intent to remain auditors and their perceived indifference towards their academic achievement was the temporary nature of their residency in Cyprus. Asylum seeking families were often unaware of the timeframe that their families could remain in Cyprus. This uncertainty appeared to decrease their motivation to actively engage in academic aspects of school:

**Nouria:** now we are not real students…we are auditors, but I want to be.

**Interviewer (I):** why do you want to audit classes?

**Nouria:** Miss we will leave soon…

**I:** you will leave Cyprus?

**Nouria:** yes. My family will go to other place…

**I:** when are you leaving?

**Nouria:** we don't know. But they always tell me we will not stay here forever

**I:** so you prefer to be auditing classes?

**Nouria:** yes Miss. The class is difficult. All is in Greek and if I am regular student I need to do test. If we go soon, why learn Greek?

Other factors identified as barriers to students’ academic and social inclusion involved their difficulty to adjust into the new school life if no teachers showed them the practical aspects of participating in most daily school activities. This information was usually provided by other foreign-speaking students upon their enrolment at school.

Similarly to the first case study, foreign-speaking students at Aristotle Gymnasium often felt that native students perceived them in a negative light, speculating that such negative perceptions possibly emerged due to some foreign-speaking students’ disruptive behaviour within regular classes or other disciplinary issues. Instead of projecting this negative image to individual students, this was bestowed upon foreign-speaking students as a group. Associated with native students’ reported negative perceptions towards foreign-speaking students, one instance of bullying from a boy towards a Ukrainian classmate (Karina) was identified. Karina’s friend from language support class, Karolina, suggested that “this is normal when you first come to school”. This comment indicates that bullying occurred at the school on grounds of difference, confirming relevant claims in Chapter 2.

Having explored the identified barriers to students’ inclusion, it is now time to unveil what students perceived as resources to inclusion. To begin with, similar to Socrates
Gymnasium, amongst the resources to students’ inclusion was the use of other foreign-speaking classmates to explain or translate material taught in the students’ home language. Moreover, having high aspirations to learn mediated by the will to attend higher education was linked to increased motivation to learn Greek and improved academic performance. According to teachers, this was more prevalent amongst students from Eastern-European countries compared to students from Palestine or Iraq. Parental ability to provide help with schoolwork was also identified as motivating students to strive to perform well at school.

Confirming the findings from Socrates Gymnasium, students appeared to achieved better in subjects that were personally relevant to them and that they enjoyed participating in (i.e. secondary lessons like gym, art, music, technology and computers); and subjects that dependent less on language for participation and assessment (i.e. core lessons of mathematics and physics). Finally, students who appeared better adjusted to their new school were those that valued the added opportunities that Cyprus could offer to them and their families (i.e. a boy from Palestine who wished to become a football player suggested that he was unable to undertake the relevant training in his own country but did in Cyprus).

Socialisation at school was also perceived as integral to promoting students’ presence at school. It was noted however that very frequently students from Palestinian and Iraqi backgrounds, who made up the majority of non-native students, preferred to socialise with students from their own countries. Contrary to that trend, students from Eastern-European countries were more prone to socialise with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and on occasion even with native students as well.

Similar to Socrates Gymnasium, it became evident that multiple factors underlined the formation of social relationships at school and the apparent “social isolation” of foreign-speaking students from native students. The following excerpt enlightens this topic:

**Mboret:** Is easier to make friends in Greek class. Here all is the same. All don't know Greek and talk wrong…in regular class most speak only Greek.

**Ayshe:** …in this class is more relaxed; we work together and we know each other. In regular class we only sit together with students like us and not with the others.

This excerpt explains that language difficulties possibly limited students’ potential to socialise with native students who spoke Greek fluently but none of the home languages of foreign-speaking students. Moreover, the frequent withdrawal of foreign-speaking students to attend support lessons limited their opportunities for enhanced interaction with native classmates within regular classes, thus decreasing socialisation between the two groups.
The withdrawal of foreign-speaking students from regular classes not only limited socialisation with native students, but it simultaneously promoted in-group socialisation between students attending the same language support classes. Nonetheless, participation in language support lessons could have promoted socialisation between foreign-speaking students despite opportunities for enhanced interaction, given that the participating students tended to have common ethnicity, customs, language, and language difficulties.

These factors acted in parallel to the apparent lack of appreciation for diversity from native students (i.e. perceiving Muslim girls wearing head scarves as different), as well as some recorded negative perceptions of native towards non-native students. This as a result limited opportunities for socialisation between the two groups. Despite that, non-native boys had opportunities to socialise with native boys outside class, as for example when playing football during breaks. However, non-native girls socialised less often with native girls. In a similar pattern to Socrates Gymnasium, Muslim girls appeared to interact less with native students compared to girls from Eastern-European countries. Through careful consideration, I would suggest that exclusion within patterns of social interaction at Aristotle Gymnasium was more pronounced compared to Socrates Gymnasium.

In summary, the previous analysis indicated barriers and resources to inclusion according to students’ perceptions. Amidst these, the concept of social interaction appeared as extremely important to students’ school lives. The following section will therefore draw from the data collected from the drawing task to account for the social patterns that emerged at Aristotle Gymnasium at the time of my fieldwork. With this I aim to validate the importance that should be placed in exploring social aspects of inclusion in schools.

**Social patterns at school**

Four sociograms were produced to portray social interaction between students attending language support lessons, as well as regular classes at Aristotle Gymnasium (see Appendix 6). The key findings confirm findings from Socrates Gymnasium as follows:

- Foreign-speaking students attending language support lessons self-selected each others as friends;
- Participation in the language programme appeared to offer added opportunities for socialisation to recently-arrived foreign-speaking students;
Foreign-speaking students were offered limited opportunities for socialisation with native students due to their withdrawal from regular classes for language support; If foreign-speaking students selected peers outside their language support class as friends, these were non-native students attending other language support classes.

However, the higher numbers of students from similar backgrounds at Aristotle Gymnasium (i.e. Palestine and Iraq) compared to the greater variability in the student composition at Socrates Gymnasium, entailed that students from these countries had the opportunity to socialise solely with classmates from the same countries as them. In addition, at Aristotle Gymnasium there was an observed probable variation between the social patterns of non-native boys compared to non-native girls, with boys being seemingly more likely than girls to form friendships with students not belonging to the same ethnic group as them. It was also observed that Muslim girls would socialise with other non-Muslim foreign-speaking students within the context of language support classes, but not during breaks or in regular classes where they socialised only with other Muslim girls. Moreover, Muslim girls very rarely socialised with native students.

In the light of these observations, more questions have been raised relevant to the nature and reasoning of the formation of the specific social patterns. Therefore, it is acknowledged that studying the social inclusion within educational institutions can be a highly complex task, and that any insights stemming from the sociometric analysis should be further explored to investigate the reasons giving rise to this web of social relationships.

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented the context of Aristotle Gymnasium, the second case study school of my research. I presented perceptions of what constituted student diversity within this particular school, and focused on presenting the perspective of recently-arrived foreign-speaking students on their school experiences and potential barriers and resources to their inclusion at school. Emphasis was also placed on analysing social patterns, as these formed at the time that fieldwork was conducted, and interpreting them in terms of the contribution to the social inclusion of foreign-speaking. This analysis raised questions on the nature and reasoning of the formation of the specific social patterns observed, and led to the suggestion that further exploration is necessary to provide answers to these questions. The following chapter presents the final case study explored in this study.
Chapter 8 - Third Case study: Archimedes Gymnasium

School context

Archimedes Gymnasium, a school located in the seaside town of Paphos on the west side of the island, formed the third case study of my research. In selecting a school from a district different to those of the other two schools, I aimed to research a distinct educational context in support of the study’s exploratory nature. Catering for one of the largest non-native student populations in Cyprus, Archimedes Gymnasium ensured that enough participants could contribute to the research. Non-native students came predominantly from economic migrant families arriving in Cyprus from Georgia and Russia. These students are often referred to as “[Ρωσσοπόντιοι]: Russian-Pontiacs” or “[Ελληνοπόντιοι]: Greek-Pontiacs”\(^\text{10}\), providing a general description of their place of origin.

This school was originally located in a different area and served a different community. The building of a new school in the late 1990’s meant that existing students had to commute to the new area or attend different schools. Having been built fairly recently, the building was modern-looking. The main entrance led to a beautiful garden where seasonal flowers and shrubs were planted. The walls were decorated with posters and students’ work, bringing colour to the plainly looking building. The layout followed a cyclical structure surrounding an internal garden. On one side was a welcome lounge with sitting arrangement for visitors, school administration offices, the head-teacher’s office and the staffroom. Opposite the staffroom was the school canteen. The rest of the cyclical building was separated on two levels, with classrooms and deputy-heads’ offices scattered along intertwined corridors. The main building was enclosed by a yard, which had a rectangular arrangement, and included on different sides the school’s front garden; football and volleyball grounds; a small side garden on opposite side to the football court; and the backyard, with an array of trees planted to make the school environmentally friendly.

The school was located on the outskirts of the city, in an area which has been recently developed. On the side of the main road servicing the area next to the school there was no apparent residential community, making it difficult to distinguish the area from which this school drew its student population, unlike the two previous case studies. The building

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\(^{10}\) Unofficial term used in reference to people coming from countries of the former Soviet Union surrounding the Black Sea, like Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia. The term 'Pontiac' stems from the Greek word ‘Pontos’, which is the historical designation for the southern coast of the Black sea. Nonetheless, school records categorise students using the countries from which these students come from.
stood isolated in an area surrounded by vast acres of arid land, with very few houses surrounding it. A closer look revealed a residential area on the opposite side of the main road, and in the distance an industrial area. It would be easy to assume that this school drew its student population from the nearby residential area and probably catered to the children of the people who worked in the nearby industrial site. Since the surrounding area stretched a considerable distance from the city centre, it did not attract many native families, but instead it provided affordable housing to families of economic migrants, in reflection of the increased immigrations rates recorded in Cyprus over the past ten years (CySTAT, 2007). The nearby community therefore dictated the intake of students to Archimedes Gymnasium, and gave rise to its unique student composition.

Archimedes Gymnasium was the only case study school in which records of the numbers of enrolled non-native students decreased in the two years for which statistical data was collected. For example, in 2008-2009, 145 out of a total of 553 students were non-native (approximately 26% of the school population) (MoEC, 2009b); with this number decreasing to an intake of 99 non-native students out of 544 students (approximately 18% of student population) in 2009-2010 when this research was conducted (MoEC, 2010). The observed decrease in the number of non-native students reflected trends in the arrival of economic migrants in Cyprus, as well as demographic changes in the area. Relative to the other case studies, in 2010 Archimedes Gymnasium had a lower percentage of non-native students compared to Socrates Gymnasium, but similar percentage to that of Aristotle Gymnasium. This categorised it as one of the schools catering to the largest non-native populations of the island, and certainly the second large in the district of Paphos.

![Student Diversity in Case Study School C](image)

**Figure 8.1**: Graph representing student diversity at Archimedes Gymnasium. It depicts the nationalities and numbers of non-native students enrolled in 2009-2010. The inset graph compares the number of native to non-native students.
Figure 8.1 provides evidence for student diversity at Archimedes Gymnasium for 2009-2010. Non-native students made up approximately 18% of the student population with the majority coming from Eastern-European countries like Georgia and Russia. It has to be noted that the 11 students categorised as “Greek” had been born in Greece, but their parents came from countries of the former Soviet Union. Since the Ministry records depict them as non-native and eligible for language support based on the fact that their families had been constantly moving across Europe in search of employment, they were regarded as non-native students for the purpose of this research.

Moreover, during 2009-2010, 80 out of the 99 non-native students enrolled had received at least one year of education in Cyprus and were perceived as not requiring language support. The 19 most recently-arrived students received language support, by being allocated into respective levels of language ability and withdrawn from regular lessons to receive on average 8 hours of support per week. Descriptive information about the students receiving support is provided in Table 8.1, which indicates their diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic and cultural background. It also shows that students with Eastern-European background, and more specifically students from Georgia, were highly represented. It must be noted too, that most students receiving language support (approximately 89%) were categorised as auditors and not as regular students.

Table 8.1: Statistics relevant to students receiving language support at Archimedes Gymnasium. The asterisk (*) marks students auditing lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginners’ level</th>
<th>Intermediate level</th>
<th>Advanced level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Boy*</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Girl*</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Boy*</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Georgian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Boy*</td>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Boy*</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Boy*</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the group of non-native students appeared more homogenous compared to the two previous schools, with more students coming predominantly from Georgia and Russia, diversity was still evident in terms of the different countries represented. The following section portrays aspects of the students’ school life that illuminate their perceptions of their school experience and potential factors affecting teaching and learning.
The students

At Archimedes Gymnasium I explored the experiences of a class of seven foreign-speaking students, who attended the beginner’s level of language support. These students had recently arrived in Cyprus and required the most help with learning the Greek language and adjusting to their new school. Table 8.2 presents descriptive information about this group to promote understanding of who they were.

Table 8.2: Information on the ethnic composition, gender and year group of the students attending the beginners’ level of language support. Pseudonyms were used to maintain students’ anonymity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student participants for participatory photography project</th>
<th>Beginner’s level of language support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name and gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ndarius; Boy</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tasos; Boy</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Giannis; Boy</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Petre; Boy</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Theodora; Girl</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Marian; Boy</td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Roxana; Girl</td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant insights into students’ school experiences were attained when the students produced posters to reveal places they liked or disliked at school; a selection of which is presented below. Since the posters constructed by most students included similar photographs, I present a selection below and the remaining are presented in Appendix 7.

Figure 8.2: Poster constructed by Marian.
Discussions with students revealed their selection criteria for distinguishing between favourite or least favourite areas. Their favourite places included in a similar way to the previous two schools, areas where students could socialise with their friends during breaks, such as the yard and football grounds. Unlike in the other case studies, students at this school photographed classrooms where specific lessons were held, to indicate lessons they enjoyed. These were their language support class, art, technology, computers and gym. Interestingly enough, all students used photos of bulletin boards displaying their work and participation in school activities in a positive light.

Since discussion with students aimed to illuminate the factors that students perceived as promoting or compromising their inclusion, the following sections provide a detailed account of students’ daily lives. Reference will be made to how students perceived teaching and learning in various lessons, and the development of relationships with teachers and other classmates.

**Perceptions of lessons**

Conversations with students often revolved around their perceptions of lessons, often categorising lessons into those in which they felt they achieved well or badly in, and those that they enjoyed compared to lessons they did not enjoy. It has to be noted that language difficulties affected most students’ perceptions of lessons and guided their decisions regarding lessons they perceived as easy or difficult, and the relevant level of enjoyment these lessons presented.
For example, most students appeared to enjoy lessons they found interesting, personally relevant, and in which they could achieve well despite language limitations. They gave the impression that enjoyment and achievement in lessons was relevant to the level that language used was required for in-class participation and assessment. As such they preferred lessons like maths and physics, when these primarily involved working out equations, as was the case in the other two schools. In addition, they seemed to enjoy secondary lessons more than core lessons if these were less language-dependent:

**Interviewer (I):** What are your favourite lessons and why?
**Tasos:** Technology because it is construction… teacher shows you what to do …not much talking… …I am good in it! If I see something I know how to make it.
**I:** Do you construct what you want or the teacher tells you?
**Tasos:** Teacher tells.
**Giannis:** Teacher shows and you do it. But is not difficult.

The emphasis placed on students’ lack of basic skills in Greek relevant to difficulties with lessons is also indicated in the following example:

**I:** You chose the class of technology, the art class, your Greek class…
**Theodora:** These lessons I like. Easy lessons, other lessons I don't like, very difficult. I cannot say anything in class because I make mistake. I do nothing.
**I:** Why don’t you participating in other lessons?
**Theodora:** I know no Greek so is difficult.
**I:** What is the difference compared to other lessons between technology, art and language support that make you like them?
**Marian:** Miss, in art you draw. They show us we do it. Technology you make. Again the teacher shows us we make it. “Easy Greek” is also ok…other Greek difficult.

Accordingly, the classes that most students suggested that they liked were those of art, computers and technology (Figure 8.4). All of the suggested lessons were perceived as highly interactive, allowing socialisation with classmates while doing work, and were not considered to be as linguistically challenging as other lessons. Students explained that most lessons were held in classrooms that looked the same, so the only classes easily distinguishable were those of art, computers and technology. It was interesting to note that no photos of classes depicting lessons that the students disliked were taken. Relevant discussions revealed that students disliked lessons in which they felt they suffered academically. Such lessons were usually core lessons which were linguistically demanding in terms of in-class participation and taking tests. Failing to perform academically in such lessons had implications on whether students could progress to the next academic level.

Amongst the factors perceived as compromising students’ academic performance was their length of residency in Cyprus, with the most recently-arrived students facing the most academic difficulty. Furthermore, two boys, Giannis and Tassos, claimed that coming to
Cyprus at an older age meant that they “missed out on primary school”. Accordingly, they suggested that they lacked opportunities to learn Greek to a level that would allow them to cope with the demands of secondary school curriculum.

![Collage representing the classes of arts, computers and technology.](image)

**Figure 8.4:** Collage representing the classes of arts, computers and technology.

Another factor that appeared to affect students’ adjustment to their new school was their auditor status. All students agreed that not being considered as regular students within regular classes affected their school experiences. They felt that being categorised as auditors distinguish them from the rest of the student population and pronounced their differences to their classmates. As a result, teachers often focused on teaching regular students and seemed unwilling to accommodate auditing students in their teaching, as can be seen in the following extract:

**Interviewer (I):** Do you take tests in this lesson (reference to technology class)?

**Ndarious:** There is a test but we don't do it…

**I:** Why?

**Theodora:** Because Miss we audit class.

**I:** But if you don't do the test can you still do the construction work?

**Ndarious:** The teacher is nice and lets us do the work because if we don't do the work we talk.

**Roxana:** Miss you don’t want to do nothing and be different. We do what others do but teachers know we audit and sometimes they don't give us anything to do.
Auditing classes seemed to have a direct impact on students’ learning experiences by limiting their opportunities for class participation and academic achievement, compared to native students. Consequently, five out of the seven students from this class mentioned that they decided to conceal their auditor status in favour of becoming regular students. However, the two students who enrolled at school late in the academic year, and received language lessons for less than three months, suggested that they would maintain their auditor status until the end of that year. However, they considered it important that the school could revise the format of tests to take into account students’ linguistic difficulties instead of suggesting to them to skip tests. As indicated below, this was assumed to offer foreign-speaking students equal opportunities to academic achievement as native students:

**Interviewer (I):** Are there any things at school you want to change?

**Theodora:** Exams.

**I:** What has to change?

**Ndarius:** …They have to have other exams for students who are not Cypriot.

**Theodora:** Yes Miss, we talk about this before to our friends. Is not fair to have exams only for them and we don't do anything. If they have other exams for us we can do well. With the exams they have now we cannot do well. The Greek is very difficult to write and to read and learn the lesson in Greek.

Such discussions showcased that students felt different to their classmates since their auditor status focused attention on their linguistic difficulties and their different mode of in-class participation and assessment. Suggestions that teachers sometimes focused on students who were not auditing lessons and spend less time teaching auditors, presented an intriguing topic for further exploration; especially when seen this had a direct effect on the academic achievement of students who audited classes by being exempt from in-class participation and assessment.

It also became evident that some students compared their experiences to that of native students, who appeared to have more opportunities for successful academic performance. This was associated to language difficulties that compromised foreign-speaking students’ ability to take tests. Most students claimed that since they were unable to read or write in Greek they could not present their existing knowledge in the subjects taught. Finally, the following extract gives a flavour of students’ frustration when they compared their academic ability in their school in Cyprus, compared to their experience from when they were taught in their mother tongue:

**Interviewer (I):** What about your previous school? Did you do well in exams?

**Roxana:** Always! In my country I am best student; here I cannot take tests…

**Ndarius:** I did very well too.

**Theodora:** Miss I only get “A” in my test there.

**I:** So what about in this school?
Roxana: Always worse, Miss. If you don't know the language you do less well.
Ntarious: Maths or physics is not easy unless I know equation from before…Miss we are the only people that don't know and the teacher moves very fast and we cannot catch up. So I don't like when I cannot say what I know.
Roxana: Miss you know how we do maths and physics and chemistry here in Cyprus. In Romania we go further ahead and faster than here. But there you know how to say what you know. Here is very difficult.
Marian: We are at least 1 year advanced in my old school. And here you learn things you know already but you do very bad in test. This is very difficult.
Roxana: Is not nice to have so much difficult with what you know already.

Perceptions of classroom experiences such as these offer an initial glimpse into the microcosm of foreign-speaking students’ school lives and the perceived barriers to their inclusion in the processes of teaching and learning. As seen, students considered their auditing status as potentially pronouncing their differences compared to other classmates and as possibly compromising their academic opportunities. Moreover, decisions on lessons of preference or indifference were guided by the level of language-dependence or how enjoyable lessons were. The following section explains the implication of language difficulties in school inclusion for recently-arrived foreign-speaking students.

**Language difficulties**

Confirming the findings in the other two schools, the most important factor compromising students’ academic achievement and socialisation at school involved language difficulties. In particular, most students appeared to find it extremely difficult to make associations between academic material taught in their previous schools and what was being taught at Archimedes Gymnasium, due to the difference in the official language of instruction. Thus they could not draw from their previous knowledge to improve their academic performance at their new school. The frustration felt by students who had to overcome language difficulties in order to cope with the demands of the curriculum is evident in the following conversation:

Roxana: Miss, we know the basics from back home but we cannot say it in Greek. We know how to use something but we cannot say the name. This is difficult.
I: So you have difficulties to do tests now because of the language?
Roxana: We all have problem Miss. Is not just me. But I say it. Because we don't know Greek well is very difficult to study in Greek and have test in Greek but I know what I am studying. That is worse. Not to be able to say or show that I know.

This discussion indicates how the limited Greek skills of foreign-speaking students reduced their opportunities for academic achievement. Language difficulties were identified as affecting all foreign-speaking students’ communication with teachers and
peers, as well as their participation in lessons. Similar to the other two case studies, Archimedes Gymnasium attempted to address students’ linguistic difficulties through introducing the Greek language support programme and the assignment of an auditor status to students. Auditing classes was perceived as allowing students sufficient time to learn Greek until they could cope with the demands of the national curriculum. Meanwhile, auditors were exempt from in-class participation and tests with no academic repercussion. However, most students perceived auditing as compromising their academic opportunities and as emphasising differences between them and their peers.

It was interesting to observe that some students identified language difficulties as compromising their inclusion at school, and that they had considered possible strategies that their school could use to overcome this issue. For example, I had the opportunity to listen to two students proposing participation in a more intensive programme focused solely on learning Greek language prior to being introduced into regular classrooms. According to them, such a programme could facilitate their introduction into regular classrooms without pronouncing their difference to the rest of their classmates:

Roxana: Miss if you learn the language faster it means you can do well in other lessons later. I prefer to learn in class only Greek first and then other lessons.
Petre: Me too. I think is better than now.
Roxana: If you know language well then you do not audit lessons and you are like other students….you can do well on test if you know Greek.

More specifically, in the view of Petre and Roxana, this concept of “reception classes” would offer them added opportunities for class participation and academic achievement, which would be on a more equal basis to the native students. Not all students though had such a strong opinion on this topic. For instance, Theodora disagreed with her classmates and expressed concerns by suggesting that an entirely separate educational provision would segregate foreign-speaking students from rest of the student population.

In summary, then, I was left with the impression that the perceived extent of students’ language difficulties impacted on their inclusion at school. This being the case, I now turn to explore the topic of student-teacher relationships that presented as affecting foreign-speaking students’ inclusion at school.

**Relationships with teachers**

The importance of developing constructive relationships with teachers emerged in discussions with students, whose nature proved important enough to determine whether
students liked or disliked specific lessons. It also became evident that developing positive relationships with teachers promoted their inclusion at school, whereas less positive relationships promoted feelings of exclusion.

An example of constructive relationships was identified through students’ claims that they enjoyed their language support classes. Students commented on how their teacher treated them as individuals and cared about their wellbeing, even outside class. Moreover, the learning environment of language support lessons meant that all students had similar life experiences and were at the same level of Greek language ability. As a result, students did not feel embarrassed to participate in class for fear of making mistakes, with lessons taking place at a rate suited to their own needs and not to the needs of other students. For example:

Roxana: The Greek class is fun. We all don't know Greek so you don't feel different. We all learn together. No one makes fun of how we speak or write. And tests have easy and difficult questions in test. So if you study you do well.

Theodora: Miss Hermione is good too. She likes us and tries to speak to us not just school work but says how to be good people. So is nice to come in this lesson.

Ntarious: Less people. Less strict and we all learn the same here…

Taking this argument further, the class where they received language support lessons was depicted as one of the places they enjoyed being in the most at school (Figure 8.5). This class was previously used as a storage room but had been modified to use for language support lessons by Miss Hermione (language support teacher). Miss Hermione appeared to be the teacher that recently-arrived non-native students had most contact with. Due to this enhanced interaction, students had developed a deeper relationship with her compared to other teachers; something which was supported by my own observations, as well as conversations with other teachers.

Figure 8.5: The Greek language support class.
To make her classes more welcoming and to promote students’ diversity and ethnic backgrounds, Miss Hermione displayed the flags of students’ countries, as well as excerpts of students’ essays relevant to their national food and customs on the class walls. On the board there was also a map of Europe surrounded with bullets of students’ names connected with a piece of string to their country of origin. This created a more personalised atmosphere for students attending her lessons. Moreover, it enabled the introduction of newly arrived students to their classmates and promoted their social inclusion.

All students appeared to appreciate Miss Hermione’s efforts to personalise this class to them as individuals. Moreover, they took pride in having their work displayed and to appreciate efforts to promote their national identity. One group explained:

Theodora: It shows where we are from. Bulgaria is right there with my name.
Tasos: I am from Greece. You see on this poster Miss, where the map is, is my name next to Greece. So we learn about each other, that we come from so many countries…is nice to see your name on the map.
Roxana: Miss, in here you come and you don't mind to say oh! I am from this country…this map makes you happy to see where you are from and see that other people are from other places. Nowhere else in the school you see this.

In comparison to the language support teacher, it was noticeable that most regular class teachers failed to develop close relationships with the foreign-speaking students in their classes. In addition, students’ accounts and my own observations indicated that not many regular class teachers were willing to modify their teaching practice to accommodate the needs of these students. Overall, students agreed that most teachers were willing to help them with difficulties they faced but at the end of lessons and not while they were teaching. Moreover, students often refrained from asking questions in class that could have otherwise helped them understand what was taught. Instead they preferred to ask the teacher questions in private during breaks, or they rely on other classmates for help as seen in the following extract:

I: Do teachers help you in lessons if you do not understand something?
Petre: Sometimes. Maybe after the bell rings we go and ask something and they say what they mean. But they have not much time to say things to us during lesson.
Roxana: I go to staffroom at break to ask if I want.
I: So you don't ask questions in class?
Roxana: No Miss. If I don't know something I wait until break. Then teacher can speak without others hearing us and I can understand better.
Theodora: Miss, I ask student next to me if I don't understand.
I: Why not the teacher?
Theodora: Miss, the teacher will say I waste time… My friend knows so I ask him. And then the teacher shouts that we talk in his class and says they will call my parents.
It was evident, therefore, that development of constructive relationships with teachers was perceived as enhancing students’ opportunities for academic success at school. Nonetheless, it became evident that social interactions with other students were equally important in promoting their inclusion. These relationships are explored in the next section.

**Relationships with classmates**

The most widely cited factor appearing to enhance the school experiences of foreign-speaking students was their ability to socialise with peers upon their arrival. Beyond the benefits of social interaction with classmates, making friends appeared to help students adjust faster to their new school. For example, they often relied on friends to introduce them to the practical aspects of their new school life, such as translating their academic schedule in students’ mother tongue and showing them where classes for various lessons were. Moreover, having friends within regular classes allowed them to adjust academically to their new educational context, with friends often translating what was taught in class.

Socialisation therefore emerged as an important resource for students’ inclusion. This was also evident in students’ selection of places they liked at school, which primarily depicted places that they liked to spend time with their friends during break times. For example, Tassos and Giannis, suggested that their favourite “hang out” place was a tall pine tree located in a secluded area of the school grounds. Interestingly enough, other students suggested that they avoided this area, which had been the hang-out place of older students who were often seen smoking during breaks. Since smoking is prohibited at school and is subject to punishment, most of the newly arrived students preferred to avoid this area entirely. Similar reasons were offered to justify why some boys avoided the use of school toilets during break time and preferred to ask for permission to use them during lessons.

Besides the isolated area of the tall pine trees located at the edge of the school yard, the students’ less favourite areas included the boys’ toilets, the school lounge and the school canteen. It seems that students thought that it took too much time for them to purchase food from the canteen and in addition, there was not a lot of variety of items to choose from. Since it was more important for them to spend time with their friends during breaks, many students preferred to bring food from home instead. Apparently, the students’ conversations about places of preference were focused primarily on places offering space for socialisation. Acknowledging that socialisation was perceived as a primary concern for students at Archimedes Gymnasium, as was the case in the other two schools studied, I explore social patterns at Aristotle Gymnasium in further detail in the section that follows.
Social patterns at school

The sociogram analysis of drawings received at Archimedes Gymnasium revealed that foreign-speaking students primarily selected as friends students that also received language support (see Appendix 6). Interestingly enough, two students from the beginners’ level of language support who had very recently arrived at this school did not write down names of ‘close friends’ but only included names of ‘other friends’ when completing the drawing task. This draws attention to the fact that recently-arrived students require time to build up relationships at school. A closer observation reveals that one of these students had selected five other classmates as ‘other friends’, but none of those relationships appeared to be mutual. Not being selected by any classmate as a friend potentially indicates the difficulty with which recently arrived foreign-speaking students can become included within the already-formed social circles of their school.

When students outside the realm of language support groups were selected as friends, they were mainly non-native students who did not need language support. On four occasions, native students were selected as friends. Since the latter students did not complete a drawing it was not possible to identify whether such relationships were mutual. Nonetheless, such patterns of interaction revealed a web of social relationships consisting mainly of non-native students. The overall findings of the sociometric analysis at Archimedes Gymnasium confirm the social patterns observed in the other two case study schools, which have already been explained in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Conclusion

A series of themes emerged from my exploration of students’ day-to-day experiences at Archimedes Gymnasium. What was particularly interesting was the way that students talked about their experience of school life in terms of academic, as well social factors. In terms of academic aspects, language difficulties emerged as the most important factor compromising students’ potential for participation in lessons and academic achievement. Decreased opportunities for in-class participation and achievement in tests due to language difficulties were perceived as providing students with diminished opportunities to education in comparison to their native classmates. Information about the lessons that these students enjoyed and achieved well in was thus perceived as associated to how linguistically demanding specific subjects were, with students enjoying more and achieving best in lessons that were less linguistically challenging.
Interestingly enough, the attempt to minimise the strain placed on students due to language
difficulties through their introduction as auditors within regular classrooms, was perceived
as emphasising differences between foreign-speaking students and native classmates, as
well as diminishing their opportunities for participation and achievement in regular
classrooms. This promoted a general sense of frustration in students, who were unable to
cope with the demands of the curriculum despite the language support provided to them.

Other factors were perceived as enhancing students’ school experiences. These included:
the formation of positive teacher-student relationships; allowing students to feel part of the
school community by having their personal work displayed across school boards; and,
promoting students’ national identities by providing them with opportunities to share
information about their countries of origin. Some students even mentioned that separate
provision of language support prior to being introduced into regular classes might be more
effective in avoiding the drawbacks of auditing classes. Socialisation patterns also
appeared as being important in promoting students’ inclusion. This was evident in
students’ selection of places they liked or disliked at school, which depicted primarily
places in which they spend time with their friends. However, the analysis of social patterns
revealed the complexity in the factors underlying the formation of relationships in schools.

Taking this analysis forward, the themes that emerged from the student-oriented tasks and
were presented and analysed within the three case study chapters are further analysed in
the next chapters in comparison to themes that emerged from interviewing teachers. This
level of comparative analysis is directed towards identifying factors that act as barriers to
the participation and learning of foreign-speaking students, as well as the resources that
might be mobilised in order to address these barriers. Even though comparing the students’
view with teachers’ perceptions adds to the complexity of data interpretation, it served as a
means to triangulate the sources of information and essentially add to the credibility of the
study. To present teachers’ perceptions in a comprehensive way, the model adopted for the
discussion of barriers to foreign-speaking students’ experiences (see Chapter 5), is
revisited. The next three chapters attempt, in turn, to categorise teachers’ perceptions of
barriers to students’ inclusion according to the three conceptual dimensions of the model,
namely those of Schools & Classrooms; National Policy; and Students, Home &
Community factors, respectively.
Chapter 9 - Schools & Classrooms

Introduction

Having explored students’ views of their school experiences within the case study chapter through the presentation and interpretation of data collected through student-oriented research methods, I now consider the perceptions of teachers on potential barriers to students’ inclusion. I begin to look at potential barriers to students’ presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation that appear to primarily arise from day to day school and classroom practices; since this is the dimension of the proposed model adopted in Chapter 5 to discuss berries to inclusion, for which I have most comprehensive evidence. Barriers revolve around school factors, and progressively focus on those affecting teaching and learning within regular classrooms and language support classrooms respectively. Though I draw mainly from teachers’ perceptions of their own practice, as well as their views of foreign-speaking students’ school experiences; teachers’ ideas will be critically reviewed to offer a comprehensive analysis of barriers associated with teaching and learning.

School level factors

Many barriers have been identified by teachers as compromising the inclusion of foreign-speaking students on a social, as well as an academic level, through compromising teaching and learning relevant to school practices. These are elaborated in the following sections and include the limited role of most teachers to the education and wellbeing of foreign-speaking students; insufficient teacher training on issues of multicultural education; insufficient provision of resources to enhance teaching in diverse classrooms; relative absence of non-native teachers; the inappropriate curriculum; and finally, the failure of schools to create activities that could promote the participation of non-native students and celebrate their ethnic, religious and cultural identities. To guide the reader through the exploration of school level barriers, the concept map in Figure 9.1 offers a visual representation of the interplay between school level factors that appear to compromise foreign-speaking students’ inclusion at school.
Limited role of most teachers

At this point, providing an overview of the role of school staff in the processes underlying the newly introduced language support programme for foreign-speaking students is critical, since teachers were essentially the mediums through whom this policy was enacted within schools. It is also important in portraying the involvement of particular teachers in promoting inclusion through shaping more equitable school experiences for this group of students. Accordingly, I consider the role of the head teachers, the deputy dead-teachers of the linguistics department, the Greek support language teachers, and regular class teachers.

To begin with, a major barrier to the effective implementation of strategies targeting foreign-speaking students was the limited role of most members of staff in their school lives. This was reflected in the a unique leadership style enforced within Cypriot schools, in which responsibility was disproportional to the hierarchical position of teachers (Angelides et al., 2010; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 2, due to the central control of schools by the Ministry of Education, leadership roles within Cypriot schools were restricted to school head-teachers, and were closely monitoring from the Ministry. This allowed little room for innovation and adopting strategies relevant adopting a more inclusive ethos, in attempts that were context-specific to each case study school.
Head teachers’ perceptions of increasing student diversity involved considering diversity as “a necessary evil”, attributed to the increased demands for “cheap labour” and subsequent increased numbers of economic migrants. Comments from head-teachers were vague and rested with identifying that increasing student diversity presented challenges to teaching and learning. Contrary to the fact that leadership roles were not “distributed” to multiple stakeholders within schools, as suggested by Ainscow et al. (2006a), it was interesting to notice that head teachers did not assume more prominent roles in implementing and monitoring strategies directed at foreign-speaking students. In essence, all responsibility for the language support programme, which was the schools’ main provision for foreign-speaking students, was dispensed to deputy head-teachers.

Therefore, amongst teachers that interacted most frequently with foreign-speaking students were the deputy head-teachers of the Greek language departments, who were responsible for organising and monitoring the language support programmes. Their interaction with students was also enhanced through their role in enforcing discipline with these students. They were nonetheless involved in students’ lives in varying degrees depending on time available beyond their other responsibilities. For instance, the deputy head-teachers at Socrates and Aristotle Gymnasium had more contact with foreign-speaking students, since they taught these students within regular classrooms, unlike deputy head-teacher at Archimedes Gymnasium. The following excerpt presents the latter deputy head-teacher’s views of his role in relevance to the education of foreign-speaking students:

“Last year the language programme was introduced and the head-teacher requested that someone from the Linguistics department organises it…to tell you the truth I don’t have much contact with the students…I don’t teach them since they withdraw from class to receive Greek lessons…I only meet them when they first come to school for class allocation, or when they misbehave and teachers sent them to my office…”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

In turn, the teachers who were in closer contact with foreign-speaking students were the language support teachers, who provided students with extra help in the Greek language daily. It was therefore inevitable that beyond they often developed a personal relationship with the majority of their students. For example, Miss Marilia (Socrates Gymnasium) felt personally responsible to motivate students to achieve at school, and emphasising the importance of investing in education to the increased potential for students to have a life that they wanted in the future.
Similarly, despite often feeling unprepared to address students’ individual needs, Miss Nefeli (Aristotle Gymnasium) assumed the role of the adult that students could confide in and turned to for help when necessary, as explained below:

“Since I was at this school last year they know me well…they feel comfortable to tell me things they wouldn’t normally tell a teacher…but from a cultural point of view I don’t feel competent to advise them appropriately on certain issues…”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

However, Aristotle Gymnasium had another member of staff actively involved in Arabic-speaking students’ lives besides the language support teacher. In the early stages of my fieldwork it became evident that the person most closely aware of the school lives of foreign-speaking students was Miss Aysha, the schools translator. Mish Aysha mediated communication between school staff and the families of Arabic-speaking students. Something that was necessary at this particular school since the number of Arabic-speaking students coming from asylum-seeking families had greatly increased

In the year 2008-2009, Miss Aysha was also assigned activity hours during which she had taught Arabic language and the Muslim religion to Arabic-speaking students, thus allowing students to practice their home language and religion as well. Students were withdrawn from the regular class of religious education, during which other classmates learned about the Christian Orthodox religion to attend religious education lessons with Miss Aysha. Consequently, her increased contact with these students allowed her to develop personal relationships with them, as explained next:

“We have our own class to do Religion…they don’t accept to have lessons with Christian teacher, they come to my class and we do other things…I help with Greek, Math, and I teach Arabic as well…If there is something very difficult they stay in regular class to do that. But if teacher says is ok they come to find me…I spend much time with them and they get to know me and they trust in me”

- Miss Aysha, Translator; Aristotle Gymnasium

The positive role that language support teachers in all schools, and the school translator at Aristotle Gymnasium in particular, assumed relevant to foreign-speaking students was widely documented by other colleagues. However, despite the closely-knit relationships that language support teachers formed with foreign-speaking students, this did not extend to regular class teachers, who often assumed little responsibility towards these students. Consequently the role of regular class teachers was ambiguous and considerably less personal. Teachers’ unwillingness to accommodate these students’ needs into their lesson plans was regarded as stemming from the challenges posed when teaching an increasingly
heterogeneous student population. For example, language barriers frequently compromised students’ engagement and participation in class and sometimes led to incidents of misbehaviour. Moreover, students were often withdrawn from class for language support, thus decreasing their presence and participation in lessons. Consequently, teachers’ limited contact with foreign-speaking students affected the types of teacher-student relationships formed, and appeared to reinforce the belief that these students were “not their responsibility”. The following excerpts are illustrative of regular class teachers’ lack of a feeling of responsibility relevant to foreign-speaking students:

“...not many teachers are willing to dedicate time to introduce new material and resources in their teaching or participate in activities directed at these students…”

- Miss Alexia, Ancient Greek teacher; Socrates gymnasium

“...to some extend I don't feel responsible for not being able to teach them…it all bores down to not knowing the students’ home language…I am not obliged to know their languages. In Cyprus we teach in Greek. I try to help them but they have to be mature enough to show me that they want to be active participants in their learning. Otherwise I have other students to worry about.”

- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“Sometimes I say things in Greek and English to help them understand. Most do not even know English! I don’t know how else to approach them. I try to show more pictures to visualise what I teach…I hope they learned these things previously but I cannot make associations for them…they have to figure it out on their own.”

- Mr Marinos, Physics teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

It therefore seemed to me that the limited role of teachers in response to foreign-speaking students was linked to the way in which teachers perceived the students. For example, in Mr Yiannis, a mathematics teacher at Archimedes Gymnasium revealed three important issues with regards to how he perceived these students. One major concern lies with how the students are perceived in general, and whether they are being regarded as a minority, and consequently as different to the rest of the student population.

His second concern related to perceived language difficulties as contributing to increasing the inability of regular class teachers to actively teach these students. He also felt that the frequent withdrawal of foreign-speaking students to attend language support lessons compromised teaching practice and prohibited regular class teachers from forming constructive relationships with the students, as explained next:

“...it is hard to teach them if they don’t know Greek or are withdrawn from class all the time (to receive Greek language lessons)...you cannot form close relationships with them if you don’t have any contact with them.

- Mr Yiannis; Mathematics teacher

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Finally, he believed that there was often the need to prioritise teaching and focus on the needs of the student majority in class, and in effect spend less time trying to cater for the needs of foreign-speaking students. This was attributed to: foreign-speaking students auditing lessons and not being perceived as “regular students”, the daily demands of teaching practice and the need to cover specific material during a prescribed time.

When I compared the perceptions of all teachers interviewed on the topic of student diversity, I realised that barriers to teaching foreign-speaking students in terms of teachers’ limited involvement rested with the lack of opportunities for collaboration amongst school staff when implementing relevant strategies, and the assignment of responsibility for foreign-speaking students in the hands of very few teachers who were overworked.

To justify their failure to assume more responsibility towards foreign-speaking students, most regular class teachers referred to the lack of sufficient training on issues of multicultural education as a means of coping with the demands of increasingly diverse classrooms. The unequal response assumed by teachers with regards to teaching and forming relationships with foreign-speaking students, indicates some of the challenges posed when responding to increasing student diversity. The complexity of the students’ experience was viewed as something which added to the challenge of responding to their individual needs within classrooms and as potentially affecting their inclusion.

Finally, the teachers’ views suggested that there appeared to be a “deficit” perception in response to increasing student diversity within classrooms. Apart from the Greek language support teacher, most teachers were perceived as indifferent to adapting their teaching styles to suit the needs of foreign-speaking students. Current policy, which entailed considering these students as auditors within regular classrooms, ensured that teachers failed to assume responsibility for promoting their teaching and learning. As a result, limited opportunities were offered to the students to form constructive relationships with regular class teachers, which would have otherwise enhanced their inclusion.

**Insufficient pre- and in-service teacher training for multicultural education**

Amongst the perceived barriers to providing foreign-speaking students with equal opportunities to education, was the lack of sufficient pre- and in-service teacher training. Most teachers criticised the scant offering of seminars by the Ministry just a few times each year. In addition, one teacher was highly critical of the Ministry for only organizing in the districts of Nicosia and Limassol, as indicated in the example that follows:
“I would be keen to receive training relevant to foreign students in my class but the only available resources are seminars offered by the Ministry usually in Nicosia. If I want to attend I have to travel 1 ½ hours to get to the venue...”

- Mr Yiannis, Mathematics teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

In similar discussions, teachers unanimously mentioned that the content of the seminars offered by the Ministry left them unprepared to teach within increasingly diverse classrooms, thus compromising teaching and learning. For example:

“...well as you know I am not an expert on the topic of teaching Greek to a foreign-speaker...I have no training in that area...”

- Mrs Magda, Modern Greek teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

“The Ministry organises seminars with information on how to respond to multiculturalism in schools but this is the only resource offered to teachers”

- Mrs Aphrodite, Modern Greek teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

“We are not given guidelines on how to teach them...It is for teachers to decide how to handle their class...there is no specific training for the staff as a whole...”

- Miss Alexia, Ancient Greek teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Due to feeling inadequately trained to cope with the challenges posed in multicultural classrooms, many teachers opted not to assume any responsibility for teaching foreign-speaking students. In turn, they suggested that this responsibility lies with support teachers.

Nonetheless, other teachers took a more constructive approach towards these students. For instance, Mrs Aphrodite (Greek teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium) produced hand-outs with material at a linguistic level appropriate to the skills of foreign-speaking students. Students were therefore able to understand the exercises and solve some of them correctly. In this way she kept students busy and prevented misbehaviour, while encouraging them to attend lessons. She also helped students during tests by providing some of the answers or indicating where students made mistakes, so that they did not lose marks by providing wrong answers or by not answering questions. A final strategy she used was praising students to encourage participation and keep them engaged with the material.

Despite teachers identifying the potential benefits of adopting a different teaching style towards foreign-speaking students, it became clear that insufficient training compromised teaching and learning within multicultural classrooms. On that note, some teachers explained that any training should focus on preparing teachers to cope with issues such as linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. This was assumed to cultivate cultural knowledge to help teachers avoid exemplifying “inappropriate” behaviours towards students, as that described in the example below:
“…After asking an Arabic-speaking girl three times to stop talking I went next to her to give her a warning and touched her on the shoulder….to my horror she yelled at me not to touch her! I was shocked since no student should yell at teachers! The school’s translator later said that in their culture it is inappropriate for a man to touch a woman. I realised that I don’t have the knowledge required to respond to these issues. …”

- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

In an evaluation of the readiness of regular class teachers to address the needs of foreign-speaking students, most teachers confirmed that they were unaware of students’ customs, their life experiences and their cultures; something that prevented them from relating to these students. As an outcome, they felt that they could not teach foreign-speaking students in ways that “fitted their needs”, and felt that they “failed as teachers”. In their suggestions to improve the response to foreign-speaking students, most regular class teachers thought that support teachers were better trained to teach foreign-speaking students.

However, the deputy head-teacher of Archimedes Gymnasium was the only teacher who was critical of the readiness of language support teachers to respond to the needs of foreign-speaking students. The following excerpt exemplifies his disappointment at the “lack of expertise” of these teachers for teaching within multicultural classrooms:

“…we were informed by the Ministry that support teachers would be trained to teach Greek to foreign-speaking students…I was expecting experts! When I asked them what training they received, they told me that nothing special was done to prepare them to teach in this context. And it shows! Half the year passes before they get a grasp of the realities of teaching in highly diverse classrooms.”

- Deputy Head teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

Language support teachers in turn suggested that training for multicultural education in Cyprus had to be directed towards learning to teach Greek as a second language. It was therefore observed that due to their perceived inability to respond to the academic or cultural needs of individual students, teachers often refrained to a collective response towards foreign-speaking students as a group and not as individuals. For example:

“…we often respond to them as the group of students who differ from the majority of the student population. This is not done intentionally but as a practical way to deal with their academic needs more effectively…”

- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

In addition to the lack of appropriate teacher training that was assumed to potentially equipping teachers with skills to better cope with increasing student diversity, it will be explained below how the lack of appropriate resources was perceived as another factor compromising teaching practice within multicultural classrooms.
**Insufficient resources to improve teaching in multicultural classrooms**

An additional barrier relevant to enforcing a coherent school response towards foreign-speaking students was seen to be the limited provision of resources. Specific to language classes, it was identified that material such as appropriate text books for teaching Greek as a foreign language to students with varying levels of Greek language ability would be necessary. However, it was suggested that material relevant to foreign-speaking students was often sent to schools well after the commencement of the new academic year. Furthermore, all language support teachers noted that from the available resources most were inappropriate in enhancing the language programme, often forcing teachers to dedicate personal time to find appropriate additional material.

In both language support and regular classrooms, the lack of resources was a prominent issue of concern. The following suggestions indicate that resources in the form of multimedia were assumed to be useful in engaging students in teaching and learning:

“…beyond the book that the Ministry sent there has not been anything else. It would have been more helpful to use pictures, drawings, the computer and other mediums of teaching in order to enhance the lessons….”

- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

“We often use Power Point to produce presentations…they most enjoy the use of pictures when we do activities because it helps them associate what I am trying to teach with their prior knowledge…this helps me speed up the learning process with the specific group of students who do not have too much time to learn such things, since they are expected to be in regular classes parallel to learning Greek…”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Simultaneously, I recognised that the teachers involved in the implementation of the programme could act as resources to students’ inclusion. Therefore, having teachers with a limited role relevant to foreign-speaking students and on average only two adults per school responsible for implementing the language programme was ineffective. Instead, a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning through which teachers could reflect on their practice and share responsibility for the teaching of foreign-speaking students could have beneficial effects to these students’ inclusion.

**Lack of non-native teachers**

Another factor which appeared to compromise the inclusion of foreign-speaking students was the absence of non-native teachers. Out of the three schools studied, Archimedes Gymnasium was the only one which employed a non-native teacher. Mrs Luta was a
technology teacher who came from Russia but had been residing in Cyprus for thirty years. She thought that it had been relatively easy for teachers with an excellent knowledge of the Greek language to become employed within Cypriot secondary education twenty years ago, but it was currently becoming increasingly difficult for non-native teachers to qualify for teaching positions.

It was interesting to observe that Mrs Luta was the only teacher who was keen to suggest that the absence of non-native teachers was potentially compromising students’ inclusion. According to her, greater diversity amongst teaching staff could promote an ethos of respect for diversity that could transcend into the student population as well. As the following excerpt shows, it was assumed that having teachers from diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds could allow teachers to personally relate to the life experiences of their students:

“I hope that in the future more foreign students will be graduating and going to university and being eligible to apply for these positions…it is very positive for them to see foreign teachers as role models and know they have the also can do this…”

- Mr Luta, Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

It was therefore suggested that the presence of non-native members of staff could motivate students to study harder and strive to learn the Greek language, to countermeasure stereotypes that non-native people are “destined to assume the lowest paid positions in Cyprus”.

**Inappropriate curriculum**

Amongst the barriers to inclusion was the perceived inappropriateness of school curricula. The general consensus in all schools was that not all subjects of the curriculum were appropriate or relevant to use with diverse groups of students. For example, a lesson that used to be offered in schools as a medium to strengthen students’ national and religious identities (Greek-Orthodox Christian) (Koutselini, 1997), was that of Religious Education. In the context of increasing student diversity, with newly-arrived students representing a variety of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, the lesson of Religious Education as a mandatory subject was extremely controversial.

Amongst the practical issues that had to be addressed were therefore: the custom to say a morning prayer; whether non-Christian students would have to accompany their classmates to observe mass during religious or ethnic holidays; and whether non-Christian students
would have to be present during religious education lessons, or in case they were exempt, what other activities would the school provide instead of Religious education lessons. The excerpt below indicates the strategies employed to addresses these practical challenges:

“...foreign-speaking students have to be present in class irrespective of what their religion is. Otherwise you need to introduce other activities for them...due to lack of resources this cannot be done. Anyway, you can’t let them run around the school at unsupervised...In classes with many foreign-speaking students the students don’t have to say a prayer or go into church. They can stay in the church yard with their friends where teachers can supervise them during mass time…”

- Ms Eleni, Deputy Head; Socrates Gymnasium

Religious Education sparked interesting discussions across all the schools regarding freedom of religious expression. The most intense discussion took place at Aristotle Gymnasium, which catered for a large population of Muslim students. Teachers described that during the previous academic year Muslim students were allowed to withdraw from this lesson and join Miss Aysha’s (Translator) class to learn Arabic or practice their religion. However, a change in policy required that all students attend Religious Education lessons to reduce truancy incidents as described below:

“Since most foreign students aren’t Christian, last year the Ministry decided that they weren’t obliged to attend Religious Ed. lessons. Being exempt from class they roamed the yard unsupervised raising concern over safety. Sometimes alternate activities were organised, like having their own religious lessons with the school translator...this year students stay in class but aren’t forced to participate.”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

The policy change had been perceived by Muslim students as discriminatory, since it prohibited them from expressing their own religion. Moreover, students’ families perceived this as an attempt to assimilate their children into the Greek-Orthodox religion. As a result, some teachers questioned whether the agenda of the Cypriot educational system could respond to the emerging demands of increasingly multicultural classrooms, by foregoing the strategies aimed at promoting the ethnic and religious identity of the majority of the population. Teachers at Aristotle Gymnasium in particular, appeared to be sensitive to the fact that school curricula did not respect students’ national, linguistic and cultural identities. Many teachers criticised the practice to urge Muslim students to be present for Religious Education lessons at the expense of spending more time with the school’s Translator to practice their own religion. Despite stronger opinions relevant to Religious Education lessons, lessons such as Ancient Greek and History were also perceived to be irrelevant to the life experiences of almost all non-native students.
Lack of activities that promote respect for diversity

Similar to the need to have appropriate curricula that will be relevant to the daily lives of foreign-speaking students, teachers in all the schools identified that there were only limited opportunities for students to engage in school activities that promoted respect for diversity. Teachers viewed such activities as offering the potential for students to resolve issues of racism and prejudice by promoting enhanced interaction between all students and cultivating respect for ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. Taking this argument a step further, Miss Nefeli, the language support teacher at Aristotle Gymnasium, mentioned that respect for diversity could also entail allowing “foreign-speaking” students to develop their home language and customs, or practice their own religion.

It needs to be noted, though, that the opportunity to celebrate students’ national identities was an issue of concern primarily for teachers that had the most contact with foreign-speaking students, like the language support teachers and deputy head-teachers, but less so for regular class teachers. This observation directs attention to the effectiveness of a response towards increasing diversity in schools when most teachers had a limited role relevant to foreign-speaking students, with the exception of only a few individuals.

Having explored the school-related factors affecting the experiences of foreign-speaking through imposing barriers to their presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation at school, it is now time to take a more careful look into the context of classrooms. In so doing, I portray the factors compromising teaching and learning within regular classrooms and language support classrooms separately to identify unique pressures in each setting.

Barriers within regular classrooms

Having identified potential barriers within schools on a larger scale, I believe it is even more important to explore what actually happens within classrooms. This analysis revealed that multiple factors affect students’ teaching and learning, as well as socialisation at school; some of which were prominent within regular classrooms, and some appearing as specific to language support classes. Figure 9.2 presents a concept map that outlines the identified barriers associated with classrooms and is used to provide visual reference and clarification to the remaining text in this chapter. The increased complexity in the web of factors outlined in this concept map indicates the greater amount of data obtained relevant to the topic of classroom practice, as well as the deeper level of analysis derived.
In brief, this concept map shows how the government’s initial response to increasing diversity focused on addressing students’ language difficulties through introducing the language support programme, as well as assigning an “auditor” status to foreign-speaking students to exempt them from in-class participation and assessment until they could learn Greek. It outlines how the interaction between classroom environment and policy ambiguities, have produced a context within which day to day teaching and learning have
become progressively more challenging. When seen in this light, “auditing” lessons bore direct disadvantages to the level of presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation in class for foreign-speaking students.

Indirect disadvantages included an increased prevalence of misbehaviour and truancy, which affected teaching and consequently learning for all students. As a result, a context of unequal opportunities to education seemed to emerge; yielding criticism towards a system that appeared to be “cheating” foreign-speaking students of opportunities otherwise offered to native students, and which was even cited by a teacher as creating a “cheap labour force”. The following sections elaborate on these barriers, with the exploration beginning by reviewing the factors cited by regular teachers as compromising teaching practice.

**Students’ language difficulties**

This section addresses the topic of students’ language difficulties, since I considered this to be the most important obstacle to students’ inclusion. This inference is in agreement with students’ views of their school experiences as described in the case study chapters, as well as with teachers’ perceptions as explained next. For example, when evaluating their role in the light of increasing student diversity, a primary concern for teachers was their inability to accommodate foreign-speaking students’ needs due to language difficulties. Students’ lack of Greek language skills was therefore perceived by teachers as compromising teaching practice. Language difficulties were therefore cited as one of the primary barriers to students’ achievement and social inclusion:

“…Greek language is the primary issue affecting students’ achievement and participation in the things that happen across the school…Teaching them Greek means we provide opportunities for participation in schools activities…”
- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

“It is extremely difficult for students to integrate into regular classrooms…they are deprived in what they can gain from lessons when these are taught in a language they can’t understand. Not understanding decreases their interested in lessons…”
- Ms Vera, Deputy Head; Aristotle Gymnasium

Many teachers associated linguistic difficulties with students’ failure to participate meaningfully in lessons and decreased academic performance. The following examples suggest that language difficulties affected teaching practice negatively and were often perceived by teachers as associated to students’ loss of interest and lack of motivation to participate in lessons; students feeling bored and being unwilling to engage with teaching and learning in class; and with the rising incidents of misbehaviour and truancy recorded:
“…students’ lack of Greek skills affects my lessons negatively since students who cannot comprehend the lesson get easily distracted and misbehave; they disrupt the lesson and annoy other students, making teaching much more difficult…”

- Mrs Luta, Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

“…teaching becomes challenging because [regular class teachers] teach students who cannot understand them…behaviour is also worse in regular classrooms…”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“I have one group of students who always misbehave…they do not have a strong background in the English language…they always make too much noise because they cannot understand what I am teaching and cannot participate in the lesson…”

- Mrs Amelia, English teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

“…to be honest I don’t think they learn many things in regular classrooms because they do not have the level of Greek required, and since they cannot follow the lesson they misbehave…teachers often complain about that”

- Miss Georgia, Head Teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

In essence, the primary effect of students’ language difficulties on teaching practice involved the decreased communication between teachers and students, resulting in students’ decreased in-class participation. This was exacerbated when teachers introduced new material, especially if teaching required students to build on prior knowledge. An additional factor compromising teaching and learning was the inability of teachers to encourage associations between the new material they were teaching and what students had learned in their previous schools. The following excerpt, for instance, indicates one teacher’s concerns and exemplifies how he attempted to overcome this challenge:

“When presenting new material I rephrase myself to help them understand and make associations with things they already learned. Since what they learned was taught in their own language, even with strong background knowledge in a subject it is difficult to associate scientific terms taught in two different languages…”

- Mr Marinos, Physics teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Another issue of concern was the fact that teaching had to be modified to fit the needs of diverse classrooms, something which entailed teachers dedicating effort and personal time to identify suitable teaching material aimed at overcoming the students’ linguistic difficulties. Some teachers though observed that despite recognising the need to modify their practice relevant to catering to the needs of increasingly diverse classrooms, not many appeared willing to dedicate the extra time and effort required to achieve this.

Moving on, a more practical challenge posed by students’ difficulties with language use appeared to be specific to the context of Cyprus. According to many teachers, foreign-speaking students could not comprehend the “switch” between the use of the Cypriot
dialect\textsuperscript{11} and the Modern Greek language, for oral “day-to-day” communication and for oral and/or written communication for academic purposes respectively. As perceived by teachers, students often thought that their capability for communication with teachers or peers using the Cypriot dialect would enable them to succeed academically as well. This behaviour resulted in some students not exerting the necessary effort to acquire the linguistic skills that would enable them to participate in or be assessed in lessons; something which compromised their academic achievement. The following excerpt presents how students were often perceived as unwilling to learn the Modern Greek language in preference to using the Cypriot dialect at school:

“They think they know Greek because they can communicate with friends in the Cypriot dialect. This is not same as knowing Greek for academic purposes. I always try to explain this but they don’t listen...”

- Mrs Aysha, Translator; Aristotle Gymnasium

To exacerbate this effect it was observed, as the following examples indicate, that foreign-speaking students often preferred the use of their mother tongue at school instead of the Greek language. This affected socialisation patterns as seen below:

“I have two English students in my class who do not make the slightest effort to speak in Greek. They very well know that they can communicate using English in and out of school, without realising that this affects their academic performance...”

- Mr Yiannis, Mathematics teachers; Archimedes Gymnasium

“...there are three boys who all speak Arabic and we placed them in the same class to help each other. They ended up forming a ‘clique’ and continuously disrupt lessons by talking in Arabic between them...”

- Ms Evridiki, Head Teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Exploring the topic of language difficulties further, it appeared that language difficulties affected teaching practice in different lessons to varying degrees. More specifically, most teachers of core subjects considered language barriers as the biggest challenge to teaching practice, whereas teachers of secondary subjects appeared to cope better with students’ language difficulties. The difference in nature of these lessons was pertinent to the fact that core lessons were more linguistically demanding in terms of the processes of learning and academic assessment compared to secondary lessons. As the following example shows, lessons like art were not considered to be as linguistically demanding as for example the core lessons of mathematics, physics and languages. This was also true for lessons like music, technology and gym.

\textsuperscript{11} In Cyprus, academic work requires the use of the Modern Greek language instead of the Cypriot dialect which is used for everyday communication between Greek-Cypriots but is rarely used for written work.
In contrast, language difficulties presented a major challenge for teaching and learning within regular classrooms, as follows:

“[Foreign-speaking] students pose a real challenge to any teacher. First of all, their ability in Greek does not allow them to understand and participate in lessons. They usually lose interest; having nothing to do they misbehave and disrupt lessons…I spend more time disciplining them rather than teaching…the extra effort to teach and at the same time disciplining the class is extremely exhausting…”

- Mrs Magda, Modern Greek teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Due to language difficulties it was not surprising to identify that students appeared to be performing better in some lessons compared to others. Increased academic performance was perceived as dependent on increased level of enjoyment or personal relevance certain lessons held for students, or decreased linguistic demands during assessment. The former case corresponded usually to secondary lessons like gym, art, music, technology, and computers; whereas the latter case involved lessons like maths and physics in which students could often rely on their prior knowledge to solve specific exercises on tests, if these involved the use of equations rather than solving problems. Meanwhile, low attainment tended was linked to lessons that students found personally irrelevant, or which relied heavily language use for participation, learning and assessment, as seen below:

“These students find interesting lessons like gym, art, music that they can do well in; they like mathematics and physics, if these involve mainly equations.”

- Ms Vera, Deputy Head Teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“We have students who perform extraordinary in math or physics when using equations, but their performance suffers in other lessons because those rely on using language to explain the material. They have difficulties in my lesson, since they are expected to know scientific terminology and not Greek for everyday talk.”

- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

As the previous examples show, the adverse effects of students’ linguistic difficulties were not solely associated with teaching and learning, but extended also to the interplay between students’ language competency and the mode of assessment of different lessons. The following excerpt portrays how Ryan- a student from England who had lived in Cyprus for two years- explained his strategy when taking a maths test:

“[The teacher reprimanded Ryan for losing points by not answering problems on a test]. Ryan said that he could not comprehend what was being asked, and knew that unless he spent time trying to understand the problem he would most likely answer wrongly and lose marks. However, if he did spend time solving this problem he would most probably not have enough time to complete the test…In his words, he tried to solve all equations and then proceeded to solve problems in the remaining time. The extra time spent on comprehension of problems left him with no time to solve the final problem.”

Research diary: Archimedes Gymnasium: Observations in Mr Yiannis class
The previous example indicates the extent to which language difficulties affected foreign-speaking students’ academic performance. In agreement, Mrs Luta (Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium), offered an insightful account on foreign-speaking students’ potential for academic performance. In her view, academic success could be promoted if students attended primary schools in Cyprus, or resided in Cyprus long enough to gain the skills required to meet the demands of secondary education. Her suggestions were based on years of teaching experience and the fact that some of her highest achieving students were non-native; something which made her believe that those students could achieve as well as native students if they were competent in the Greek language. Nonetheless, she observed that high achieving students came primarily from what she called “families of favourable backgrounds” where students receive encouragement to study hard to achieve a better life. Academic achievement was thus seen as dependent on a favourable home environment.

Meanwhile, Mrs Luta indicated that it was important to note that the worst achieving students were foreign-speaking students as well, and explained that decreased achievement was an outcome of a linguistically demanding mode of assessment, that of a written test. Consequently, recently arrived students, unskilled in the Greek language, often failed to score high on tests solely due to tests requiring the use of the Greek language as the medium through which to indicate the acquiring of new knowledge.

The claims underlying Mrs Luta’s attempt to explain the perceived discrepancy in attainment levels between recently arrived non-native students; non-native students who received their primary education in Cyprus, and finally, native students; solidified teachers’ suggestions that language difficulties compromised students’ academic achievement. In an attempt to evaluate how language difficulties were perceived as implicated in foreign-speaking students’ decreased academic performance compared to native classmates, the example of a foreign-speaking boy whose academic performance suffered in all lessons except mathematics is presented below:

“…John had to attend Greek lessons when he came to school…a colleague told me that he does excellent in math with only a bit of help…However, I feel he is bound to fail in lessons that are more linguistically demanding since certain language skills are needed to achieve at least passing grades…he is cheated by the system. He would be a top student if taught in his own language since his prior knowledge in most subjects is excellent but he cannot do well here.”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head Teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

Reference to students being expected to fail academically or being “cheated” by an educational system which ensures that without a relative linguistic ability a student could
not perform well academically, implied that foreign-speaking students were provided with unequal opportunities for academic achievement compared to their native classmates. Moreover, I would argue that factors such as excellent prior knowledge in a subject become less significant if teaching and assessment techniques rely on language use.

Such information raises concerns on whether foreign-speaking students are at a disadvantage compared to native students on issues of accessing the curriculum and modes of academic assessment. Relevant discussions often led teachers back to an evaluation of the schools’ provision of language support to foreign-speaking students. Following the argument that teaching practice was compromised due to students’ language difficulties, the existing language support strategy was perceived as the first, but not sufficient, milestone to providing students with the linguistic means to participate in all aspects of their new school lives. This is explained below:

“You should have seen us last year…I have to say we did not know what we were doing with having so many students with different customs, languages, religions…This new programme is promising but is just the first step the government needs to take. There are many issues to consider for their inclusion in schools…”

- Ms Vera, Deputy Head; Aristotle Gymnasium

As a result, many teachers claimed that despite students’ participation in the language support programme, it was often the case that students did not acquire Greek language skills fast enough to cope with the increasing demands of curriculum subjects. Such claims, as the one presented below, deemed the language programme as insufficient in equipping students with the skills required to overcome language difficulties effectively:

“In general I am satisfied; many students improved their Greek and actively engage in learning. I want to believe that by the end of each academic year my students will have gained at least the valuable basic skills in the use of the Greek language. However, I am under the impression that the way the programme is run offers little substantial help to students’ achievement levels.”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Meanwhile, many teachers directed attention to the fact that students were not taught subject-specific terminology that was required for meaningful participation in different lessons. Teachers were concerned with the fact that language support appeared to be focused on teaching students the basic skills required for daily communication. Consequently, most teachers inferred that if the language programme did not teach subject-specific terminology, foreign-speaking students were offered unequal opportunities to the rest of their classmates for participation in lessons and academic achievement. In essence,
regular class teachers suggested that participation in the language programme was not sufficient to equip students with the language skills that would allow them to cope with the demands of the curriculum subjects taught within regular classrooms.

In summary, teachers’ accounts presented language difficulties as the primary barrier to be overcome in order to meaningfully include foreign-speaking students academically and socially in schools. Analysing the drawbacks emerging from students’ language difficulties, such as loss of interest and lack of motivation to participate and learn, and subsequent misbehaviour in class; portrays the extent to which teaching practice was compromised within increasingly diverse classes. Finally, discussions on the perceived unequal opportunities for academic achievement offered to foreign-speaking students allowed teachers to evaluate the main school strategy of language provision, as ineffective.

This evaluation raised questions with regards to the effectiveness of the strategy to engage students with learning the Greek language in ways that would prepare them to cope with the demands of the secondary school curriculum. However, the strategy for language provision was introduced in parallel with another strategy of assigning an “auditor” status to foreign-speaking students. The next section explores the effect of assigning an auditor status to foreign-speaking students on their school inclusion.

**Students as auditors**

Alongside language provision, the strategy of considering foreign-speaking students as auditors within regular classrooms was adopted as a measure to allowing students sufficient time to overcome their language difficulties. This strategy allowed students to receive segregated language provision until they acquired Greek language skills to an appropriate level for regular classroom participation, prior to recognising them as “regular students” and assessing them in academic subjects similarly to their classmates. Nonetheless, most teachers guided discussions by explaining how challenging teaching and learning had become within regular and language support classes as a result and to which key areas of the processes of teaching and learning were compromised as a result.

Firstly, due to language difficulties auditors were exempt from participation or assessment in lessons, offering them limited opportunities for meaningful in-class participation or academic achievement. However, the absence of test results meant that regular class teachers had no reference of students’ achievement relevant to curriculum subjects, or
whether students’ overall academic performance should allow their progression to the next academic level in the following year. Teachers were then faced with the dilemma of requesting that foreign-speaking students repeat an academic year on grounds of insufficient academic progress, contrary to the general practice of allowing students to propagate to the next academic level in reflection of poor achievement possibly being an outcome of students’ inability to access the curriculum due to language difficulties.

To overcome this dilemma it became unsaid practice to assign passing grades to foreign-speaking students and offer them the opportunity to progress through secondary education along with their age group, in antithesis to the accepted practice of allowing students to progress through education stages only on proof of sufficient academic achievement. This essentially instigated teachers’ displeasure and questioning of “what the role of teachers” is when faced with such moral dilemmas, as the following excerpt indicates:

“…there are many complaints from colleagues associated with gaps in policy that allow students to audit classes. Teachers are concerned about having no way to assess students’ abilities on various subjects... How do you assign grades to students who have not taken a single test and have learned nothing throughout the semester? …usually we assign passing grades within school records that will allow them to progress along with the rest of their age group…”
- Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

Moving on, a second parameter compromising teaching and learning was the fact that allowing students to merely audit classes was perceived as de-motivating students from meaningfully engaging with the processes of teaching and learning at school. This observation stemmed from teachers’ acknowledgement that students became aware that failure to participate, take tests, or behave appropriately in class, would have no severe academic repercussion. The following excerpts exemplify how teachers’ perceptions on students’ de-motivation to learn paired with decreased in-class participation was conceived as instigating the increasing recorded incidents of misbehaviour in schools:

“…there is the issue of class discipline. If you have students who know they have nothing to fear if they misbehave because they will not suffer academically, they are bound to misbehave and disturb lessons.”
- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

“The new policy established students as auditors with negative consequences... they don't have the skills required to participate in lessons and they lack the incentive for learning since they are not assessed...they get bored, they misbehave, they disrupt teaching and annoy the students that genuinely want to learn.”
- Mr Marinos, Physics teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium
Teachers also claimed that policy inconsistencies and the lack of clear guidance from the Ministry relevant to the “students as auditors” strategy impeded teaching. To begin with, the auditor term was used for students attending the language programme who did not have the linguistic abilities to participate in regular lessons, with students expected to audit classes until they developed the skills required to achieve academically. Essentially this assigned an ambiguous role to foreign-speaking students within regular classes.

Many teachers commented on the challenge posed to teaching due to policy discrepancies and the lack of guidance when implementing this strategy. According to teachers, when students realised that the auditor status allowed their exemption from in-class participation and assessment, many opted not to relinquish their auditor status at the end of an academic year. The fact that some students audited classes for more than one year raised questions over students remaining auditors throughout secondary education. Additionally, the lack of academic repercussions for failure to participate in lessons frequently led to misbehaviour; something that was considered to show lack of respect towards teachers and affected teaching and learning for other students. Many teachers claimed that auditing gave students leverage to identify ways to exploit the educational system, as indicated below:

“The biggest challenge is that policy ensures that we treat them leniently by allowing them to audit class and not assessing them….they don’t make the effort to learn... This affects my teaching when I am asked to give passing marks so that students even though their abilities would not reflect that”

- Mrs Amelia, English teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“As long as students audit classes they learn that there is no academic consequence as long as they maintain that status…”

- Ms Georgia, Head teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

A major concern for teachers was that being too lenient on foreign-speaking students and permitting them to decide whether to maintain or relinquish their auditor status, prevented students from aspiring to achieve to the best of their potential. Stemming from that realization, teachers considered this strategy as detrimental to students’ future academic or professional opportunities, as explained with the following excerpts:

“There are many gaps in policy...students can escape with being auditors throughout secondary education. We don’t help them by doing them favours...these students will only get a piece of paper saying audited classes out of six years school experience. How is this going to help them when they trying to go to university or get a job?”

- Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

“Students auditing lessons often progress to the next academic level without learning the principles involved in subjects at a lower level, creating gaps in knowledge…”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium
At the same time, it became apparent that even teachers exploited policy discrepancies with regards to auditing students. For example, categorizing students as auditors served in making a prominent distinction between “auditors” and “regular students”. This allowed some teachers to focus on regular students, often diffusing responsibility for teaching the foreign-speaking students in class. For example, it was a frequent phenomenon that no material corresponding to foreign-speaking students’ linguistic ability was provided. As a result, students were prevented from class participation since they could not access the curriculum. Therefore, some teachers’ inability, or reluctance, to involve auditing students in their teaching also resulted in students being disengaged from learning, and consequently, to misbehave and disrupt lessons. This is evident in the excerpts below:

“…as you have seen, auditors are rarely in class. I am not too preoccupied with them, since they are uninterested to participate in my lesson; they are often absent and have gaps in knowledge; when present they talk to each other and disrupt the lesson, so I focus my attention on other students who want to learn.”
- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“…imagine their psychological state when they know they will go into a class where they will understand nothing. And because the teacher cannot communicate with them they are often neglected or unintentionally ignored by the teacher who has a responsibility to teach the rest of the 20 or 25 students in class.”
- Mr Angelos, Technology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Therefore, the debate on policy discrepancies relevant to auditing students directed attention to the adverse effects of this strategy on teaching and learning, and promoted the prediction that most foreign-speaking students would remain auditors throughout their secondary education due to language difficulties.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, when reviewing teachers’ thoughts on auditing, it became clear that teachers of both regular and language support classes were concerned about the policy’s potential to establish unequal opportunities to education for non-native compared to native students. Auditing classes was perceived as limiting students’ future education or employment opportunities and equipping them with qualifications that would allow them to assume only the lowest paid jobs in Cyprus, as described next:

“…not participating in core lessons offers students the opportunity to argue that they have not acquired the knowledge necessary for them to be tested in equal terms to other students…”
- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

“One of my students wants to become a doctor. She started her third year as a regular student, but her language abilities will limit her opportunities to achieve the grades required to enter medical school.”
- Mr Marinos, Physics teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium
“Education creates stratification in the Cypriot society that will reveal itself in subsequent generations of immigrant families….we try to give native students the best possible education but on the contrary we classify foreigners as auditors, limiting their opportunities to get school leaving certificates. They will most probably attend technical schools\textsuperscript{12}…we are preparing tomorrow’s labour force that will occupy the lowest paid jobs, since they will be unqualified for anything else.”

- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

In summary, then, the creation of a new type of student in the face of student auditors had practical implications resulting in decreased participation and engagement of students in the learning process; increased instances misbehaviour, truancy, and absenteeism; an ambiguous role for auditing students within regular classes, which pronounced student differences to the rest of their classmates and on occasion allowed regular class teachers to avoid any responsibility for teaching them; students exploiting policy discrepancies and maintaining their auditor status beyond the expected timeframe, something that could prevent the receipt of a school leaving certificate, thus establishing different academic and employment opportunities for auditing students compared to other students. Most interesting, reference to the “stratification of the Cypriot society” as an outcome of strategies adopted in response to increasing diversity within educational institutions calls attention to the long-term effectiveness of the adopted national policy, its implication for school and classroom practice, and the underlying effect on the inclusion of non-native individuals within the wider Cypriot society. On that note, the prevalence of increased misbehaviour within classrooms will be explored in the following section.

Misbehaviour

Teachers in all schools suggested that amongst the primary challenges of teaching within multicultural classrooms, were the rising incidents of misbehaviour. Misbehaviour, especially within regular classrooms, was perceived as stemming from students’ language difficulties and auditing status that prevented students from meaningfully engaging or participating in lessons as previously discussed. Talking between foreign-speaking students was the most frequently recorded form of misbehaviour, which disrupted teaching practice and learning for other students in class. This behaviour was thought to be enhanced in instances where students belonging to the same ethnic background formed closely-knit groups, or “cliques”, in class. In these cases students chose to sit together, and disrupted lessons through continuous talking.

\textsuperscript{12} Technical schools provide students with technical and vocational training in theoretical or practical specialties (i.e. plumping, building, electricians, and car mechanics); and absorb approximately 15\% of the secondary school student population between the ages of 16-18 (CyprusNet, 2010).
Teachers frequently tried to resolve incidents of misbehaviour within their classroom through verbal warnings towards the misbehaving students. However, verbal warnings were often not sufficient to discipline students, and teachers often send students to the deputy head-teacher’s office, since they were considered responsible for disciplining the students; with formal complaints referred to the school head-teacher. If the incident was serious, as in cases of students not wearing their uniform or when displaying aggressive behaviour, the students’ parents were called to school to discuss disciplinary issues.

In Aristotle Gymnasium misbehaviour extended beyond the context of class with reference to some foreign-speaking students stealing from other classmates or even teachers. Having been at the school on a day where a student from Palestine was suspected to have taken something out of a teacher’s bag in the staffroom, I was evident that this occurred frequently at the school. During the incident, I was surprised by the readiness of the teachers who happened to be outside the staffroom to suspect the student, as indicated in the following record from my research diary:

“...while walking towards the staffroom I saw teachers screaming at two foreign-speaking boys. The lady that keeps the teachers’ canteen was also in the corridor shouting ‘I saw him coming out of the staffroom just now when no one was there’. I was later informed that the two boys were suspected to have sneaked into the staffroom and the canteen lady found them taking things out of a teacher’s bag.”

(Research Diary: Aristotle Gymnasium- Notes on “stealing” incident)

Justifications for the rising disciplinary incidents varied, with one teacher even suggesting that such behaviour has “roots within the wider culture of our society”. When misbehaviour was discussed at Aristotle Gymnasium, the school translator enlightened the discussion by clarifying that not all foreign-speaking students were responsible for the reputation they had as a group. However, the high prevalence of disciplinary incidents linked to foreign-speaking students not only affected teaching practice but gave rise to a general “feeling of discontent” from teachers and their classmates, exacerbating any negative perceptions towards foreign-speaking students.

Another form of misbehaviour seen in instances of truancy and absenteeism from class will be discussed in the following section, since despite taking place outside classrooms it was also thought to affect teaching and learning. Disrupting lessons in this way was therefore perceived as affecting teaching practice, as well as the process of learning for other classmates. This led to dissatisfaction of other students in class, who often complained of the presence of foreign-speaking students within regular class settings.
**Truancy and Absenteeism**

Closely linked to issues of discipline and misbehaviour were incidents of truancy and absenteeism. Truancy incidents were observed in all schools and were frequently associated with policy discrepancies spanning the strategies used with foreign-speaking students. More precisely, with schools not being explicitly guided on what lessons students could be withdrawn from for language support lessons, conflicts in students’ academic schedules were created. Exploiting this conflict, students often remained in the yard with their friends and attended neither language support nor regular lessons, as seen in the following example from a record in my research diary:

“The headmistress spotted a group of foreign-speaking boys that were out of class and asked them which class they were supposed to be in. The boys could barely speak Greek to communicate with her…according to her it was possible that the students did not know where they were supposed to be since the school program had changed; students also exploited the fact that they had to withdraw from regular classes to attend Greek support lessons and often stayed in the yard. Even after the head teacher reprimanded them, the students did not go to their class.”

*(Research Diary: Aristotle Gymnasium- Notes on “truancy” incident)*

The increasing incidents of truancy in parallel with the frequent withdrawal of students from class to attend language support meant that teachers had to cope with increasing prevalence of student absenteeism. Following such claims, many teachers felt unable to teach foreign-speaking students who were often absent from lessons. Absenteeism resulted in students being deprived from participation in lessons, thus lagged behind other classmates who were present during teaching.

Teaching practice therefore became more challenging when teachers were faced with the dilemma of having to continue teaching the prescribed curriculum, while stalling teaching to allow students who were frequently absent to catch up. Accordingly, all teachers recognised the need to dedicate additional time to prepare lessons if these were intended to cater to the needs of foreign-speaking students. Thus, teachers identified as a negative outcome of the general response to increasing student diversity the increased challenge posed on their practice and the resulting necessity to re-evaluate and modify the routine of their teaching practice. The following section offers an account of regular class teachers’ evaluation on the increased challenge posed when teaching increasingly diverse classrooms.
In light of the previous analysis, it has to be noted that teachers’ claims that “teaching practice has become more challenging” were unanimous. Despite this, many teachers appeared unwilling to modify their teaching practice in ways that would reflect the new realities of their classrooms. Relevant to the increased challenge presented when teaching diverse classrooms, most teachers appeared to prefer to address the needs of the majority of students in class to allow for the natural progression of lessons, and avoid the responsibility of the education of foreign-speaking students.

The head-teacher of Aristotle Gymnasium categorised teachers’ unwillingness to modify their teaching practice to accommodate the needs of a more diverse student population as a barrier towards inclusion. He also suggested, as indicated below, that this behaviour stemmed from the “absence of a school culture where teachers assume personal responsibility” beyond their prescribed daily activities:

“I believe that teachers are unwilling to modify their practice…there is no culture that promotes personal initiatives from individual teachers. Often teachers will do what is absolutely necessary and nothing beyond their daily duties…”

-Ms Evridiki, Head Teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Taking this discussion forward, the deputy head-teacher at Socrates Gymnasium mentioned that the increased demands placed on staff involved in the language support programme could have been vastly decreased, if other teachers helped with this time consuming activity. Confirming that no teacher would willingly contribute their time, she associated such behaviour to the “failure to cultivate a collaborative ethos between teachers”. She also attributed the lack of personal responsibility for foreign-speaking students felt by many regular class teachers to their decreased contact with the students who were often withdrawn from regular classrooms to attend support lessons.

In turn, teachers directed attention to how policy discrepancies made teaching within diverse classrooms more challenging. For example, some teachers claimed that despite policies urging the equal allocation of foreign-speaking students across classes, students were often grouped in fewer classes to facilitate their withdrawal for language support. Teaching classes with high numbers of foreign-speaking students increased teachers’ workload, giving rise to a general sense of staff dissatisfaction when it came to teaching increasingly diverse classrooms, and a preference to teaching classes that were less.
Many teachers justified their behaviour by suggesting that if their attention was deflected from the majority of students in favour of foreign-speaking students, this would be at the expense of the remaining students who would be provided with lower quality of teaching:

“…you feel you need to focus on [foreign-speaking student] but at the same time you have to worry about the rest of the students in the class too… foreign-speaking students disrupt the lesson and annoy other students…”

- Ms Luta, Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

“…as you have seen, auditors are rarely in class…I have other students who are regular students; I focus my attention on them since they are motivated and show a strong will to succeed academically.”

- Mr Agesilaos, Biology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

In conclusion, the previous sections reviewed regular class teachers’ perceptions on the barriers to students’ presence, participation, achievement, and socialisation. The analysis offered an account of the challenge imposed on the process of teaching and learning in relevance to students’ language difficulties; students’ auditor status; and the incidents of misbehaviour, truancy and absenteeism. However, to present a complete picture of school life for foreign-speaking students, the following section will explore barriers to their inclusion identified from yet a different vantage point; that of language support classes.

**Barriers within language support classes**

Moving beyond the context of regular classrooms, barriers compromising the inclusion of foreign-speaking students have also been identified in association with the context of language support classes at the three schools studied. Since language provision was the schools’ main strategy to cope with increasing student diversity, these barriers are outlined in more detail below. Despite the noticeable repetition in some of the sections that follow, addressing potential barriers associated with language support separate to those of regular classes, aims to offer a different vantage point towards the discussion on barriers to inclusion; meanwhile identifying whether there are similar or distinct pressures in response to increasing student diversity within regular compared to language support classrooms. Figure 9.2 can be used as a visual reference to the next sections in this chapter.

**Language barriers**

As with regular classrooms, all language support teachers coined language barriers as affecting their teaching practice. Teaching was primarily compromised by the fact that
language teachers felt that they had limited ability of communication with their students. This for example, led to fewer opportunities to enhance their teaching through helping students draw on their previous academic experiences. On that note, I present below Miss Marilia’s account on the differences in teaching diverse classrooms compared to teaching more homogenous classrooms, and the implications for her professional role:

“IT is easier to teach classes where students’ mother tongue is Greek. You don’t need to worry that students cannot comprehend you… in cases you have foreign-speaking students, you need to find ways to integrate them in lessons, like teaching at a slower pace. In a class without foreign-speaking students I wouldn’t have to change my teaching style, like repeating and explaining the same thing in various ways as with students that cannot speak Greek when I have to use simpler language, give more examples…. shifting your focus to students with language difficulties means that the teaching level for other students drops…”

- Miss Marilia; Socrates Gymnasium

Therefore, language barriers were amongst the most frequently cited factors perceived as affecting students’ academic and social lives even within language support classes. Miss Nefeli (Aristotle Gymnasium) claimed that she felt that she did not have a “common ground” with her students in terms of linguistic, ethnic and cultural background. She therefore tried to employ forms of teaching that would benefit all students irrespective of diversity within the group. For example, she gave two big tests throughout the year and many smaller tests to assess students’ oral and writing skill, ensuring that tests included both easy and hard exercises. In her opinion, this minimized students’ disappointment when they managed to solve the easier exercises and score at least moderate grades. Not intending to provide students with false beliefs of their language skills, she used harder exercises that not all students could solve to motivate them to study more for future tests.

She also claimed that language difficulties prevented students from making connections to previous knowledge. Not having “building blocks” on which to base her teaching made the learning process for students more difficult. To overcome this challenge, she dismissed teaching solely from text books as ineffective, unless paired with visual educational approaches. For example, she often used the school’s media room for power point presentations that included vast amounts of images; and concluded that students were more likely to build upon previous knowledge and learn new things when shown images, as when teaching new vocabulary:

“Using pictures helps students associate what I teach with what they already know. They can associate meanings to pictures easier to understanding abstract ideas. For example, they learned the names of fruits faster when shown pictures of fruit.”

- Miss Nefeli; Aristotle Gymnasium
In conclusion, attempts to teach “Greek as a second language” to students who presented such linguistic and cultural diversity, offered no “common ground” for teaching and learning. It has to be noted that, language support teachers appeared more willing and flexible modify their teaching styles by introducing new material to suit students’ needs, compared to regular class teachers. Overcoming challenges to teaching and learning appeared difficult, but seemed to improve over time and through teacher’s enhanced interaction with students. It was therefore suggested that providing Greek language support teachers with a permanent rather than a temporary post could effectively serve as a valuable resource for schools, through allowing the necessary time for constructive teaching and learning relationships to develop.

**Misbehaviour, Truancy and Absenteeism**

Another challenge, perceived as linked to students’ language difficulties, which had to be overcome in terms of foreign-speaking students, was that of misbehaviour. In a similar manner to regular classroom practice, students were often caught misbehaving and disrupting lessons, which directly affected teaching and learning for the rest of the students (Figure 9.2). Misbehaviour was perceived as closely linked to language difficulties, as was the case for regular classes. If students did not understand what was taught, they failed to participate in lessons, and not being engaged in the learning process, they tended to talk amongst themselves. This phenomenon was assumed as more prominent in classes where students from the same ethnic background were grouped together, since they tended to speak in their home language. In the case that misbehaviour could not be controlled within the class language teachers sent the misbehaving students to the deputy head’s office.

At Archimedes Gymnasium misbehaviour was perceived as the second most important factor compromising teaching following language difficulties. According to Miss Hermione, it required time to “break students’ bad habits” by targeting basic issues like teaching students to respect teachers and classmates; to bring their books and handouts to class; and overcoming issues of absenteeism, truancy, and decreased student participation in lessons due to the withdrawal of students to attend core lessons. She confirmed that grouping students from the same background together led to ‘clique’ formation and increased misbehaviour. In addition she suggested that misbehaviour was more prominent in classes including the most recently-arrived students. Teaching students to respect each other irrespective of background had therefore been a challenging task.
Absenteeism and truancy, as was the case for regular classes, were also amongst the factors which compromised teaching. For example, many students were frequently absent from school without significant reason. Even when they attended school, students were often withdrawn from language support to attend other support programmes or core lessons. Teachers also suggest that some students exploited conflicts in their schedules created when they were supposed to attend either language or regular lessons at specific times, and remained in the school yard missing lessons altogether.

In practical terms, teachers were often faced with the dilemma of conducting lessons only with students that were present in class; something that entailed that the students absent would not benefit from participating in the lesson. To ensure that the absentees would not lag behind their classmates, additional material was often provided to the remaining students on things already taught. However, the progress of students who attended class was stalled; while teachers risked not covering the syllabus required for students to successfully complete the language diagnostics test at the end of the year. Any factor compromising teaching within language support classes had detrimental effects on students’ academic progress, since performance in this test determined whether students would forfeit their auditor status and become regular students. Evidently, misbehaviour, truancy and absenteeism acted as barriers to the processes of teaching and learning within language support lessons, confirming the findings from regular classes.

**Teaching practice becomes more challenging**

As seen in the previous sections, teaching diverse groups of students posed added challenges for teachers. One barrier identified as affecting teaching practice within language support classes rested with how time consuming teaching had become. All teachers discussed their involvement in the language programme in terms of the need to dedicate much personal time and effort to overcome the lack of appropriate resources:

“…beyond the book that the Ministry sent there was nothing. It would be more helpful to use pictures, technology and other teaching media to improve lessons….but I need to search for extra material and other resources on my own. It’s something based on whether I am willing to dedicate time to search for extra material and innovative ways of teaching ‘foreign speaking’ students.”

- Miss Marilia; Socrates Gymnasium

For example, to overcome the challenge of books being sent late to schools, Miss Nefeli (Aristotle Gymnasium) made copies from her own copy of the book, or searched the internet for extra material; spending a lot of personal time to prepare the day’s syllabus.
Nonetheless, she suggested that there had been a great improvement compared to the previous academic year when the books arrived after Christmas. However, Miss Nefeli expressed that relying solely on her own judgment about the material chosen made her anxious of not covering the required syllabus at the end of the academic year. Similarly, having evaluated most available material as inappropriate to address her students’ ethnic, cultural or religious diversity, Miss Hermione (Archimedes Gymnasium) directed attention to the failure of the proposed academic material and to searching for relevant material on the internet in her personal time. She also expressed concerns on her lack of training on multicultural issues.

In support of this claim, discussions with teachers revealed their struggles with insufficient in-service training and provision of resources that could otherwise enhance the teaching of Greek as a second language. In agreement, despite their time consuming role, language support teachers appeared more willing than regular class teachers to modify their teaching to suit the needs of their diverse classes. Most importantly, it seemed that due to their extensive involvement with the language programme, they had very limited time for contact with other colleagues or students, resulting in an isolated teaching post strictly directed towards foreign-speaking students.

Another barrier to teaching perceived as depicting a lack of importance towards the language programme, was the failure to allocate a fixed classroom for language lessons at Aristotle and Archimedes Gymnasium. In agreement, Mr Theodoros argued that allocating language classrooms proved time consuming as seen in the excerpt below:

“Language lessons were held in any available class last year until we started using the storage room as a class…dealing with these practical issues took time…”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

Miss Marilia (Socrates Gymnasium) and Miss Hermione (Archimedes Gymnasium) claimed that no arrangements had been made to provide classrooms for language support, despite this being the second year the programme was run. The downside was the loss of valuable teaching time while trying to find suitable classrooms. Meanwhile, these teachers assumed the “role of detectives” in trying to locate their students who did not know in advance which classroom to go to. The lack of a fixed classroom allowed room for truancy, with students often arriving late or missing lessons with the excuse that they did not know where the lesson was held. Consequently, these teachers believed that the lack of importance placed on language lessons allowed students not to hold these lessons to the same esteem as regular lessons.
The role of individual teachers in creating a suitable teaching environment for students shines through the case of Miss Hermione; who upon her placement demanded that a suitable classroom was assigned to language teaching. She considered the practice of walking around the school to find an available class for her lessons as counterproductive and unprofessional, and as encouraging truancy. Accordingly, she described the importance of taking personal initiative for achieving even basic tasks for the benefit of foreign-speaking students.

Moving beyond practical challenges to teaching and learning, the following sections will review barriers specific to the context of language provision within schools, which language support teachers had to overcome in order to efficiently address the needs of their students.

**Temporary employment & high turn-over rates of language support staff**

Having reviewed in the previous sections the practical factors compromising teaching practice for language classes, it would be invaluable to shed light into some of the predominantly hidden barrier to teaching within language support classrooms. For example, the attempt to identify barriers to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion revealed that a determining factor compromising teaching practice rested with the fact that language support teachers were employed as temporary and not as permanent member of staff. These teachers were highly critical of the Ministry’s decision to employ them on a temporary basis; suggesting that the temporary nature of their employment reflected a lack of importance placed on the language programme, despite its role as the primary school response to the inclusion of foreign-speaking students.

More precisely, Miss Marilia (Socrates Gymnasium) argued that if language teachers received permanent placements, the Ministry would have to take additional measures to ensure that teachers received adequate training to help them cope with the complexities of their position. Miss Nefeli (Aristotle Gymnasium) suggested that their temporary placements while awaiting permanent placement as Greek language teachers for regular classes was challenging, and compromised their professional role at school. For example, upon the introduction of the language programme during the previous academic year, Miss Nefeli was appointed as a language support teacher in two different schools in order to cover her working hours. Below she describes why this was challenging:
“Last year I co-taught with another teacher in two schools. It was a disaster. Teaching only in one school allows me to control my time better and students see me as their teacher. They approach me in the staffroom with issues to discuss and they know I am not rushing to teach elsewhere. With closer contact you develop different relationships with students in a more stable environment.”

- Miss Nefeli; Aristotle Gymnasium

Moreover, it was estimated that language support teachers would hold their position on average for one year before receiving permanent placement as Greek language teachers at another school. The high turn-over rates of language support teachers were also perceived as having detrimental effects on the academic and social inclusion of foreign-speaking students. Such claims emerged from arguments that these students would definitely benefit from education within a stable teaching environment. For example:

“…by the time students get to know me the year will end; next year another teacher will replace me since I hope to receive a permanent position…this discontinuity with different teachers each year doesn’t have positive effects for students…”

- Miss Marilia; Socrates Gymnasium

“If they had to leave their countries and families to come here; if one or both parents work long hours or in a different city and children don't see them often; if they are asylum-seekers and are here on a temporary basis…there is instability in their lives. School should provide stability. If their school lives are also transient then it is difficult to expect positive results either on an academic or a social level.”

- Miss Nefeli; Aristotle Gymnasium

“The downside to having new teachers each year is that as soon as students get used to them and possibly form stable relationships of trust and respect, that teacher is replaced. It would be better to have a permanent position, train the teachers on issues of multiculturalism and diversity, and in case a teacher is considered to be good and has positive results when working with these students, keep them in that position…”

- Miss Hermione; Archimedes Gymnasium

In agreement with suggestions for the need to create a stable educational environment for foreign-speaking students commencing with creating a permanent post for teachers of “Greek as an additional language”, the deputy head-teacher at Archimedes Gymnasium also raised concerns over the temporary employment of language teachers. He suggested that it would be a shame to replace teachers that have formed personal relationships with students and motivate them to learn, with new teachers who would have to dedicate additional time to become familiar with the students, as presented in the following excerpt:

“…this year’s teacher will be promoted to a regular teacher next year with a new temporary teacher replacing her…you can see that she bonded with students, gained their trust and managed to engage them in learning Greek… losing her to someone new would be a shame…since this programme might become a permanent programme in most schools across Cyprus, it would be essential that “good” language teachers are employed as part of our permanent staff.”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head Teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium
The following excerpts indicate how regular class teachers at Aristotle Gymnasium considered the fact that the two members of teaching staff working more closely with these students, namely the Greek language teachers and the translator were not offered permanent post as a big barrier towards the inclusion of foreign-speaking students:

“…We are talking about moments of brilliance when you identify people that care about foreign-speaking students. Despite being people who apparently work well with these students and managed to gain their trust they are temporarily employed, next year they will be replaced and students would need to adjust to a different teacher”

- Mr Angelos, Technology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

In conclusion, it was suggested that ensuring the permanent employment of teachers that worked closely with foreign-speaking students in schools would serve to create stable teaching environments. This would consequently entail a great resource if aimed at enhancing students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation in school.

Perceptions towards language support teachers

As suggested in the previous section, the temporary placement of language teachers was perceived as compromising their professional status, affecting their relationships with their colleagues. It was suggested that colleagues often perceived them as support staff and not as “proper” teachers. This essentially created ambiguity towards their professional role, with other teachers frequently criticising the effectiveness of the language programme and the competence of the respective teachers. The following account illuminates the complex reality of school life for language teachers:

“I noticed that some teachers are unaware of what I do with students or how the programme works…they criticise the programme…I have been asked “do you think this programme has something to offer to foreign-speaking students, because in my opinion it has nothing to offer”…I feel that they underestimate my professional role.”

- Miss Marilia, Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

In Miss Marilia’s opinion this behaviour was exacerbated by having two separate staffrooms, which prevented colleagues from interacting and “prohibited collaboration” amongst them. Failure to build collaborative relationships that could yield constructive criticism between staff, led to ignorance and the creation of prejudiced ideas about each other’s practice. Assuming isolated roles within Socrates Gymnasium, the staff considered foreign-speaking students to be “her job”, thus avoiding responsibility for the academic and social well-being of these students. As a result, no other teacher dedicated time to activities for foreign-speaking students.
Miss Hermione (Archimedes Gymnasium) also confirmed the negative perceptions of colleagues towards her, and suggested that being considered as support staff prevented her from demanding additional resources that could enhance her teaching practice. She often faced comments like “taking her job too seriously with respect to students who did not want to learn anything anyway”; or suggestions that she “demanded changes that even “proper” teachers working at the school for a long time hesitated to request”. Prejudiced comments against her position frequently meant that colleagues evaluated her work as “extremely easy” in comparison to their workload, based on the fact that she only had to cope with a maximum of eight students at a time. In this light, she expressed her extreme frustration about such attitudes, despite recognising that the comments may have been unintentionally made. In her view, such claims were based on ignorance and the failure to understand the challenges she faced. Nonetheless, the constant criticism of her teaching skills made her question whether this post accurately reflected her abilities as a language teacher, as expressed below:

“…they don’t know the challenges involved in teaching them. They should realise that I am doing them a service by withdrawing students from their lessons, because they struggle with these students in their class… I feel that students are damped on me to make teaching for other teachers easier.”

- Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

In Miss Hermione’s opinion, colleagues’ arguments emerged when they realised that she willingly dedicate time and effort to improve the education of foreign-speaking students, even though she knew that she would probably be offered a permanent position at another school in the following year. Her colleagues regarded the investment she made in both time and resources as futile, especially when she insisted on the need for amendments a position in which she was temporarily employed. The temporary nature of her employment ultimately affected how she was perceived by colleagues and prevented any constructive collaboration regarding foreign-speaking students. Moreover, it limited her potential to instigate necessary improvements for the language programme.

Considering language teachers as support teachers served to deny them any assistance towards their practice and failed to promote collaboration amongst colleagues in response to foreign-speaking students. Consequently, any response towards these students stemmed from the effort of very few individuals within each school, and became an engrained part of their daily routine; with most regular class teachers diffusing responsibility for the enactment of any strategy directed towards these students.
Conclusion

This chapter explored teachers’ vantage point of schools as organizations in the midst of responding to student diversity, and their perceptions of barriers to classroom practice. This corresponded to the section of the model of analysis for which most data was available. Looking first at schools as institutions that need to respond to increasing student diversity, it became evident to me that the primary challenges involved the effective enforcement of the relevant national policy. Referring back to the model selected for the presentation of barriers to students’ inclusion (Figure 5.1), the potential barriers associated to the dimension of national policy in my opinion included:

- The limited role that most teachers saw themselves as taking regarding the education and wellbeing of these students;
- The feeling that many teachers had relevant to having insufficient training on issues of multicultural education;
- Scant provision of resources that could otherwise enhance teaching within highly diverse classrooms;
- Absence of non-native teachers within Cypriot schools;
- The inappropriate or irrelevant curriculum;
- And finally, the failure to engage students throughout schools in activities aimed at promoting respect for diversity.

Following this, the identification of barriers became increasingly more focused to the classroom instead of the school level, serving to identify potential barriers that appeared to affect the processes of teaching and learning taking place. It should be noted that while comparing teaching practice within regular and language support settings revealed that all educational practitioners face added pressures as an aftermath to increasing student diversity. In this case, I believe that most barriers were similar within the two contexts, with the exception of some unique pressures identified relevant to language support classrooms. The foremost barrier to both regular and language support classes, involved students’ difficulties with the Greek language, the drawbacks of which have been extensively described in the previous chapter.

Interestingly enough, most barriers were associated with the way educational policy was implemented. This primarily involved the response to students’ linguistic difficulties through segregated language provision; and the policy categorising them as “auditors”
within regular classrooms. Policy ambiguities prevented schools from effectively implementing the national strategy, resulting in teachers and students interpreting the policy as they saw fit. The most easily identifiable effects of policy ambiguities involved the rising incidents of truancy, absenteeism, and misbehaviour; all of which made teaching more challenging.

However, I consider the more subtle barriers identified as the most important to address. For example, the failure to allocate classrooms for language support reflects a diminished commitment to producing an effective response to increasing student diversity. More importantly, the temporary employment of language teachers ensures high turn-over rates, preventing the creation of a stable teaching environment with teachers who dedicate time to these students, and appear to eventually develop relationships of respect with them. Also, the often prejudiced perceptions of other colleagues towards language teachers and their acknowledgement as members of the support staff and not as “proper” teachers, serves to deprive language teachers from opportunities to initiate a positive change that could enhance their teaching practice, thus promoting students’ inclusion.

On the same note, the recognition that the currently implemented policy might be creating unequal opportunities to learning, and by extension to future academic and employment opportunities between foreign-speaking and other students, is extremely alarming. Comments like “students being cheated” by the educational system that “prepares foreign-speaking students to become the future labour force of the Cypriot society”, add credibility to claims of unequal opportunities for non-native students; adding tremendous concerns for the educational ethos promoted within Cypriot schools. The critical analysis in this chapter has addressed in detail the underlying barriers towards the inclusion of foreign-speaking students emerging in relation to schools and classroom practices. Since these appeared to be closely associated with the government’s response to increasing student diversity within schools, the next chapter explores in detail the barriers to students’ inclusion that perceived as stemming from national policy.
Chapter 10 - National Policy

Introduction

Drawing from the analysis in the previous chapter, I detected that the identification of barriers to students’ inclusion was closely linked to the national policy framework through which the described school and classroom practices emerged. That being the case, this chapter explores the barriers perceived by teachers as affecting foreign-speaking students’ inclusion, that emerged from the government’s initial response to increasing student diversity. To achieve this, I evaluate policy relevant to the newly introduced language support programme employed as the primary response to increasing student diversity. The interaction between the various factors associated to policy barriers is presented in the following concept map (Figure 10.1).

![Concept map](image-url)

**Figure 10.1**: Concept map outlining the barriers affecting the schools experiences of foreign-speaking students stemming from discrepancies and ambiguities in relevant national policy.

According to my interpretation, and as presented in the following sections, it is the interaction between these factors that deemed the introduction of the language programme as ineffective in teachers’ eyes. Most importantly, the existing policy framework was
regarded as creating a context within which unequal opportunities to education were offered to foreign-speaking students, as explained in the next sections of this chapter.

**Barriers relevant to national policy**

The way in which the policy framework and respective strategies adopted by the government and implemented in schools as a response to rising student diversity, was interpreted by teachers as placing a strong “focus on students’ language difficulties”. This was evident in the fact that the pilot programme for segregated language support served as the schools' main strategy towards newly arrived foreign-speaking students. The focus on language was considered essential for equipping students with the necessary skills to cope with the demands of Cypriot schools. However, this was perceived by teachers as a narrow agenda offering few possibilities for divergence into other areas of students’ experiences, such as promoting students’ social inclusion and identifying ways to eliminate incidents of prejudice and racism within school populations. Interestingly enough, many teachers claimed that the “government’s lack of anticipation of the required educational change” was evident in the way relevant strategies had been introduced in schools. For example:

“It is not easy having so many ‘foreign’ students in our school. At first we did not know how to deal with them…we were unprepared to enrol so many students…”

-Ms Evridiki, Head Teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

The urgency with which the language programme was introduced allowed schools little time to develop concrete strategies on how to implement it. As a result, teachers across schools suggested that discrepancies and ambiguities in policy negatively affected the organisation, implementation and monitoring of this programme. Discrepancies in policy, as well as the lack of guidance from the Ministry of Education were viewed as generating lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities of schools and students within the language programme. Most teachers therefore considered policy inconsistencies as a major barrier towards formulating a successful response to the needs of foreign-speaking students.

The factors that appeared to inhibit the successful organisation of the programme were primarily linked to three policies promoted by the Ministry. The first of these policies suggested that foreign-speaking students should be allocated according to age groups in equal numbers across classrooms. This aimed to support their linguistic and cultural needs more effectively, as well as minimising the strain placed on teaching and learning within increasingly diverse classrooms. Nonetheless, the process of organising language support lessons in parallel to other lessons proved to be challenging, and often resulted in foreign-
speaking students being concentrated in fewer classes so that they could be withdrawn for
language lessons with fewer disturbances to other lessons. According to most teachers this
had adverse effects on their workload if they taught classes into which a larger number of
foreign-speaking students were aggregated.

The second policy required that students not be withdrawn from core lessons for language
support, because success in term tests and final exams in these lessons was a prerequisite
for students’ progression to a higher academic level. The general practice involved
withdrawing students only from secondary lessons (i.e. Music, Technology, Art), rather
than core lessons (i.e. Maths; Modern Greek). However, since students were grouped for
language support in terms of ability and not according to age, withdrawing them only from
secondary lessons for language support created timetable conflicts.

In addition, this resulted in complaints from students who frequently enjoyed secondary
lessons, compared to core lessons that were more linguistically demanding. Such
complaints indicated that foreign-speaking students were withdrawn from lessons that they
enjoyed and in which they achieved well, and this could potentially prevent them from
feeling adept for academic achievement. This policy therefore appeared to place a strong
emphasis on allowing students to participate in school subjects that were assessed and
aimed to provide students with a school leaving certificate; rather than a more personalized
approach to teaching that would pronounce students’ strengths and not their weaknesses. In
agreement with this, many teachers suggested a link between secondary lessons and the
ability of newly arrived foreign-speaking students to enjoy and achieve well in specific
lessons. For instance:

“They don’t want to miss out on the lessons they enjoy like gym and art because
those are the lessons they do well in…”

- Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

Despite students’ complaints, all schools found it challenging to withdraw students only
from secondary lessons due to timetable conflicts with the language support programme. A
problem arising from the production of conflicting academic schedules for foreign-
speaking students was that often students had to attend language support and regular
lessons simultaneously. The resulting production of conflicting academic schedules was
considered as an outcome of the lack of guidance from the Ministry or the Pedagogical
Institute on how to produce students’ academic schedules.
At Socrates Gymnasium, a formal complaint was made to the Ministry claiming that the school had been unable to identify teaching times for language support during which students could be withdrawn solely from secondary lessons. Surprisingly, the Ministry’s response involved grouping foreign-speaking students in each year group in fewer classes in order to facilitate the organisation of language lessons and overcome clashes in students’ academic schedules. Since this counteracted the policy of distributing students evenly across classes, the deputy head-teacher informed the Ministry that this would be ineffective for Socrates Gymnasium. In keeping with the deputy head-teacher’s argument, such an action could produce a series of negative consequences. For example, it could: promote the social isolation of foreign-speaking students if grouped together in specific classrooms; deflect teachers’ attention from other students in the class, thus lowering the quality of teaching within diverse classrooms; deter native students from wanting to attend such classes due to the anticipated lower quality of teaching and; and finally, deter teachers from wanting to teach in these increasingly challenging classes.

The challenge in teaching stemmed from the perceived linguistic difficulties and discipline issues relevant to foreign-speaking students. In addition, teachers’ workload would increase and teachers would need to modify their teaching practice to cater to the needs of diverse classrooms. However, teachers were regarded as unwilling to dedicate personal time and effort to prepare lesson beyond what would be expected within classrooms not catering to foreign-speaking students.

Moreover, the withdrawal of students from core subjects to minimise timetable conflicts was perceived as offering limited opportunities for academic achievement to these students through decreased participation and learning within regular classrooms. Since academic achievement in core lessons was a prerequisite for receiving a school leaving certificate, unequal opportunities to academic achievement were considered as limiting foreign-speaking students’ opportunities for future academic and professional advancement. Such a phenomenon has the potential to stratify Cypriot society by allowing native students to exploit opportunities for further education or professional development while withholding these opportunities from non-native students. Concerns about unequal opportunities to foreign-speaking students were raised by various teachers across schools, such as:

“…students that want to get good grades to have the opportunity to attend university or get a good job want to attend core lessons so as not to miss out on teaching…I believe that if they don’t have the opportunity to get good grades in class then they will not be able to do the things they want in the future…”

- Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium
“It is difficult for them (foreign-speaking students) to keep up with the rest of the class in core modules. They are usually absent from core lessons to participate in support programmes and miss teaching time…their level of Greek is below what is required to achieve well in test and cannot compete academically with the rest of the students…”

- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Recognising the possible drawbacks of withdrawing students from core lessons, the language support teacher at Socrates Gymnasium suggested that a closer evaluation is necessary of the lessons from which students are withdrawn from. For example, withdrawing students from core lessons like Modern Greek, where they could be further “exposed” to the Greek language, seems contradictory to the government’s agenda that focused on language provision. For example:

“…we expect them to improve their skills in Greek by having support lessons with me, but we end up withdrawing them from regular classes when they are supposed to be having a Greek lesson. It is very important for them to participate in the regular hours allocated for Greek lessons and be exposed to the Greek language…”

- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

According to most teachers, it was often the case that many students decided to attend core lessons instead of their language support lessons to ensure that they exploited opportunities for participation and learning in these classes. However, this limited students’ opportunities to learn the Greek language at the pace required to cope with the curriculum demands of regular classrooms. Such behaviour was regarded by one teacher as a “double-edged sword”:

“…irrespective of whether foreign-speaking students decide to attend core or language support lessons, it is at the expense of the alternative option, it is a “double-edge sword”…so for them it is a “lose-lose” situation…”

- Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

As a result, the policy with regards to lessons from which foreign-speaking students could be withdrawn seemed flawed. Most teachers claimed that withdrawing students only from secondary rather than core lessons was not ideal. With most students enjoying and feeling that they could perform well in these lessons, many teachers argued that participation in secondary lessons might be the determining factor towards students enjoying school and being motivated to learn. It was also suggested that students’ academic performance in core subjects was comparatively lower than their classmates due to language barriers.

The third policy to be discussed assumed that language support lessons should be organised according to students’ linguistic ability, (i.e. beginners, intermediate and advanced level), and not according to students’ age groups. This was the case for Socrates and Archimedes Gymnasium. Nonetheless, at Aristotle Gymnasium students were
allocated only to a ‘beginners’ and an ‘advanced’ level’ according to their achievement on a language diagnostics test. As a result, this school had one ‘beginners’ and two ‘advanced’ classes of language support. This inconsistency was attributed to unclear guidelines for policy implementation from the Ministry, with schools across Cyprus introducing the pilot programme to their discretion. This process is better explained by the following teacher:

“…the Ministry has informed us that we can allocate students to only two levels of Greek ability. The ‘beginners class’ and the ‘advanced class’. In other countries they have an ‘intermediate classes but we were asked to have only two levels…”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Despite barriers to organizing the programme, a different set of barriers was perceived as linked to its implementation. In the absence of a clear policy or guidelines the Linguistics department deputy head-teachers and the language support teachers were considered responsible for its effective implementation in each school respectively. Interestingly enough, the head-teachers did not assume responsibility for its implementation, whilst teachers of regular classes appeared unwilling to dedicate time to activities involving foreign-speaking students, by considering that these students were not their responsibility.

In the light of discrepancies and ambiguities linked to national policy, the direct implication of national policy on school practices was revealed. For example, the deputy head-teacher of Socrates Gymnasium identified high bureaucratic demands associated with the programme as a barrier towards enrolling more students for language support. In one case for example the Ministry requested the production of individual progress reports for each student participating in the programme. Some of the information requested was not readily available and required input from the parents or the students’ previous academic institutions. In effect, this resulted in the deputy head-teacher dedicating a lot of time trying to meet these bureaucratic demands:

“I feel entangled into a ‘bureaucratic labyrinth’…trying to produce something which I consider meaningless; instead I could dedicate time to deal with more pressing issues to implementing this programme more effectively…”

- Ms Eleni, Deputy Head, Socrates Gymnasium

To manage the time limitations imposed through the added bureaucratic demands of preparing individual student reports, it was decided that only the twenty one students with the lowest scores on the language diagnostics test would receive language support in the years 2009-2010. This prevented the enrolment of more students who would otherwise benefit from language lessons.
Finally, the last process that appeared to affect schools’ response to foreign-speaking students involved the monitoring of this response to foreign-speaking students by stakeholders outside the school. At the time that this study was conducted it was perceived that there was insufficient monitoring of the organisation, implementation, and outcomes of the programme. In support of this claim, Miss Marilia (Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium), mentioned that officials from the Pedagogical institute appeared more involved in monitoring the programme compared to Ministry officials. Nonetheless, she believed that having only one official visiting the school to conduct in-class observations was not sufficient to provide useful feedback on how she could enhance her teaching. She would, however, welcome a more practical approach to monitoring the programme, such as the exchange of ideas between teachers on how to cope with teaching multicultural classrooms. The closer involvement of officials from the Pedagogical Institute was confirmed by Miss Nefeli (Language support teacher, Aristotle Gymnasium), who mentioned that one consultant from the Institute visited the school to observe her lessons and listen to her input concerning her position.

According to her this was a great improvement from the collaboration with Ministry officials in the years 2008-2009 but still not sufficient for her to feel that there was a support network in place for her. Such evidence shone light on the “lack of effective collaboration and communication” with stakeholders from the two governing bodies actively involved in the design of schools’ responses to increasing student diversity. It was acknowledged that the school merely received notice of policy changes relevant to foreign-speaking students. Most changes involved the introduction of the pilot programme for language support. Nonetheless, it was a general consensus that no specific guidelines were provided to indicate how schools should deal with the practical challenges emerging when trying to enforce such changes. For instance:

“…the Ministry is keen on sending documentation of how things should be run…the urgency with which changes were introduced and the lack of clear guidelines on how to implement them, shows that is no awareness of the practical applications and the strain placed on school when forced to implement them…it is extremely difficult to translate theory provided into actual practice in schools”

- Deputy Head, Socrates Gymnasium

Taking the collective views of teachers from all schools into account allows the evaluation of the effectiveness of the schools’ response to these students, and more precisely the evaluation of the language support programme, which is presented below.
Evaluating the effectiveness of the language support programme

Overall, teachers appeared to be critical of the organisation, implementation and effectiveness of the language support programme. By directing attention to how organisational aspects of the programme, such as creating individual study programmes for students who have failed, they exemplified the creation of conflicting time-schedules for students and how this allowed for increased incidents of truancy. Teachers’ practice was subsequently compromised by simple facts such as teachers being unaware of how many foreign-speaking students would attend lessons, and if they had to prepare additional material for them, as the example below shows:

“…they have difficulties operating the programme in a smooth way, since the academic schedules of students clash when they attend the language lessons because they have to be taken out of core lessons, which end up disrupting the teaching practice of the rest of the teaching staff as well…you think whether you have to spend time preparing things for them to do in class or not…”

- Miss Alexia, Ancient Greek teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Despite considering the introduction of the language support programme as a “first step” towards catering to the needs of foreign-speaking students, it was therefore suggested that this was merely a milestone towards producing a more complete and coherent government strategy. It also became apparent that most teachers perceived the language programme as appropriate to provide students with basic Greek language skills, whereas it remained ineffective in providing them with the skills needed to cope with curriculum demands at an equal level to their classmates. It was therefore suggested, as is exemplified in the following excerpts, that the “integration policy” applied in schools might not be sufficient to meaningfully include foreign-speaking students in the daily school life:

“I think schools need to adopt a more effective integration policy (ένταξη: integration), since foreigners are not fully integrated into the school system. They don’t meaningfully merge within the wider student population”

- Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

“…The programme was flaws in its practical application, with ambiguous policy guiding its organisation, implementation, and monitoring…the high numbers of students opting to maintain their auditor status after a year of participation in the programme leads to doubts about the programmes’ effectiveness…”

- Ms Athena, Head Teacher, Archimedes Gymnasium

During a very insightful conversation, Miss Marilia, the Language support teacher at Socrates gymnasium, identified that teachers were unable to respond to the needs of these students on an individual basis:
“...we collectively respond to them as the group of students who differ from the majority of students in school. This is not done intentionally but in a more practical way which allows the school to deal with their academic needs more effectively...”

- Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

Mr Theodoros (Deputy head-teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium) offered an extensive account of his concerns regarding the practical application of the newly introduced language programme. For example, all tasks linked to organising and implementing the programme were assigned to a few stakeholders, namely the deputy head-teacher and language support teacher. Consequently, dedicating this much time to these tasks counteracted the deputy head-teacher’s other responsibilities at school. There also appeared to be no clear policy disseminated to schools regarding how to distribute non-native students evenly across classes, therefore minimising the strain placed on teaching and learning within multicultural settings. In practical terms, the lack of clear guidance from the Ministry compromised the school’s attempt to produce non-conflicting schedules to mediate the withdrawal of students from regular classrooms for language support. There was also lack of communication with government officials with regards to monitoring the effective implementation of the programme.

Furthermore, there was a lack of willingness from other members of staff to collaborate with the deputy head-teacher and Greek language support teacher to produce a coherent response to students’ needs. Regular class teachers were perceived as diffusing responsibility for teaching these students by considering this as not relevant to their professional role. Finally, some of the deputy head-teacher’s primary concerns rested with issues such as the lack of provision of resources directed at enhancing the teaching of foreign-speaking students; the temporary nature of employment of the Greek language support teacher that will be elaborated in a later chapter; and finally, the flaws in policy that had established foreign-speaking students as auditors at school.

**Conclusion**

The analysis presented in this chapter of the ways in which national policy influenced thinking and practice in schools has revealed how this led to some of the barriers experienced by students. By the end of my fieldwork, I recognised that the lack of anticipation of the necessary change within schools to reflect the increased immigration patterns of the last ten years, had led to the urgent introduction of the language programme. This created discrepancies, ambiguities and inconsistencies in the programmes organisation, implementation and monitoring. Additionally, initiatives were focused on
addressing students’ language difficulties through segregated language provision; thus being contrary to inclusive agendas where students are educated alongside their peers, and of narrow scope since they failed to address other aspects of students’ lives. In agreement, the overall strategy adopted was appraised by the majority of teachers as ineffective in providing students with the tools needed to face the demands of regular classroom participation to the extent that native students would.

Secondary to this, it was observed that extensive responsibility was placed with a small number of teachers in each school in terms of the organisation and implementation of the language programme; namely the deputy head-teacher of the Linguistics department, and the Greek language support teachers, instead of being widely shared between all teachers. I therefore conclude that the limited role assumed by the schools’ head teachers and regular class teachers reflected the implementation of a strategy that did not transcend the whole school. This raises questions with regards to the effectiveness of the leadership style employed in schools and the “power” that head teachers hold within a highly centralised education system to initiate change in their schools; as well as the lack of initiative to cultivate a collaborative ethos between members of staff, who appeared to be diffusing any responsibility to engage in activities that were not specifically prescribed to their job profile.

Having analysed barriers relevant to schools that seem to have risen from discrepancies and ambiguities in the interpretation of the national policy spanning the government’s response to increasing student diversity in schools; it is now time to turn to another section of the model of analysis, and as a result address some barriers that have been cited as associated with students, and their family and community environment.
Chapter 11 - Student, Home & Community factors

Introduction

To complete the picture of the factors that appear to be shaping foreign-speaking students’ school experiences, this chapter briefly explores the dynamics of students’ lives outside school. In this way, I throw light on the interplay between students as actors within the sphere of schools; and as individuals for whom factors submerged in their family and community lives need to be addressed. I argue that this is essential in order to comprehend how students can experience schools.

It should be noted that although I do not have explicit data relevant to the theme of students’ families and communities, teachers’ perceptions hinted as to the effect of factors lying beyond the school borders on students’ school experiences. This led me to conclude that it was necessary to consider this wider context in order to fully understand the barriers to students’ inclusion. The absence of substantial evidence from students’ home and community environment entails that the following analysis will be brief, but will nonetheless enlighten another dimension worthy to focus on in future research. The chapter will commence with looking at students as individual actors within schools.

Students as individuals

A different category of emerging barriers was identified by teachers as relevant to students as individuals. The way in which students appear to act in schools and the types of experiences they draw from to cope with their new academic environment has provided the means to evaluate barriers to their inclusion in a new light. The following sections will therefore outline the factors perceived as intrinsic to students as individuals and as affecting their school experiences. Even though these factors might at a first glance appear as disjointed, each factor was coined as compromising aspects of students’ inclusion at school. Figure 11.1 is a concept map outlining the relevant barriers to inclusion.
Figure 11.1: Concept map outlined the factors coined by teachers as particular to students as individuals that appear to compromise their inclusion at school.

Lacking the intrinsic motivation to learn

Discussions with teachers on barriers to students’ inclusion often directed attention to factors that appeared as innate to students as individuals. For example, some students were perceived as “lacking an intrinsic motivation to learn”, something which was thought to affect the effort teachers dedicated to meaningfully engaging students in learning. Not being immersed in the learning experience was seen as compromising students’ participation and as affecting their opportunities for academic achievement.

For example, the deputy head-teacher at Archimedes Gymnasium claimed that some students were “unwilling to dedicate the necessary effort to learn Greek”, thus limiting their potential for academic achievement. More precisely, students that had arrived from England tended to use English to communicate within or outside school and considered learning Greek as irrelevant to their social inclusion. Achieving social inclusion at school by using their home language which is widely used in Cyprus had no benefit for students’ participation and achievement at school, since this required good skills in the Greek language. Such behaviour gave rise to teachers’ claims regarding some students’ lack of motivation to learn. Some teachers even proceeded to justify why in their opinion specific
students appeared unmotivated to engage with teaching and learning, by suggesting that this behaviour could be linked to students’ high mobility rates, low aspirations for their future, and students’ auditor status.

Accordingly, a primary factor affecting teaching and learning was perceived to be that of the high mobility rates associated with foreign-speaking students. This seemed to affect schools located in different districts in varying ways. For instance, the temporary residency of economic migrant families in Paphos appeared to negatively affect the motivation of children from these families to invest time and effort into their education. High mobility rates also affected practical aspects of school life, such as the organisation of academic schedules and the introduction of students into classes according to ability and age. For example, introducing new students into language support classes after the beginning of the academic year entailed that the teacher needed to cover the same material again so that the new students could be included in the lesson, essentially stalling the learning process for other classmates.

“Students that didn’t start school at the beginning of the year fail to grasp what was already taught…slowing down to accommodate them means that the rhythm of learning has to be slowed down for other classmates.”
- Miss Hermione, Language support teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

Similarly but specific to the city of Larnaca and Archimedes Gymnasium, the temporary nature of families’ residency in Cyprus as asylum-seeking families appeared to demotivate students from actively engaging in learning. Miss Nefeli explained this behaviour in detail in the following excerpt:

“A big issue affecting whether students adjust to school life is whether their families came to settle down permanently or whether they are asylum seekers. Most ‘foreign’ families in Larnaca are Arabic-speaking and applied for political asylum. They don't know how long their children will attend school here! ...knowing they might leave Cyprus soon, students are often indifferent towards school.”
- Miss Nefeli, Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Consequently, introducing new students in both regular and language support classes at different times during the academic year entailed that the newly-arrived students lagged behind the rest of the class. Teaching practice was therefore compromised, with teachers having to teach classrooms of students at different levels of ability. In addition, many students appeared to lack an interest in learning and for academic achievement, this usually associated with students whose future in Cyprus was uncertain.
In addition to high mobility rates, teachers suggested that foreign-speaking students’ length of residency in Cyprus and whether they had received part or all of their primary education in Cyprus were factors that determined how well students could adjust to their new school lives. This is exemplified in the following excerpt:

“Students that receive their primary education in Cyprus are better adjusted to our education system and have fewer language difficulties. Even those that come in the first year of secondary education do not have serious problems since they learn everything in Greek. If they come at a later stage in secondary education they are likely to face more difficulties than students that have been in Cyprus longer…”

- Mrs Aphrodite, Modern Greek teacher at Archimedes Gymnasium

Essentially, students whose families were living in Cyprus on a permanent basis and had parents with constant employment opportunities, appeared to be better adjusted and more motivated to achieve at school compared to students who had a more transient status in the district of Paphos and Cyprus in general.

As previously suggested, many students auditing classes also appeared unmotivated to participate or engage with teaching and learning. This claim was based on the fact that the majority of auditing students opted to hold their auditor status for more than one academic year when they recognised that it deferred any responsibility on their behalf for participation and assessment.

The combination of barriers including high mobility rates; a fairly recent arrival to Cyprus; and students being allowed to audit lessons; were perceive as characteristics specific to foreign-speaking students that failed to encourage their motivation for a meaningful engagement with learning in schools. Since these factors acted in parallel to the introduction of students to an educational context using an official language of instruction different to students’ home language; it was interesting to realise from teachers’ narratives that perceived language difficulties were often considered an innate characteristic of foreign-speaking students. In agreement with this observation, the language support teacher at Socrates Gymnasium evaluated language difficulties as a characteristic of children of immigrant families that came to Cyprus at an older age:

“…the children coming to Cyprus at a younger age are lucky in the sense that they learn Greek from an early age and have fewer problems when they go to school. The unlucky children are those who arrive at an older age, like my students…they do not learn Greek properly since they are not given the necessary time to do that…due to their language difficulties most will not be able to reach the level of Greek language skills necessary for them to become academically successful …”

- Miss Marilia, Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium
Facing language difficulties was perceived as the most important barrier to students’ academic and social inclusion. As previously explained, inability to understand what was taught in class often resulted in students’ loss of interest; failure to engage with the material taught; and frequent misbehaviour in class. In general terms, most foreign-speaking students were thought to perform worse in theoretical lessons highly dependent on the use of language; and perform better in more practical subjects, which were less dependent on language for learning and assessment purposes. Furthermore, some students’ perceived lack of motivation to learn Greek to the level required for in-class participation and achievement was believed to be a determining factor of students’ compromised academic and social inclusion at school.

In addition, associated with students’ motivation for learning were their “aspirations for future academic and professional development”. According to some teachers students who “did not aspire to study at university or receive well-paid jobs in the future”, where amongst those who most often “failed to engage with lessons and were subject to disciplinary measures”. In contrast, students aspiring to attend further education or receive “good jobs” were usually encouraged at home to study hard and learn Greek as a means to achieve these goals. The next example indicates these beliefs and directs attention even to students’ ethnicity as a determining factor of their motivation to learn:

“Students’ personal characteristics, such as having high aspirations and intending to attend further education increase their potential for academic achievement. Such traits provide incentives for them to learn Greek as well…Students from Eastern-European countries were show the most motivation to learn Greek and strive for academic achievement at school, compared to students from other ethnicities.”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

However, I would argue that readily classifying the above mentioned factors as part of students’ intrinsic characteristics only serves to exacerbate the stereotypes associated with foreign-speaking students. Attributing some students’ lack of motivation for learning to factors lying outside their control, such as, their families’ high mobility rates; their length of residency in Cyprus; whether they attended primary education in Cyprus; and aspirations for further academic or professional development linked to parental involvement in children’s education; would suggest that these factors should not be viewed as students’ intrinsic characteristics. In essence, it would be appropriate to look at factors affecting students’ motivation to learn from multiple vantage points in order to determine the external factors beyond students’ control that might be promoting this behaviour, and avoid “assigning the blame” (Sontag, 1978) directly to students. Failure to do this will only serve to propagate stereotypes and promote the stigmatization of this group of students.
Varying abilities and background knowledge in curriculum subjects

Further to an apparent lack of motivation to learn, barriers to students’ academic inclusion have been associated to students’ varying abilities and background knowledge in curriculum subjects. For instance, high mobility rates ensured that students arrived in Cyprus throughout the academic year and commencing lessons at variable times. The following excerpt indicates how the processes of teaching and learning were affected if teaching had to accommodate students of varying abilities and background knowledge:

“This creates problems for the recently-arrived students because they didn’t start at the beginning of the year to grasp the basic principles of the Greek language, but also for classmates whose rhythm of learning is slowed down to integrate the new students.”

- Miss Marilia, Language support teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

On that topic, many teachers suggested that the policy to allocate recently-arrived students in classes according to their age, whereas disregarding issues of academic ability was flawed. This strategy compromised teaching since it further diversified the needs of students in a class. However, it was acknowledged that allocating students in classes irrespective of their age group could create further problems in terms of socialisation with classmates belonging to different age groups.

It was even suggested that factors such as students’ prior school experiences affected how well they adjusted to the Cypriot school system. Students who had received a higher level of education than that offered to their respective year group in Cyprus for instance, were seen as better able to adjust to their new school context compared to students who had a less demanding academic experience. The next examples justify this claim:

“…most students have varying abilities in English so it is difficult for me to teach groups of students at different levels… you cannot make up for lack of basic skills in the English language…it is as if trying to teach them from ‘zero’.”

- Mrs Amelia, English teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

“If lets say a student has not managed the skills required to complete first year math, how are they going to cope with the syllabus for second year math? Aren’t we depring them from the opportunity to achieve as well as their other classmates? …failing to receive at least passing grades will prevent them from getting a school leaving certificate, and they will not have options to go to university or get good jobs.”

- Mr Theodoros, Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

Moving beyond barriers to students’ academic inclusion, all teachers perceived as an equally important parameter to school experience the aspect of students’ social inclusion. The next section will explore teachers’ perceptions on the social aspects of school life, and more specifically student socialisation.
Prejudiced perceptions between native and non-native students

The negative perceptions of some native students towards their foreign-speaking classmates presented, according to some teachers, an important barrier to inclusion. For example, the head-teacher of Archimedes Gymnasium expressed her concern over negative perceptions of native students towards non-native classmates, something perceived as escalating to marginalisation and stigmatization of non-native students. Frequently, foreign-speaking students were viewed as “problematic” within regular classes, since they often misbehaved and disrupted lessons, while teachers were perceived as lenient towards them. Such behaviour gave rise to feelings of discontent for native students, who considered their academic progress as compromised due to the presence of foreign-speaking students in class. The excerpt below clarifies this claim:

“You can see the negative perceptions of native students towards them…seen as responsible for disrupting lessons or as subjects to leniency from teachers…”

- Miss Alexia, Ancient Greek teacher; Socrates Gymnasium

The prevalence of such beliefs was considered linked to the wider community and not as a phenomenon manifested solely within schools. Therefore, aspects of increasing ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity within the Cypriot society were identified as promoting the challenges that schools had to overcome. More specifically, non-native students and their families had been associated with being the people who would willingly take up the lowest paid jobs in Cyprus, and as a projection from that, the jobs that native people would be unwilling to do—therefore they were considered to have low educational expectations. The extent to which such stigmatisation affected non-native students’ educational experiences became evident during observations within the advanced language support class at Archimedes Gymnasium. The following notes paint a picture of how non-native students and their families are predominantly perceived in the Cypriot society:

“…During a discussion about ‘which jobs would women feel embarrassed to do?’ female students in the class said that women would feel embarrassed to work as cleaning ladies, arguing that they would never do this nor would they be pleased if their parents held such jobs…The teacher said that no job is embarrassing if it offers the means to provide for your family…The students gave an example of a classmate whose father worked as a sewage cleaner and came to school looking for his daughter regarding a family emergency; the girl pretended not to know him and told her closest friend afterwards ‘it is bad enough to be known as a foreigner…it is even worse to tell people that your parents work in such jobs if you are trying to fit in…everyone thinks we have the jobs that Cypriots don't want…”

(Research diary: Observation in advanced language class at Archimedes Gymnasium)
Realising that the extent of discrimination against non-native families could lead a girl to disown her father in an attempt to preserve her social image at school, raises issues of concerns relevant to whether such prejudiced perceptions can be abolished. Drawing on this example, Miss Hermione, the language support teacher, suggested that such incidents might shine light as to students’ socialisation patterns at school. Observing that students often socialised in ‘cliques’ consisting of students from the same ethnic background as them, could perhaps be the outcome of voluntarily selecting to socialise with students of similar cultures, religion and life experiences to them. Meanwhile, such socialisation patterns could be the direct outcome of native students’ prejudiced perceptions towards non-native classmates, which forces non-native students to socialise mostly with non-native students.

Such negative perceptions towards non-native students were even considered as providing evidence for a “clash of civilizations” (Mr Yiannis, Mathematics teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium), indicating the magnitude of social change within the Cypriot society due to increasing diversity. A different form of prejudice can nonetheless be identified from teachers’ preconceptions of most non-native students as lacking the intrinsic motivation to learn, as will be described in the following section.

**Social Aspects of school life**

Most teachers regarded the socialisation of students as a complex issue, but as integral to promoting their adjustment in school. Agreeing that most foreign-speaking students had friends at school, many teachers thought that it was often the case that students socialised with peers of the same ethnicity as them, and less so with native students or students from other nationalities, as indicated below:

“I think they have friends but usually socialise with students from the same countries as them. The fact that their families usually reside in the same areas helps them bond outside school, encouraging the formation of closely-knit social groups”
- Mrs Luta, Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

“…they do have friends; some have Cypriot friends but usually they stick together with people from the same countries as them…they form their own cliques…”
- Mrs Aphrodite, Modern Greek teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

The phenomenon of socialising within more homogenous groups was more prominent at Aristotle Gymnasium. Teachers suggested that Arabic-speaking students especially preferred to socialise with students of their ethnicity, with this being predominantly noticeable in the case of female compared to male students. The following excerpt presents
Miss Nefeli’s rationale regarding students’ apparent preference for homogenous groups of friends as lying within religious reasons and the fact that the numbers of students from asylum-seeking families have increasing over the last year:

“...the majority of Arabic-speaking children are cautious with the people they meet maybe due to religion...their numbers have increased in the past two years, so they are naturally drawn to each other when making friends, especially girls. They prefer people that speak the same language and can understand their customs.”

- Miss Nefeli, Language support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

Even regular class teachers suggested that student socialisation might be affected by religious beliefs. Such claims were based on observations that Muslim students tended to socialise primarily with students from the same ethnicity as them. Similarly, issues of religion were cited as affecting the socialisation patterns primarily of female Muslim students, since they rarely socialised with students of a different religion to them.

In turn, at Archimedes Gymnasium, the deputy head-teacher suggested that the often negative and prejudiced perceptions of native students towards non-native classmates appeared as compromising the latter group’s social inclusion. Nonetheless, he was eager to clarify that such perceptions stemmed from ignorance that did not escalate to racism. In response to questions regarding incidents, occurring in Paphos prior to commencing this research, where native parents requested that their children be withdrawn from schools catering to large numbers of foreign-speaking students on grounds of decreased academic performance, Mr Theodoros said that such claims were not entirely unjustified:

“...if one primary school has 300 students from Eastern European countries who do not know a single word of Greek it creates problems for native families, since the school is essentially used as a language centre. The priority shifts from teaching curriculum subjects to teaching Greek to foreign-speaking students; many families asked to transfer their children to other schools since academic progress suffered.”

- Mr Theodoros, DeputyHead; Archimedes Gymnasium

It was claimed that the reporting of such incidents through the local media cultivated a sense of xenophobia amongst the native population. Irrespective of the rationale giving rise to these incidents, the outcome rested with the possible segregation of native and non-native student populations into separate schools and the propagation of notions of segregation through the two communities as well. Reference was made to some schools that essentially had a more challenging role when required to cater to increased numbers of foreign-speaking students compared to other schools. Such was the case according to the deputy head-teacher with a local school that absorbed the biggest population of non-native students from Georgia and Russia. The specific school had been placed within the
government’s Zone of Educational Priority, thus receiving more resources and having fewer students per class, aimed at coping with the high intake of non-native students. Such incidents that transcended from the school context into the Cypriot society in general gave rise to prejudice and stigmatisation towards non-native students and their subsequent, as I would call, “instigated isolation” within schools.

A second attribute affecting student socialisation was the frequently perceived “voluntary isolation” of non-native students from other students. According to Mr Theodoros, besides the apparent isolation of non-native students by their native classmates as a result of prejudice, non-native students seemed to prefer to socialise with students from the same ethnic backgrounds as them. This preferred closely-knit socialisation within homogenous groups including only non-native students gave rise to ‘cliques’ of students from the same background. According to Mr Theodoros:

“…possibly they are attracted to students they have things in common with, like language, religion, or even life experiences like having to leave their countries for better economic prospects…sameness usually brings people together isn’t it?...”

- Deputy Head, Archimedes Gymnasium

In summary, looking at students as individual agents within schools, some of their perceived characteristics, including an observed lack of intrinsic motivation to learn; varying abilities and background knowledge in curriculum subjects; and their preferred or instigated socialisation patterns; were coined as affecting their presence, participation, achievement and socialisation in schools. It was nonetheless argued that caution should be paid when such observations represent generalised ideas, since these might serve to propagate further prejudice and marginalisation towards foreign-speaking students. On this note, the following section will present barriers to students’ inclusion perceived by teachers as relevant to students’ homes and communities.

**Home & Community factors**

Since discussions with teachers and students revealed the importance of looking beyond the realm of schools when attempting to identify barriers to students’ inclusion, this section will explore briefly suggested aspects of students’ home lives and communities. Figure 11.2 outlines the barriers identified as relevant to student’s home and community environments, offered as a visual guideline for the text to follow.
Figure 11.2: Concept map representing the barriers compromising students’ inclusion at school, relevant to students’ home and community environment.

With regards to students’ home environment, an obstacle to students’ academic inclusion was considered to be the fact that most parents were often unable to help children with schoolwork, due to the fact that parents often worked long hours; did not have the relevant educational level; or had difficulties with the Greek language. Typical suggestions involved teachers reporting no obvious parental involvement in some children’s education, and raising questions of whether students received meaningful help with schoolwork or the appropriate motivation to become academically successful:

“Students often lack help from home with regards to school work, something which could otherwise have helped them cope better with the school curriculum…”
- Ms Eleni, Deputy Head; Aristotle Gymnasium

Furthermore, some parents were perceived as indifferent to their children’s education based on teachers’ observations that there parents rarely inquired about their children’s academic progress. For teachers, this reflected a lack of parental emphasis for academic achievement, and failure to motivate children to view education as beneficial. Parents were even perceived as failing to cultivate high aspirations in children for their future lives, since this was provisional on successful completion of their secondary education.

Teachers also criticised the emphasis placed by some parents for children to support their families financially over their education. Miss Marilia (support teacher; Socrates
Gymnasium) mentioned that many students confided in her that they lived in dire conditions and worked to support their families. In agreement, Miss Nefeli (support teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium) referred to children from economic migrant or asylum seeking families, that had to work and as a result often arrived to school tired, sleepy and unable to pay attention in class, and had little available time to study at home.

When comparing students’ ethnic backgrounds, Miss Hermione (Language support; Archimedes Gymnasium) claimed that “students coming from Eastern European countries appeared motivated to work more and harder at school compared to Arabic-speaking children”. Therefore they tended to perform better compared to students from middle-Eastern countries like Iraq. Remarks classifying the latter group of students as those who tended to work to support their families, indicates the importance of investigating students’ home environments before rushing into conclusions about their school performance.

Teachers were also keen to direct attention to perceived unequal opportunities offered to foreign-speaking students relevant to the frequently lower socioeconomic status of their families. For example, it was claimed that students who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds could not afford to take private afternoon lessons in curriculum subjects as most native students tended to do. Therefore, they had essentially diminished opportunities to achieve as well as their classmates in school exams as seen in the following example:

“…these students can achieve academically, even as well as Cypriots, if they stay in Cyprus long enough and overcome problems with language. But they are economically more disadvantaged compared to Cypriot students and usually cannot afford to pay personal for private lessons as most Cypriot students do…If they want to achieve as well as Cypriot students without added resources, they have to exert more personal effort than Cypriot students in their studies.”

- Mr Yiannis, Mathematics teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium

A final barrier to students’ inclusion pertinent to their home environment was the absence of role models that could otherwise motivate students to enhance their presence, participation, achievement and socialisation at school. The teacher most appropriate to discuss the importance of providing positive role models for students was Mrs Luta, the only non-native teacher employed in the schools studied:

“With the worldwide economic crisis affecting Cyprus most of the students’ parents, and especially fathers, need to work in a different city in Cyprus or even to a different country…the families split up and not having good role models boys especially misbehave at school and have low achievement rates. If you don’t understand their culture you cannot always teach them, but at the same time you have to worry about the rest of the students in the class too…”

- Mrs Luta, Technology teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium
In summary, home factors affecting aspects of students’ school lives included the frequent inability of parents to help children with schoolwork; parents’ apparent indifference to children’s education, with emphasis placed on children supporting their families over education; the lower socioeconomic status of families that was perceived as offering children limited opportunities to receive resources that would otherwise allow them to perform equally to other classmates; and finally, the absence of role models. The following section will draw attention to conflicting cultural values between students’ home and school environments, seen as affecting their inclusion at school.

**Conflicting cultural values between home and school**

Many teachers suggested that despite schools’ best efforts to promote the inclusion of foreign-speaking students, enforcing effective strategies was often difficult since the cultural values that were promoted within schools were often different to the values promoted within students’ homes. This “conflict” identified by teachers between the home and school cultural values, was perceived as compromising students’ inclusion.

In the light of relevant discussions, closer attention was paid to factors such as the apparent “tendency of most non-native families to form homogenous communities” with families of their ethnic background. This behaviour was believed to create a context of *voluntary segregation* of non-native families from the majority population. This that was more pronounced in Larnaca, where asylum-seeking families formed closely-knit communities encompassing the neighbourhoods of resident families along with self-sufficient local shops, with the community having lobbies for its social and political representation within the Cypriot society.

The attempts to maintain their ethnic and cultural identities allowed non-native families to begin their lives in Cyprus without the need for cultural exchange with the native population. Whereas the opportunity to promote their own cultural identity was widely perceived by teachers as positive, the apparent reluctance of these families to welcome any influence or communication with the native population had been negatively regarded. Teachers therefore described this behaviour as a voluntary attempt by non-native families against accepting or respecting the Cypriot society and culture.

The instances of “voluntary segregation” and subsequent isolation of non-native families from the majority population were assumed to infiltrate the realm of education as well. For example, foreign-speaking students often showed an unwillingness to learn Greek since
this was not necessary for communication within their communities, or when socialising at school with students from the same ethnic backgrounds as them. Questions were thus raised on whether the topic of including non-native families within the wider society should not be regarded solely as an effort of the native population to accept and respect the non-native communities. Instead this topic could be viewed as a reciprocal act through which both the native population and newly arrived families should show mutual respect for each others’ differences. The excerpts below outline such concerns:

“…they form a ‘closed’ society. They don’t go out; they prohibit girls to speak to boys…what they know from their country they bring here, customs, habits, everything. So the home is very important in learning Greek and merging into the new society. Because they have their own shops where they can speak their language they think they do not need to learn Greek.”

- Mrs Aysha, Translator; Aristotle Gymnasium

“We might want to integrate them in our society but they want to maintain their national identities and cultures without gaining anything from us.”

- Mr Angelos, Technology teacher; Aristotle Gymnasium

As these examples show, teachers in Larnaca appeared critical of the unwillingness of non-native families to respect the Cypriot culture. This phenomenon of “voluntary isolation” was evident in the district of Paphos as well, and similar to the city of Larnaca it appeared to emerge from the realm of the nearby community and extend into the school context. It had been noted that in Paphos non-native families of similar ethnic origin tended to reside in the same neighbourhoods, something which offered opportunities for socialisation only with people from their own ethnic groups. This phenomenon was again highly criticised by teachers, as the excerpt below shows:

“They form cliques of people from their own countries and tend to maintain their own traditions. These families have not come in contact with Cypriots at all and have gained nothing from living in Cyprus…Their children tend to create the most trouble at school… They have not adjusted to life here in Cyprus at all.”

- Deputy Head; Archimedes Gymnasium

Specific to Paphos, it was suggested that the tendency to segregate from the majority population might be the result of prejudice and xenophobia of native families towards non-native families. Despite the fact that many non-native families had been residing in Cyprus for many years, one teacher attempted to shine light into the social context within which such families were perceived by native families:

“There are obvious waves of racism and discrimination against these families especially in Paphos…we often regard them as responsible for increasing unemployment rates, but we fail to realise that they usually take over the jobs that we (natives) are not willing to do.”

- Mr Yiannis, Mathematics teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium
The previous excerpt offers evidence for an unfavourable social context through which non-native families are perceived, with specific mention to “waves of racism” and “discrimination” against non-native families. These statements raise awareness regarding the extent to which the social context encountered within the communities surrounding schools - and from which schools draw their student population from - affects the attempts to promote the inclusion of non-native students within schools.

Finally, a barrier to inclusion linking community aspects with inappropriate policy was identified as of particular importance to Archimedes Gymnasium in Larnaca. More specifically, this involved the provision of welfare benefits to asylum-seeking families. The funds given as welfare benefits were collectively subsidised by the Cypriot government and the European Union (European European Commission, 2010a). Through conversations with the school’s translator I was notified that for a family with two children, a benefit of approximately €1400 was offered. Out of this sum it was estimated that €580 was spent on rent and the rest on the family’s subsistence.

Despite widespread criticism against offering benefits to asylum seeking families, most teachers at Archimedes Gymnasium objected to the additional benefit of €90 offered to families for each child attending school. This sum was offered as an incentive for families to send children to school, instead of forcing them to work to support their family, or keep them at home to provide help with chores or care for elderly members of the family. To monitor the effective distribution of benefits, records of student attendance were maintained and signed by the school head-teacher and the translator at the end of each month that were included in all families’ applications for benefits.

If students exceeded 45 school hours of recorded absences per month, the family did not receive this “child benefit” payment. Nonetheless, it was observed that many children attended to receive this benefit, but children refused to attend lessons, instead remaining in the school yard with their friends. Therefore in an attempt to reduce truancy it became a school policy that when children were present at school but did not attend class, the number of hours spend outside class was recorded as absences. The excerpt below shows the perceived disadvantages to creating a welfare state for these families:

“It is an attempt to tackle problems with increasing numbers of foreign-speaking students. It is effective in keeping most students in class and parents happy when they get their money. Is it beneficial for students? Do they learn anything if ‘forced’ to be in class when they don't know the language used for teaching? I have my doubts…”

- Mr Costas, Art teacher; Archimedes Gymnasium
According to Mr Costas, offering benefits to asylum-seeking families might not lead to the desired outcomes. It was suggested that in terms of reducing truancy, offering benefits managed to keep “most” but not all students within classes. Moreover, Mr Costas questioned whether “forcing” students to stay in class had any educational benefit for students. In turn, Mrs Aysha was keen to offer her opinion on the social context underlying the offering of benefits to asylum-seeking families:

“After two years the government says to them ‘Mr. we find you this job and you don't go to work, why?”’, and he says ‘I only want benefit and this is enough for my family’. They make conspiracy not to work and they protest outside the president’s house…it is one thing to have my feet up and wait to get cheque every month that the Cypriots pay from their tax…I see that I give you money and you have three cars and you sell one and you buy another; you break the law bringing cigarettes from ‘the other side’ (reference to the area of the island under Turkish occupation)...I tell them ‘you are doing crime’; and the police call me to translate when they get in trouble and put them in prison…you understand how big is the problem?...This cause a lot of problem for all foreigners, and now the government want to see what to do with them.”

- Mrs Aysha, Translator; Archimedes Gymnasium

Mrs Aysha’s reference to her role as translator for criminal cases regarding asylum-seekers in Larnaca indicates her deep involvement in the lives of this community. Due to the enhanced contact she had with members of the community, Mrs Aysha was able to clarify that the receipt of benefits upon asylum-seekers’ arrival in Cyprus was conditional upon identification of suitable employment for them within a given timeframe. Nonetheless, asylum-seekers appeared de-motivated or even unwilling to accept jobs, and as a result protested against the withdrawal of any benefits at the end of the specified period of time.

Mrs Aysha criticised asylum seekers’ frequent refusal to accept jobs as a means to provide a living for their families at the end of a two-year stay in Cyprus; and perceived this as a masked attempt to exploit the system that was intended to allow for their initial transition from their own countries to Cyprus. She judged the protests against the government’s decision to withdraw benefits after two years as shameful and disrespectful to the country that accepted to offer them a home. She also drew attention to the fact that some asylum-seekers participated in criminal acts, which essentially gave a negative reputation to all “foreigners” in Cyprus. The participation of members from these ethnic groups in criminal acts and the subsequent representation of such incidents in the local media attached a stigma which was generalised to all non-native families in Cyprus. Such community-based factors were perceived as permeating the school context as well, often with native students appearing to be prejudiced towards their non-native classmates.
In summary, certain factors that were particular to communities of non-native families of economic migrants or asylum-seekers were perceived as transcending the social context of their communities with obvious effects in children’s school lives. Amongst the factors cited was the apparent tendency of non-native families to form closely-knit communities with families of their ethnic background, thus promoting their “voluntary isolation” from the native population. This prevented any cultural exchange between the two communities, and was perceived as a refusal of non-native families to respect the Cypriot society.

A final barrier rested with the provision of welfare benefits to asylum-seeking families to ensure their smooth transition from their countries to Cyprus, and as a means of improving student attendance in schools. Despite the intended outcomes, family members in receipt of benefits appeared unwilling to find work after the prescribed timeframe. Their often unjustified demands for receiving benefits throughout their stay in Cyprus; their participation in criminal acts; and the failure of “child benefits” to reduce truancy in schools; indicated how ineffective this policy was and gave rise to prejudice and discrimination against non-native families from the native population.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored factors lying outside the school borders which were perceived by teachers as compromising students’ inclusion at school. Despite the absence of primary data to support this argument, teachers’ extensive reference to these factors encouraged the need to explore students as individuals, and their home and community environments when considering how well students can adjust to new school contexts. This observation has allowed the addition of the “students, home and community” section in the model of analysis of barriers to inclusion. However, further evidence is needed to explore in depth the effect of these factors for students’ inclusion at school. The brief reference to barriers which implicate the student’s home and community environments simply added complexity to the attempt to identify barriers to students’ inclusion, while indicating how multi-faceted the concept of students’ inclusion in schools is. The final chapter that follows will present the most important findings of this study, as well as stress the significance and implications of this study for educational practice and research in the field of inclusive education relevant to contextualise responses to increasing student diversity.
Chapter 12 - Lessons and implications of the research

Introduction

In this final chapter, I present an overview of the most important findings of this study and I revisit the purpose of this study in order to define its contribution to knowledge not only for the field of inclusive education, but also its contribution to the wider field of migrant and additional language learners (in this study with reference to the example of learners of Greek as an additional language). This leads me to draw out some lessons learned, as well as the implications of the findings in terms of educational practice and research in relation to contextualised responses to increasing student diversity within educational institutions.

As described in Chapter 2, this research has begun the process of filling the gap identified in the literature in the field of inclusive education relevant to the response of Cyprus’ educational system to the unprecedented increasing diversity among student populations, as a result of the historical and socio-political changes taking place mainly over the last decade. With the topic of increasing student diversity being explored through the lens of multicultural education, scant literature and research focused on aspects of inclusive education beyond the field of special needs, and, finally, existing research focusing on primary instead of secondary education; this study proposes that inclusive education in Cyprus currently adopts a very narrow scope. Instead, this thesis has adopted a wider definition of inclusion, in that it considers inclusion as an approach through which to study pedagogies of equal educational opportunities for all students irrespective of diversity.

More specifically, inclusion offered a lens through which the perceived exclusion and marginalisation of any student within educational institutions could be addressed. In this case, the group under study involved “foreign-speaking students” in mainstream Cypriot secondary schools. Based on this, a research design was constructed which aimed to explore the response of the Cypriot educational system to increasing student diversity. With that in mind, the focus was placed on identifying the barriers that compromised foreign-speaking students’ inclusion, as well as resources promoting their inclusion. This was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are secondary schools responding to increasing student diversity?
2. What are the barriers to the presence, participation achievement, and social inclusion of foreign-speaking students?
3. What resources could be used to support the inclusion of these students?

In terms of identifying barriers and resources to inclusion relevant to increasing diversity, my exploration involved taking into consideration teachers’ reflection on the challenges posed for teaching and learning due to increasing diversity, and their interpretation of how policy is enacted in practice within schools. More significantly though, this study considered students as valuable research participants, shown through the use of a variety of student-oriented research methods, despite any discernible challenges, like language difficulties giving rise to communication problems. Consequently, “pupil voice” and students’ perceptions on their school experiences were kept at the centre of the analysis. Accordingly, in the next section I draw together the most important lessons of my study in order to define what I see as its contribution to knowledge. This is achieved through presenting an overview of the most important findings which serve in contributing towards the scarce literature on the topic in Cyprus; a discussion on how the findings of this study can have a wider implication to the field of inclusive education, and finally, by indicating how the findings of this study can have a contribution to the field of migrant learners and learners of additional languages as well.

**Context-specific contribution to knowledge - the case of Cyprus**

Having finally arrived at the end of my research journey, it is necessary to reflect on the relevant contribution and implications that this study has for the field of inclusive education and practice relevant to increasing student diversity within schools in Cyprus. As a starting point, it is necessary to recognise that the study has been context-specific, since it provided an in-depth exploration of the response of three mainstream secondary schools in Cyprus to increasing student diversity. When seen in this light, my research has begun to fill the identified gap in literature and research in the field of inclusive education in Cyprus, as discussed in Chapter 2. With scant literature focused on aspects of inclusive education beyond the field of special needs, and existing research focusing mainly on primary instead of secondary education, the study indicates how the framework of inclusive education can be mobilised within a wider scope to investigate issues of educational diversity in Cyprus.

More specifically, through its exploratory nature, the study has provided a starting point for evaluating the contextualised governmental and institutional response in Cyprus towards the added challenges imposed on schools that are required to cater to the needs of
increasingly diverse student populations. In the midst of educational reform aimed at addressing the new realities of globalisation, increased migration rates, and changes in the previously homogenous communities that schools used to serve, my findings provide a platform for evaluating emerging exclusionary pressures that prevent foreign-speaking students to meaningfully engage with their education and participate in school life equally to other classmates.

Accordingly, while analysing the findings of this study in reference to the model presented in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1), allowed me to realise that some of the identified barriers to students’ inclusion were not generalisable, since they were associated with specific communities located across various districts in Cyprus. Therefore, carrying out context-specific research proved to be invaluable for looking in-depth at factors affecting specific contexts at a given time. As a result, this study confirms claims such as those of Rouse & Florian (1996), who state that addressing cultural and political contexts within educational research is highly relevant to studies of inclusive education. Context-specific research is therefore necessary for identifying barriers that lead to the exclusion and marginalisation of any student within a given school.

**Making sense of the findings for the context of Cyprus**

One of the most significant contributions of this study involved the use of the model presented in Figure 5.1 to identify factors that were perceived to act as barriers to the inclusion of foreign-speaking students in Cypriot schools. Using the model as the framework, this section summarises the barriers to inclusion that I consider as most important in shaping the educational context of Cyprus and creating additional challenges for adopting a coherent response towards increasing diversity in schools. It also relates these arguments to the literature analysed in Chapter 2.

Firstly, it became evident quite early in the analysis of findings that the national policy adopted in response to student diversity affected school and classroom practice, since the implementation of relevant policy was contingent upon its interpretation and understanding by teaching staff. Moreover, analysing teachers’ narratives allowed me to see that the relevant national policy was limited in scope, in that it focused primarily on compensating for foreign-speaking students’ language difficulties, while disregarding other aspects of school life. As a result, the perceived discrepancies and ambiguities in policy yielded a response towards student diversity that lacked cohesion; was interpreted by staff as they
saw fit; and, most importantly, created a context within which regular class teachers could eliminate most of the responsibility associated with the education and well-being of foreign-speaking students (detailed analysis of barriers relevant to policy are presented in Chapter 10, Figure 10.1). This confirms Allan’s (2008, pg. 25) claims that policies are frequently subject to shifting interpretations, resulting in the implementation of inclusive education being a largely subjective issue.

As a direct outcome, foreign-speaking students were “side-lined” within regular classrooms, with patterns of decreased presence, participation, achievement and socialisation recorded in all three schools studied. Following this, the critical evaluation of regular classroom practice indicated that emphasis was placed by regular class teachers on the fact that foreign-speaking students required additional support if they were to cope with curriculum demands. A major barrier to inclusion, therefore, was the fact that no reference was made to the need to reform the educational curriculum in ways that make it more inclusive (Ainscow, 2007; Arber, 2005; Gravelle, 2000; Mitchell & Brumfit, 1997). Instead, lower achievement records led to a classification of foreign-speaking students into those that needed help and those that did not, creating a “deficit” lens through which these students were viewed. Adopting such exclusionary views of students can evidently propagate notions of discrimination and marginalisation in schools, acting as a barrier to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2004; Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 17 & pg. 99; Strain, 1995).

The strategy of creating a system of additional language provision offered in segregated classrooms as the primary response to increasing diversity, reminded me of the early struggles of inclusive education relevant to students categorised as having special educational needs (Allan, 1999; Angelides, 2005; Lewis & Norwich, 2005; Phtiaka, 2000). Accordingly, aspects of diversity within student populations seemed to be addressed mainly through strategies offering additional provision outside regular classrooms to students considered to be “different” to the norm. Perceptions of diversity within this negative light compromised inclusion, since they reflected underlying discriminatory attitudes. Such attitudes ensured the marginalisation of foreign-speaking students through constructing them as a distinct, and “different”, subgroup within the entire student population in their respective schools. Pronouncing differences between students creates a process of “othering” (Said, 1993) and subsequent categorisation, that in agreement with Ainscow et al. (2006a, pg. 17) acts as barriers to developing a broader view of inclusion.
Accordingly, the act of distinguishing between groups of students that are more included compared to “other” groups that are in need of policies that will promote their inclusion (Barton & Armstrong, 2008, pg. 158), meant that regular class teachers were actively involved in the educational provision of regular students, while dealing with foreign-speaking students rested mainly with the Greek language support teachers. Considering the education of a sub-group of the student population as the “job” of specific teachers, meant that regular class teachers failed to aspire to an inclusive ethos, through which the education of all students irrespective of differences becomes the priority of any teacher.

In relevance to this topic, perceptions towards the professional role of language support teachers reflected similar patterns of “othering” when compared to regular class teachers. The discriminatory perceptions of regular teachers towards language support teachers (as explained in Chapter 9), meant that the professional role and identity of teachers offering language support was compromised, allowing them very limited opportunities to instigate any meaningful change to the school lives of foreign-speaking students.

It is important to acknowledge here that a crucial barrier reflected in the failure of these schools to promote inclusive practices, was the apparent lack of what has variously been referred to as “transformative”, “distributed” and “inspirational” leadership (Angelides et al., 2010; Blackmore, 2006; Riehl, 2000; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010), in which school improvement is promoted through the development of inclusive cultures in schools, embedded within an ethos of collaboration (Angelides, 2001; Angelides et al., 2005; Angelides et al., 2007). These findings are important, since attempts could be directed towards promoting better communication and dialogue between school head-teachers, regular teachers and language support teachers, in order to stimulate reflection on practice and to promote ideas of shared responsibility for the inclusion of all students.

An additional way of reflecting on barriers to inclusion is to pinpoint the factors which compromise the daily practice of teaching and learning within classrooms. In this study, the analysis of barriers relevant to classroom practice started with students’ personal accounts but has also relied on the perceptions of teachers. Specifically, conversations with teachers revealed that teaching and learning became increasingly challenging within diverse classrooms. The primary barrier involved students’ language difficulties, which compromised students’ participation, achievement and socialisation. Stemming from this, a complex array of barriers relevant to school and classroom practice emerged (presented in
which are important to consider relevant to the formulation of strategies adopted in response to students’ language difficulties.

For example, the first point of interest is the classification of recently arrived foreign-speaking students as auditors within regular classrooms. Auditing, alongside the observed discrepancies in how relevant policy was implemented in schools, has presumably allowed some students to exploit the educational system by choosing to maintain their auditor status for a prolonged period of time. Such behaviour meant that many students fail to meaningfully engage with teaching and learning, due to the fact that lessons appear to offer no academic relevance in return, as explained in Chapter 9 (see Figure 9.2).

In addition, the observed leniency with which these students were approached has possibly contributed to the rising incidents of misbehaviour, truancy and absenteeism observed within Cypriot schools (Chapter 9). As a result, foreign-speaking students’ decreased in-class presence and participation effectively led to lower levels of achievement compared to their classmates. This context effectively compromised teaching and learning within multicultural classrooms, something that was reflected in the dissatisfaction of most teachers and students within regular classrooms with the ways that inclusion is implemented, confirming the suggestions of Angelides et al. on the topic (2003; 2004b).

To overcome challenges this posed for practice, it was recognised that the routine approaches that many teachers followed in the past had to be significantly modified, so as to accommodate the needs of foreign-speaking students and encourage their participation, presence and achievement in class. However, what I discovered was that many teachers were unwilling to differentiate their teaching practices accordingly (Angelides, 2008), often refusing to take responsibility for the education of foreign-speaking students. I found this quite alarming, since increasing diversity is a reality for Cypriot education, and as such, any meaningful change towards inclusive policy and practice will undoubtedly require the positive contribution of teaching staff.

Taken in context, reference to students being expected to fail academically, or being “cheated” by an educational system which ensures that without a relative linguistic ability a student could not perform well academically, implied that foreign-speaking students were provided with unequal opportunities for academic achievement compared to their native classmates (Johansson et al., 2007; Kowalczewski, 1982). Such claims allowed for speculation of the potential adverse effects that educational provision has for foreign-
speaking students’ future academic and professional prospects. Remarks about “preparing these students for the lowest paid jobs” in Cyprus and the imminent “stratification of the Cypriot society” would seem to be the outcome of all of this, raising concerns about the effectiveness and goals of the overall response adopted relevant to overcoming the challenges posed by increasing student diversity.

On the topic of potential stratification within the Cypriot society, I direct attention to the fact that the social aspects of school life, observed through the sociogram analysis within the case study chapters, are potentially reflecting patterns of social inclusion while revealing underlying patterns of acceptance and rejection of “difference” within the wider Cypriot society. This suggestion was introduced in Chapter 11 when discussing friendship formation between students, patterns which were categorised by teachers as potential barriers to students’ inclusion. This was the case, since when accounting for the ethnic composition of friendship groups it was frequently noticed that these groups were extensively homogenous, comprising of only native or only non-native students. Interestingly enough, a closer investigation revealed that socialisation of non-native students within their communities reflected a similar pattern to in-school socialisation.

Therefore, questions can be raised as to whether the appearance of homogenous friendship groups and the apparent “marginalisation” on non-native students within schools and communities is “imposed”, “voluntary” or “coincidental”. These findings pose implications for future research on social inclusion. Accordingly, research can investigate whether the “apparent” social exclusion of non-native students is indeed relevant to the conscious isolation of the non-native student by their native classmates based on notions of perceived difference or, contrary to that, is the result of non-native student’s preference to exclude native students from their social circles.

Furthermore, factors like non-native students’ language difficulties that allowed for limited communication with native student, or the frequent withdrawn of foreign-speaking students from regular lessons to receive segregated language support at school, should not be disregarded. This phenomenon could therefore have given rise to the apparent social isolation of non-native students as a “coincidental” outcome of the decreased social interaction of these two groups of students, which limited their opportunities to form friendships. Isolation in this case becomes an outcome of factors lying beyond matters of students’ “choice”, and extends into entrenched institutional factors that are relevant to how schools attempt to respond to student diversity (in this case within segregated settings
for language support). Accordingly, focusing future research on factors “promoting social inclusion” (Florian & Rouse, 2001; Rouse & Florian, 2006), should serve to promote a more inclusive response to student diversity through minimizing exclusive tendencies within schools (Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 114).

In conclusion, through outlining the most important barriers to inclusion identified in this study, this research confirms claims such as those of Angelides et al. (2004a) who suggest that the educational system of Cyprus appears not to value diversity. Instead, the assimilation of foreign children into the dominant culture is promoted through contextual factors that “emphasize similarity” and disregard “difference” (Angelides et al., 2003; Messiou, 2002; Messiou, 2006; Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007; Panayiotopoulos & Nicolaidou, 2007).

The identification of so many barriers towards inclusion confirms the presence of exclusionary pressures that act to compromise foreign-speaking students’ inclusion, as discussed in Chapter 2. The more comprehensive list of barriers to inclusion proposed in this study (Chapter 9, 10, 11) deems the response to increasing diversity assumed thus far as feeble and ineffective. However, it offers a lens through which the perceived exclusion and marginalisation of foreign-speaking students could be addressed. The study of barriers to inclusion points to a need for amendments to current policy and practice employed within schools in Cyprus in order to produce a more coherent and meaningful response to increasing student diversity. At this stage it would be wise to acknowledge the fact that mobilising resources aimed at promoting inclusion should enhance the effectiveness of any educational reform strategies. Accordingly, the following section outlines what I see as resources for promoting foreign-speaking students’ inclusion. I argue that these have important implications for the development of policy and practice in Cyprus.

**Implications for policy, practice and research**

So far I have presented in detail what the barriers towards the inclusion of foreign-speaking students are in the three schools studied, as these were perceived by students, teachers and myself as the researcher. In this final section of the thesis, I consider it significant to outline perceived resources that could be mobilised to produce an effective response towards increasing diversity. As I will show, these resources relate to the dimensions of national policy, school and classroom practices, students as individuals, and finally, the students’ home and community environments, since they often involve countermeasures
for the barriers to inclusion. Since this research did not involve policy stakeholders, the suggested policy resources mentioned below refer to my reflection on the findings of this study and understanding of the actions that need to be taken in order to produce a more coherent national response to increasing diversity.

**Policy Resources**

My understanding, based on what I have seen during my fieldwork, is that these would require an element of de-centralization in the Cypriot education system, allowing more power to be distributed down to school head-teachers, teachers and students, something that would allow more room for innovation and reflection on practice. Accordingly, resources identified as offering possibilities to overcome barriers associated with students’ language difficulties: the formulation of a more coherent policy on inclusive education; the provision of comprehensive guidance on how to implement the newly introduced language programme; the closer monitoring of the programme to reveal whether it was effective; the offering a variety of resources to enhance teaching and learning; and the adoption of collaborative modes of practice and inquiry would, I suggest, lead to reflection on practice. Furthermore, increased collaboration between stakeholders would offer policy makers better possibilities regarding ways of turning from theory into practice.

Most of the proposed resources relate to factors that could enhance the language support offered to students, in alignment with claims that the response to increasing diversity had been primarily concerned with language barriers at the expense of other important issues (Angelides et al., 2004a; Angelides et al., 2003; Angelides et al., 2004b; Koutselini, 1997). However, as seen in Chapter 10, the language support programme was deemed by most teachers as ineffective in providing students with the skills required for regular class participation. To this extent, a proposed strategy aimed at addressing the challenge of students’ language difficulties, involved the creation of “reception classes”.

In more detail, most teachers argued that within “reception” classes, students could focus on learning Greek in segregated settings until they were able to cope with the academic demands required for meaningful participation in teaching and learning. The rationale for such suggestions stemmed from thinking that the strategy of categorising students as *auditors* upon their enrolment in schools would be abolished, along with all its drawbacks (reference to Chapter 9). Consequently, enrolling foreign-speaking students in classes as
regular students instead of auditors was perceived as providing equal opportunities for further academic and professional development as for the rest of their classmates.

This was, in turn, expected to reduce the perceived disengagement of foreign-speaking students from teaching and learning, improve their participation and achievement in class, and decrease incidents of misbehaviour and truancy. As a result, teaching and learning within regular classes was anticipated to become less challenging for teachers and other students. Moreover, teachers anticipated that the social inclusion of foreign-speaking students would be promoted through minimizing their perceived language difficulties.

Nevertheless, the findings of my research lead me to argue that any strategy offering additional support within segregated settings cannot act as a resource to inclusion, but will only serve to pronounce students’ differences with adverse effects to students’ academic and social inclusion. In addition to the need for relevant policy changes, it was identified that further resources in schools and classrooms could enhance practical aspects of responding positively to the needs of foreign-speaking students.

**School and Classroom resources**

Through analysing data to identify potential resources to inclusion, I was impressed to see that many resources were suggested by teachers and students as having the potential to promote foreign-speaking students’ inclusion through enhancing the processes of teaching and learning. Building on these suggestions, in the following section I describe the possible school and classroom resources in terms of their potential for improving teaching and learning within schools.

An identified barrier to inclusion, as mentioned in Chapter 9, was the fact that the language support teachers who were most involved in the school lives of foreign-speaking students, were employed on a temporary basis, which resulted in high turn-over rates in these posts. I therefore argue that the temporary placement of language support teachers is contradictory to the unanimously agreed upon perspective of teachers and students that a resource to inclusion was the “presence of a dedicated language support teacher”. This provided opportunities for meaningful and “enhanced interaction” between students and teachers, cultivated constructive relationships, and mediated the identification of modes of “best practice” when it came to working within multicultural classrooms.
This was extensively noted during my observations in all three schools. Such observations point to the need for the permanent placement for language support teachers, since the stability offered to students and the opportunity to develop personal relationships with teachers appeared to enhance their academic and social inclusion. In addition, receiving permanent posts could possibly motivate language teachers to develop their skills in working within multicultural classrooms, and to invest time and effort in the education of diverse student groups through appropriate teacher training courses (the importance of relevant teacher training was noted in Chapter 2). Such changes in policy could also improve regular class teachers’ perceptions of language support teachers, with the latter starting to be perceived as “properly qualified teachers”.

Based on this, I consider it necessary that policy should be amended in ways that allows for “good teachers” who establish constructive relationships and care about foreign-speaking students to assume permanent posts in schools (i.e. language support teacher; translator). The presence of teachers who are willing to become personally involved in providing students with meaningful education is a resource that provides opportunities for foreign-speaking students to feel included in the schools’ academic and social lives.

Another area of improvement, as suggested by some language support teachers, related to the limited response and sometimes negative attitudes of regular class teachers towards increasing student diversity. It was proposed that all teachers should assume collective responsibility for all students and be willing to modify their teaching practice to reflect the new reality of their classrooms. The formation of constructive and collaborative relationships between teachers was identified as offering added opportunities to enhance the schools’ response to this group of students, in agreement with relevant literature (Ainscow et al., 2004; Angelides, 2001; Angelides et al., 2007). Finally, it was suggested that regular class teachers should try to develop relationships with their students and try to understand and show respect to students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Accordingly, it was claimed that reform directed at adopting inclusive school cultures would facilitate attempts to take on a common agenda for promoting the inclusion of foreign-speaking students. This directs attention to the importance of considering the organizational factors implicated in promoting inclusive cultures, as those have been presented in Chapter 2, and in evaluating how these can shape any strategies adopted in response to increasing student diversity.
In addition to promoting inclusive cultures, a set of resources with practical applications for teaching and learning have also been proposed. These involved: appropriate teacher pre-service and in-service training aimed at enhancing teachers’ ability to teach in diverse classrooms; enhancing the learning experience of students by allowing them to build upon prior knowledge when learning new material; using a variety of material and teaching media to increase students’ engagement; a curriculum that would allow teachers more flexibility in working with students who have variable skills in the Greek language. Amongst the more practical issues suggested was also the need to have a fixed classroom allocated for language support lessons, in reflection of the priority placed on these lessons within the national response to increasing diversity.

In terms of using an appropriate curriculum, it was also suggested by some teachers that students should be encouraged to “participate in lessons they enjoy and achieve well in”, in order to motivate their engagement in the learning process. Following this, the need to “revise the curriculum” to allow room within the educational agenda for foreign-students to promote their own national, religious and cultural identities was mentioned. For instance, such measures could be aimed at promoting respect for diversity, while eliminating the challenge placed on schools when offering lessons like Religious Education for instance to students of different religions.

An additional measure involved the “placement of foreign-speaking students from the same ethnic background in the same classrooms”. This was based on the assumption that students who had been in Cyprus longer and had developed better language skills could help recently-arrived students adjust to their new educational system faster and with greater ease. In this way, students of variable linguistic and academic abilities might be able to help each other in lessons through the use of their home-language to translate to each other what they cannot understand in class for example. Moreover, meeting people from the same background as them could promote socialisation and minimize the potential for isolation of recently-arrived students within schools.

However, I would suggest that such measures focused on encouraging students to seek support from their peers might have negative consequences in terms of increasing the workload of teachers, who would teach in classes that cater to higher number of non-native students compared to other classes. In addition, grouping students together according to their ethnic background might lead to self-segregation from the rest of the student
population and the formation of closely knit friendship groups amongst foreign-speaking students, contrary to the school’s aim of inclusion within the wider social networks.

Alternatively, since social inclusion was identified as an integral aspect of student’ school lives, I think that the experiences of foreign-speaking students could be enhanced with providing them with opportunities for participation in various school activities. This, I suggest, could: encourage students’ confidence if activities involve tasks that all students could participate in and complete successfully; promote the feeling that foreign-speaking students are part of the school community; and finally, decrease their isolation through enhancing interaction between native and non-native student groups, which might as a result minimise ignorance and prejudiced perceptions between these groups of students. These opportunities might serve as a medium towards cultivating an ethos for respect for diversity across schools, with the potential to address instances of racism and xenophobia observed within Cypriot schools (reference in Chapter 2). Therefore, assigning a more prominent role to strategies of response to increased student diversity in school by targeting issues of xenophobia and racism will diversify the overall government response and extend it to issues beyond provision of language support.

Table 12.1: Resources for Schools and Classroom practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources for Schools and Classroom practice</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Offer language support teachers permanent placements in order to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Decrease high turn-over rates of teachers who have formed constructive relationships and have learned to address the needs of foreign-speaking students</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Change negative perceptions of colleagues towards language support teachers that compromise the latter teachers’ response to foreign-speaking students</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Need for change in school culture in order to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Promote ethos of collaboration between staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage development of constructive relationships between staff and students</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cultivate respect for diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage teachers to modify their practice in reflection of increasing diversity in their classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Identify and use modes of “best practice” that enhance teaching and learning within diverse classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Offer relevant pre-service and in-service training to teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Offer relevant resources to enhance teaching and learning within diverse classrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Have fixed classrooms for language support lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage students to participate in lessons they enjoy and achieve well-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Allocating foreign-speaking students of the same background in the same classrooms so that they can support each other academically and enhance socialisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage foreign-speaking students in school activities in order to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance their socialisation with other peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage them to feel part of the school community</td>
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</table>
In summary, then, this section has pointed to a range of resources for supporting inclusion that were perceived by teachers and students as relevant to schools in general, as well as those that were more specific to classroom practice. These resources are summarised in Table 12.1, and were outlined in this section since they affect daily school practices, as well as teaching and learning; therefore affecting to variable extend students’ inclusion at school. To conclude the presentation of resources to inclusion, the next section outlines resources identified as relevant to Students, Homes and their Communities

**Resources amongst Students, Homes and Communities**

While analysing data collected through discussions with teachers, I identified suggestions that one level of untapped resources was the identification of students’ personal dispositions that could be utilised as resources to promote inclusion. For example, it was noted that many foreign-speaking students seemed motivated to attend school on the basis of meeting their friends. The opportunity to socialise with peers, therefore, appeared to motivate some students to come to school, resulting in improvements in attendance records. Peer socialisation was also associated with allowing students to use friends as resources to cope with the curriculum and linguistic demands of lessons. In addition, students’ personal characteristics, such as having high aspirations for further education, were perceived as mediating their potential for academic achievement and learning Greek.

Furthermore, some factors lying outside the schools’ walls were identified as resources to promoting the inclusion of students in schools. Such resources extended to students’ home environment and their communities. For instance, the importance of primary education in providing students with the basic skills required for a smoother transition into secondary education was also stressed. However, this factor could not be controlled due to the often high mobility rates of foreign-speaking students and their families. In this case, student participation in various support programmes was aimed at compensating for students not having attended primary education in Cyprus prior to enrolling in secondary schools.

Another resource deemed crucial to promoting the academic inclusion of foreign-speaking students involved closer teacher-parent collaboration. Increased collaboration with parents was expected to promote an environment that favours learning (Georgiou, 1997; Georgiou, 1998; Georgiou, 1999; Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2007; Theodorou, 2008). More specifically, receiving help with schoolwork at home and being motivated by their
parents to achieve well at school was perceived as a resource to promote students’ academic achievement.

In complement to home-school collaboration, the topic of increasing collaboration with students’ communities to initiate a community-based approach to deal with racism and prejudice was also mentioned. Attempts to enhance the sensitivity of both native and non-native families to increasing diversity within the Cypriot society were seen as a medium to promote respect for diversity. I think that these proposed strategies will have a wider scope than focusing solely on the context of schools. Based on the notion that the school is the microcosm reflecting the attitudes spanning the society within which it is situated, such widespread strategies might therefore be able to resolve the challenge of prejudiced perceptions against non-native families, and therefore reduce the stigma attached to them.

It was also suggested that through establishing collaboration between schools and the communities they serve, a process that is widely encouraged within inclusive schools (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Ainscow et al., 1999; Angelides, 2001; Angelides & Aravi, 2007; Barth, 1990; Reynolds et al., 1996), good community representation could be set up that might allow families of foreign-speaking students to advocate for better educational opportunities for their children. For example, despite the overall negative perceptions to offering welfare benefits to asylum-seeker families (Chapter 11), this presented an incentive for promoting the presence of children from these families in schools.

Ultimately, such suggestions indicated how the dimensions of students’ home and community environment were implicative in students’ inclusion in schools. In my opinion, this makes it necessary to acknowledge the importance that such factors might play in promoting inclusion in schools, and the need to conduct further research to account for the impact of these aspects of students’ lives when devising strategies to promote inclusion.

With this analysis I conclude my proposal regarding resources that could be used in order to foster greater inclusion. All these proposed resources will, I suggest, have direct implications on educational practice, since they were suggestions evoked through conversations with teachers and students as direct measures to compensate for the perceived barriers to inclusion. However, further research will be required to justify the appropriateness and effectiveness of the proposed resources.
The previous sections in this chapter have indicated how this study has a context-specific contribution to the Cypriot educational field. In this section, I would venture to go a step further to suggest how this study has a wider significance beyond the context of Cyprus to the field of inclusive education.

As indicated in Chapter 2, inclusive education entails that the right to education should be extended to all children (Lewin, 2007; UNESCO, 2000), and any initiatives to promote inclusion in schools should place a particular focus on groups of students which in the past have been excluded from educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2003). In addition, the most widely used definitions of inclusive education refer to inclusion as an approach to education embodying certain values, such as providing all students with equal educational opportunities, in which they can thrive and receive meaningful education, irrespective of students’ ethnic and cultural diversity (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 5).

Ainscow (2005), for example, presents inclusion as a continuous process involving the identification of better ways of responding to student diversity, and as a process that should be driven by a concern towards identifying “barriers” and “resources” to inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006b, pg. 5). Similarly, the process of removing barriers by targeting ineffective educational policy and practice to ensure the presence, participation and achievement of all students in schools, particularly for students at risk of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement should be at the heart of inclusive education (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 5; Manchester City Council, 2004). Within this view, aspects of inclusion and exclusion are perceived as intertwined, since inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion; and, finally the attempts to promote inclusive education become a never-ending process since no school can be in a perfect state of inclusion given the constant presence of exclusionary pressures in schools (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 25).

When starting the process of identifying barriers to inclusion, it is important to consider all possible exclusionary pressures, since certain factors within schools, communities and local or national policies act as barriers to learning and participation, and lead to children’s marginalisation. According to Dyson et al. (2002), barriers to inclusion can be related to curriculum, school and classroom organisation, assessment, or more generally to cultures, policies and practices. In this case then, when embarking on a journey towards promoting inclusion in education settings, it is important to investigate factors compromising the
formulation and implementation of inclusive educational policies, as well as effective educational practice, but at the same time not to oversee factors lying outside the realm of schools.

Therefore, in an overview of the entire study, I would like to draw attention to the model that was developed as an outcome of my data analysis (this was presented in Chapter 5; the process of deriving the model was explained in Appendix 8), and which served to discuss the factors that seemed to be affecting multiple dimensions of students’ school lives. This is revisited in Figure 12.1, since it offers a medium through which to pinpoint the most important contribution of this research to the wider field of inclusive education.

![A Model for explaining the barriers experienced by students](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 12.1:** Model used for the discussion and interpretation of findings. This model was derived from the thematic analysis of data and represents three dimensions of analysis and discussion within which barriers to students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation were identified (same as Figure 5.1).

The adoption of this model is important in itself and presents a contribution to the wider field of inclusive education, since it provides a means of theorising the process of identifying and discussing barriers to students’ inclusion. However, it is important to address the realisation that the process of classifying barriers according to fixed categories was often impossible, since some of the factors involved could fit into more than one dimension of the proposed model (i.e. schools and classrooms; national policy; students, families and communities). The association of specific barriers to multiple categories indicated an underlying interaction between the proposed dimensions/levels of analysis on the topic of barriers to inclusion. For example, as I carried out my investigation it became easier to understand how policy directed educational practice within schools, which in turn shaped students’ experience of schooling.
Mapping out the potential implications that any decision regarding policy and practice might have on other dimensions of the model could certainly present one way to overcome the complexity of strategies adopted in response to increasing student diversity in the future. In this way, using this model as a starting point for any discussion relevant to promoting an inclusive ethos within schools, would direct attention to the underlying factors that would need to be taken into consideration in order to produce a comprehensive response towards any type of exclusionary pressure.

Finally, I venture to go a step further in arguing that despite the specificity of context within this research, the broad categories proposed as dimensions to the model presented in Figure 12.1, can be used to discuss and analyse barriers to inclusion beyond the context of the Cypriot education system. In this way the findings of the study could offer practitioners and researchers of inclusive education in other parts of the world a further set of “interruptions” that have the potential to provoke thinking and reflection on educational practice (Ainscow et al., 2006a, pg. 118-143).

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that though the process of identifying barriers and resources to student’s inclusion within their schools language was identified as the most important factor affecting the students’ daily school lives (the particular implications of language have been explored in Chapter 9). Therefore, in the next section of this chapter, I would like to discuss how the research design adopted and the findings of this study present a further contribution to the fields of migrant and additional language learners.

**Contribution to the fields of migrant and additional language learners**

As discussed in chapter 2, this study was exploratory in nature and aimed to explore and identify any factors presented as barriers to “foreign-speaking” students’ inclusion in schools, and as such, it did not set out to address only issues relevant to language learning. However, the findings of this study have suggested that a great barrier to students’ academic and social inclusion at school was the fact that they were not proficient in the Greek language, which was the formal language of instruction used in schools; something which had direct implications on students’ inclusion through compromising their academic performance and socialisation (Figure 9.2).
In this respect, the findings of this study, regardless of context-specificity, have a direct contribution to the field of “migrant learners” and “additional language learners”, since concurrent themes to this study can be identified in the broadening international literature relevant to migrant and additional language learners. This section will explore some of the most prominent themes stemming from this literature, in an attempt to exemplify how this study can inform further this particular field of literature and research. In turn, the themes that will be outlined involve the identified language barriers and the formulation of educational policy targeting the improvement of language proficiency; students’ recorded underachievement compared to native students, and the subsequent shifts in policy aimed at raising standards; barriers with students’ social inclusion at school; and finally, the struggles of these students to preserve their national identities in schools where they have to follow culturally-specific curricula and are being received as “Others”.

Accordingly, it has to be noted that the topic of investigating the schools’ experiences of migrant children has been brought to the forefront in many international studies within a variety of contexts, in which schools are faced with the added pressure to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Additional language barriers present the primary barrier to students’ academic and social inclusion, in a similar pattern to the barriers identified in this thesis (Allen, 2006; Arnesena et al., 2007; Bo-Yuen Ngai, 2007; Corson, 1998; Demie, 2013; Franson, 1999; Hamilton, 2013a). As a primary response, as was the case of Cyprus, the educational system is reformed and policies are introduced which place a strong emphasis on promoting the students’ proficiency in an additional language (that used as the official language of instruction in each different setting). However, the frequent withdrawal of students from class to receive additional support in language learning creates further excludes learners from the processes of academic learning and socialisation which are taking place within their regular classrooms.

Therefore, as a first response to the rising migration patterns which result in increasing student and linguistic diversity within schools, specific emphasis is often placed on second or multiple language learning. This is very prominent within countries of the European Union, with various projects funded by the European Commission aimed at promoting language competency. This range from context specific research on native language preservation in the case of the Roma (European Commission, 2014), to second language acquisition or support for language diversity in various European countries (European Commission, 2010a; European Commission, 2010b; European Commission, 2011; European Commission, 2012; European Commission, 2013; European Commission, 2014).
A second theme that can be drawn from literature relevant to the education of migrant and additional language learners is on the topic of student’s observed underachievement compared to native students. Underachievement amongst these students is a widely cited outcome of students’ limited proficiency in the formal language of instruction used in each context (DfES, 2005a; DfES, 2005b; DfES, 2006; Gomolla, 2006; Hamilton, 2013b). Therefore, as it was identified in this study as well as in other international studies, great emphasis is placed on reforming educational policy and adopting strategies that aim to raise academic standards for migrant and additional language learners (Ainscow et al., 2006b; DfES, 2005a; DfES, 2005b; Mistry & Sood, 2012).

However, strategies aimed at improving standards and students’ achievement seem to be in contradiction to the emphasis placed with strategies aimed at improving language proficiency. This is the case since, as suggested by the findings in this thesis, an issue that is frequently brought to the forefront of discussions in schools catering to migrant additional language learners, is the time required for these students to acquire language fluency in the official language of instruction used in educational institutions in the country they have migrated to.

For example, Demie (2013) confirms that the key factor affecting the academic performance in pupils that have English as an additional language (EAL), are the language barriers. In the case of learning English as an additional language, it has been claimed that it takes on average five to seven years for students to acquire academic English proficiency to the level that students can meaningfully cope with the academic demands of the curriculum (Demie, 2013), indicating a very slow pace towards achieving language proficiency (Demie, 2013; Leckie et al., 2013; Strand & Demie, 2005).

This finding is similar to the findings of this thesis with the only difference being that in this thesis the language difficulties identified in Cypriot schools were against the learning of the Greek language instead of English. In this study, an interesting finding was the suggestion by most regular class teachers that “foreign-speaking” students could attend “reception” classes upon their arrival in Cyprus, dedicated solely to learning Greek. The rationale for this suggestion was that with the current strategies of withdrawing the students for a few hours of language support per day, language proficiency in Greek was very slow paced, and students were as a result unable to cope with the academic demands of everyday teaching.
Taking these findings into consideration, it becomes evident that this thesis serves to re-affirm that additional language learning is a slow-paced process, thus demanding the re-conceptualisation of strategies currently used to make any response towards these learners more effective. Similarly, Demie (2013) directs attention to the implications of such findings for policy and practice in light of the ever-increasing student diversity observed in schools, as well as the requirement for additional support to be offered to English language learners if they are achieve education equality with native English speakers in the classroom by having equal access to the national curriculum.

The third theme that has been drawn out, involves the fact that language barriers affect students’ social inclusion at school (Addler & Addler, 1995; Hamilton, 2013a). For example, in a study which investigated the experiences of Latino students, the ability to form relationships of trust between newly arrived students and their teachers and classmates, was suggested as a necessary strategy to promoting the students’ inclusion at school (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). The studies of Foley et al. (2013) and Hamilton (2013a), re-affirm the need to ensure the smooth transition of students into their new school environment, usually mediated through strategies aimed at promoting the students’ social inclusion at school.

Finally, in this thesis, students’ attempts to maintain their own national, linguistic and religious identities have been explored. Literature in the field of migrant and additional language learners also shines light on the struggles of these students to preserve their national identities in schools where they have to follow culturally-specific curricula and are being received as “Others”. Relevant discourse investigates the underlying issues of how students cope with preserving their national identities within schools that have culturally-specific curricula (Sood & Mistry, 2011), when in fact they are positioned as ethnic “others” within their schools (Devine, 2009; Devine et al., 2008; Kitching, 2011).

For instance, in a study that took place in Montana, USA, which suggested that all schools should try to respect students’ native languages, it was suggested that, in order to preserve native languages for “inclusive bilingual education” within the framework of multicultural education, the collaboration of all relevant stakeholders is required leading to the creation of multiple language programmes and curriculum, that will be applied by committed language educators working in variable settings (Bo-Yuen Ngai, 2007). Amongst the specific indicators in terms of schools becoming more inclusive was the enhancement of
“multicultural competence”, of “cross-cultural understanding” between all stakeholders, and of “second language awareness” for all stakeholders in schools (Bo-Yuen Ngai, 2007).

Amidst all this discourse and identification of prominent barriers to students’ daily school experiences, some studies have also been dedicated to identifying the factors, or resources, that need to be incorporated into national strategies adopted in response to increasing numbers of migrant and additional language learners within mainstream schools (Foley et al., 2013; Hamilton, 2013a). These studies direct attention to topics such as the:

- appropriate teacher training and support for additional language education;
- prioritising notions of respect for diversity by educational practitioners, irrespective of the perceived increase in teachers’ workload which might be contradicting any agenda set by the frequent performance-driven culture of educational institutions;
- efficient monitoring of any additional support offered to these students;
- revision of the curriculum and pedagogy in ways that promote respect for diversity;
- supporting students achieve language proficiency beyond the level of “social fluency” required mainly for daily communication, but to achieve proficiency required for academic fluency as well;
- (Foley et al., 2013; Hamilton, 2013a).

Safford & Drury (2013) proclaim the need for considering the “problem” of linguistic diversity in this era of globalisation, and to consider what kinds of research methods could provide insights to this issue and relevant solutions. Having drawn on the series of themes that this study has derived, and presented how similar the topics discussed are to those of the field of migrant and additional language learners, I propose that the research methodology used in this study, as this has been informed and shaped through the work done for the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), can provide insights to the underlying barriers to students’ inclusion.

In addition, the findings of this study re-affirm the suggestions and findings from relevant literature in the field of migrant and additional language learners. In this case, this study can offer a platform through which to discuss the appropriateness of educational responses towards increasing linguistic diversity within student populations; though which to evaluate the importance of policy reform and adopting strategies aimed at catering to the needs of these groups of students, the effect of every day school practice on students’ school experiences, and finally, look into the implication of students’ home and
community environment for identifying barriers and resources that can be used to make the school experiences of this group of students more meaningful.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the most important findings of this study. The purpose of the study was revisited in order to define its contribution to knowledge. This was achieved by drawing attention to the three-fold contribution of this study. Specifically, the context-specificity of the study has made it particularly relevant to discuss issues of inclusive education which were particularly relevant to the Cypriot educational context, with particular implications for research and practice in this field. In this way, this study comes to fill a gap in knowledge and research in the field of inclusive education relevant to increasing student diversity in the educational context of Cyprus.

However, as suggested in this chapter, the identification of a model of analysis which provides a framework for discussion and theorising of the identification of barriers and resources to students’ inclusion (Figure 5.1), situates this study in the heart of discourse on inclusive education. Finally, this study has identified that language barriers have significant implications for students’ academic and social inclusion in schools in Cyprus, and it has provided a framework through which to discuss how daily school practice is compromised by language barriers (Figure 9.2). Taking this evidence into consideration allowed me to present the contribution of this study to the wider field of migrant and additional language learners.

In the next and final chapter of the thesis, I would like to draw out some lessons learned, as well as the implications of the findings in terms of educational practice and research in relation to contextualised responses to increasing student diversity within educational institutions.
Chapter 13 - Concluding remarks

This study has investigated the school experiences of recently arrived foreign-speaking students coming mainly from economic migrant and asylum-seeking families, and educated within three mainstream secondary schools in Cyprus. My interest in this topic emerged in relation to the lack of anticipation of this unprecedented increase in diversity within student populations in schools across Cyprus. Since increasing student diversity has been a topic that affected educational institutions across the world, I was eager to explore the changes that educational institutions in Cyprus had to undertake in response to increasing student diversity.

Due to the fact that the phenomenon of increasing diversity was at its primary stages in Cyprus, I anticipated that I would be able to carry out exploratory research to identify barriers and resources to students’ inclusion specific to the context of Cyprus. This was achieved through relying on the perceptions of both teachers and students within the selected case study schools. The identified barriers to inclusion have been extensively explained in this thesis, and offer a detailed outline of the increasing challenge posed on educational institutions when dealing with increasing student diversity. However, further research on the topic can be directed towards investigating schools’ ability or reluctance to adapt in reflection to the emerging changes observed within the ever-changing and less homogenous communities that they currently serve.

In turn, the identification of resources as measures to compensate for the observed barriers to inclusion have been proposed as having potential implications for future reform for educational policy, practice and research, in terms of their effective presentation as countermeasures to the barriers to inclusion. Therefore, an implication of this study has been the identification of unused resources that could otherwise be mobilised to enhance schools’ response to increasing diversity. However, I would argue that further research is necessary to explore the contextualised effect and specific implication of these resources on students’ school lives for the development of inclusive policy, practice, and cultures.

This study therefore provides an initial platform from which to evaluate emerging exclusionary pressures that prevent students to meaningfully engage with their education and participate in school life equally to other classmates. Accordingly, the model presented in Chapter 5 offers a visual medium through which barriers and resources to inclusion relevant to increasing student diversity can be discussed. The adoption of the specific
model is important in itself since it allowed opportunities of theorising about the process of identifying and classifying barriers and resources to students’ inclusion. The most important element of this model is the identification of interaction between its different dimensions; something that prescribes the added complexity for any future attempts to respond to increasing student diversity.

The identification of broad categories as the dimensions to the model, such as schools and classrooms; national policy; and students, families and community aspects, can be used to discuss barriers to inclusion relevant to increasing student diversity in a wider context beyond Cypriot education. In addition, the phenomenon of increasing student diversity has presented a challenge to other countries long before it presented a challenge to schools in Cyprus. In the light of this, I would like to suggest that despite the contextualised nature of barriers and resources identified in this study, future research could effectively tap into yet another underused resource, that of reflectively evaluating the examples set internationally to compare responses of other educational institutions in order to create interruptions to thinking, as proposed by Ainscow et al. (2006a, pg. 118-143), as a means of formulating an informed response to increasing diversity through reflecting on existing knowledge in the field of inclusive education.

In a similar way, the lessons learned in this study can also be considered according to their relevance to the field of migrant and additional language learners, as discussed in the previous chapter. In critical reflection of this suggestion, more research should be directed at investigating the implication of additional language learning within schools catering to increasingly diverse student populations, as well as the converging factors of policy, practice and home and community environment to any attempt to overcome language barriers to students’ education.

With these concluding remarks, I would like to return to the findings of my original pilot studies on the topic of student diversity and to reflect on the intellectual journey that has been undertaken from that starting point. It needs to be noted that while working through the various stages of this study, it had not always been possible to pause and reflect on the learning curve that was undertaken. In reflection to the original pilot work carried out with “foreign-speaking” students in Cyprus, as well as the pilot work undertaken when studying the experiences of EAL learners in an English primary school, it is at this stage that I can admit to the “naivety” with which I was approaching these topics at that time.
Drawing specifically from my experiences of studying how an English school has responded to issues of increasing student diversity and migrant and additional language learners, I was able to evaluate with a more critical eye the response of the Cypriot educational context to similar exclusionary pressures. Most importantly, having relied on this work to provide me with insights as to an appropriate methodology to use with “additional language learners”, I was able to build on the methodology employed and use it in a very different educational context with very positive results. Therefore, through my engagement in a more substantial research for the purpose if this thesis, I have immersed myself in an in-depth investigation of the factors implicated in shaping educational systems in particular ways, in response to any factors compromising the processes of teaching and learning.

This has allowed me to gain better understanding of the complexity found within educational systems, as well as the factors required for their effective reform when faced with exclusionary pressures, such as the ever increasing student diversity amongst student populations. Consequently, this journey has allowed me to comprehend the interconnectivity of variable factors, such as policy, educational practice, and factors lying outside the realm of schools and into students’ community and home environment, for the creation of effective educational responses towards overcoming barriers to teaching and learning. In critically reviewing my journey leading to the culmination of this work, I now realise that the valuable lessons learned will act as milestones accompanying me during my future academic and professional endeavours!
References


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Appendices
Appendix 1

Timeframe for the research

The table below indicates the timeframe for completion of this thesis. Fieldwork was conducted between September 2009 and February 2010, where each of the three case study schools was visited in turn for two months. Data entry occurred simultaneously to the data collection and was finished in August 2010. Data analysis started during the data collection and data entry period and was completed in February 2011, at which time the write up period of the thesis commenced.

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<td>Apr-Aug</td>
<td>Sep-Oct</td>
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Timeframe for use of each research method per school and number of participants

The different research methods used during the data collection period are presented below along with the approximate time it took for the use of each method in each of the three schools.

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<th>Minimum number of participants (per school)</th>
<th>Number of days required per school</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interview with school teachers</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation of teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole day classroom observation of students</td>
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<td>Drawing task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participatory photography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of days required to complete the data collection per school</td>
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<td>48</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Gaining access to case study schools to research participants

Field notes on the process of negotiating access to schools X & Y

Case study school X: Field notes of Personal Communication and Discussion with school head teacher

Date of initial school contact: 12-10-2009

Purpose of school visit: attempt to negotiate access to a school in Nicosia to conduct my research in with the school principal. This would have been Case Study A if access had been granted.

Field Notes:
- School X is a small school in the district of Nicosia which caters for one of the largest populations of foreign-speaking students in this district. The decision to choose this school as my first case study school was based on the fact that:
  - The school catered for a large number of students coming from diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. This would allow me to potentially have access to a large number of student participants since the research had to involve students’ notions of inclusion at school.
  - I returned to Cyprus to commence my fieldwork at the end of September 2009. This school was in the district where I reside in Cyprus and would have been easier to start my research immediately after my arrival in Cyprus in the district where I live in, instead of focusing on making arrangements for residence as well as access to schools in another district at this point.
- First communication by phone on the 12th October

  The principal suggested that:
  - I might not find enough pupils that will be willing to participate in my research
  - The students might not be able to meaningfully contribute to the research because they lack even the basic skills in the Greek language

- She questioned the decision of the Ministry of Education to grant permission for research to be conducted in her school, since this school has been classified as one that belongs to the ‘Zone of Educational Priority’ for the education system of Cyprus, which means it follows a different curriculum to the rest of the public schools and receives more resources so it would not be representative of the majority of schools in Cyprus. She seemed a bit annoyed at this decision.
- She informed me that children in her school are in fact too tired and frustrated with the number of researchers that come into the school wanting to use students as participants for their inquiry.
- Nonetheless it was decided that I should visit the school the following day (October 13th at 10:00am) to discuss my research project in greater detail
- I was requested to draft a parental consent form to be sent out to students’ parents and only when the consent forms were returned I would be able to have access to student participants.

- Meeting with the principal on the 13th of October

  The principal expressed her concerns about conducting the research in her school suggesting that school schedule would be disturbed if I wanted to include students in the research as well.
  - She tried to negotiate that only teachers were involved despite the explanations I provided for the reasons I wanted to engage students in my research as well.
  - She was adamant that no students could be withdrawn from lessons in any instance to have interviews or discussions with and that provided the parents consented for their children’s participation in my research, she would make an announcement to students that whoever wanted to participate in my research project would have to come and find me at break time and volunteer to offer their time to this research.
  - I was requested to leave the parental consent forms at the school to be disseminated to students by their teachers and to allow one to two weeks for the students to bring the signed parental consent forms back to the school. The secretary would then call me to inform me that I could come to school to start with my research.
  - I called the school at the end of week one (22nd October) to check whether any consent forms have been returned and the secretary mentioned that my forms had not been handed out to students.
I called the school at the end of week two (29th October) to check whether the consent forms had been sent out to students’ homes and whether it would be more convenient for me to come into the school and hand the forms out and explain to students what the research was about. The secretary informed me that consent forms had been given to 3 classes of year one secondary school students and she was expecting to see whether any would be returned to school. I mentioned that the principal had agreed that the consent forms could be given out to all 6 classes of year one secondary school students. The secretary mentioned that she asked the teachers in charge of each of the first year classes to drop by her office to collect the forms and only 3 showed up, and that if any more forms were sent out she would inform me.

I visited the school at the end of week three (6th November) to inquire about the progress made with the parental consent forms. I was informed that none was returned back to the school.

Seeing that there was no response of effort to help me with carrying out my research at this school, I decided that I should immediately contact a second school in the district of Nicosia to negotiate access to conduct my research. In this case if I could not gain access to this school I would have a second alternative and would not waste any more time trying to gain access to this school.

I visited this school for one last time on the 13th of November and I was informed that no parental consent forms had been returned to the school, which meant that I could not proceed with conducting the research in this particular school.

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**Case study school Y: Field notes of Personal Communication and Discussion with school head teacher**

**Date of initial school contact:** 02-03-2010

**Purpose of school visit:** attempt to negotiate access to a school in Larnaca to conduct my research in with the school principal. This would have been Case Study B if access had been granted.

**Field Notes:**

- I called the school the week before visiting them for the first time. I spoke to the school’s Head teacher and informed her of my intention to conduct research at her school. She mentioned that she had already granted permission for research to be carried out at her school for 3 other projects. Two of these projects were part of the agenda of the Pedagogical Institute and another project was one involving a professor of the University of Cyprus. Based on that she claimed that taking up another project would be too time consuming for her staff and most importantly for the students who miss valuable teaching time when they are forced to participate in these research projects.
  - She mentioned that I could speak to the Deputy Head who was in charge of the foreign-speaking students’ program and if he agreed to help me carry out this research then I had her consent to start my research
  - She questioned the fact that I intended to do research in a district in Cyprus where I was not residing. She mentioned that all the students who had previously come to her school to carry out research where actually staying in Larnaca and they only went there because it was convenient for them. When I explained that my intention was to see different school contexts with regards to the diversity of student populations across schools in different districts of Cyprus, she hinted that it would have been easiest for me to choose all my schools from the district of Nicosia.
  - She also questioned that fact that I had decided to choose that school for my research when there were other schools in that district that catered for a greatly diverse student population. I explained that according to documents from the Ministry of Education this school was catering for the largest number of foreign students in this district and that I based my choice on this criterion.
  - When I asked if I could visit the school and discuss my research in more detail with her she decided to give me 10 minutes of her time during the following week to discuss about granting me permission for my research.

- I visited the school and asked to see the head teacher. She was absent from her office and the secretary directed me to see the Deputy Head who was in charge of the pilot program for foreign speaking students. He was not in his office either so I had to wait.
  - I met the head teacher who did not seem very keen on providing me with permission to carry out the research at her school. She mentioned again that there were already research projects taking place at the school and she did not want for foreign-speaking students especially to be missing any lessons since these were students who were more vulnerable that others at the school.
  - The Deputy Head happened to be passing by the Head teacher’s office and she asked him to come in to discuss about my intention to do research at the school. His immediate reaction was “and who are you that wants to do research in our school?”. I explained what
my research was about and he asked me “Why didn’t you do your research in England then? It would be easier for you than having to look for schools in Cyprus”. I mentioned that the nature of my research topic indicated that I should focus on schools in Cyprus. I felt, comparing to how well I had been receive in my first case study school, that he did not intend to dedicate time to helping me with my research even if the Head teacher had already agreed.

- They were discussing amongst themselves the fact that the Ministry should not have granted permission for me to carry out my research at that school since for the last two years they had to accommodate at least 5 researchers who conducted research on various topics. The Head mentioned that she specifically wrote a letter directed to the Head of Secondary Education at the Ministry of education to ask that no more researchers be sent to that school.

- I tried to negotiate access by indicating that the nature of my study would not burden the students too much and that not a lot of teaching time would be lost, but instead the student-associated methods would be complemented by interviews with teachers as well. The Deputy Head laughed and asked me whether in other schools I had been too I found it easy to convince teachers to volunteer to spend time to participate in research projects.

- The Deputy Head mentioned that he had recently refused access to a well-known professor from the University of Cyprus to conduct a research project at their school for this school year since they were preoccupied with other things this year. And he continued to say that it would place him in a very difficult situation if it became known that he refused access to a University professor but granted access to a student.

By this time in the conversation I knew that it would not even be wise to attempt to convince them to grant me access to carry out my research there because in that case I would not have received much support anyways. Having carried out my research in one school already I knew how important it was to collaborate with a few key people at each school that would be eager to volunteer their time and connections to help me complete my research successfully. In case that I did not achieve this I was risking to lose valuable time trying to complete my project in a school that was not willing to provide me with any help and probably end up with a half-completed project in the end.

I was positively surprised when the Head teacher told me how sympathetic she was to my situation and how awful she felt by the fact that she could not accommodate me, but suggested that I contact the Head teacher of another school close by who catered for an equally large number of foreign students. She mentioned that that school had received many more foreign students than any other school in this district and that a lot of the students from her school had actually gone to the other school as well.

- I asked her whether I could have the contact details of the Head teacher at the other school since she mentioned that they were friends, and she offered to call her and ask her if I could go over at that school to talk to her. I agreed and she placed the call.

- She told the other head teacher that due to other active research projects they had going on at the school she could not grant me permission to conduct my research at her school, and that she would be greatly obliged to her if she granted permission to complete my research at her school. She mentioned that I had a very interesting research topic and that her school would greatly benefit by having me conduct my research there because they had so many foreign students coming into that school for this school year.

- The Head teacher of the other school agreed to see me that same day so that I did not have to come all the way back to Larnaca again just to see her, and asked me to drive over and see her as soon as possible since later during the day she had to leave the school to attend a serried of meetings with the Mayor.

I thanked the Head teacher and Deputy Head for the time they spend talking to me and went straight to the other school.
Appendix 3

Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools

Indicators for DIMENSION A Creating inclusive cultures

A.1 Building community
Indicators
A.1.1 Everyone is made to feel welcome.
A.1.2 Students help each other.
A.1.3 Staff collaborate with each other.
A.1.4 Staff and students treat one another with respect.
A.1.5 There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers.
A.1.6 Staff and governors work well together.
A.1.7 All local communities are involved in the school.

A.2 Establishing inclusive values
Indicators
A.2.1 There are high expectations for all students.
A.2.2 Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion.
A.2.3 Students are equally valued.
A.2.4 Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a ‘role’.
A.2.5 Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.
A.2.6 The school strives to minimise discriminatory practice

Sample questions for indicator A.1.3 Staff collaborate with each other
Do staff treat each other with respect irrespective of their roles in the school?
Do staff treat each other with respect irrespective of their gender?
Do staff treat each other with respect irrespective of their class or ethnic background?
Are all staff invited to staff meetings?
Do all staff attend meetings?
Is there wide participation in meetings?
Are all teachers and classroom assistants involved in curriculum planning and review?
Is teamwork between staff a model for the collaboration of students?
Do staff know who to turn to with a problem?
Do staff feel comfortable about discussing problems in their work?
Are regular supply staff encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school?
Are all staff involved in drawing up priorities for school development?
Do all staff feel ownership of the school development plan?

Indicators for DIMENSION B Producing inclusive policies

B.1 Developing the school for all
Indicators
B.1.1 Staff appointments and promotions are fair.
B.1.2 All new staff are helped to settle into the school.
B.1.3 The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.
B.1.4 The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.
B.1.5 All new students are helped to settle into the school.
B.1.6 The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued.

B.2 Organising support for diversity
Indicators
B.2.1 All forms of support are co-ordinated.
B.2.2 Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity.
B.2.3 ‘Special educational needs’ policies are inclusion policies.
B.2.4 The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students.
B.2.5 Support for those learning English as an additional language is co-ordinated with learning support.
B.2.6 Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies
B.2.7 Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.
B.2.8 Barriers to attendance are reduced.
B.2.9 Bullying is minimised.

Sample questions for indicator B.2 Organising support for diversity
Do all curriculum development activities address the participation of students differing in background, experience, attainment or impairment?
Do all curriculum development activities address the reduction of barriers to learning and participation?
Do staff development activities support staff in working effectively together in classrooms?
Is partnership teaching, followed by shared review, used to support teachers to respond to student diversity?
Do staff observe each other's lessons in order to reflect on the perspectives of students?
Do staff receive training in devising and managing collaborative learning activities?
Are there shared opportunities for teachers and classroom assistants to develop more effective collaboration?
Are there opportunities for staff and students to learn about peer tutoring?
Do teaching and support staff learn about using technology to support learning (such as cameras, television, video, overhead projector, tape-recorders, computers/internet)?

Indicators for DIMENSION C Evolving inclusive practices

C.1 Orchestrating learning
C.1.1 Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.
C.1.2 Lessons encourage the participation of all students.
C.1.3 Lessons develop an understanding of difference.
C.1.4 Students are actively involved in their own learning.
C.1.5 Students learn collaboratively.
C.1.6 Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students.
C.1.7 Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.
C.1.8 Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership.
C.1.9 Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participation of all students.
C.1.10 Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students.
C.1.11 Homework contributes to the learning of all.
C.1.12 All students take part in activities outside the classroom.

C.2 Mobilising resources
C.2.1 Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning.
C.2.2 Staff expertise is fully utilised.
C.2.3 Staff develop resources to support learning and participation.
C.2.4 Community resources are known and drawn upon.
C.2.5 School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion.

Sample questions for indicator C.1 Orchestrating learning
Are students encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?
Do teachers explain the purpose of a lesson or group of lessons?
Do the classroom environment, displays and other resources help independent learning?
Does the support given to students help them to move on in their learning while drawing on the knowledge and skills they already possess?
Are curriculum plans shared with students so that they can choose to study at a faster pace or in greater depth?
Are students taught how to research and write up a topic?
Are students able to use the library and information technology resources independently?
Are students taught how to take notes from lectures and books and organise their work?
Are mechanical copying activities avoided?
Are students taught how to present their work in spoken, written and other forms, individually and in groups?
Are students encouraged to summarise what they have learnt verbally and in writing?
Are students taught how to revise for tests and examinations?
Appendix 4

Research method: In-class Observations

4.1 Semi-structured in-class observation schedule

**Purpose:** Used to observe teaching and learning of students in regular lessons and language support lessons. To analyze learners’ classroom experiences, where the learners have been identified as potentially vulnerable to marginalization or underachievement.

Name of Pupil

Description of lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Pupil’s Experience of Learning</th>
<th>Tick when observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEHAVIOUR CATEGORIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. General disposition of pupil</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. chooses to sit with friends F or alone A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. teacher organises seating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Positive + / negative - / neutral? Disposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong> e.g. surprising observations, queries, additions to the prompts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Teacher – pupil relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. has eye contact with pupil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. praises/rewards pupil</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. criticises pupil</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. names the pupil</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. encourages the pupil</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. approaches the pupil in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. monitors the pupil’s work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C. Teacher and pupil questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. pupil calls out answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. pupil puts hand up to answer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. teacher responds to pupil as volunteer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. teacher asks pupil question without them volunteering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. pupil asks teacher a question</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. The pupil, task and teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. appropriate behaviour for task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. inappropriate behaviour for task</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. appears to understand task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. appears not to understand task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. pupil responds to teacher’s instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. pupil does not respond to teacher’s instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. The pupil and other pupils</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. selects pupil(s) to work with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. works with pupils selected by teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. interacts on task with other pupil(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. seeks help from other pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. gives help to other pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. interacts off task with other pupils</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. initiates off task behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOTES IN GENERAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with group of students from lesson including shadowed students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Example of data collected

*Socrates Gymnasium*: Field notes of Observations conducted in the extra Greek language lessons for foreign-speaking students offered by T1. Date of first observation: 24-11-2009.

Purpose of school visit: start observations in T1’s classes. Some of the observations will be completed before the Christmas break. She teaches 3 separate classes of foreign-speaking students: a beginners class, and intermediate class and an advanced class, and I can observe each of these classes on various days. Examples of field notes from observation sessions are presented below.

Greek language support class- Beginners Level: First lesson observed:

- While walking towards the class where the lesson was supposed to be held I noticed that students were not in the class that we actually used for the lesson but were waiting for the teacher outside another class. The teacher informed me that no specific class was allocated for language support lessons.
  - While trying to find available classrooms to conduct the lesson, valuable teaching time was wasted.
  - It is often the case that she cannot find the students in the school yard to tell them which class they are going to and thus students show up late for class and complain that they did not see which class she chose to have the lesson in and it took them time to find their teacher and the rest of their classmates. She thinks that this might be in a way an excuse to miss class.
  - T1 mentioned that for the first two months of school and since the students knew that there was not a specific classroom allocated to them for their Greek lessons, students continued to roam the yard or the school corridors after the break and she had to look for and find her students and tell them where to go for their lesson. She expects students to gather together at a specific location after the break so that it is easy to find them and find a class to have their lesson in.
  - Teacher introduced me to the students as Miss Annita who wants to learn a few things about how they do their Greek lessons at this school
  - 6 students (5 boys; 1 girl)
  - The lesson was about using the verb ‘wear’ and the students had to use it correctly when used in reference to a female or a male or when used in plural for more than one person.
  - Sitting arrangement:

```
      A     B
      C     D
      E     F
```

- A: girl from Ukraine
- B: boy from Romania
- C: boy from Romania
- D: boy from Iraq
- E: boy from Egypt
- F: boy from Iraq

- Notes on specific students:
  - After explaining what this verb meant the teacher assigned an exercise to the whole class and approached student C to explain things in on a one-to-one basis. She checked whether he had understood what they were supposed to do and whether he needed specific help with the exercise. She tried to remind him that the way to solve the exercise was to try to solve it like the one they solved yesterday, so tried to make connections with things that were already learned.
  - Student C arrived to Cyprus one week ago and as the teacher told me needs to learn even the basic principles of Greek language like the alphabet that the rest of the students in the class have already learned. He sits alone in class and keeps to himself. He tried to talk to students A and B on a couple of instances but these students kept talking to themselves.
  - Students A and B were talking between themselves for most of the lesson. They got on with their work though and were eager to say the answer when asked by the teacher. The girl translated some things for the boy and the boy seemed to understand what she was trying to say, proceeded to solve the exercise, and since they finished before everybody else they were talking to each other at first softly but then were talking and laughing loudly and ended up disturbing the class.
  - Students D, E and F spoke between themselves in Arabic. They were passing papers with writing between themselves for the majority of the lesson. The laughing and talking disrupted the class on various occasions. T1 scolded them a number of times and asked them to concentrate on their work and not let student F distract them from their work.
  - Student F kept distracting the two boys sitting in front of him and the teacher approached him and said that if he thought he had nothing to learn from being in her class he could leave and go to the Deputy Heads’ office and explain why he wouldn't allow the rest of the students to learn something.
Appendix 5

Research method: Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

5.1 Semi-structured schedule for Student Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for discussion: (used with student participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Time of arrival in the country and time that participants have been in school (if recent arrivals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Country they have come from (if recent arrivals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) How do you feel about your school? Do you feel safe/unsafe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Have you made friends at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Do you sit with your friends in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Do you come to school every day? If not, why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) When you are at school, do you always attend lessons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) What lessons do you like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) What lessons don’t you like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Do you take tests at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Are there adults at the school who support you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Do you get enough support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) What additional support would help you? Is extra support required with Greek language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Can your parents help you with your school work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Do you speak Greek at home? What other languages do you speak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Do you participate in after-school clubs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Which?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Example of data collected

Socrates Gymnasium: Transcript of Interview 3
Date interview was conducted: 25-02-2010
Length of interview: 21:06 minutes
Interviewer (I): Annita Eliadou
Interviewee: Student 1 (S1) – 2nd year secondary school student; female; 14 years old; from Syria; in Intermediate group of Greek language support class

Excerpt of Interview Transcript:

I: how long have you and your family been in Cyprus?
S1: 2 years
I: Where were you born?
S1: Syria
I: why did your family move to Cyprus?
S1: my dad works as a….car engineer? Yes, car engineer, and his boss travelled to Syria and he liked how my dad worked, my dad does a good job, and so my dad came to Cyprus to get a few things to bring to Syria, and he stayed here 3-4 months, and then we came as well.
I: How does Cyprus seem to you in comparison to Syria? Where would you rather stay?
S1: in Cyprus
I: yeah? Why is that?
S1: is more beautiful, and I liked it
I: what did you like the best? What do you prefer in Cyprus compared to Syria?
S1: in Cyprus I liked it, because the school is very nice, and…. I liked it
I: is the school better because you like the buildings better, do you like the way that you carry on the lessons better…? What do you like best at school?
S1: how do we do the lessons here….how we go on a break, like this
I: what is different in Syria?
S1: it is the same but….is not so nice like here….
I: good. Is there something else that you like from your life here in Cyprus?
S1: the….the trees….what I see here is different
I: good. Ok, so when you came to Cyprus did you know any Greek?.....
S1: …no…I didn't know….it was….my dad knows a little….a little Greek from trips to Cyprus, and he said when I come to school I will not know anything but will learn a little bit at first, like ‘what is your name’, ‘how old are you’, ‘where are you from’….and I have to answer….yes it was like this…and then….

I: did your dad help you at the beginning? With your Greek?
S1: yes, yes! Helps as much as he can….and then I try….i tried using Greek within the lessons……

I: what languages can you speak now?
S1: Greek and Arabic
I: good….so in Syria what language did you use when speaking and writing?
S1: Arabic
I: good….so you started school here at this secondary school?
S1: yes….I started in first grade of secondary school here
I: good….so you are now in second grade?
S1: yes….I: so if you can remember how it was last year for you…..did you start school by being placed in a regular class with the rest of your classmates?
S1: no….I did not know anything about the school schedule….I thought is like Syria….that you are always in the same class and the teachers come to your class to have the lesson with you….here it is very different because you always go to a different class to have different lessons, every school hour is a different lesson and you have to know what lesson you have at that time and what class to go to….we change classes….and I did not like this….because my friend I cannot speak with her, you see her in one class and then she has other lesson in other class and I have other lesson in another class and I don’t see her a lot….I: so it was more difficult at the beginning?
S1: very difficult….it was very very difficult…..I did not understand and I have to do the tests in each lesson and I don’t know anything and I feel I don't know anything at school…
I: so did you do tests in your regular classroom then? Where you given grades on tests in each of the lessons?
S1: no…it was auditing….i was auditor in class
I: ok….did you know this from the beginning? Did you know that you had to do the test but you were not going to be graded on this test?
S1: yes I knew….teachers all told me that I get no grades
I: so this was a problem for you at the beginning? You had difficulties with the school schedule?
S1: yes
I: Is there anything else that you had difficulties with or you did not know how to do at the beginning at school?
S1: it was….school work….talk with my friends….i could not…and I could not explain to them what I want…..it was very, very difficult
I: so did you make friends as soon as you came to school?
S1: no…. I had friends from Syria….they came to Cyprus with their family too….and then I had to make friends with people in my class….but they did not like, because I am foreign and they know I do not understand….and then I try to speak little Greek slowly slowly….and then we talk with people in my class, and I try to speak to them
I: are there many students from Syria in this school? When you came here….you met students from Syria?
S1: ...I did not know if there are people from Syria…then I found out there is one girl….then I found out there is two, three, four….like this….
I: when you are with people from Syria at school do you speak to them in Arabic or in Greek?
S1: I try to speak in Greek and sometimes I do speak in Greek to them….sometimes I speak in Arabic…..so much easier to say what I want and they can understand…..
I: good….so is it easier to speak in Arabic when you are with people that know the language?
S1: yes….much easier
I: when you said that it was difficult to make friends with people who are from Cyprus….that are in school
S1: it was difficult…
I: what was most difficult for you?
S1: to make friends….in general….i don't know….i did not know how to make friends with my friends and how to speak to them, how to explain what I want, yes to explain what I want…and for them to understand me and what I want to say….that was the most difficult….I: so at the beginning when you joined your new class, where you the one that started speaking to other people in class in order to get to know them? Or did they come to meet you and to get to know you as well
S1: I was embarrassed to speak to them….because I did not know Greek….and then I tried to speak to my friend and she did not understand and then I came and she speaks with me now that I can talk better
I: so now you have friends who are Cypriot as well?
S1: yes now I have company
I: so are they all from you own class or from other classes as well? Which class are you in right now
S1: I am in B6
I: so are all your friends from B6 or have you met other people from other classes too?
S1: I met other people too from other schools as well
I: so do you hang out with your friends from school only at school or can you see them in the afternoon or during the weekends as well?
S1: just in school and sometimes in the afternoon if we have extra lessons
I: ok…so they are just friends from school
S1: yes
I: ok….so it was difficult at the beginning to meet new people, and it was difficult to adjust to the new academic requirements in terms of how the schedule works and being able to participate in lessons due to language difficulties…is there anything else that you can remember from last year or this year that is difficult for you at school?
S1: what is difficult now in school?
I: yes!
S1: I have difficulty in taking tests because some things I do not understand, and I am scared that if I don't do well in my tests this year I will lose one academic year and have to be in second grade again next year…. I want to try to learn Greek because I have to do exams and then after passing the exams I can progress to third grade as normal
I: do you mean tests that you do in your extra Greek class with T1 or in your regular class?
S1: both in my regular class and with T1. And I have to do very well in exams this year.…
I: will you be graded in this exams or not?
S1: I chose to be graded
I: so this year you get grades in all of your lessons?
S1: no
I: in what lessons do you get grades this year?
S1: now I do not get any grades but when I have an exam I will get grades
I: your other friends, who know you are still learning Greek and you might have difficulties in tests and so based on that you do not get a grade….. do they say anything? Because Cypriot students will do their test, they know they will be graded and they are stressed when they have a test….do they say anything about you not receiving grades on tests?
S1: they say they are different. They get a grade and I don't. it is difficult when I don't get grades…. I: do you feel it is difficult or do other people think that?
S1: is difficult in general…. I: ok….would you like to know though that every time you do a test you will be graded? Or would you prefer it now that you might take a test but you know you do not receive grades on your performance? What do you prefer?
S1: yes…. I do a test but I don't get graded. I wanted to get grades but I will not get a grade in class but in final exams I will get a grade…
I: so you will get a grade at the end of the year?
S1: yes
I: and then the school tells you if you will progress to third grade or not?
S1: yes
I: so it is the same procedure for all students that do not know Greek very well?
S1: yes
I: ok….so we talked about a few things that you found difficult at the beginning when you came to this school. Are there any things that helped you when you came to Cyprus and to this school? Was there something that you found pleasant, that was good, that helped you start school here in Cyprus?
S1: who helped me?
I: a person or something else…
S1: the teachers help….my friends want to but cannot help me….it was difficult, like, one foreign girl comes to school, she does not know Greek, and I try to explain to her and I cannot explain what I want to say….this is difficult…..and it was good that teachers help….so if I don't understand something they explain more…
I: so all teachers helped you in the same way? Or are there teachers in some lessons that helped you more?
S1: yes, they help in different ways, some more some less
I: what lessons do you like the most here in schools?
S1: Greek
I: why do you like the Greek lessons more?
S1: because I like the language and then I can speak better and I learn to correct lets say a word, I speak better and I write better….and I like Maths as well
I: good! Why do you like Maths?
S1: is easier than Greek and other lessons. I learned in Syria as well and I see equation and I solve it. When I have Maths problem though is more difficult, you nee to understand what the problem asks you to do
I: ok….so do you find Maths easier than Greek?
S1: yes a lot
I: so you can understand better?
S1: yes, because it is numbers and not words most of the time
I: ok…..is there something else that you think has helped you or made you feel good at school?
S1: my friends in my class
I: your friends….so when you first came where you given a lesson plan or a schedule and you were told that you have these lessons and you have to go to these classes? Was there someone showing you around the school?
S1: no. I got the schedule and I had a girl who understands Arabic and Greek and she said this is Maths, she translate Greek into Arabic so I understand what I have to do, and I knew I have this lesson this time
I: was this girl in your class or in another class?
S1: in another class
I: who introduced you to this girl? How did you know she could help you?
S1: I had this friend from my family who did not know Greek and in her class there is another girl and she understands Greek and my other friends said I needed help and she came to help me
I: so nobody from the school told you that there are other people from Syria in your school that can help you?
S1: no
I: so you found these people on your own?
S1: yes
I: when you compare how school was for you last year to this year, is it different?
S1: yes very very different….it was very difficult now is easier…I have friends now…..
I: so is one of the most important things to meet new people at school? What do you think?
S1: what?
I: did meeting new people at school help you when you are from a different country?
S1: yes a lot!
I: so do your other siblings go to school as well?
S1: yes
I: do they have as much difficulty as you?
S1: no it was more easy for them
I: why?
S1: because I speak Arabic and then I don't try to speak in Greek as much. My sister and my brother learned Greek very fast. They are younger and they do easier things in Greek
I: what about at home? When you are at home, do you try to speak in Greek to them?
S1: yes we have to speak in Greek. My younger brother understands Greek better than he understands Arabic now…..

5.3 Semi-structured interview schedule used for interviewing teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probing questions for discussion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) What is your role with respect to foreign-speaking students at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How has this role been modified within the context of increasing student diversity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) (If mention of increasing challenges). What are the challenges you face with respect to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Policy/ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. In-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Syllabus to be covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) What are the resources offered relevant to increasing student diversity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) In an ideal world, what would you change to improve schools’ response to increasing student diversity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) What is your evaluation of the language support programme relevant to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way students are selected for participation in the programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way students are allocated to classes for regular vs. language support lessons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outcome/ benefit to students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The segregated provision of language lessons outside regular lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy relevant to programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Do students achieve well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if they say some students can/ some cannot) Who can and who cannot?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Do all students participate in lessons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Are all students present in lessons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Are there opportunities for socialization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) (If reference is made to home/ community aspects) Comments on home/ school communication/ collaboration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) General opinion on increasing student diversity within schools?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6

Research method: Students’ Drawing task

6.1 Pre-planned Drawing Task Arrangement completed by student participants

The figure represents the pre-planned drawing task arrangement completed by groups of both foreign-speaking and other student participants in all of the case study schools. Students were asked to name themselves and their friends in terms of preference (distinction between “close friends” and “other friends”). The names of students and classmates depicted on drawings were then analyzed to produce a pictorial representation of the social relationships of the student participants in the form of sociograms.

6.2 Presentation of data not presented in thesis as Sociograms & relevant analysis

Additional Sociograms not presented and analyzed as part of the First case study (Chapter 6)

Note: Sociogram 6.1 has been presented in Chapter 6 as an example of the data analysis carried out relevant to the method of Drawings completed by students.

Sociogram 6.2, which is presented below, represents the social relationships developed by Kozet, Eve and Sarah, who attended the intermediate level of language support. The other three students attending this class did not complete the drawing task because they were attending regular lessons at the time, and were absent when the drawing was administered. Since this was not an isolated incident, foreign-speaking students’ frequent absence from language lessons can be perceived as a barrier to learning, and as compromising teacher’s practice. The girls who completed the task had been living in Cyprus longer than students in the beginners’ class, and had attended up to a year of secondary education. In completing their drawings, they self-selected each other as friends; in agreement to the suggestion that participation in the language programme provides opportunities for socialisation between non-native students.

Two of them selected another girl from their language class as a friend, and all three selected a girl from Syria who did not receive language support as a friend. Nonetheless, they appeared to have distinct groups of friends within their regular classes, possibly because they belonged to different age groups. It should be noted that compared to students from the beginners’ class, friendships for this group appeared to be more diverse with the selection of Greek-Cypriot students as friends. Referring to findings from Eve’s interview, the
length of time attending Socrates Gymnasium, as well as acquiring basic Greek language skills over time might have enhanced their opportunities to have native students as friends.

Sociogram 6.2: Sociogram depicting social relationships developed between students attending the intermediate level of Greek language support (class A2).

The social relationships of students belonging to the advanced level of language support are represented in Sociogram 6.3. These students had lived in Cyprus longer and had the most developed language skills compared to the other two groups. Seven out of eight students attending this class completed the drawing. A boy from Russia was absent since he attended his regular class that was preparing for a test. These absences of students from language support raise questions regarding the effectiveness of the language programme since they compromise teaching practice.

Similar to the previous sociogram, students in this group self-selected each other as friends, indicating that participation in the language programme promoted socialisation and friendship development. Unlike the previous group, all students in this class attended the third grade of secondary school. Nonetheless, they all appeared to form distinct friendships outside their language support class and from within their regular classes, mostly with other non-native students not receiving language support.

However, Greek-Cypriot students were also selected as friends, something which indicated that socialisation patterns were quite diverse. If we were to look closer at individual students though, we could identify differences in patterns of socialisation, probably based on students’ individual characteristics. For example, a boy from Georgia (code: 17.M.3.A3. Georgia) selected both native and non-native students as friends. The fact that he alone selected half the Greek-Cypriot students depicted as friends in this sociogram (4 out of 8) indicates that generalisations about tendencies of non-native students to have native students as friends should be avoided. Rather than this, individual student cases should be explored in detail.

In contradiction to the diverse friendship patterns presented in the previous example, is the case of a Turkish boy (code: 13.M.3.A3.Turkey) who has selected only non-native students as friends. Factors which are difficult to distinguish might nonetheless be underlying his socialisation patterns. For example, the political context of Cyprus following the Turkish invasion in 1974 constitutes the Turkish as formidable enemies to Greek-Cypriots. Instances of violence and racism have been widely reported within educational contexts between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish or Turkish-Cypriot students (Politis-newspaper, 2006; Spyrou, 2006). Therefore, the personal account of this student on his selection of friends, as well as an elaborate investigation of the socio-political factors underlying the cultivation of social relationships between students from these two ethnic categories would be essential to understand the factors enabling or prohibiting these socialisation patterns in schools.
Case study school A: Sociogram of Greek language support class A3

LEGEND:
Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
Blue ovals = teachers.
One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship
Read the code assigned to each oval as in sociogram above.

Sociogram 6.3: Sociogram depicting social relationships developed between students attending the advanced level of Greek language support (class A3).
Sociograms constructed and analyzed in the Second case study (Chapter 7)

Note: Sociograms constructed and analysed in association to the second case study (Chapter 7) will be presented below, since I have only presented the most important findings in the main text of the thesis.

LEGEND:
Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
Blue ovals = teachers.
One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

Read the code assigned to each oval as follows: i.e. 1.M.2.A1.Bulgaria;
1= serial number provided to each individual whose name appeared on a drawing;
M= distinction of gender (M= Male; F= Female);
2= year of secondary education attended by student (students are in year 1, 2 or 3 according to their age);
A1= level of Greek language support received if needed by foreign students (A1= beginners class; A2= intermediate class; A3= advanced class)
Bulgaria= country of origin of foreign students; the GC symbol indicates Greek-Cypriot students

Sociogram 7.1: Sociogram depicting social relationships developed between students attending the ‘beginner’s’ level of Greek language support (class A2).

Sociogram 7.1 depicts the relationships emerging from the drawings of nine girls and four boys attending one of the two “beginners” classes of language support. These were recently-arrived students with little skills in the Greek language. The web of social relationships portrayed shows that students predominantly self-selected each other as friends in mutual manner (two-direction arrows). It could therefore be argued that participation in the language programme offered opportunities for socialisation, but were restricted to relationships between students attending the same support classes. Such social patterns indicate that foreign-speaking students were possibly offered limited opportunities for socialisation with native students.

On the few occasions that students selected peers outside their language support class as friends, the selected students were primarily non-native students attending other language support classes. The higher numbers of
students from similar backgrounds at this specific school, such as students from Palestine and Iraq, entailed that students from these countries had the opportunity to socialise solely with classmates from the same countries as them. The only variation was three students selecting as a friend a student from Syria (code: 66.M.3.Syria) who did not receive language support. Interestingly enough, only one of the 13 student who participated in this drawing task (code: 5.F.2.A2.Jordan) selected a native student as a friend. Non-native foreign-speaking students therefore appeared to socialise predominantly with non-native students.

**Sociogram 7.2** represents the social relationships of students within a regular lesson of Modern Greek. Out of the 15 students, 13 were native and 2 were non-native students who did not receive language support. The analysis showed that students in this class formed three distinct friendship groups. These represented respectively the relationships of native girls; those of native boys, with the exception of one student from England (code: 34.M.2.England) who was selected as a friend; and the relationships of a Palestinian girl. Evidence of native boys selecting the boy from England as a friend raises questions on probable variation between the social patterns of non-native boys compared to non-native girls. Adding validity to this claim, the participatory photography findings indicated that it was more likely that non-native boys socialised with native boys and vice versa, compared to non-native with native girls, since they had added opportunities for enhanced interaction through common activities such as playing sports during breaks.

Finally, the latter friendship group indicates that the only non-native girl attending this class had not formed social relationships with any of her native classmates, and considered as friends only non-native girls in receipt of language support. Knowing that this girl came from Palestine and was a Muslim (Code: 29.F.2.Palestine) raises questions on issues of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity as implicated in the processes formation of these specific social patterns at school.

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**Case study B: Sociogram of regular class 2**

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**LEGEND:**
- Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
- Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
- White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
- Blue ovals = teachers.
- One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
- Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

**Read the code assigned to each oval as in sociogram above.**

**Sociogram 7.2:** Sociogram of the second regular class in which students completed the drawing task.
Case study B: Sociogram of regular class 3

LEGEND:
- Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
- Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
- White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
- Blue ovals = teachers.
- One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
- Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

Read the code assigned to each oval as in sociogram above.

Sociogram 7.3: Sociogram of the third regular class in which students completed the drawing task.

The third sociogram (7.3) represents the social relationships formed within the third regular class observed at the Aristotle Gymnasium. The drawing task was administered during an Ancient Greek language lesson and was completed by 16 native students and one non-native student receiving language support. Two more foreign-speaking students that belonged to this class were receiving language support lessons at the time, confirming claims of decreased presence of foreign-speaking students within regular classes. This directs attention to the drawbacks of decreased participation in curriculum subjects for students, as well as the challenge posed on teaching within regular classrooms catering to foreign-speaking students. Interestingly enough, the only foreign-speaking student present in the lesson (code: 3.M.2.A2.Iraq) did not select any of his native classmates as friends. Instead, he selected four foreign-speaking students and another non-native student from different classes as friends. In a mutual manner, none of his native classmates selected him as a friend either. This raises questions regarding the rarity of social interactions between native and recently-arrived foreign-speaking students, compared to social interactions between native students and non-native students who resided in Cyprus longer and were not in need of language support. Such observations direct attention to factors like foreign-speaking student’s length of stay in a foreign country, as well as their linguistic ability in the official language of the country, as relevant to friendship in schools.
Sociograms constructed and analyzed as part of the Third case study (Chapter 8)

Note: Sociograms constructed and analysed in association to the third case study (Chapter 8) will be presented below, since I have only presented the most important findings in the main text of the thesis. Three sociograms were produced to represent the social relationships of students according to the class context in which they were produced. More specifically, one sociogram represented social relationships as these formed within all three levels of the language support, with two additional sociograms representing social relationships within regular classes. As a first example, Sociogram 8.1 illustrates the social relationships of foreign-speaking students that received language support. It was considered appropriate to present the relationships of all students in one sociogram, since the data analysis revealed interconnected social patterns, with students choosing classmates within language support groups as friends irrespective of their level of language ability.

This sociogram revealed that foreign-speaking students primarily selected as friends students that also received language support. Students with serial numbers 1, 2 and 13 were the most recently arrived students at this school. They did not write down names of ‘close friends’ but only included names of ‘other friends’ when completing the drawing task. This draws attention to the fact that recently-arrived students require time to build up relationships at school. A closer observation reveals that the Bulgarian student (serial number 2) selected five other classmates as ‘other friends’, but that none of those relationships appeared to be mutual. Not being selected by any classmate as a friend potentially indicates the difficulty with which recently arrived foreign-speaking students can become included within the already-formed social circles of their school.

When students outside the realm of language support groups were selected as friends, they were mainly non-native students who did not need language support. On four occasions, native students were selected as friends. Since the latter students did not complete a drawing it was not possible to identify whether such relationships were mutual. Nonetheless, such patterns of interaction revealed a web of social relationships consisting mainly of non-native students.

Sociogram 8.2 illustrates the relationships within regular classroom settings, at a time when students were receiving a Modern Greek lesson. Three distinct friendship groups emerged upon close analysis. The first group represents friendship amongst girls in the class. Some of the native girls appeared to be inclusive of their non-native classmates by selecting them as friends. The second group indicates the relationships of boys. Native boys self-selected each other as friends, and appeared to be inclusive for example, of one English classmate who did not receive language support. Nonetheless, none of the boys in this class selected as a friend their foreign-speaking Ukrainian classmate, even though the latter student selected four of his Greek-Cypriot classmates. Despite this the Ukrainian student (code: 10.M.1.A2.Ukraine) appeared to have his own group of friends outside the context of his regular classroom, consisting primarily of non-native students, most of whom received language support as well.

The friendship groups already discussed reveal socialisation as being pertinent to gender, with female students socialising primarily with other females, and male students socialising only with other male students. In addition, such social patterns direct attention to the apparent relationship between native and non-native students who did not require language support, as well as the lack of such relationships between native students and non-native students who had recently arrived at the school and due to language barriers, were eligible to receive language support. This observation raises questions with regards to the implication of factors such as the length of residency of non-native students in Cyprus, as well as their level of Greek language as being pertinent to providing added opportunities for social inclusion amongst the rest of the school’s student population.
Case study C: Sociogram of all Greek language support classes

LEGEND:
Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
Blue ovals = teachers.
One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

Read the code assigned to each oval as follows: i.e. 1.M.2.A1.Bulgaria;
1= serial number provided to each individual whose name appeared on a drawing;
M= distinction of gender (M= Male; F= Female);
2= year of secondary education attended by student (students are in year 1, 2 or 3
according to their age);
A1= level of Greek language support received if needed by foreign students (A1=
beginners class; A2= intermediate class; A3= advanced class)
Bulgária= country of origin of foreign students; the GC symbol indicates Greek-Cypriot
students.

Sociogram 8.1: Sociogram depicting social relationships developed between students attending all Greek
language support classes at Archimedes Gymnasium.
**CASE STUDY C: SOCIOMGRAM OF CLASS 1**

**LEGEND:**
- Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
- Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
- White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
- Blue ovals = teachers.
- One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
- Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship

**Read the code assigned to each oval as in sociogram above.**

**Sociogram 8.2:** Sociogram of the first regular class in which students completed the drawing task.

**Sociogram 8.3** illustrates the relationships as these appeared to form within another regular class. Similar to the social patterns revealed within the previous class, two main groups were revealed. The first consisted mainly of native boys self-selecting each other as friends. The second comprised of the relationships formed between girls. Three native girls selected a Russian girl (code: 33.F.1) that did not receive language support as a friend. However, the relationship was not mutual since their Russia classmate selected only non-native students as friends. Finally, one native boy (code: 51.M.1.GC) selected a non-native boy from Georgia who received language support as a friend, but his classmate (code: 5.M.1.A1.Georgia) did not select him as a friend. Instead he selected only non-native students as friends. These findings raise questions regarding the apparent “preference” for native students to socialise with other non-native students while “non-native” students appeared to “prefer” to socialise primarily with “non-native” students.
Case study C: Sociogram of class 2

LEGEND:
Yellow ovals = foreign students receiving Greek language support.
Green ovals = foreign students not receiving Greek language support.
White ovals = Greek-Cypriot students.
Blue ovals = teachers.
One sided arrow = selection of a person as a friend
Double sided arrow = selection between two people; mutual friendship
Read the code assigned to each oval as in sociogram above.

Sociogram 8.3: Sociogram of the second regular class in which students completed a drawing task.
Appendix 7

Research method: Participatory Photography

7.1 Instructions given to student participants for the Participatory Photography Task

“You will be given one camera for each pair of students. You can go around your school to take pictures of places that make you feel safe and you like going to at school, and of places that make you feel unsafe and you do not like going to when you are at school. Please ask for permission to enter classrooms and avoid taking pictures of people”.

7.2 Examples of visual data collected (posters)

Additional posters and analysis forming part of the second case study school (Chapter 7)

Eleven foreign-speaking students from the beginners’ class of extra Greek language lessons participated in the Participatory Photography project. Participating students were also involved in a focus group discussion while constructing their posters on the topic of places that they like at school and places that they do not like. Overall six posters were produced between pairs of the following students, three of which were depicted in Chapter 7, and the remaining 3 are presented here as additional posters:

S1: Nouria; girl from Iraq
S2: Mboret; girl from Iraq
S3: Hakan; boy from Armenia (Palestine)
S4: Khalet; boy from Palestine
S5: Nihal; girl from Iraq
S6: Karolina; girl from Russia
S7: Moustafa; boy from Palestine
S8: Amine; girl from Palestine
S9: Mariam; girl from Palestine
S10: Ayshe; girl from Armenia (Palestine)
S11: Karina; girl from Ukraine

Additional poster 1: Poster constructed by Hakan (S3) and Khalet (S4). The left side of the poster represents places that the boys like at school (a smiley face was drawn to indicate positive emotion) and the right side represents places they do not like at school (a frowned face was drawn to indicate negative emotion). Places they like include the school lounge at the entrance of the school; the football grounds and the school yard; and the photographs showing the foreign-speaking students participating in a school event. The places they do not like include the school canteen; the parking; the theatre room/ place where the school celebrations take place; the trees in the school yard; and the drawings on boards and posters that represent the diversity across the school. The flag of Armenia was drawn on the left upper corner of the poster, and the flag of Palestine was drawn at the left bottom corner to indicate the students’ ethnic background.
Additional poster 2: Poster constructed by Amine (S8) and Mariam (S9). The left side of the poster represents places that the girls like at school and the right side represents places they do not like at school. The places they like include the school lounge at the entrance of the school; the football grounds and the school yard; the parking; the school canteen; and photographs showing the foreign-speaking students participating in a school event. The places they do not like include the trees in the school yard; certain areas in the school yard; and the drawings on boards and posters that represent the diversity across the school. The theatre room/place where the school celebrations take place appears in both sides of the poster.

Additional poster 3: Poster constructed by Nouria (S1) and Mboret (S2). The left side of the poster represents places that they like at school and the right side represents places they do not like at school. The places they like include the school lounge at the entrance of the school; the football grounds and the school yard; the parking; the school canteen; and some of the drawings on boards and posters that represent the diversity across the school. The places they do not like include the trees in the school yard; the theatre; certain areas in the school yard; and some of the drawings on boards and posters that represent the diversity across the school.
**Additional posters and analysis forming part of the second case study school (Chapter 8)**

Seven foreign-speaking students from the beginners’ class of extra Greek language lessons (A1) participated in the Participatory Photography (PP) project. Students who have participated in the PP project also participated in a focus group discussion while constructing their posters on the topic of places that they like at school and places that they do not like. Each of the following students produced a poster, with 3 posters depicted in Chapter 8, and the remaining posters shown below:

S1: Ndarious; boy from Poland
S2: Marian; boy from Romania
S3: Tasos; boy from Greece (Greek-Pontiac; Georgia)
S4: Giannis; boy from Greece (Greek-Pontiac; Georgia)
S5: Theodora; girl from Bulgaria
S6: Roxana; girl from Romania
S7: Petre; boy from Bulgaria

**Additional poster 1:** Poster constructed by Petre (S7). The left side of the poster represents places that he likes that include the class of technology; the class in which the foreign-speaking students receive Greek lessons; and places in the school yard like the football grounds and a tree under which students gather during break. The places that he does not like include the school’s main yard where teachers stay during break time; the school’s canteen; and the school’s main lounge where large boards display students’ work and which leads to the staff room and the head teacher’s office.

**Additional poster 2:** Poster constructed by Tasos (S3). The left side of the poster represents places that he likes and the right side represents places that he does not like at school. The places that he likes include the art class; the class in which the foreign-speaking students receive Greek lessons; places in the school yard like the football grounds and a tree under which students gather during break time; and the area of the main yard where the rose bushes are. The places that he does not like include mainly the school’s main lounge where large boards display students’ work and which leads to the staff room and the head teacher’s office (he has used 3 photographs of the main lounge); and an area in the main yard where usually groups of girls sit during break time.
Additional poster 3: Poster constructed by Giannis (S3). Most of the poster represents places that he likes at school, with only one picture placed at the upper right corner of the poster representing places that he does not like at school. The places that he likes include mainly places in the school yard like the football grounds and the trees under which students gather during break time, as well as places in the school’s main yard which is outside the staffrooms. Other places he likes include the school canteen; the computer class; the technology class; the art class; and the class in which the foreign-speaking students receive Greek lessons. As shown in his poster the only place that he does not like is the school’s main lounge where large boards display students’ work and which leads to the staff room and the head teacher’s office.

Additional poster 4: Poster constructed by Ndarius (S1). The places that he likes are depicted on the right side of the poster and include the computer class; the class of technology; and places in the school’s back yard with certain trees that students gather under during break time. The places that he does not like are shown on the left side of the poster and include the school’s main lounge; the school’s main yard; and the school canteen.
Appendix 8

Deriving a model to present the barriers to students’ inclusion at school

The following section aims to explain the consecutive stages of analysis that took place during this study, which progressively focused my thinking on the interpretation of the findings of this study, and ultimately allowed me to derive a model used to present the identified barriers to students’ inclusion at school. This will allow me to depict how each level of the model was primarily analysed separately according to the constant comparison of information collected in all three case study schools, from all research participants, and using the multiple research methods adopted in this study.

The first stage of analysis involved the presentation of information as a list of notes regarding the important and recurrent themes emerging from the data. For example, the first topic relevant to the identification of barriers and resources to foreign-speaking students’ inclusion was that of National Policy. All factors perceived as being submerged under this heading were listed along with a narrative as to the reasoning that deemed them appropriate for discussion. In the case of National Policy, the below list was considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Policy framework of barriers (interplay between school &amp; classroom level factors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus on language difficulties: strategies directed primarily towards language provision/overemphasis on language difficulties at the expense of other parameters such as reducing racism and xenophobia in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introduction of a language support programme without proof of its effectiveness: abrupt introduction of the pilot language programme- still in its early stages with no proof of efficient language provision- little time to develop concrete strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bureaucratic demands in government attempt to produce records of attendance and achievement for students. Result: limited the attention paid to the content of the language support programme. Limited the number of students that could receive language support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ambiguities/discrepancies in policies disseminated and implementation in schools: Result: affected the organisation, implementation and monitoring of the language programme and regular classroom practice:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Policy to distribute foreign-speaking students evenly across classes according to their year group. Aimed to reduce strain placed on teaching and learning. Since in practice language support depended on students’ linguistic abilities rather than the age group considered for regular class allocation, students were grouped in as few classes as possible to facilitate their withdrawal for language support. Result: problems with organising language support lessons and. Disruption of teaching &amp; learning in regular classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Policy to withdraw foreign-speaking students mainly from secondary lessons (i.e. music, P.E., art- in which they tend to achieve better and enjoy more) rather than core lessons (i.e. Greek, Maths, Science- in which they tend to achieve worse and enjoy less) was aimed at allowing them to participate in lessons that are more likely to provide them with school leaving certificates. However, many teachers suggested that withdrawing students from lessons in which they achieve well and enjoy, whilst forcing them to participate in lessons where they have fewer opportunities for academic achievement or personal satisfaction, could have negative outcomes for students’ adjustment at school. Result: emphasis on subjects assessed rather than an approach to develop students’ strengths and avoid pronouncing weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. When it was impossible to withdraw students only from secondary lessons due to practical aspects of organising language support lessons, students were withdrawn from core lessons. Result: Discrepancies between policy-in-theory and policy-in-practice. Claims that depriving students from participation in core subjects in which achievement is needed to receive school leaving certificates, provided unequal opportunities to academic achievement compared to the native students, limiting opportunities for higher education or good employment opportunities. Teachers’ claimed that essentially the education system is directed towards constructing foreign-speaking students as “Cyprus’ cheap labour force for the future”. Note: Issue of unequal opportunities also observed when analysing school and classroom practice!!!! Segregated language provision: withdrawing foreign-speaking students from regular classes to receive language support will potentially impact their status within their regular classes and compromise their interactions (social inclusion) within the rest of the student population; concept relying on a segregation/integration rather than inclusive paradigm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Foreign-speaking students as auditors: segregation rather than inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Insufficient teacher training on issues of multicultural education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Insufficient resources to enhance teaching in multicultural classrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the second stage of my analysis, the original lists of the thematic analysis of important findings were further scrutinised and compared with information obtained through each new case study. The lists were revised, as follows, to reflect only the most important findings that would be discussed:

**National Policy framework (relevant barriers)**

1. Focus only on language difficulties
2. Introduction of the language support program without proof of its effectiveness
3. Bureaucracy
4. Ambiguities and discrepancies in policy dissemination & implementation in schools
5. Segregated language provision emphasises difference between native and non-native foreign-speaking students
6. Students as Auditors
7. Insufficient teacher training on issues of Inclusive Education
8. Insufficient resources to enhance teaching in multicultural classrooms

Following the same practice throughout the data analysis stage of this study, two more topics in addition to the “National Policy”, emerged as relevant to revealing barriers to the inclusion of “foreign-speaking students” in schools. These were the topics of “Schools” and “Home and Community” environment. During subsequent and more intense scrutiny of this thematic analysis, I could detect some similarities between the barriers that could easily be grouped under each of these three topics. At the same time, “Foreign-speaking Students” were always at the center of this analysis. Upon reflection on this understanding I considered the possibility that this framework for the analysis of barriers towards the inclusion of foreign-speaking students in the three case study schools could be presented using a Venn Diagram. This would allow me to present separately the findings corresponding to each topic of “National Policy”, “Schools”, and “Home and Community”, but also discuss the convergence and relevant implication of some of the barriers that seemed to span more than one on these categories. The below diagram represents one of the first attempts present my findings using a Venn Diagram.

This framework was revisited and revised throughout the data analysis stage of this study, and even through the write up of this thesis. The final “model” of analysis that was adopted for the purpose of presenting the findings of this study is depicted below and is further explained in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1) of this thesis.
**Figure 5.1:** Model derived from the thematic analysis of data that represents the three dimensions of analysis and discussion within which barriers to students’ presence, participation, achievement and socialisation were identified. A Venn Diagram was adopted to represent the observed interaction of factors that seem to transgress the boundaries of the three dimensions of Schools & Classrooms; National Policy; and finally, Students as individuals and the effect of their Family and Community Backgrounds.

Finally, a concept map was produced to provide an explanation of all the data that are grouped under each section of the adopted model, which are presented in succession in the relevant chapters in the thesis. For example, the below concept map has been used in Chapter 10 (Figure 10.1) to develop the discussion about the section of the model corresponding to the barriers identified as relevant to “National Policy”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL POLICY BARRIERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of differential opportunities to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancies &amp; Ambiguities in Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language program evaluated as ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected practical aspects of organisation, implementation, &amp; monitoring of language program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collaboration between staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased bureaucratic demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to anticipate need for educational change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong emphasis on language provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to address other important aspects of inclusion i.e. racism, xenophobia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>