Experiences of secondary students with 'SEN/D' in England and Greece: student voice and bio-ecological systems theory

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BESD	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties
DfE	Department for Education
DT	Design and Technology
EHC	Education, Health and Care
European Agency	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
LA	Local Authority
LD	Learning Difficulties
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PE	Physical Education
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time
RE	Religious Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEN/D	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
TA	Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UREC	University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to develop a theoretically coherent account of the significance of student voice in understanding the secondary experiences of students with 'SEN/D'. The research question was: *'In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes?'*

The study utilised a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2009). Two secondary schools in each of two different national contexts (England and Greece) were recruited, from which 12 secondary students with SEN/D were selected as participants (3 from each school). The study's methods included classroom observations, interviews combined with participatory methods for eliciting student voice and the systematic use of a research diary. The fieldwork in each school included student observations during a school day; 'guided tours' combined with photo generation; and two separate individual interviews with each student combined with photo elicitation and other child-friendly activities. Collected in a range of contexts and situations, the student accounts were also complemented by data obtained though qualitative interviews with the school staff (SENCOs, SEN teachers and TAs).

The study followed a dialectical approach to analyse and interpret the data, by combining the 'objective' bio-ecological theory of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) with the 'subjective' student voice approach. The data analysis process included a two-stage analysis of the interview data. In the first stage, twelve 'personal experience' stories were developed to illuminate each participant's voice, using an inductive approach. In the second stage, data were examined for common themes and ideas following the structures of the bio-ecological (Process-Person-Context-Time) framework, which were further scrutinised through the study's student voice critical framework.

The analysis showed that students' individual characteristics (such as their status in relation to 'SEN/D', their particular abilities/skills, level of motivation, temperament) considerably affected their experiences in both contexts. Students reported few instances of peer acceptance and having fewer friends and social interactions compared to their classmates. A general lack of interaction with mainstream teachers was reported in and out of the classroom. Divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged regarding the interactions of the students with the special support staff. While certain aspects of secondary school life (such as the inclusive school ethos and the flexibility of support) were perceived positively by students, other aspects (such as frequent exams and grades) were found to affect student experiences negatively regardless of the particular school or national context. By and large, the findings of this study indicated that the way students perceive their individual characteristics, their relationships with key people in school and their multi-level ecological system environments are inextricably intertwined in shaping their school experiences.

The unique contribution of this study lies in the demonstration of the value of student voice to the actual meaning of the process of inclusion. Focusing on student voice contributed to a more holistic analysis of the development of young people in their school environments by: highlighting issues of power and identity; illuminating many of the key factors in the PPCT model and explaining their perceived significance; providing evidence for the interactions between PPCT elements; and finally, by identifying contradictions between students' and staff's perceptions. Overall, this study suggests that this dialectical view of student voice and the bio-ecological framework provides opportunities for a deeper understanding of the experiences of students with SEN/D in diverse settings and educational systems. In this way, the study enriches student voice and inclusive research in the secondary education level.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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“At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial [...] one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold.

One can only give one’s audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.”

— Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Research on inclusion has traditionally focused on the experiences of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities ('SEN/D'[1]) in mainstream settings. Nevertheless, inclusion theorists have paid less attention to the voices of those students, especially in the secondary level. Yet, understandings about the development of inclusion must be provided by research that recognises the complexity and plurality of perspectives (Booth and Ainscow, 2005). The present study examines SEN/D students' views on their secondary experiences in two national contexts, England and Greece. It aims to provide an understanding of how inclusive policies, practices and processes shape the experiences of students in the two diverse countries.

This chapter introduces the reader to this study, by offering a general overview of this thesis. It starts by providing a brief narration of how this research was conceptualised and the professional steps that helped me to undertake it (Section 1.2). It continues with an explanation of the study's rationale (Section 1.3), as well as the development of the research aim and question (Section 1.4). It also explains the cross-cultural focus of the study and discusses briefly how inclusion is perceived and organised in England and Greece (Section 1.5). It then goes on to provide the main aspects of the methodology (Section 1.6). Finally, it presents the structure of the whole thesis, by illustrating the content of each Chapter (Section 1.7).

[1] The single inverted commas in the abbreviation 'SEN/D' are used in places to indicate that any labels and categories of special educational needs are not adopted in this study uncritically. On the contrary, this study acknowledges the contested and constructed nature of the term 'SEN/D' which is analysed and challenged throughout the whole thesis. In particular, there is recognition throughout that neither a special educational need, nor a disability, adheres to the individual in isolation from the context.

1.2. My personal journey

This thesis investigates secondary student experiences in two countries that are economically and culturally disparate: England and Greece. In the effort to outline the reasons for investigating this particular topic, it comes naturally to reflect on my life experiences and to try to sketch my personal and professional journey through which I gradually developed my interest in this area.

My origins are from Greece, where I have lived most of my life and I have received my basic education. During my last years of secondary school, after acknowledging the value of education, I decided that I wanted to be a teacher. My particular interest in educational practice initially developed during my undergraduate studies in Greek Philology in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), when, except for studying Classics, I was also exposed to a wide range of pedagogical courses. After the completion of my undergraduate studies and for three consecutive years, I worked as a Greek language teacher of children and adolescents in public and private secondary schools.

During that period, I came across students with diverse needs, ascribed with various labels, ranging from 'dyslexia' and 'autism' to 'communication disorders'. Their learning difficulties and complicated behaviour engaged my curiosity. Having grown up in a rather 'homogenous' neighbourhood in Athens, I have never had the opportunity to challenge my beliefs of 'normality' before- neither as a student, nor as a pre-service teacher. This was the first time to admit my sensitivity and curiosity for minds and behaviours that were 'different' to what I was familiar with and I was later trained to teach. I realised I was very much intrigued by the demands and the complexity of those needs and I immediately decided to gain expertise in this field.

In pursuing this goal, I subsequently enrolled in the two-year master's programme 'Special Education' at the University of Thessaly (Volos, Greece). My studies there provided me with a thorough theoretical background concerning special educational needs and the appropriate ways to address these in educational practice. As part of my internship, I had the opportunity to teach in the 'inclusion class' of a mainstream secondary school at Volos. Working with various students with different needs (i.e. students identified as having dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, hearing problems and autism) enabled me to reflect upon the effectiveness of my teaching and cooperative skills and how to adapt them accordingly. Further, it made me realise that there is a huge distance between theory and

practice, which motivated me for the investigation of this relationship, as a general context of my Masters' dissertation.

Not long after the completion of my master studies, I was actively engaged in early research activities as a research assistant in a national research project in Greece, aiming at the retention of foreign and repatriate students in education. This experience has further developed my thinking about inclusive education: I was convinced that the concept of inclusion includes all vulnerable learners, and not only those with 'SEN/D'. What particularly captivated me towards working in the area of inclusion practices was when I started to work as a special educator, supporting a teenager with autism in a mainstream secondary school of Athens. To my disappointment, my role in the classroom was strictly restricted in managing the students' behaviour, in order to ensure the smooth conduct of the lesson. My cooperation with the mainstream subject teachers was unsuccessful, despite my constant efforts. Notably, this experience has led me to acknowledge the challenges related to such inclusive efforts in the secondary level.

It was at that point when I understood the inadequacies and the challenges of the Greek education system concerning the provision of disadvantaged students. I was convinced about the importance of shared responsibility of professionals for quality teaching that can address all student needs. This experience made me question the effectiveness of 'inclusion', or rather, 'integration' programmes supported by educational policies. It became clear to me that there was a need of systematic evaluation of inclusion practices in Greece. A primary review of the related literature triggered a further interest in uncovering the relationship between recommended theory and actual practices. When I decided to pursue a PhD degree in the UK, I was particularly interested in exploring the collaborative classroom practice for inclusion, and in particular the effectiveness of the 'team-teaching' (also referred to as 'co-teaching') model in secondary education level in Greece.

Ultimately though, my focus on the wider topic of inclusion within diverse contexts emerged during my PhD studies at the University of Manchester (UK). During the first two years in the Manchester Institute of Education, I had the opportunity to work as a research assistant in two university-led projects focusing on inclusion. My main responsibilities were to liaise with various primary and secondary schools in Greater Manchester and to facilitate their action-research projects, aiming to promote inclusive practice. This role has enabled me to generate qualitative data in English schools, to develop my research skills in 'real world' contexts and to establish good relationships with school professionals. Most importantly, it

has helped me to familiarise myself with the English education system and has triggered my interest to compare the different educational experiences.

Instinctively, while engaging with the various English school policies and practices, I was constantly reflecting upon my earlier years of education and my subsequent teaching roles in Greek schools. At the same time, I came to challenge my initial expectations and assumptions that the English world-leading reputation in inclusive research would be diffused into effective practice; in other words, I came to question the extent to which schools are in fact catering to the needs of their diverse student populations, despite the early development of inclusive research and practice in England. This experience in both countries has led me to explore further the potential of a cross-cultural examination of inclusive experiences in Greece and England.

A further scan of the literature within the two countries has convinced me that including more than one country in my research could provide valuable insights for a better understanding of the inclusive education agenda within diverse contexts (see Section 1.5: 'the cross-cultural approach'). The idea of adopting a cross-cultural approach in my research has been further enhanced since I was employed in the second year of my doctoral studies as a project officer in the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the 'European Agency')[2]. Overall, my work in this organisation, as well as my research and teaching activities in both Greece and UK have helped me to familiarise myself with different education systems and made me confident that cross-cultural insights are valuable and can contribute effectively to my own research inquiry.

With this brief introduction, I have outlined the personal and professional steps which I believe in retrospect have progressively encouraged me to focus my PhD research on the topic of inclusive experiences in two diverse contexts. The following section provides more details on how the study focus was shaped from my initial proposal up to now.

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[2] The European Agency is an international organisation which promotes inclusive education policy and practice among different European countries. For more information see: https://www.european-agency.org

1.3. The research rationale

As already mentioned, I began my PhD studies with an interest in investigating inclusive practices in English and Greek secondary classrooms. While engaging more with the literature related to inclusion, I discovered the importance of exploring specifically on how the students experience these practices in the secondary level.

Why secondary education?

I decided to focus my research on secondary inclusion as this has been one of the main areas of concern (Meijer, 2010). Inclusion generally progresses well at the primary education level, but at secondary level serious challenges emerge (Allan, 2003; Davies and Howes, 2005; European Agency, 2003). The increasing topic specialisation and the different organisation of secondary schools frequently result in serious barriers for inclusion (European Agency, 2003). Because of its connection with higher education and/or the labour market, secondary education receives constant pressures for accountability, which makes teachers more oriented to subject demands and drives schools to place more emphasis on academic achievement (Davies and Howes, 2005; De Vroey et al., 2015). The standards agenda and accountability measures can act as a barrier to inclusion when they develop 'purely instrumental motives for learning and teaching' (Howes et al., 2005 p. 136). The pressures of 'success' and 'effectiveness', and in some cases, the competition that exists between secondary schools (Ainscow and Howes, 2007; Davies and Howes, 2005) make the assumptions about ability and diversity more persistent at this level (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; De Vroey et al., 2015). As a result, the 'gap' between students with SEN/D and their peers increases at secondary age and their differences become more evident (Davies and Howes 2005; European Agency, 2003). These features of secondary schooling necessitate a deeper exploration of the inclusive experiences of students with SEN/D at this level, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the tensions and barriers that exist and to identify possible areas of inclusive development.

Why student voice?

The reason of focusing particularly on the views and experiences of students, was that students are the stakeholders who are more directly affected by educational policies and practices. My teaching experience has shaped my belief that young people have important

perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling. This has been validated by a more systematic search of the international literature (see Literature Review: Section 2.4), which included considerable theoretical and empirical studies documenting the importance of student voice and the need to take student views and concerns seriously (see Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Gunter and Thomson 2007; Lewis and Porter, 2007; Messiou, 2013; Rudduck, 2007; Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). Important disability right advocates, like Barton, have linked the process of inclusion with the act of listening to 'different' voices, by noting specifically that:

> Inclusive education is about responding to diversity; it is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering members and about celebrating 'difference' in dignified ways (Barton, 1997, p. 223, cited in Allan, 1999, p. 14).

Having discovered the power of student voice in inclusive research, I took the decision to investigate student experiences through their own voices. I would focus in particular on the experiences of students with SEN/D, as this group tends to experience more visible forms of segregation or exclusion (Ainscow and Miles 2008; D'Alessio et al., 2010; European Agency, 2013). While students with SEN/D have traditionally been the target of most inclusive efforts (Slee and Allan, 2001; Ekins, 2016) (see also Section 2.3.2), many researchers have identified a lack of attention on the voices of those students within the inclusive literature (see Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2004; Gunter and Thomson, 2007; Messiou, 2017; Riley and Docking, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2000; Tangen, 2009).

Therefore, focusing on the actual voices of students with SEN/D appeared to me as the most reasonable and authentic way to investigate inclusion, considering the fact that even the best practices might be experienced very differently and might not work for every student. As suggested by Squires et al. (2016): 'although the notion of inclusion is promoted by adults as being a good thing, this view is not necessarily shared by students' (p. 2). This study would aim to respond to that: it would set out to provide SEN/D students with a voice in an effort to bring to light what is it that they want, need, like and dislike about the inclusive practice implemented in their schools.

1.4. Research aim and question

Driven by this new thinking, I developed my research focusing on students' views about their secondary inclusive experiences in the UK and Greece. The research aim was to provide

a deeper understanding of students' inclusive experiences in the two contexts, by using the voices of the students. The overarching question that guided the research inquiry was:

'In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes?'

It's worth noting that the research question above was not set from the beginning, but it was gradually developed throughout the research process. Specifically, when I began my fieldwork, I was initially guided by the following question: *'How do students with 'SEN/D' in English and Greek secondary schools experience inclusive practice?'* Under the umbrella of this inquiry, I was seeking to answer to the following sub-questions:

1. How do schools in England and Greece organise and implement inclusive practice?
2. How do students with SEN/D in English secondary schools experience inclusive practice?
3. How do students with SEN/D in Greek secondary schools experience inclusive practice?

The experience of my fieldwork has validated my belief about the importance of my research. However, some 'critical incidents' and dilemmas which came up during data collection made me reflect on whether I was actually keeping my research focused. In particular, student voice as a principle of my work was challenged, when I faced several dilemmas i.e. in relation to the level of student participation in my research, the use and the effectiveness of methods to elicit their voices and the representation of student voice. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I had a 'naïve' expectation of my student participants to act as reflective adults. But not long after I entered the field site, I started to worry about the kind of data I was collecting, which did not seem to be in line with my research aims and focus. Specifically, I discovered several tensions that existed between life/school experiences and inclusive experiences and, notably, between individual and collective experiences (see more details in Section 3.3.3).

I then thought more carefully about the underlying aim of the study: this was to provide a space for students to voice their views and to reveal and document how they perceive experiences in school, always in relation to inclusion. My research methods were designed to collect student perceptions about how school and teacher practices promote or hinder inclusion in their daily school life. Looking at the data I was collecting, I realised that these were rich enough to include views and perspectives on general school experiences, but also more specific inclusive experiences. It was my own task to interpret which practice or

experience might be regarded as inclusive, according to the study's theoretical framework and definitions. As such, what I needed to do was to look more carefully at the collected data through an 'inclusive lens'. This 'lens' could help me to interpret student voice and to enhance understanding about inclusion, focusing both at school and system level.

In particular, looking at the data related to inclusive practices would cover the school level and looking at elements of the inclusive policies would cover the system level. The latter would permit a more in-depth exploration of cross-cultural issues related to the two diverse educational systems. But rather than seeking at a set of collective experiences within the two national contexts, or the differences and similarities between them, I realised that my study had the potential to communicate individual voices throughout the education systems (see Section 1.5), by exploring all aspects of student experience related both to personal aspects and inclusive processes, policies and practices. The study's theoretical framework, which bridges the bio-ecological framework with student voice, would help me to identify the factors shaping students' experiences and to understand how students perceive their individual characteristics, their relationships with key people in school and their multi-level ecological system environments (see Section 4.4).

After clarifying these tensions, I have re-visited my initial research question and the sub-questions. I decided to keep one umbrella question to guide my overall research inquiry, which was finally developed as follows:

'In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes?'

This overarching question has replaced the initial question and sub-questions mentioned previously (i.e. how inclusive practice is organised and experienced by students in both contexts). It was broader, as it incorporated the initial questions, but also went further to explore the way student voice can contribute to a better understanding of inclusive experiences throughout the two education systems.

1.5. The cross-cultural approach

This study has a cross-cultural dimension by studying students' perspectives in two European countries, England and Greece. This cross-cultural approach of the study is based on the idea that looking at different countries' systems helps researchers to problematise

current educational practice and to reflect upon educational alternatives (Artiles and Dyson, 2005). As Peček and Macura-Milovanović put it:

> The conceptual and philosophical problems of equity and education for all are shared concerns. International studies are therefore indispensable as it is easier, with distance and through comparisons with other contexts, to recognise one's own problems and paths to solving them (2015, p. 272).

International researchers in the field of inclusive education have stressed the need for more qualitative data from cross-cultural studies in order to better understand students' experiences of inclusive practices (D'Alessio and Watkins, 2009). Such studies enable researchers to engage in processes of knowledge transfer with a view to promote a transformative agenda in educational research and to improve educational systems (Barton and Armstrong, 2007; D'Alessio and Cowan, 2013; D'Alessio and Watkins, 2009; Thomas, 2013).

In this study, the analysis of the systems, structures and practices in both Greek and English secondary schools extends well beyond simply developing an understanding of some local difficulties within the Greek or the UK context; it is, on the contrary, a means of gaining insight into fundamental social and educational contradictions (Clark et al., 1995). As already mentioned, the comparative insight that I had developed by engaging with a different education system (i.e. UK) was considered particularly valuable for de-familiarising people, practices and events in my national context (i.e. Greece), and vice versa. By listening to different perspectives and observing different processes and practices in these two diverse contexts, my thinking about those would be constantly challenged and, therefore, enriched with critical reflection. Hence, engaging with the complexities of these two countries' systems and practices, as these are experienced by students themselves, adds interpretive power to this study and makes it potentially possible to abstract 'regularities' (Artiles and Dyson, 2005) within the sphere of student secondary experiences that can inform inclusive practice at a global level.

However, this study acknowledges that it is difficult for research to make a valid contribution and provide a universal solution to context-specific problems. As Ozga (2004) notes, research in education may not necessarily produce 'actionable knowledge', as it reflects particular schools and classroom situations. Fielding et al. (2005) also provide evidence which shows that spreading good practice is difficult, particularly in the education sectors

where there are a series of complex variables involved in the transfer of good practice from one context to another (Ozga, 2004).

As such, the comparative approach in this study aims more at 'finding instructive lessons in all practice', rather than identifying the 'best practice' (Booth, 1999, p. 165). The comparison of two countries with different stages in inclusive research and practice is therefore seen in this study as a unique opportunity to enlarge the framework within which the results of a single country can been viewed and understood (Noah, 1984) by making the 'strange familiar and the familiar strange' (Booth, 1999). Through this process, this study aims at a deeper understanding of the inclusive education agenda and secondary student experiences in the two different national contexts.

1.5.1. Mapping the field in the two national contexts

As mentioned above, the study adopts a cross-cultural approach to inform about the students' secondary experiences in different contexts. My personal experience in the two countries constituted a 'motive and an opportunity for research' (Hammersley, 1984, p. 28). I decided to include England and Greece in my study as examples of two disparate European countries[3] which are in different stages of development with regards to inclusive research and practice. Specifically, although both countries have firm legislation in place promoting the inclusion of students with SEN/D, the way inclusion is managed is considerably different and has a very different history in each country. A brief discussion on how inclusion is perceived and organised at the secondary education level in both countries is given in the following sub-sections.

1.5.1.1. *The UK context*

England has been chosen for this study because of its long history of inclusive research and practice. The UK government has firmly established its commitment to the principle of inclusive education since Salamanca's Statement (Dyson, 2005; UNESCO, 1994). The shift in thinking about inclusive education in the UK context dates back to 1978 with the

[3] At the early stages of the study, the two countries shared political linkages within the European Union, but throughout the life of the study, the 'Brexit' process has started. However, the two countries remain European countries in geographical terms, with inclusive policies that historically have been greatly affected by European and international policy mandates.

recommendations of the Warnock Report (Warnock Committee, 1978), which stated that all children should be educated in mainstream schools with an emphasis on their integration rather than segregated provision (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015; Squires, 2012). Since then, important Education Acts have followed (i.e. in 1981, 2001, 2004) facilitating a greater commitment to a more effective inclusion of students with 'SEN/D' (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015).

The most recent Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) assumes that students with SEN/D will be educated in mainstream schools. The Code lays out guidance for the assessment and intervention for children with SEN/D and imposes certain duties on Local Authorities (LAs), the administrative areas responsible for the provision of statutory education for England[4]. All LA schools (including special schools) are required to deliver the National Curriculum, which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate different learning paces and styles (DfE, 2014). A range of provision to meet the needs of learners with SEN/D exists, including provision in mainstream schools, in units or resourced provision attached to mainstream schools (ibid). The role of a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is key in the organisation of the specialist provision (Eurydice, 2018). However, if this is not suitable to meet some students' needs, provision is also available in 'resourced' schools (special schools which can guarantee appropriate resources, usually in a particular 'category' of need) (DfE, 2014). LAs must -in consultation with others, including children, young people and parents- draw up and publish a 'local offer' setting out the education, health, care (EHC) plan and other provision which is available to students with SEN/D from their areas (DfE, 2014; European Agency, 2018a).

Parallel to these policy developments, the UK government has also aimed at raising standards of attainment, what is commonly called the 'standards agenda' (Ainscow et al., 2006a). Such policy goals concentrate mainly on a narrow view of attainment, where 'success' is expressed in national league tables (McNamara et al., 2000) leading to the competitiveness and marketization of education (Ainscow et al., 2006a). They often contradict with the inclusion agenda, as they cause significant tensions to schools when they

[4] The UK educational system can be characterised as decentralized, as it is up to schools' governing bodies to decide how to organise and spend their available resources (European Agency, 2018a).

attempt on the one hand to become more inclusive, and on the other hand to respond to policy pressures for achievement (Allan, 2010a; Ainscow, et al., 2006a; Muijs et al., 2011). In fact, critical policy analysts have been noting uncertainty and ambivalence about inclusion in the current legislative framework and have been questioning how enforceable the participation of children and their parents in decision making is (Norwich and Eaton, 2015). Although expectations and standards for teachers exist for promoting inclusion practically (McNamara et al., 2017), various concerns have been raised that students with SEN/D who attend mainstream schools can be 'excluded' in reality, when teachers make use of withdrawal 'units', streaming or within-class grouping (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015). Generally, inconsistencies exist between the theoretical approach to SEN/D in the new UK policy and some of its implications for service provision (Castro and Palikara, 2016), which could lead to 'a gap between the vision and policy and another gap between policy and practice' (Squires, 2012, p.10).

Student voice, as a principle of promoting engagement and participation, has been prominent in official policy (Flutter, 2007) and is constantly gaining more ground. In the recent Code of Practice, 'there is a clearer focus on the views of children and young people and on their role in decision-making' (DfE, 2014, p. 8). A series of research projects in schools around England have revealed the power of pupil voice strategies for improving teaching, learning and inclusive education (see for example Ainscow et al, 2012; Messiou, 2013; Tangen, 2009). These initiatives are much more challenging to operationalise for certain group of learners, particularly for students with SEN/D. However, less research has focused on their accounts (Clark et al., 2003; Tangen, 2008; 2009), especially in the secondary education level, where the challenges of inclusive efforts are increased and complicated (Davies and Howes, 2005). In light of this, and of the criticism about the current legislative framework, it is necessary to continue to build and refine the research literature on inclusion and student voice in the English secondary level.

1.5.1.2. *The Greek context*

Greece has been selected as an example of a country that faces many constraints in promoting inclusion, despite the introduction of inclusive practices in secondary schools (European Agency, 2004). As opposed to the English system, the Greek educational system is highly centralized (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006), with the Ministry of Education prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling the financing of state schools (European Agency, 2018b).

The Greek education system has been extensively reformed in line with the European inclusive educational policy, mainly through the adoption of the Law 3699 (Greek Law 3699/2008), which is considered a landmark in the development of inclusive education in Greece. This Law proclaimed the right of students with SEN/D to be educated in mainstream schools. Students with severe difficulties who cannot attend mainstream are educated in special schools and training centres. However, the first choice of placement for pupils with SEN/D is in mainstream classes, with or without special support (European Agency, 2018b).

Currently, a great number of students who are different in abilities and needs are identified and labelled as students with 'Special Educational Needs'[5]. These students are entitled to government-funded support services according to their diagnosis, assessment and Individual Education Plans. In the context of mainstream schools, this support might take the form of a) 'inclusion classes' b) 'parallel support' in the mainstream classes. Specifically, according to the most recent Law 4386/2016, the purpose of the inclusive classes is 'to create an inclusive school environment for students with SEN/D through special educational interventions and programmes' (European Agency, 2018b, para 3). The ultimate goal is for the students to be supported in the future in the mainstream classroom environment. 'Parallel support' refers to the support of students in the mainstream classroom environment by the 'inclusion teacher' or the 'special needs' teacher in co-operation with the class teacher. In this type of support, the 'parallel support' teacher is responsible to design and implement the students' Individual Education Plans. In secondary education, parallel support is provided for some or all of the teaching hours by secondary teachers (Greek literature, mathematics and science teachers) who hold appropriate qualifications in special education (European Agency, 2018b). Some parents/carers have also the right to supplement public provision with private tuition or other special support services (European Agency, 2018c).

[5] The students with 'SEN/D' in Greece are ascertained and diagnosed by the Educational and Counselling Centres (KESYs), the Interdisciplinary Educational, Evaluation and Support Committees (EDEAYs) and the validated by the Ministry of Education Community Centers for the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents of other Ministries (Eurydice, 2019).

Although it is evident that inclusive practices have been established in Greek secondary schools, many challenges and issues are still impeding and restraining actual reform (European Agency, 2004; 2018e; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006). In practice, subject teachers rarely use inclusive pedagogical approaches and support is mainly provided in the inclusion classes which are run exclusively by 'special needs' teachers (Vlachou, 2004; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006). Problems of resourcing, delays in the recruitment of SEN teachers -sometimes lasting several months-, the lack of quality professional training and development are among the barriers which impede the effective implementation of the inclusion policy (Kokkinaki and Kokkinaki, 2016). With specialist teachers being in short supply, parents/carers increasingly choose to hire private tutors as a way of patching the gaps in their children's education. This situation fuels a booming industry of private 'parallel support' which complicates issues of accountability (Alfavita, 2018). It could therefore be argued that despite the rhetoric of inclusion, inclusive practice in Greece is driven more by a 'segregated' approach, by which students are categorised and supported individually based on their deficits (Reraki, 2015; Vlachou, 2004; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006).

What is more, there is a significant lack of studies which systematically evaluate the inclusive practices implemented in secondary schools. The few national investigations focus mainly on teachers' perceptions towards inclusion (Coutsocostas and Alborz, 2010; Koutrouba et al., 2008). The views and perspectives of students are neglected in the political processes around inclusion. According to Vlachou and Papapanou (2015), students' perspectives about schooling are under-represented in the Greek body of literature, with very few available studies highlighting the significant role that disabled students can play (see Lampropoulou 1997; Soulis and Floridis 2010). Yet, if any education change is to be successful, all voices should be taken into account in order for its aims to be met.

1.6. Research methodology and framework

The study is qualitative in nature and focuses on the experiences of students with SEN/D in English and Greek secondary schools. As already mentioned, the main aim of the study was to explore how students with SEN/D experience secondary schooling in England and Greece, using their own voices. In order to identify the essence of students' experience, their perceptions were investigated in depth. For the purpose of the inquiry, I used a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2009) by examining two cases/schools in each context.

The study's methods included classroom observations, interviews combined with participatory methods for eliciting student voice and the systematic use of a research diary. For the purposes of this study, two secondary schools in each context were recruited, from which 12 secondary students with 'SEN/D' were selected to be the focus of the study (see more details in Section 3.3.4). The fieldwork in each participating school started by observing each student during one school day; the student was then asked to give me a 'guided tour', during which she/he took photographs of the school; subsequently, an in-depth discussion with each student took place in two separate individual interviews. Collected in a range of contexts and situations, the student accounts were also complemented and compared by data obtained though qualitative interviews with the school staff (SENCOs, SEN teachers and TAs).

In order to develop a critical understanding of the interacting factors related to students' experiences, this study combined the 'subjective' student voice approach, with the 'objective' bio-ecological theory of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006). More specifically, this study used a student voice critical framework (See Section 4.3) to reflect on aspects of the system around the students and to examine carefully students' personal characteristics ('Person') in combination with the influence of their interactions ('Process') within and between specific environments ('Context') on their experiences over time ('Time'). The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) theory has only recently been used in published research for conceptualising the experiences of students with SEN/D (see for example Squires et al., 2016). It has proven particularly useful in considering the different levels of the society and educational system that might impinge upon student experiences. Conceptualising the development of individual students within a complex, dynamic, interactive web of environments provides a rich contextual field for the study of educational development and inclusion, as suggested by previous research in the field (Odom et al, 1996; Renn, 2003).

1.7. Structure of the thesis

The overall structure of the study takes the form of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter (**Chapter One**) which offers a general overview of the study. Each chapter systematically discusses essential information regarding this research. The chapters' content is described below, so that the reader is able to conceptualise the steps leading to the final conclusions.

Chapter Two begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research and looks at how inclusion and student voice are conceptualised within the international research. Firstly, it presents the background of inclusive education. Attention is given to issues around SEN/D and the process of identification, the models of disability and how inclusive education is understood and enacted internationally. The chapter concludes with a section on empirical research related to student voice and student experiences on secondary education.

Chapter Three is concerned with the methodological approach used for this study. The research methodology, design and methods used are discussed in detail along with issues of sampling and data collection. Following this, any research integrity issues as well as matters concerning validity and reliability are addressed. The final part of the chapter details aspects of data preparation along with the rationale and the step-by-step process of the data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the two analytical frameworks used for the data collection, analysis and interpretation and explains how these two were synergistically combined to understand student experience. Firstly, it introduces Bronfenbrenner's' original and 'mature' Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model of child development. After presenting theoretically each element of the PPCT model, it provides explanations of how these elements are applied in this study to analyse the individual experiences of the twelve participating students. The Chapter continues with a presentation of the student voice critical framework which was used to facilitate a more student voice-oriented approach to analysis and interpretation. Finally, it concludes by presenting the dialectical approach between the bio-ecological model and the student voice critical framework that this study followed.

Chapter Five sets the context of the study by presenting the schools and some of student data gathered, in storied form. Specifically, readers are acquainted with the four participating schools and four (out of the twelve) focal children, one from each school: John and Liam from the UK, Marios and Anna from Greece (pseudonyms). Led through the journey of each student in turn, the storied representations of their experiences are structured using the PPCT theory discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Four).

Chapter Six presents the findings of the research as these were analysed by using the elements of the PPCT framework and reflecting through the student voice critical framework. More specifically, it includes the analysis of the twelve students' personal stories focusing firstly on their personal characteristics ('force', 'demand' and 'resource'). Then, the

'Process' analysis is provided, which discusses the students' experiences in relation to the students' 'proximal processes', i.e. the forms of their interactions in their immediate environment. The 'Context' section follows, which includes the analysis of experiences in relation to the systemic features of the students' environment. A brief analysis of the 'Time' component of the model follows, which covers specific events and circumstances that affect student experiences from a temporal perspective. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the overarching framework of the study which is based in the dialectical relationship between the PPCT model and the student voice critical framework.

Chapter Seven is the Discussion Chapter, which draws upon the entire thesis and synthesises the findings of the previous chapters in order to address the overall research question. The main findings are linked with relevant literature and are structured around the four dimensions of experience and the contextual features that have emerged from the systematic use of the study's overarching framework. The final part of the Chapter provides an overall account of the use of the framework and how this has contributed to unravel the meaning of student voice in this study, addressing in that way the study's research question.

Finally, Chapter Eight (Conclusion) gives a summary of the research and a brief critique of the findings. After presenting briefly the main research findings, it considers the unique study's contribution and implications. An overall reflection on the research journey and the research process follows, outlining the study's challenges and limitations and suggesting future research directions. The last part of the Chapter includes some final thoughts about this thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The present Chapter aims to review the use and value of the main concepts of the study i.e. that of inclusion and student voice. In the main body of the review, the primary theoretical discourses around inclusion (Section 2.3) and student voice (Section 2.4) are analysed by providing existing definitions, identifying and critiquing problematic areas. Research evidence is also presented relating to the key issues that have emerged from the analysis (Section 2.5). In the concluding comments, an overall insight into the literature is attempted by highlighting the important points of the review (Section 2.6). Overall, the Chapter's conclusions suggest that inclusive research needs to be further supported by focusing more on student voice. It can also be enriched by linking student experience with inclusive processes and by investigating them within different national contexts through the bio-ecological lens.

2.2. Literature review methodology

The questions that the review aimed to address were:

- How are inclusive education and student voice conceptualised within the international literature?
- What are the main issues surrounding inclusive education and student voice?
- What does the international research say about inclusion and student voice at the secondary level?

The search strategy attempted to locate literature which focused on the review's main areas of interest (i.e. inclusive education/practice, student voice, student experiences, secondary education). It should be noted here that the focus of the review was not on a broad notion of inclusion (which might encompass students from minority/disadvantaged backgrounds, or from other potentially marginalised groups), but on inclusion as it affects in particular young people with SEN/D, as this was the target group of the study. The first step in the literature search was to identify an initial set of papers to use for the snowballing procedure (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The second step was to examine reference lists from the initial set of papers and select relevant peer-reviewed papers, as well as key literature reviews and overviews. More details about the search strategy as well as the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the review are provided in Appendix I.

2.3. Understanding inclusion

2.3.1. The issue of definition

More than two decades ago, the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education endorsed the idea of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). After the Salamanca Statement, other important declarations, such as the World Declaration on 'Education for All' (UNESCO, 2000) and the 'Incheon Declaration' (UNESCO, 2015) reaffirmed a worldwide consensus on an inclusive vision and orientation for educational systems. The most contemporary conceptualizations of inclusive education link it to the principles of efficiency, equality and equity (European Agency, 2016a; OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2017). This vision is also reflected in other significant documents, such the latest UNESCO guidelines, which define inclusion as 'a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners' (UNESCO, 2017, p.13).

As a result of these international mandates, school systems around the world have been reviewing ways in which they can best provide quality education and pedagogies which support all children (Armstrong et al., 2011). However, the implementation of inclusive education has been dependent to each society's different understandings of disability and inclusion (Meijer and Watkins, 2016; Strogilos and Avramidis, 2017). In fact, since the initial conception of inclusion, multiple perspectives and approaches have emerged to explicate its meaning. Despite of the different understandings, there is general agreement within the international literature that inclusive education is a dynamic process and should be understood as 'a journey, not a destination' (Topping, 2012, p. 9). In their effort to provide clarity, Ainscow et al. (2006b), outline a typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion:

1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
2. Inclusion as way to reduce disciplinary exclusions.
3. Inclusion in relation to all students seen as being vulnerable to exclusion
4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.
5. Inclusion as 'Education for All'.
6. Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society (p. 15).

The definitions above are, to some extent, contradictory and have different implications for educational practice. The first three refer to overcoming barriers in a specific context for the education of particular groups of learners. However, the practice that follows those definitions might limit the educational opportunities of those learners, as it is based more or less on their 'labelling', which extends their differences with other students (Howes et al.,

2009). On the contrary, the last three definitions place the emphasis to developing practice according to a set of inclusive values and principles with the aim to reduce barriers to learning and participation for all pupils (ibid).

Another typology is provided in the critical analysis of Göransson and Nilholm (2014), who found four different understandings of inclusive education:

1. Inclusion as the placement of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.
2. Inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of learners with disabilities.
3. Inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all learners.
4. Inclusion as the creation of communities.

Typologies as the above indicate that during the past decades, inclusion has been conceived in several ways, sometimes contradictory, all of which influence practice and have complex consequences for learners (Howes et al., 2009). In fact, when attempting to examine more closely the models of inclusion that have emerged internationally, lack of clarity and overlaps in definitions are still frequent (Dyson, 1999; Slee, 2011; Topping, 2012). Within the idea of 'inclusion', there are still many unanswered questions (for example, inclusion 'for whom', 'by whom', 'with whom', 'where', 'why' and so on). A more detailed examination of the most important approaches, questions and dilemmas surrounding inclusion is attempted in the discussion that follows, starting from the history of contemporary ideological and political movements.

Inclusion as an issue of disability and social justice

Discourses around inclusion have focused on the issue of social justice since the political and social movements for equity in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s (Thomas, 2013). After the 'milestone' of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), inclusion was considered part of the efforts to protect and promote the disabled persons' rights (Sherleaw and Hudebine, 2015). Key commentators view inclusion as a principled approach to education and society, and as the task of putting particular values into action (Booth, 2005).

The stronger tensions and challenges around inclusion have their historical roots in major theoretical debates around disability. More specifically, the sociology of disability, established by leading theorists such as Len Barton, Sally Tomlinson and Mike Oliver, is marked by a significant shift in the analysis of the nature and causes of disability (Allan, 2010b). In essence, the two dominant perspectives that have shaped perceptions of disability throughout the 20th century have been the social and medical model (Oliver, 2013;

Rieser, 2012). In a nutshell, the medical model focuses on the loss of function of disabled people, which leads to them being viewed as in deficit and in need to be made 'normal' (Rieser, 2012). Conversely, the social model rejects the notions of this constructed 'normalcy' which situates the problem of the disabled person (Davies, 2006) and argues for a barrier free environment which is likely to benefit every person with disabilities, as well as other groups (Oliver, 2013).

The social perspective emphasises the dynamic relationship between an individual's impairment and environmental 'disablement' (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). In other words, individuals who are different because of an impairment are oppressed by a society which is guided by the concept of 'normality' (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). This is one of the major paradigm shifts around disability: the realisation of impairment as a disability, informed by social limitations, which are associated with discriminations (Barnes, 1991). Oliver (2013) argues that the existence of the disability movement and the ideas emerging from it are posing profound challenges to the existence of the professions and have radical implications for their professional practice.

Indeed, such sociological perspectives around disability have clear implications for the education profession, and inclusive practice in particular. As Stangvik notes (2010) 'cultural interpretations of disability strongly affect opportunities for inclusion' (p. 353). Social theorists reject the 'medical model' way of thinking about students with disabilities, as leading to integration and segregation (Rieser, 2012). They emphasise on the sociological dimension of inclusion, which view as a political struggle and act. In a nutshell, theorists influenced by the social model of disability maintain that disability and special needs in education are 'the products of disabling barriers and of exclusionary and oppressive educational processes' (Terzi, 2005, p. 448).

Other educationalists identify critical weaknesses in conceptualising disability as unilaterally socially caused and asserting only the limitations on the part of the school (see Norwich, 1993; Shakespeare, 2006). Terzi (2005) specifically notes that 'the duality between individual and social elements, an artificial causal opposition, leads to limited and unsatisfactory conceptualisations of disability and special needs' (p. 446). Although Terzi (2004) acknowledges the theoretical limits of the social model, she accepts that it remains a powerful and helpful perspective, which illuminates the moral dimensions of inclusion and has clear implications for inclusive practice. On a similar note, Julie Allan considers the contribution of the sociology of disability to inclusive education, which she sees as an

'ethical project' (Allan, 1999; 2005), entailing both personal and collective responsibility (Allan, 2010b). What is more, Rieser (2012) emphasises the potential of the social model approach to allow all education stakeholders to examine their thinking and practice so that they break the barriers for disabled students.

In the light of the above, it cannot be disputed that despite its theoretical oppositions, it was through the disability and 'social justice' movement that students with SEN/D have been assured of the right to fair education. In Gerrard's (1994) words, students with disabilities 'through their advocates, have already fought the legal battle and won the right to be included' (p. 62).

Inclusion as a human rights issue

During the 1980s and 1990s, discourses around disability have shifted the focus from the medical perspective to a socio-political perspective and were introduced and analysed as a human rights issue (Gibson, 2015; Rieser, 2012; Rioux, 2013). Armstrong and Barton (Armstrong and Barton, 1999; Barton and Armstrong, 2001) and Oliver and Barnes (2012), among other scholars, have emphasised the rights of learners 'within' education. On a similar note, Ainscow et al. (2013) have noted that 'a fair and inclusive education is desirable because of the human rights imperative for people to be able to develop their capacities and participate fully in society' (p. 150).

Incorporating or mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities has become an integral part of policy dialogue within European Member countries (Coleridge et al., 2010). For example, in the recent General comment No. 4 (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016), inclusive education is understood as a fundamental human right, a principle that values all learners' well-being, a means for realising other human rights, and a process for eliminating barriers (Soriano et al., 2017). More recently, the UNESCO guidelines (2017) affirmed the 'human-rights' perspective, by acknowledging inclusion and equity as overarching principles which should guide all educational policies and practices.

According to the 'rights' agenda, inclusion is strongly associated with providing equity (Artiles et al., 2011) and is seen as a part of the general school reform movement (Gerrard, 1994). What is more, Soriano et al. (2017) support that inclusive education, as the right of all learners to high-quality education, entails four dimensions:

1. Inclusive education as placement in mainstream education.
2. Inclusive education as a process towards equal learning opportunities.

3. Inclusive education towards equal achievement opportunities.
4. Inclusive education towards equal citizenship opportunities (pp. 8–9).

Similarly, various European and international reports provide evidence that suggests that inclusive practice can not only provide equal opportunities, but also more equitable outcomes for all learners (European Agency, 2018d; INCLUD-ED, 2012; OECD, 2012).

Yet, the rights-based approach is not without criticism. Various concerns have been raised about the problems that schools face under the dual pressure of providing more equitable and inclusive education and, at the same time, raising learners' achievements and combating school failure (Muijs et al., 2011). Gibson (2015) problematises the rights agenda of inclusive education and calls for new pedagogic developments which can only emerge through more critical insights 'to the impact of hegemony and 'silence' on the experiences of those with 'disability' (p. 1). What is more, Farrell (2000) has criticised the human rights position on inclusion as being essentially flawed and ultimately unhelpful, as it moves the debate away from the important empirical questions around the development of inclusive practices (as opposed to inclusive principles), answers to which are necessary if there is to be improvement of education for all students.

In line with Farrell's view, Lang et al. (2011) suggest that despite the international policy mandates and the accumulation of arguments in favour of inclusion as means for ensuring equity, the 'human-rights' discourse has not yet managed to find its clear-cut implications for inclusive implementation and practice. The reality is that too often students who are perceived to be different for any reason are still marginalised or excluded (UNESCO, 2003). This further 'perpetuates social and educational inequalities' (European Agency, 2016a, p. 56) and contradicts with the 'human-rights' perspective of inclusion.

Regardless of these theoretical oppositions, it cannot be disputed that the ethical and moral justification for the rights-based approach to education, and inclusion in particular, has gained its theoretical ground. Allan (2017) specifically comments on the power of human-right legal frameworks (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), as providing 'some grounds for optimism' (p.10). From the discussion above, it can be suggested that any skepticism on the rights-based agenda can prove helpful, but not with the intention to reject it completely; On the contrary, it can serve a useful purpose by drawing the attention from 'why' to 'how' the human rights approach can become a useful framework to orient inclusive development and increase the impact of inclusive schooling (further discussion on the issue of impact is provided in Section 2.3.3).

Inclusion as an organisational approach

Many inclusion scholars have focused on the school factors that impact on inclusive practice and recognised the need to pay attention to organisational features of schooling to promote inclusive practice (Clark et al., 1999; Dyson and Millward, 2000; European Agency, 2013). According to Clark et al. (2014) schools should develop structures, practices and processes which will allow them to respond more effectively to the diversity of their students' populations. This perspective has also been referred to as the 'organisational' approach to education (Sebba and Ainscow, 1996; Clark et al., 1999; Dyson and Millward, 2000; Booth and Ainscow, 2002). This approach considers schools as organisations that have the potential to explore key issues and promote inclusive change (Armstrong et al., 2011).

According to Dyson and Millward (2000), two influential commentators have provided the most thorough theoretical accounts of the relationship between inclusion and schools as organisations: Skrtic with his 'adhocratic' school and Ainscow with his 'moving' schools both focusing on the institutional-level factors in the establishment of more inclusive approaches. In more detail, Skrtic (1991) suggests an alternative organisation structure for schools and professional culture, which he terms 'adhocracy'. He argues that this form, which stresses collaboration and active problem solving, has the potential to make schools both excellent and equitable, and thus educate today's youth appropriately (Skrtic, 1991).

According to Ainscow, 'the agenda of inclusive education has to be concerned with overcoming barriers to participation that may be experienced by any pupil' (Ainscow, 1999, p. 218). The development of inclusive practices must be viewed as a process of 'social learning' which requires a reflective, 'inclusive turn' (Ainscow, 2007, p. 5); the focus must not only be on practice, but it must also address and sometimes challenge the thinking behind existing ways of working (ibid, p. 3). In a nutshell, Ainscow and his collaborators have focused more on developing 'a workable technology of inclusion' (Clark et al., 2014, p. 159). In their view, inclusion refers to the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, and places particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement.

Practically, following the 'organisational' perspective, inclusive efforts should be focused on the identification and removal of barriers of learning and participation in schools and should involve all stakeholders. This approach has been very influential internationally through the implementation in schools in many countries of the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth and Ainscow,

2000; 2002; 2011). It is now increasingly acknowledged that reorganising ordinary schools through school improvement processes is the most promising way of ensuring that all learners, including those categorised as having SEN/D, can learn effectively (Ainscow and César, 2006; Ainscow, et al., 2006b). From a school improvement perspective, it is more important for educators to find appropriate pedagogical and organisational strategies to support learners with SEN/D, rather than focusing on their labels (Dyson and Howes, 2009). Individuals have also highlighted the importance of embedding inclusive education within the school improvement genre.

To sum up, the previous analysis has shown that the development of inclusive thinking has involved a progressive refocusing from the 'disabilities' and 'needs' of individual students towards more 'whole-school' and community approaches which aim to improve schools and provide quality education of all (Ainscow and Miles, 2008; European Agency, 2013). However, as Opertti et al. (2014) note, the concept of inclusive education as transforming the whole education system is still far from effectively implemented. The previous discussion indicated several tensions around definitions, which justify the notion that inclusion still sits in a 'theoretical vacuum' (Armstrong et al., 2011, p. 37). According to Armstrong et al., (2011) what is still missing from the inclusive perspective is the 'critical engagement with the realities of education and schools that the early movement for inclusive education had promised' (p. 37). Indubitably, these realities in most educational systems around the word would still be characterised as being 'exclusionary', rather than truly 'inclusive'.

2.3.2. The issue of practice

The traditional positions around disability (i.e. the social versus the medical model) represent controversies and counterpoints across the commonly accepted divide between traditional 'special education' and 'inclusive education' (Allan and Slee, 2008). Although schools and societies have now much greater awareness of SEN and disability as an educational issue (Riddell, 2012), the relationship between special education and inclusion remains a problematic area (Ekins, 2016). More specifically, a long-lasting tension prevails between the specialist provision which accommodates individual needs and the 'whole school approach', which aims to respond effectively to all student needs (Dyson and Millward, 2000; Clark et al., 1997; Norwich, 1994). As Armstrong et al. (2010) note: the history of special education has been a history of tension between assimilation and regulation, between inclusion on the one hand and segregation and control on the other (p. 25).

This tension poses challenges to all education stakeholders and has implications for policy and practice in all types of educational settings and support services. A continuous dilemma still exists for national priorities as to whether focusing strategies and innovations on special education or on diversity in the common school (Vislie, 2003). This dilemma has also been referred to as the 'dilemma of difference' (Artiles and Bal, 2008, p. 5; Terzi, 2005, p. 444): 'Do we treat all students the same, or do we make special accommodations for certain groups? Do we educate all groups of students considered different in the same programme, or do we create separate programmes for some of them?'

Answers to these questions lead to decisions about resource allocations and accommodations to respond to student differences. Despite the general trend towards placement of children with SEN/D in mainstream education, and away from special schooling, a substantial variety in placement patterns prevails (European Commission, 2013; Rix et al., 2013). Vislie (2003) has found that while some changes were occurring toward more inclusive provision for students with SEN/D, most countries had remained stable in their practices. What is more, although the term inclusion is about all students, it is still associated with the traditional thinking around the placement, integration or inclusion of students with high levels of SEN/D in mainstream settings (Slee and Allan, 2001; Ekins, 2016).

In fact, many education professionals and disability organisations are in favour of specialist units in the mainstream schools, arguing that mainstream classrooms can never provide a full substitute (Ainscow and Cesar, 2006 in Strogilos and Avramidis, 2017). However, relying on separated or special classes reduce children to one aspect of their identities i.e. in this case their SEN/D, limiting their freedom and jeopardizing their whole education process (Cole, 2012). Such findings justify Vislie's (2003) conclusion that inclusion has still not gained much ground and raise questions about the extent to which the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) has actually introduced a new educational policy agenda for all countries, or was just a change of language (Allan, 2006; Slee, 2003; Vislie, 2003).

An associated problematic area identified by inclusion scholars is related to student 'labelling' and categorisation. In particular, Clarke et al. (2005) note the contradiction between defining an individual with disability as normal, but at the same time needing to identify them as ab-normal in order to have access to services and benefits. Allan (2010b) comments on this paradox by stressing that: 'the removal of the 'Other' [i.e. the disabled person or the individual with learning difficulties] comes through a pathologising and naming of individuals in relation (only) to their deficits' (p. 607).

Also, in many cases, the categorisations, classifications and labels used in special education have little scientific credibility (Armstrong et al., 2010). They might serve administrative funding purposes but have not proved so useful for pedagogical and learning purposes (Avramidis, 2013; Norwich, 2010). Florian specifically notes on the issue of categorisation that:

> A focus on different groups of learners as a way of determining 'all' is problematic because of the variation within and between any identified groups. Yet, provision is often organised in this way… despite the fact that individuals usually fit into more than one category (Florian, 2010, p. 64).

On a similar note, Messiou (2012, 2017) argues that focusing on categories entails a danger for other students who do not belong in a predetermined category to become marginalised. Another criticism is provided by Slee (2009), who cautions that while labelling might offer opportunities of individual support for students with SEN/D, it can also lead teachers to believe that they are not qualified to teach these students.

The latter argument leads to the interconnected issue of the nature of specialised knowledge that is perceived as needed for addressing disabled students' needs, which has also been referred to as 'SEN pedagogy'. With a great amount of literature existing that is considered related to special education, special education has formed its own knowledge, power and control. Slee and Allan (2001) note that: 'special education has constructed particular ways of 'knowing' the disabled person that privileges professional expansion into their lives'. Very often, the inclusive school movement blames special education as being responsible for mainstream education's failure to meet appropriately diverse student needs (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994).

Some scholars support the idea that the 'special' teaching approaches and strategies themselves are not sufficiently different from those used to teach all learners, so as to justify the use of the specific term 'SEN pedagogy' (Lewis and Norwich 2005; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Ainscow et al. (2013) put this simply: 'effective teaching is effective teaching for all students' (p. 7). However, Norwich and Lewis (2001, 2005, 2007) note the lack of evidence to support the notion that what works with students with 'SEN/D' would also work for all students. Without rejecting completely this position, they put forward the idea of 'a continua of common teaching strategies' and highlight the significance of intensification in teaching practice; that is to say that more practice, more examples, more experience of transfer and more careful assessment seem to be required for students with SEN/D (ibid).

Efforts are still being made to find different approaches to the phenomenon of disability in relation to special needs. For example, Reindal (2008) proposes a social relational model of disability as a platform for the enterprise of special needs education. Another approach is proposed by Nussbaum, who criticises the notion of 'normality' and suggests focusing more on children's capabilities:

> It would be a progress if we could acknowledge that there is no such thing as 'the normal child'; instead, there are children with varying capabilities and varying impediments, all of whom need individualised attention as their capabilities developed (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 210).

Terzi (2005) supports the 'capability approach' (Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1992), considering that it views impairment and disability as aspects of human diversity. In stark contrast to the above views, some other scholars argue that 'full inclusion' is impossible to achieve in practice, and introduce combined terms such as 'inclusive special education' (see Horby, 2015; Takala et al., 2009), to refer to 'a process of ongoing whole-school organisation and development in order to assist mainstream schools to effectively educate as many children with SEN/D as possible' (Horby, 2015, p. 239).

It becomes evident that the development of what is called 'full' inclusion is still challenged by the predominant models and practices of 'special education'. The term 'inclusion' is frequently used as a new name for 'special education'. This tendency calls for a 'reconstruction' of thinking about special education (Slee and Allan, 2001), together with a 'reconstruction' of its traditional forms, with the development of new structures and practices in mainstream schools (Clark et al., 1999).

2.3.3. The issue of impact

The argument in favor of inclusion, as opposed to other segregated forms of education, is a position which has been repeatedly justified in theory. As already discussed, a wide range of research examines the ideology and conceptualisation of inclusive education (e.g. Barton, 2003; Slee, 2006; Allan, 2014), pedagogy for inclusive education (e.g. Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), or school improvement and effectiveness for inclusive education (e.g. Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow and Sandill, 2010; Ainscow et al., 2004; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010). However, an area of great complexity is related to the evidence base of inclusion.

A considerable amount of research has focused on the impact of inclusion, and particularly on the development of students with SEN/D across a whole range of curriculum areas in different education levels (European Agency, 2012a; 2016a). Some of these studies have

shown the positive impact of inclusive placements for learners with SEN/D (see for example Dyson et al., 2002; McGregor and Vogelsberg, 1998). For instance, Dyson et al. (2002) undertook a systematic review of the effectiveness of school actions for promoting inclusion and concluded that:

> ...there is a limited, but by no means negligible, body of empirical evidence about the relationship between school action and the participation of all students in the cultures, curricula and communities of those schools (p. 4).

Clearer positive results of inclusion have been found regarding the social development of students with SEN/D (Farrell, 2000; European Agency, 2016a). A recent review of the literature concerned with both the short-term and long-term social inclusion of children and adults with disabilities conducted by European Agency (2018f) has indicated that:

- Inclusive education increases the opportunities for peer interactions and for close friendships between learners with and without disabilities.
- Learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may perform academically and socially better than learners educated in segregated settings.
- Attending and receiving support within inclusive education settings increases the likelihood of enrolling in higher education (p. 7).

However, many other studies on the impact of inclusive programmes on the academic performance and social development of students with SEN/D had produced mixed results and could not provide a clear endorsement for the positive effects of inclusion. For example, Lindsey's review (2007) stressed that there is a lack of evidence from appropriate studies and, where evidence does exist, the balance was only marginally positive. This finding is also supported by other reviews (such as that by Kauffman et al. 2011, Ruijs and Peetsma, 2009; Salend and Garrick-Duhaney, 1999). Another group of studies have examined the extent to which students without SEN/D are affected academically more or less than when taught together with classmates with SEN/D (e.g. Kalampouka et al., 2007; Szumski et al., 2017; Ruijs and Peetsma, 2009; Dessemontet et al., 2012). These studies showed either ambiguous results, or weak conclusions regarding positive associations between inclusive classrooms and the academic achievement of students without SEN/D. It becomes evident that the reviews of the research evidence in support of inclusion have so far been inconclusive, which indicates an inadequate research base for many issues around inclusive education (Dyson, et al., 2005). In that sense, a considerable gap appears to exist between the stated purpose of inclusive education and the evidence of its effects. As Allan (2010b) notes 'we appear to be no closer to an understanding of how to achieve inclusive education' (p.609).

Yet, it is important to note here that the inconsistencies in reporting educational outcomes do not necessarily reflect the 'value' of inclusive schooling (Forlin et al., 2013). For instance, a possible explanation for the weak academic impact of inclusion may be associated with the traditional ways of measuring educational outcomes. It is a fact that most countries' assessment frameworks commonly rely on narrow, standardised measures of attainment and do not take into account wider and more authentic learning outcomes (European Agency, 2018d; Kefallinou and Donnelly, 2016). What is more, Göransson and Nilholm (2014) stress that the operative meaning of inclusion in empirical research is not clearly defined and call for new types of studies. The discussion thus far highlights the need of more high-quality research to provide stronger evidence regarding the practice of inclusive education. As Lindsey (2007) notes: 'The important task now is to research more thoroughly the factors that support the quality education for children with SEN/D in order to develop an evidence-based approach to their education' (p. 2).

2.3.4. The issue of context

As it has been shown so far, inclusion is contested within and across various educational systems and its implementation is problematic internationally (Armstrong et al., 2011). Another tension that lies at the heart of the inclusion debate is related to its contextualization, and specifically whether it should be part of a 'local' or 'global' agenda (Artiles and Dyson, 2005). When trying to understand inclusion, important questions related to context arise, as are the following: 'can we refer to inclusion as a local or global concept?' or 'to what extent is the local and national context important of understanding inclusion?'

Inclusion theorists who see inclusion is a global phenomenon support their view on the grounds that the conceptual, philosophical and practical problems of equity and inclusion in schooling are shared concerns around nations (Florian and Rouse, 2009; Strogilos and Avramidis, 2017). Specifically, according to Strogilos and Avramidis (2017), the main challenges of inclusion seem to cross geographical and cultural boundaries and include common issues of (a) unequal access for service users with disabilities, especially those from a culturally diverse background, (b) lack of culturally sensitive collaboration among professionals from different disciplines and between professionals and service users, and (c) limited resources and support (p.108).

This 'global' view relates to the issue of transferring, 'borrowing' or 'lending' inclusive policies practices within and across nations (Auld and Morris, 2014). Some scholars suggest that there is a value in gaining international perspectives on inclusion, as they can make 'the

strange familiar and the familiar strange' (Booth, 1999, p. 165). Similarly, Ekins (2016) argues that it is through the process of finding different ways to look at familiar practices, of challenging assumptions and of developing further our understanding about inclusion that we can achieve fully inclusive practice. By and large, the supporters of the 'global' agenda see a value in looking at what other countries do, as it helps them to critique inclusive practice in their own context.

Other researchers highlight the complexities of seeing inclusion as a global issue. They hold the view that inclusive education involves complex social processes and has to be understood in relation to particular context, geographical, political and economic factors, as well as specific cultural values and attitudes (Ainscow et al., 2006b; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Miles and Singal, 2010). They specifically note a series of complex variables which are involved in the transfer of good practice from one context to another (Auld and Morris, 2014; Bridges, 2014; Fielding et al., 2005; Ozga, 2004). As Harris notes: 'while policy borrowing is far from a new enterprise, the harsh reality is that even the best policies travel badly' (2012, p. 395). On a similar note, Harris et al. (2013) stress that the selection and implementation of school reform and improvement approaches are usually disconnected from the context within which they are enacted. Overall, these scholars recognise the need for local understandings of inclusion and call for more sustainable, context-appropriate inclusive policies and practices (Miles and Singal, 2010).

These controversies testify that in the discussion about inclusion, contextual sensitivity becomes an important issue. The inclusive thinking, as it has emerged from the discourses around disability, has been criticized of relying heavily on individuals and ignoring the contribution of other social-contextual approaches to understanding inclusive experiences, particularly those from other countries (Shakespeare, 2006; Trent et al., 1998). For example, Tom Shakespeare (2006), criticises the social model of disability as relying in 'an overly narrow and flawed conception of disability' (p. 9) and points to alternative and more appropriate socio-contextual approaches; these provide a more holistic understanding of disability, which is always in interaction between individual and structural factors. As he notes:

> The experience of a disabled person results from the relationship between factors intrinsic to the individual, and extrinsic factors arising from the wider context in which she finds herself (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 55).

On a similar note, Reindal (2008) stresses the need to move away from traditional conceptualisations of SEN/D, which have their roots in the medical and the social models of disability and place emphasis on either the individual or the social context, respectively. What is more, Ainscow et al. (2012) propose to explore the 'ecology of equity' (p.198) which claims that the extent to which students' experiences and outcomes are equitable is dependent on the social context. This includes a whole range of interacting, socio-economic processes outside school (such as histories and cultures of the people surrounding the child, their economic realities etc.) and not just only the educational practices of their teachers or their schools.

On the basis of the previous arguments, a focus on inclusive school processes emerges as a promising approach to solve the problems related to the context-dependency of inclusive education. It becomes evident that current systems and practices need to be reviewed with the support of quality, in-depth research into inclusive processes (Ainscow and Miles, 2011). As Strogilos and Avramidis (2017) note: 'since the trends of the inclusion movement cross cultural boundaries and geographic contexts, it is important to understand the interrelation between local and global practices' (p.107).

2.3.5. An eco-systemic approach of inclusive education

So far, it has been shown that research on inclusive education must not only encompass individuals, schools and environments within which they operate, but should also seek for a deep understanding of the relationships between the factors that influence inclusive processes (Anderson et al., 2014). Ecological perspectives, such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 2005) allow for an exploration of inclusive education as being about the development of systems and the development of individuals within these systems (Kamenopoulou, 2016; Singal, 2006; Tudge and Hogan, 2005). Such perspectives can increase current knowledge and understanding of the complex inclusive processes (Anderson et al., 2014; Renn, 2003; Singal, 2006) and can help to contextualise global debates. Engelbrecht (1999) confirms that 'an understanding of the context is the first step towards understanding new developments in education and the movement towards inclusive education' (p. 5).

Bronfenbrenner's model of human development acknowledges the role of the individual child, the intricate mechanisms of the learning process itself and the wider conditions that surround learning; but most importantly, it allows to estimate the degree of synergy of those. The potential of the ecological perspective in the inclusive field has enabled the

emergence of 'ecological models of inclusion' (Anderson et al., 2014) which have recently been named as 'Ecological Systems Theory' (Kamenopoulou, 2016).

Traditionally, the ecological paradigm has been used in research on disability mainly as a framework for child, classroom, and family investigations in clinical settings (Salend and Garrick Duhaney, 1999; Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). It is only recently that it has started to be applied as a conceptual framework in inclusive research, with the aim to better explore inclusion processes (e.g. Odom and Diamond, 1998; Odom et al., 2004; Singal, 2006, Stivaros 2007, McLinden and McCracken, 2016, McLinden, et al., 2016; Leonard, 2011; Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013; Lewthwaite, 2011; Kamenopoulou, 2016; Tetler and Baltzer, 2011; Squires et al., 2013).

On a more practical level, several 'ecological' tools have been developed to help schools and policy-makers to support one another in carrying out reviews in the school or system level. For example, recent work of the European Agency includes 'The Ecosystem of Support for Inclusive Education' (European Agency, 2016b, 2017) which sets out the main structures and processes that influence student participation and that must be considered to improve student progress. As the European Agency (2017) notes, this holistic model can be used by education decision-makers in order 'to identify key areas for local and/or national review' (p.15).

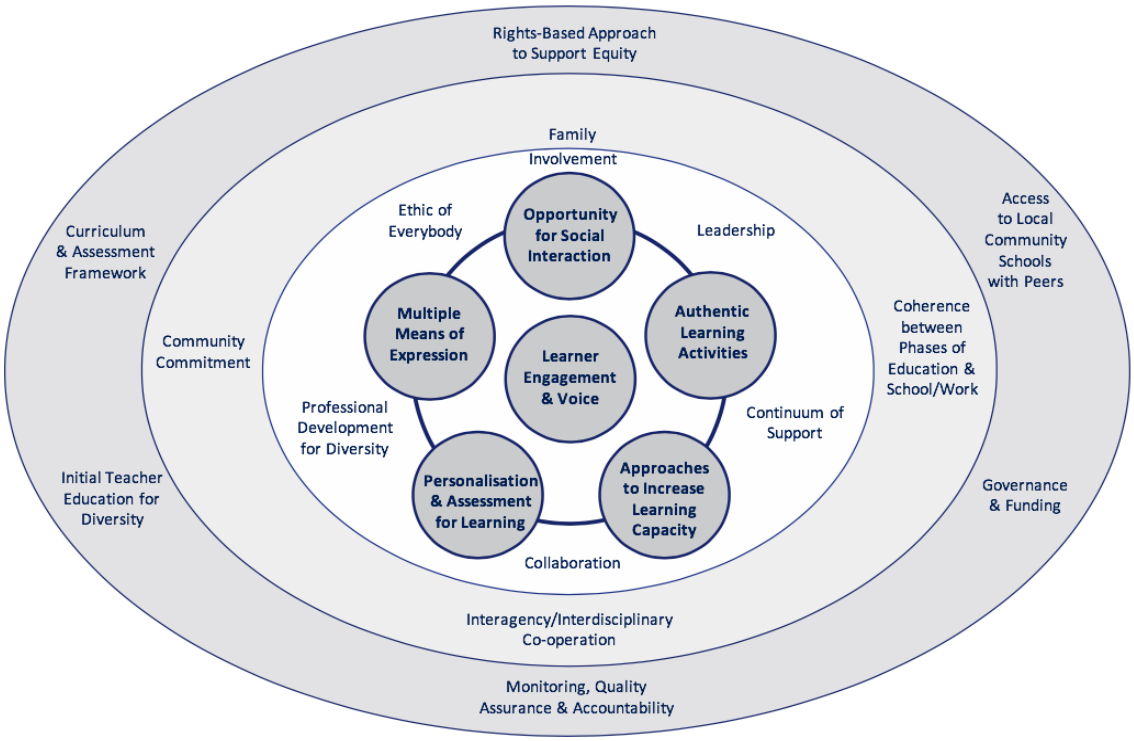

Figure 2.1 The Ecosystem of Support for Inclusive Education

This framework places the learner at the centre, and each contributory factor is located in relation to the learner's educational ecosystem (European Agency, 2017) – resulting to what Anderson et al. (2014) call 'an ecology of inclusive education'. Through the exploration of multiple factors both internal and external to the individual, the discussion moves away from the dichotomous question of whether inclusive outcomes depend on the individual or the context (Kamenopoulou, 2016). Such models permit a meaningful exploration of inclusive processes within and across systems, irrespective of how inclusion is defined and implemented in diverse contexts. As Stivaros (2007) put it:

> ...viewing inclusion from an ecological perspective, we can re-conceptualise it as experience and in doing so, any understanding is rendered much more complex than previously acknowledged. It becomes a wider phenomenon, distributed across agent, activity and world (p. 5).

2.3.6. Summary points

The previous discussion highlights the following themes and issues that have emerged from the analysis of the inclusion literature:

- Inconsistencies exist in definitions and implementation of inclusion. Inclusive education is an issue of international concern and its contested and complicated nature has led to a lack of a consensus over a single definition and approach. It has to be reminded here that although the review acknowledges the wider conceptualisation of inclusion (the 'full inclusion' model), for the purposes of this study the term inclusion is used to refer to the ways it affects particularly students with SEN/D, as this was the target group of the study.
- Inclusion is understood and implemented differently in different contexts. Although there is a shift towards social, 'whole-school' and 'rights-based' approaches to inclusion, the 'special education' and 'needs-based' thinking that uses remediation and compensatory approaches still exists.
- Despite inclusion's stated position that it can benefit all students, evidence to support this view is not easily available or coherent. Nevertheless, this inconsistent reporting of educational outcomes does not necessarily reflect the value of inclusive schooling.
- In the effort to theorise inclusion, eco-systemic approaches can prove useful. Such perspectives take into account the role of the interactions between the individual and the environment. They emphasise equally the importance of individual student characteristics within a particular school and the national context in understanding educational growth.

2.4. Understanding student voice

In recent decades, the trend towards inclusive education worldwide has significantly transformed the experiences of students in schools, and especially those with SEN/D. However, as already mentioned, it has also raised concerns about the extent to which inclusive education policy frameworks actually reflect educational practice. In the effort to understand better the development of inclusion, many researchers and practitioners have argued that listening to multiple perspectives, and especially the voices of young people, is of great importance. The following sections provide an analysis of the concept of student voice, including a discussion about its theoretical base and importance (Section 2.4.1), as well as some of the most frequent dilemmas and challenges encountered in student voice work (Section 2.4.2).

2.4.1. Rationale for student voice

Theoretical underpinnings

Discourses of the imperative to listen to children's voices have received much attention in the field of inclusive education since the early 90's (Cook-Sather, 2006). As a result, a torrent of important initiatives of listening to the opinions of children and young people and involving them in decision-making have emerged (Lewis and Porter, 2007). The growing focus on student voice has been based on several moral, social, political and theoretical considerations, which are discussed below.

First of all, the idea of listening to children has been supported and legitimised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) which calls state parties to:

> assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12).

As the human rights approach to education was gaining more ground (see Section 2.3.1), many initiatives by local and national educational policies have emerged to safeguard children's interests. These initiatives assume that children and young people are the immediate 'consumers' or 'users' of educational provision, borrowing terms from the marketing theory (Lewis, 2010); as such, their opinions about goods and services must be valued and their 'silenced' and 'excluded' voices need to be listened to (Gibson, 2006). Secondly, there is the argument of citizenship, which claims that student voice supports students' rights to act as active participants -and citizens- in school and beyond it (Cook-

Sather, 2006). Such arguments are indicative of the way the rights agenda has been closely connected with the continuing interest in student voice work. As Rudduck (2007) explains, it was exactly this imperative of students' rights that 'sparked a new student voice movement' (p. 589).

Parallel to the rights-based discourse, other theoretical developments of social sciences (such as constructivist, critical, feminist and anti-racist pedagogies) have also stressed the importance of listening to students and have contributed to the development of student voice research and practice (Cook-Sather, 2006, 2007). For example, the notion of a 'Culture of Silence', originated from the critical educational philosopher Paulo Freire, provided significant theoretical support for student voice work. Specifically, Freire (1985) has noted that: 'In ''the culture of silence'' the masses are mute, that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and therefore prohibited from being' (p. 50).

The Freirean perspective sees dependent masses as having a weak voice in contrast to the strong voice of the dominant social group; as such, by 'liberating' the voice of students (as the dependent mass) and by encouraging their dialogue with the adults (as the dominant social group), this 'culture of silence' can be weakened and potentially broken (Gibson, 2006). Many efforts within the student voice movement are drawn by a Freirean vision of social justice and transformation based on recognition of oppression and the insistence that students be recognized as subjects and actors (Cook-Sather, 2007).

Taken together, these ideas of 'empowering the disempowered' acknowledge that student voice has the potential of shifting power dynamics between adults and young people and of achieving a cultural shift in educational research and practice (Cook-Sather, 2006; Sargeant and Gillett-Swan, 2015). 'Giving voice' is seen as way of constructing children as active subjects and of recognising that they may have distinct perspectives on the world (Alldred, 1998). These ideas challenge the widespread tendency to think of adults and children as fundamentally different types of humans. The basic premise of student voice work is that children and young people should now be seen as 'human beings', not only 'human becomings', and as social agents who can make sense of their lives (Tangen, 2008; Uprichard, 2008); and this understanding of their world can, in turn, empower them and prompt change within the school (Cook-Sather, 2007). Most importantly, such a premise implies that 'education is to be found in the lived experience of participants, where people work with each other rather than on one another' (Thomas, 2013, p. 483).

The importance of student voice for inclusion

Despite the theoretical support of student voice, a considerable amount of researchers have depicted a lack of attention on the voices of student with SEN/D within the inclusive literature (for example, Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2004; Gunter and Thomson, 2007; Messiou, 2017; Riley and Docking, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2000; Tangen, 2009). These scholars highlight that research on inclusion cannot be fully understood without the representation of the views and experiences of these students (Lewis and Porter, 2007; Messiou, 2012; 2013; Messiou and Hope, 2015), and base their argument on widely-held principles of fairness and equity.

Firstly, returning to sociological perspectives, Slee (2011) maintains that inclusive education 'requires that we seek understandings of exclusion from the perspectives of those who are devalued and rendered marginal' (p. 107). In line with this view, Gunter and Thomson (2007) add that student voice is 'highly political' and argue that it can reveal student experiences in ways that facilitate understanding on processes of inclusion and exclusion. Their reasoning is based on the premise that 'cultures and practices developed to be inclusionary might not interconnect with the very issues that students know prevent them from being included' (ibid, p.188). Similarly, Allan, reflecting on her own research work with young disabled students, mentions that: 'students were not the passive objects of special needs knowledge upon inclusion is practiced, but were *actively seeking inclusion* working on themselves and their mainstream peers in order to make inclusion happen' (Allan, 1999, p. 109).

Arguably, student voice offers opportunities for critical self-reflection in the context of disability studies, sociology and education as a whole, which can lead to a transformative vision (Peters, 2010). Such arguments are associated with the conceptualisation of inclusion and reinforce the idea that student voice can increase our understanding of inclusive processes and contribute to school transformation and change. A relevant discourse comes from Messiou (2012, 2013), who connects the idea of engaging with students' voices directly with the broader and contemporary concept of inclusion, which, as discussed before, is concerned with all students. By paying particular attention to marginalised voices, and not only students with SEN/D, Messiou (2012, 2013) explores how marginalisation is understood and experienced by students themselves. She views the difficulties experienced by students as a result of the school organisation and the interactions that take place within the school.

Other sociocultural and cognitive theories which support the active participation of the learner also stress the importance of listening to student voice. For example, Portela (2013) notes that promoting learner participation contributes to the creation of new realities, which add something different to the existing order and can ultimately contribute to its reconstruction. Likewise, Allan et al. (2009) emphasise the unique students' contribution to the 'radical repositioning' of teachers (p.120) as through their insights they can show them ways in which they might enhance their understanding of diversity and become more responsive to it. From a developmental point of view, Lewis and Porter (2007) add that for any theory of child development to be generally reliable and applicable, it needs to take into account different variables from a diverse group of children (including gender, age, social background and ability etc.). To their view, children who are not developing in a typical way can provide useful evidence and can illuminate typical developmental processes (Lewis and Porter, 2007).

In addition to the above, other scholars highlight that listening especially to students with SEN/D can serve more pragmatic, educational purposes. For example, some support that enabling student voice to be heard and valued has the potential not only to improve relationships, but also to enhance learning and achievement (Allan and Persson, 2016; Duffield et al., 2000). Similarly, other educationalists highlight that this process has been linked to important educational outcomes, including: raised achievement in marginalised learners; greater classroom participation; enhanced school reform efforts; better self-reflection; preparation for improvement in struggling learners; decreased behaviour problems (Toshalis and Nakkula, 2012). In light of these, Sargeant and Gillett-Swan (2015) suggest the development of a 'voice-inclusive practice' which involves activities and practices in order to actively engage with children and their perspectives on matters that affect them (which is in line with the Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC).

Overall, there seems to be a growing consensus within the inclusion literature that listening to vulnerable students can promote inclusive development and change. Specifically, for students with SEN/D who have traditionally been regarded as a silent social group, it is now widely recognised that their views and perspectives must be heard. Taken together, these various theoretical considerations help to understand the development and proliferation of student voice work both in inclusive research and practice.

2.4.2. Dilemmas and challenges in student voice research

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of student voice, the idea that students can take up leading roles and become active agents in school change and development still has a small presence in policy, educational practice and research (Rudduck and Flutter 2000, Shulz and Cook-Sather 2001, Sargeant and Gillett-Swan, 2015; Wilson and Corbett 2001). This can be understood given the particular dilemmas and challenges that the unraveling of student views and experiences entails, some of which are discussed below.

The issue of representation

A significant debate within student voice discourses concerns the representational dilemma, and more specifically the extent to which an adult researcher is capable to represent the voices of children, especially those with SEN/D. This question, also known as 'the problem of authenticity' (Spyrou, 2016), refers to an 'insider epistemology' that assumes that 'insiders have a privileged access to knowledge of their own experiences' (Tangen, 2008, p.159). In other words, this position argues that only insiders can develop reliable knowledge of their group. Fielding (2004) explains its meaning as follows: 'We can only hesitantly speak on behalf of others significantly unlike ourselves because we lack, not only understanding, but the means to understand those whose interests and causes we would represent' (pp. 2999-3000)

Alldred (1998) also adds that the efforts of adults to represent children within research is commonly characterised by defining adult-child difference. Considering these issues, Tangen (2008) suggests a more 'open' epistemology for developing research-based empirical and theoretical knowledge. This kind of epistemology entails more interactive and participatory approaches through which outsider researchers, who study others' experiences at some distance, are indeed capable of grasping the meaning of insiders' experiences. According to Tangen, the term 'experience' is not essentially private, but 'socially mediated' and 'observable'. As such, understandings of students' experiences must be developed through a constant dialogue and intersubjective communication. This interactive approach which entails adults' and children's experiences can be viewed as a legitimate answer to the representation dilemma.

Another related concern is the danger of representing student voice uncritically (Alldred, 1998). Many researchers agree that engaging with student voice entails the risk of students to be treated simplistically or even worse, in a tokenistic or even manipulative way (Cook-

Sather, 2006; Lewis, 2010; Messiou and Hope, 2015). For example, Cook-Sather (2006) explains that there is the possibility that adults oversimplify the issues involved in changing school culture to make it more responsive; and adds to that the danger of treating students as having a unified, collective, and single voice. He cautions specifically that 'those who assert the importance of student voice as a uniform and united entity run the risk of overlooking essential differences among students, their perspectives, and their needs' (p.10).

Fielding (2004), who examined the ways in which children's views and voice may be subverted suggests critical reflection upon a number of questions and ethical dilemmas around representation of student voice, such as:

- Do we recognize the plurality of voices?
- Do we downplay the voices that seem too strident and foreground those that most readily make sense to us? Are we genuinely attentive to criticism?
- How does our professional and adult status frame our perspective?
- How confident can we be that our research does not perpetuate the status quo?
- Can we be sure that our data will not be ultimately used for the purposes of control?

On a similar note, Komulainen (2007) offers reflexivity as a way to avoid 'too simplistic and / or sensationalised usage of the term 'voice' (p. 22). Overall, these views suggest that researchers and educators should keep a reflective stance when trying to represent student voice (Naveed et al., 2017). This stance could help them to 'move beyond claims of authenticity and account for the complexity behind children's voices' (Spyrou, 2011, p.151).

The issue of listening

Another methodological question of student voice work is related to the actual act of listening, and more specifically: how to listen to children, and in particular those who face communication barriers? Rudduck and Flutter (2000) stress that adults have been traditionally excluding students from the consultative process -thus bracketing out of their voice- and explain that this tendency is founded upon an outdated view of childhood. Even beginning teachers, despite of their initial commitment to the students' freedom of expression, tend to quickly shift their will to seek students' perspectives, possibly as a result of institutional pressure (Sargeant and Gillett-Swan, 2015). According to many researchers, there remains a sense that teachers have little trust in students' capacity to hold or express a valid opinion (Messiou and Hope, 2015). Rudduck and Fielding (2006) refer to this thinking as the 'ideology of immaturity', which prevents adults from seeing students as responsible

and capable to reflect on issues that concern them. This ideology causes adults feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about what is acceptable during the consultation process (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006).

Veck (2009) adds to these considerations the issue of labelling. She argues that labelling students in terms of their deficiencies can act as a barrier to listening to them as persons with distinct voices. This barrier can deny students the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the culture and organisation of schools, which in turn, can prevent their inclusion. Based on these premises, Veck encourages educators to listen to students by attending to each other as unique individuals.

Another problematic feature of the act of listening is related of the way adults respond to students' silence (Spyrou, 2016). Silence, regardless of how it is interpreted and addressed, is an important consideration in student voice work (Cook-Sather, 2006). It can be either considered as merely a gap between responses or it can be seen as a significant part of the co-construction of the encounter (Tangen, 2008). As Lewis (2010) notes:

> listening better requires the researcher or evaluator to be reflexive and reflective in decoding the encounter. Through this, the interpretation of silence becomes an integral part of the analysis and, over time, could contribute to the development of methodologies of silence alongside methodologies of voice. (Lewis, 2010, p. 20).

According to Clark (2005), listening is understood as:

- an active and dynamic process of communication between children and adults which involves hearing, interpreting and constructing meanings;
- not limited to the spoken word (including many different verbal and non-verbal ways young people chose to communicate).
- a necessary stage in participation in (a) daily routines as well as in (b) wider decision-making (p. 491).

It becomes evident that despite that listening is frequently regarded as a passive process, in student voice research the challenge is to take the form of 'actively exchanging meanings' involving hearing, reading, interpreting and constructing meanings using more than the spoken or written word (Tangen, 2008).

The issue of participation

In the school context, the term 'student voice' generally refers to student involvement in learning, participation in school governance and active citizenship in the school and community (Gunter and Thomson, 2007). However, although student voice as an educational endeavor has been largely seen connected to action, participation and change

(Taylor and Robinson, 2009), most student voice activities currently in schools consist of less-intensive involvement, in the forms of expression, consultation, and only partial participation.

Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) illustrate the range of experiences that make up the spectrum of potential student voice-oriented activity in a classroom which begins from student influence, moves to responsibility, and reaches up to decision-making roles. Similar typologies (e.g. Hart, 1992; Fielding, 2004) illustrate the nature of student involvement and influence in decision-making. For example, Roger Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' describes young people's involvement that ranges from the non-participation (which is also associated with 'tokenism' and 'manipulation') to the middle level of consultation, moving to the highest forms of involvement of student-initiated activities and joint decision-making with adults. Based on Hart's work, Fletcher (2011) goes on to propose a 'Ladder of Student Involvement' in schools, designed as a tool to examine the way students participate in schools (see Figure below).

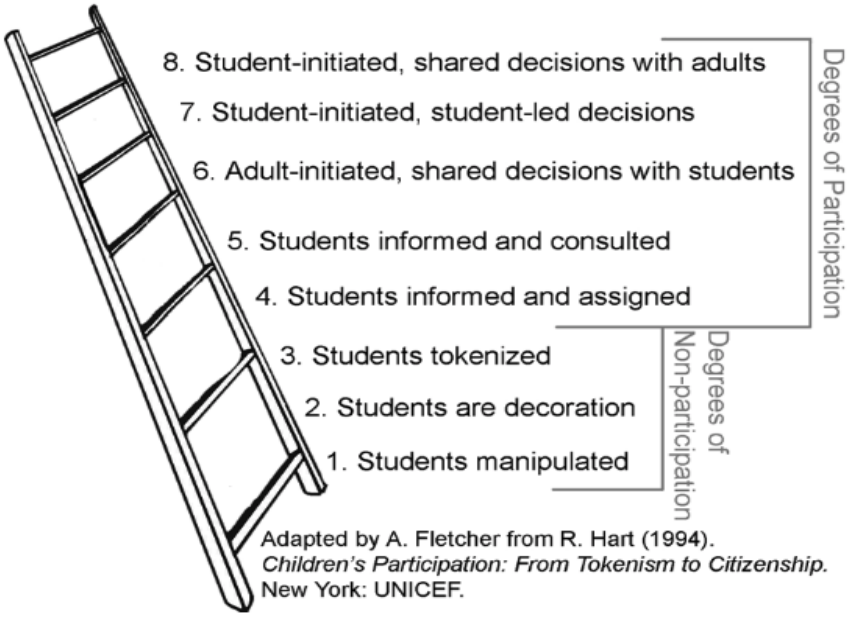

Figure 2.2 Ladder of Student Involvement

On a practical level, schools should aim to move along the continuum by working in real partnership with learners, increasing activism, and providing leadership opportunities (European Agency, 2018e).

In the field of educational research, student voice work can take parallel forms, depending on the level of control that is given to young people during the research process. More specifically, students can a) be research participants, b) be actively involved in aspects of the

planning and process of a research project; c) be consulted about the research; d) be collaborators in the research or e) have ownership of the research- with the latter having the highest level of control in the research process (Shaw et al., 2011). Despite the call for more participatory ways of involvement, it has been acknowledged that these can be particularly challenging for researchers (Messiou and Hope, 2015). As such, the question around how students are positioned in educational research and reform remains.

Gunter and Thomson (2007) discuss about the 'the sound, presence, and power of students in education' and stress that students should be given chances to actively shape their education. They argue for a form of student voice that is about 'learning through activism' where students negotiate with adults, take responsibilities and make decisions about choices and strategies of a project. Similar views are shared by Messiou (2013) who calls for a process of involving students as co-researchers in schools in order to increase their presence and participation. Bahou (2011) agrees to this idea of developing students as researchers and suggests to go beyond merely responding to teachers' concerns to promote a 'more co-directed adult-youth agential engagement in schools' (p.10). Evidently, this type of engagement has a broader scope than in the abovementioned participatory forms; by creating new spaces for shifting teacher-student relationships, it extends the possibilities of student voice work.

Several attempts have been made internationally by schools to involve students as researchers in order to explore various aspects of school life. However, Bailey et al. (2015) who examined the quality of research which involved student with disabilities, found a low level of involvement, which was also under-reported. The authors suggest that the difficulties in involving students can be overcome with sufficient time, planning and resources. In addition to this, Snelgrove (2005) suggests a pedagogy for research participation and discusses the ethics of consent and coercion, by concluding that: 'We have to find innovative ways of accepting responses that are within the normal repertoires of the children we are researching and to draw upon our expert knowledge to interpret the responses ethically' (p. 323).

On a more general note, it has been argued that student voice work should be underpinned by four core values: communication as dialogue; participation and democratic inclusivity; the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic; and the possibility for change and transformation (Robinson and Taylor, 2007). The dilemmas and problems presented above are strongly related to these values, and in especially, to issues of power

between the adults and students (Lewis and Porter, 2007). Arguably, current student voice literature does not adequately explore issues of identity, power, and context (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2012; 2018). Therefore, the main challenge is to find appropriate ways to break power relations and to identify more opportunities for student participation, at least at the consultative level (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). As Cook-Sather (2006) puts it, what it seems to be missing from student voice work is to identify the 'kind of shift in school and research culture and practices [that is] necessary not only to accommodate but, further, to reposition students in educational research and reform' (p. 4).

2.5. Student voice and inclusive education

So far, it has been argued that the notion of inclusive education remains a matter of debate and, indeed, dispute in the field internationally. The review has also indicated a growing interest in using student voice as a means of promoting inclusive practice. The discussion which follows contemplates these overlapping themes by exploring international research on inclusion which focuses on the perspectives and experiences of secondary students, with a particular focus of those with SEN/D, given that this was the target group of the current study.

2.5.1. Studies on student perspectives of schooling

Thiessen (2007) provides a typology of studies of student experience, by stressing that these studies 'critically examine the individual and social worlds of students, with a particular focus on: a) a range of actions and interactions of students b) social engagements of students in various contexts c) ways in which the experiences of students in schools interact with their lives outside school; and d) ways that students make sense of their life in school' (p. 5). Focusing on the latter, research on inclusion has tried to understand students' attitudes towards inclusion and how inclusive practice has influenced their experiences and development.

A substantive body of literature has attempted to use 'insider' students' accounts from the primary or pre-primary education sector. For example, Clark (2005) who examined the literature of early-years education, identified several common themes that have emerged regarding young children's priorities, interests and concerns in their schools (namely friends, food and drink, the creative arts, outdoor play, the role of adults, achievements and transitions). Despite of this knowledge about younger students, inclusive practice from the perspective of older students has remained under researched for a long time, possibly

because of the barriers and complexities that commonly appear in more advanced levels of education (De Vroey et al., 2015).

Overall, studies that have investigated older students' perceptions of schooling without SEN/D have revealed several factors that are commonly seen as influential in their learning and school experiences, such as: students' diverse needs, student relationships, teacher qualities; school transitions; responsibility, control, and active participation (Groves and Welsh, 2010; Tetler et al., 2010; West et al., 2010). When asked about inclusion in particular, students without SEN/D tend to hold positive views; they report that being in inclusive classrooms helps them to understand better individual differences and needs, their ability to cope with disability in their own lives, and their ability to form friendships with students with disabilities (Gordon, 2010).

Inclusive researchers have been asking more specifically about the issues that concern students with SEN/D and shape their experiences in secondary school settings. A recent extensive literature review conducted by Squires et al. (2016) explored the views of secondary students with SEN as these were captured by the international literature. Some of the most important findings were the following: a) curriculum relevance, autonomy and involvement in decision-making is valued by students; b) friendships with peers, support networks and respectful and caring relationships with teachers are also important for students; c) Students with SEN experience more bullying than those without SEN; d) The views of students with SEN about placement in mainstream, special classes or special schools were mixed. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that student views should be obtained and taken seriously for a range of educational issues including: 'educational placement; how support is provided and coordinated; the types of teaching methods used; how adult support is used in the classroom; and, aspirations for education and employment' (p. 4).

In Norwich and Kelly's (2004) study, which focused on the experiences on students with moderate learning difficulties, most participants had positive perceptions about their schools and the teaching they received, while a significant minority expressed mixed views. Regarding placement in mainstream settings, the researchers found that a high proportion of students prefer learning support in withdrawal settings, either as the main form of support or mixed with some in-class support. The authors interpret these findings as being 'supportive, on balance, of the move towards greater mainstream school inclusion for those pupils with moderate learning difficulties currently in special schools' (p. 61). At the same

time, they suggest that this finding underlies the important distinction between inclusive schools and inclusive classrooms.

Somewhat contradictory findings regarding educational placement emerged from a study conducted in Ireland by Prunty et al. (2012), who explored the perspectives of 38 children and young people with SEN on their schooling. These students, some of whom had experience of both mainstream and special schooling, pointed out a greater level of support in special schools and classes compared to mainstream classes. Their reasons related to smaller classes, more adult support and greater expertise of staff. Experiences of bullying in mainstream schools were also reported by a minority of students. Finally, the importance of friendships was mentioned as contributing to the students' enjoyment of school (ibid).

More positive perceptions about the overall quality of school experiences were reported in another study from Spain, where López et al. (2016) focused on the secondary experiences of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The research team found that students positively valued the school climate and admitted having friends and receiving help from classmates and teachers. Some students reported incidents of bullying, but they also knew whom to ask for help. Student participants also underlined the importance of approaches that let them develop their autonomy and skills for adult life.

Along the same lines, Lightfoot et al.'s (1999) study, which focused on health-related support in schools, revealed positive perceptions of 33 teenagers with a variety of chronic illnesses or physical disabilities regarding inclusive schools. These teenagers reported that they were able to manage the symptoms of their condition at school through a support network of both students and teachers; they also reported that they were included in all the decisions about the services that they would require at school.

2.5.2. Studies on personal identity

Another group of studies related to secondary experiences focus on the identity of students with SEN/D, and in particular how various dimensions of their identity affect their life in schools, and how schools either enable or impede their social and academic development. For example, Humphrey and Lewis (2008) investigated the views of 20 pupils on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools. The researchers focused specifically on how students understood their disability and found that this was often characterised by negative perceptions about their differences (such as being 'retarded' or having a 'bad brain'). The researchers also identified a number of barriers for students, such as difficulties in social

communication and interaction, which increases their exposure and vulnerability to bullying and social isolation.

Similarly, Davis and Watson (2001) investigated students' own perceptions of 'special' and 'mainstream' schools to show the nature of their lives within educational settings. The researchers illustrate that 'disabled children encounter discriminatory notions of 'normality' and 'difference' in both 'special' and 'mainstream' schools, and that these experiences relate to both the structural forces in schools, and the everyday individual and cultural practices of adults and children.

Likewise, Connors and Stalker (2007) report findings from a two-year study which explored the lived experiences of 26 disabled children aged 7–15. The participants in this study found to experience disability in terms of impairment, difference, other people's behaviour towards them, and material barriers. The researchers noted that most young people presented themselves as similar to non-disabled children, which suggests that they may not have been exposed to a positive language which would allow them to discuss difference.

Finally, an important work by Lewis et al. (2007), which combined four linked projects run between 2004 and 2006, aimed to identify the key concerns and priorities for young people with SEN in relation to their experiences of education across England, Scotland and Wales. Among the main findings was that young people valued independence and autonomy and involvement in decisions about school. When asked about their identity, it was clear that their experiences and views were highly individualised, as a minority of them appeared to have been empowered by accepting a disabled identity, while others did not feel that the words 'disabled' and 'disability' applied to them.

2.5.3. Studies on influences of experiences

Studies focusing on school experiences have not only provided valuable insights into the nature and development of students with SEN/D, but also into the changing ways of understanding their thoughts, actions, as well as their social and cultural worlds (Thiessen, 2007). Some of these studies have focused on dynamics and processes within schools, and in particular on the interaction between the individual factors and school factors which might affect student experiences. For example, Tetler and Baltzer's study (2011) focused on the quality on inclusive environments by gaining insights from 14 students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The results revealed students' quite positive attitudes towards their school experiences with regard to the academic and social dimensions of schooling.

The authors interpreted these results as the outcome of reciprocal dynamic relationships between personal and environmental factors and highlighted the need for further exploration of the concept of participation in inclusive settings.

Another attempt to draw together influences of school experiences was Kamenopoulou's (2012) study, who explored the social inclusion of young people with dual sensory impairment in secondary mainstream schools. After using the ecological system model to organize and analyse the data, the author concluded that factors within the individuals, such as the students' combined visual and hearing needs, as well as contextual factors, such as previous school placement, current organisation of provision and working relationships at the school, both affected the number and nature of their peer interactions.

Tangen's (2009) investigation had a similar focus, aiming to grasp the meanings and values of the pupils' experiences and perspectives in mainstream schools in Norway. At a theoretical level, the analysis of students' narratives revealed some patterns in their experiences, indicating four main dimensions of their school life: a) The circular dimension of time (present meanings and values of past experiences and future perspectives); b) agency (level of control of school life); c) educational alliances (relationships with teachers, parents and peers) d) schooling as a life-mode ('meaningful' school work). According to the findings, examining the subjective meanings of these dimensions can contribute to an enhanced understanding of pupils' experiences, which is a necessary step to develop more inclusive practices. Tangen goes on to suggest this model as a tool for studying and discussing quality of school life, which has the potential for empowering marginalised students; Finally, she stresses the need for further studies which would examine the complex relations between objective and subjective dimensions of school life.

Overall, the studies above reflect the important contribution of students' insights and reinforce the idea that students do hold well-expressed views about their own learning and school experiences (Groves and Welsh, 2010). However, research evidence still suggests that students are not being heard adequately (Gordon, 2010). Many scholars discuss the lack of disabled people's voice and stress that future research should have as a purpose to enable unheard voices to be heard in the efforts to inform inclusive legislation, policy and practice (Lewis and Porter, 2007; Symeonidou and Beauchamp-Pryor, 2013). Tangen (2008) highlights the need for further studies to expand the range of young voices being heard by including especially more experiences of children with SEN/D. Likewise, Shakespeare (2006) suggests a practical research agenda by stressing the need for more rich empirical studies,

both quantitative and qualitative, of how disabled people experience barriers, and how they experience their impairments.

In a nutshell, this discussion reveals that only through high quality research on student experiences as well as meaningful and authentic practice, student voice can be placed in the broader context of inclusive school reform and improvement. A summary of the main findings and of the principal issues and suggestions which have arisen in this discussion are provided below.

2.6. Summary points

Although research on student voice has its limitations, synthesising the theoretical and empirical evidence leads to a number of findings presented in this review:

- Student voice has roots in disability politics and is linked to issues of social justice and inclusion.
- As a term, student voice reflects the idea that students have important things to say about their schools; it also entails the respect for the integrity of what students have to say; and finally, it is seen as a means to enhance student participation in educational research and practice.
- There are several dilemmas and challenges related to student voice research and practice (e.g. methodological ambiguities, problems of representation and participation).
- The question around how students are positioned in educational research and reform remains.
- There is a lack of empirical studies which investigate disabled students' voices and evaluate their impact for policy and practice.
- Exploring further student perspectives and experiences of inclusion as well as the challenges they face in schools can facilitate understandings on inclusive processes and can contribute to inclusive development.

2.7. Concluding comments

Overall, this section has reviewed two key concepts of the study, namely inclusion and student voice. The analysis suggests that inclusive research needs to be further supported and enriched by increasing student voice which engages education practitioners and researchers in critical reflection. As inclusion is still associated with 'special education' and

'deficit' thinking, there also seems to be a need for student voice to be more 'politically' located towards inclusion, in terms of scepticism about the whole school processes. There is a suggestion in some studies that high level research on inclusion can be achieved by exploring processes that account for the individual as well as the social factors within different national contexts, through the use of ecological models. Guided by this view, this study engages in critical reflection about inclusive experiences by combining student voice with the bio-ecological model. In doing so, it attempts a more 'structured' exploration of inclusive processes (through the bio-ecological model) which entails the necessary 'ethical' dimension of interpreting individual voices (through the student voice lens). A more detailed discussion on the combined theoretical approach of the study is presented in Chapter Four (see Section 4.4).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

After reviewing the relevant literature and problematizing its main issues, this chapter goes on to discuss the methodological aspects of this study. To answer the main research question, the research adopted a multiple case-study design. Qualitative data were collected primarily through individual student interviews -and complementary through staff interviews- to gain views about their school experiences. Qualitative data were also gathered through observations and learning walks with the students to depict specific aspects of experiences. To gain insights into factors influencing students' experiences within a critical framework, data were scrutinised using Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998) through the student voice lens.

The Chapter begins by presenting the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research (Section 3.2) and continues with the research methodology (Section 3.3). After presenting the qualitative case study design (Section 3.3.1) it explains the inclusive student voice approach of this study (Section 3.3.2). It then goes on to discuss the research methods, along with issues of sampling (Section 3.3.4), data gathering methods and procedures (Sections 3.3.5). Following this, it discusses the ethical considerations (Section 3.4), as well as trustworthiness and language issues involved in the research process (Section 3.5). The final part of the chapter details the rationale and the step-by-step process of the data analysis (Section 3.6).

3.2. Ontological and Epistemological Positions

The various philosophical and theoretical traditions emphasise different questions and affect the analytical framework that guides fieldwork and interpretation (Patton, 2002). These philosophical orientations differentiate from the theoretical frameworks that entail particular methods of data collection and analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Gaining an understanding of these traditions provides a foundation for researchers to position themselves when conceptualising their own research designs.

This study is located within the constructivist epistemology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), as it acknowledges that there are multiple realities through which one can make sense of the world. Social constructivism, as a conceptualization of the roots of knowledge -or coming

to knowledge- draws attention to the fact that human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically. It suggests that there are 'knowledges' rather than 'knowledge'. To social constructivists, reality is also a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed. People can derive meaning through their interactions with each other and the objects in the environment (Kim, 2001). In keeping this relativist ontological position (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), I conducted the research by acknowledging that as a researcher I construct my reality from my own experiences and this worldview is embedded in the methodological approach that I undertake.

The term constructivist is commonly used in particular to refer to research that is interpretivist in nature (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Interpretivism, looks for 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). In terms of epistemology, interpretivism is closely linked to constructivism (Gray, 2004). According to my epistemological position of interpretivism, I acknowledge that the experience of the inquiry is a process of interpretation and of making sense of the phenomenon under study. From this stance, my research aims to elicit and understand how participants 'make sense of their world' (Willig, 2001, p. 9) and to produce an accurate representation of their construction of individual and shared meanings related to their school experiences.

The role of perception in this study is central, as it acknowledges that 'the way people interpret their experience is essential and constitutive, not accidental and or secondary to what the experience is' (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 27). This study seeks to explore conscious experiences as perceived from an individual's point of view. In that sense, it also is founded in the phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology lies within the interpretivist paradigm (Grey, 2004), and therefore is not concerned with trying to understand and quantify what is going on, but rather it is interested in understanding how people experience and perceive their world (Bryman, 2004). According to Moustakas (1994), empirical phenomenological research returns to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions, which provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of this experience.

Recent researchers have emphasised the importance of making clear how interpretations and meanings are placed on findings (Lester, 1999). This study follows this notion, by describing the structure of the student experience based on my own reflections and interpretations of the participants' stories (Moustakas, 1994). Instead of remaining 'a detached and impartial observer' (Lester, 1999, p.1), my position as a subjective actor is

visible and clear throughout the whole research process. However, it has to be noted here that this study takes this approach seriously as informing the approach to analysis, rather than adopting a step-wise phenomenological analytical method.

The interpretive perspective is ideally suited to providing an understanding of context and how processes actually work (Giangreco and Taylor, 2003), and so is very compatible with the bio-ecological world-view that this study adopts. What is more, the phenomenological orientation of this research, which explores and values the individual experiences and perceptions of students, is well aligned with the underlying assumptions of the theoretical approach used in this study. As explained in Chapter Three, this approach refers to a 'dialectic' between the study's student voice critical framework and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (see Section 4.4). These two lenses both separately and in combination place emphasis on and value individual experiences in context. The above approaches are also in line with the proposed methodology (research strategy) and methods of the research (see figure below).

Epistemology ➡	Theoretical perspectives ➡	Theoretical Framework ➡	Research Strategy ➡	Methods
Constructivism	Interpretivism / phenomenology	Dialectic between: ▪ Student voice critical framework ▪ Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model	Qualitative case-study design	▪ Field observations ▪ Learning walks ▪ Interviews ▪ Research Diary

Figure 3.1 The study's Epistemology, Theoretical Perspectives, Framework, Research strategy and Methods

3.3. Research Methodology

3.3.1. Qualitative case study design

The study's purpose was to explore the experiences of students with SEN/D in English and Greek secondary schools. The main question that drove the inquiry was: *'In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes, policies and practices?*

In order to identify the essence of pupils' experience, their perceptions were investigated in depth, using a qualitative research approach, which is also commonly referred to as research

strategy (Robson, 1993). A qualitative design was considered appropriate for this study, since it was exploratory in nature and sought to describe and explain social phenomena 'from the inside' by analysing experiences of individuals, interactions and documents in their natural context (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research focuses on the perspectives of participants, and especially on everyday practices and knowledge related to the phenomenon under study and is based on social construction of realities (Flick, 2009). Particularly for cross-cultural research, qualitative studies have a greater chance of producing reliable and consistent information, because the methodology rests on generating primary data (Redmond, 2003, p.10).

I decided to use a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2009), which would give me opportunities to explore the phenomenon in context, using a variety of data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2008). In particular, the case study design was employed because it: a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context and especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon are not clearly evident; b) uses triangulation of methods; c) is guided by prior theoretical propositions which have been established from the literature review (Yin, 2009, p.18).

The selection of a specific type of case study design was also guided by the overall study purpose (Baxter and Jack, 2008) which was to explore individualistic experiences, instead of an overarching set of student experiences. Therefore, each school which participated in this study was considered as an individual case and the single unit of analysis was the students' individualistic experiences. Two cases in each context were examined (two urban secondary schools in the UK and two in Greece), as they can provide more evidence than a single case and add confidence to the findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 29; Yin, 2009). These individual case-studies as a whole comprised a multiple case-study (Yin, 2009). A multiple-case study refers to research with more than one case study, but with only one unit of analysis. I used a multiple-case study design, as it would enable me to identify differences within and between cases and to replicate findings across cases (Yin, 2009). According to Stake (1995), this can be characterized as a 'collective' case study, as it aims to find out about a particular phenomenon from a number of different cases. As such, the use of a 'collective' or 'multiple' case study would allow me to analyse within each setting and across the two settings (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

More specifically, a multiple embedded case study type (Yin, 2009) was considered appropriate for this study, given the nested nature of the school contexts in which inclusion

takes place. An embedded design provides the opportunity to engage in rich analysis and better illuminate the case by looking at sub-units (i.e. students, staff) that are situated within a larger case (i.e. the school) (Baxter and Jack, 2008). By using an embedded design, the data can be analysed within the subunits separately ('within case analysis' i.e. by looking at the individual students), between the different subunits ('between case analysis' i.e. by looking at the schools), or across all of the subunits ('cross-case analysis' i.e. by looking across the two contexts) (Baxter and Jack, 2008). An illustration of the multiple embedded case study design can be found in Appendix II.

3.3.2. The study's inclusive student voice approach

Before presenting more details on the study's methodology, it is important to explain the study's approach to student voice. The literature on student voice showed several dimensions to the term: it can reflect the idea that students have important opinions to share; it can also entail the respect for the integrity of what students have to say; and finally, it can serve as a means to engage students in educational research and practice (See Section 2.6). Taking into account these dimensions, this study defines 'student voice' as the opportunities given to the students to voice their experiences, to make sense of them and to exercise active participation in the research process. It also refers to the efforts made to respect the integrity of their voices.

As suggested by the definition above, an overriding objective of this study was to determine how to include student voices in the research methodology so that it embeds an appropriate culture of listening and a strategy to keep the integrity of student voices. Considering student voice scholars' suggestions about the need for more authentic and active involvement of students in research procedures (see Gunter and Thomson, 2007; Sargeant and Gillett-Swan; 2015), I attempted to use an 'inclusive' student voice approach during data collection, analysis and interpretation. To do so, I determined specific ways to actively engage students in a more featured role and to facilitate student agency. Essentially, these ways included my continuous efforts to promote student 'participation', 'expression' and 'reflection' during data generation.

At a first level, I tried to position students as significant actors in the research process, by encouraging them to take a more active role in the projects' planned activities and by using child-friendly methods with flexibility ('participation'). At a second level, I attempted to provide 'space' and authentic opportunities to students to express freely their opinions

about how they connect to their own identity and learning ('expression'). At a third level, I provided the necessary time to build relationships with the students in order to allow them to actively make sense of their experiences ('reflection'). The figure below illustrates the three-level 'inclusive approach to voice' that this study attempted during data generation.

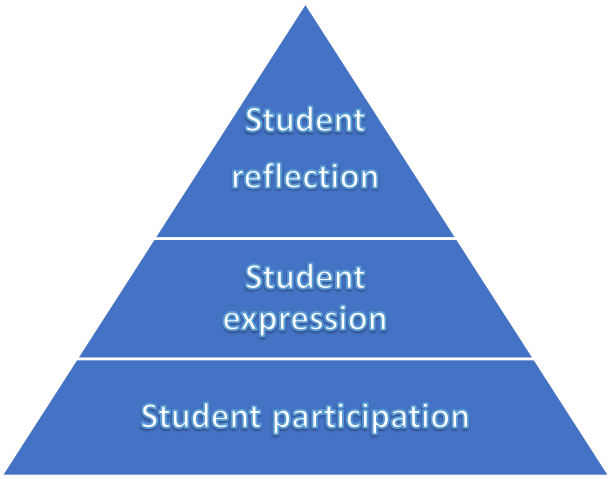

Figure 3.2 The inclusive student voice approach

As shown in the figure above, each level depends on the one below it and represents an increasing degree of student voice which implies a higher level of difficulty. Throughout this chapter, I explain how I attempted to enact this inclusive approach to voice, by giving examples of the three ways and explaining how these ways enhanced student agency during data collection.

As mentioned above, the student voice approach in this study also reflected my efforts to keep the integrity of student voices during the process of data analysis and interpretation. This dimension of the study's student voice approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four (see Section 4.3).

3.3.3. Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to gain more experience in conducting qualitative research and to test various components of the data collection and analysis protocols. The pilot study took place between 17 November and 4 December 2014 at Oakland High School (North West England, UK) which was later selected also for the main data collection. The recruitment of the school was based on a snowballing sampling technique (recommended by a university researcher). The SENCO of the school selected two students with SEN/D to participate in the pilot study. The data collection included testing three main methods: a) observations, focusing on the two participants b) 'learning walks', conducted after the observations to inform the interviews c) two individual semi-structured interviews with the

students. Overall, the piloting process gave me the opportunity to examine several methodological issues related to the main research project and it has specifically helped me to:

- *Familiarise myself with the recruitment process*. This included gaining ethical approval, contacting the school and the participants, developing and disseminating a suitable information pack to the school.
- *Combine appropriately observations and interviews*. The two research methods would be used sequentially: observations would be carried out first to understand patterns that would guide the interviews. The interviews at the end of the data collection phase proved helpful for gathering additional information that were missed during observations and for confirming initial hypotheses.
- *Engage with the participants in 'learning walks'*. This pilot study was an opportunity for me to practice this method for the first time and to assess its suitability for the main project.
- *Practice and test photovoice activities*, with which I have not been engaged before. Using visual material during the interviews gave me the opportunity to evaluate their contribution in the data collection process.
- *Practice in the data analysis procedure*. The student interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis and narrative accounts were tested as ways of the analysing the data collected. Some categories were developed taking into account Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and various themes have emerged related to the students' school life.
- *Reflect upon the focus of my study*. Maybe the most important contribution of the piloting process was the reflection it prompted upon the focus of my study. The following extract from my reflective research diary is indicative of some important tensions I have discovered early in my study:

> ...even when I give students the freedom to talk about what they want, they tend to focus on a rather narrow range of things. They comment on immediate and 'obvious' things, rather than taking a step back and talking more widely about their school experiences. In other cases, they like to talk about themselves as individuals and not as members of their school; they even reveal a lot of personal information, for example regarding their disability or their families. And although I understand that this is important information, connected to their school experiences, I feel that it is driving me into different directions. I find myself trying to 'paint' the psychological portrait of the child – which is not the focus of my research. Perhaps it means that I am slipping

> my focus towards their general experiences in and outside of the school- distancing from the actual inclusion they experience? (Extract from Research Diary)

The extract above reveals my frustration about the focus of my study, which prompted further reflection: I wanted to gain an understanding of student experiences of inclusive practice – but would this not just be their school experiences? How could my student-participants know what is and is not inclusive? And most importantly: was I looking at their individualistic experiences by approaching every student participant as a separate case? Or was I searching for an overarching set of experiences to document inclusive practice in the two different contexts?

I became aware that I needed to address the 'dilemma' that emerged between life/school experiences and inclusive experiences and, notably, the tension between individual and collective experiences in order to be able to approach appropriately the data I was collecting. This reflective process has resulted in re-visiting my original research questions and developing the final, overall question which would guide the whole inquiry (see Section 1.4). More details on the learnings gained from the piloting process are provided in the full pilot study report which is available in Appendix III.

3.3.4. Sampling

Selection of schools

The sampling frame was developed on the basis of the research enquiry and the concepts of the study. In particular, the schools for selection had to be secondary level schools (for the rationale of the secondary school focus, see Section 1.3) and to have inclusive practice in place targeting students with SEN/D. Since these precise criteria were established in advance, the sampling strategy followed was 'purposive sampling'. Purposive sampling is frequent in qualitative research and involves selecting the cases based on the researcher's needs, whether the typicality or the possession of the particular characteristics is being sought (Cohen et al., 2007).

As previously mentioned, the main characteristic which was sought in this study was the inclusive practice in the targeted schools. However, this was a complex task, given that 'inclusive practice' has not yet been defined in clear terms, as the literature review has shown. Although the term is currently used to refer to ways in which education systems can be changed to meet the needs of all learners, rather than to address individual student needs (see Section 2.3.1), this research focuses specifically on students with SEN/D. As such,

an operational definition of inclusive practice focusing on the particular group of students was deemed necessary in advance in order to guide the school selection. According to the study's focus, inclusive practice referred to any kind of educational provision in the form of additional support targeted to students with SEN/D in mainstream secondary schools.

According to the Index for Inclusion: 'support is considered as those activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to student diversity' (Booth and Ainscow 2002, p. 9). In operational terms, this study adopts a definition of support which acknowledges that additional resources provided for students with SEN/D can be of many kinds. These include: support personnel, covering both teachers and others such as para-professionals and assistants; material resources, such as aids or supports of various kinds; and financial resources including favourable funding formulas (OECD, 2007).

In that respect, the schools in each context must have had inclusive practice in place, at least by providing additional educational support to students with SEN/D, as these were defined in each country's policy documents. For this purpose, experts in educational inclusion in both contexts (university researchers) recommended potential candidate schools for the study. School data available on the web regarding the organisation of support and the inclusive ethos of the candidate schools were also consulted prior to the final selection of the schools.

The four schools that were finally recruited were located in urban areas: two schools in North West England (UK) and two in Athens (Greece). A more detailed description of the schools is provided in Chapter Five. The table below summarises some basic characteristics of the schools:

Table 3.1 School characteristics

School	Students	Students in the SEN/D register	SEN/D provision
Oakland (UK)	1196	1% of student population*	'Learning Support' department (SENCO, Assistant SENCO, 3 SEN teachers, 12 Teaching Assistants)
Mapleland (UK)	1623	135	▪ 'Access free' department (key leadership SEN staff, large team of SEN teachers and teaching assistants) ▪ 'Inclusion centre', ASD base
Zante (Greece)	275	30	'Inclusion class' (SENCO, 4 SEN teachers)
Ikarion (Greece)	267	45	'Inclusion class' (SENCO, 4 SEN teachers)

[Real numbers not available]*

Student Participants

The data generation sought to investigate the views and experiences of students who have been identified as having 'SEN/D' and are educated in mainstream secondary schools. For this purpose, a non-probability sampling strategy was followed, as I was targeting a specific group of people and I was acknowledging that this group could not represent the full population (Cohen et al., 2007). Non-probability samples are less complicated, cost-effective and ideal for small case studies, where generalisability of the findings is beyond their intentions (ibid).

Yin (1994) suggests that six to ten cases are sufficient to 'provide compelling support for the initial set of propositions' (p. 46). As such, I decided to purposefully select six students from the UK and six from Greece, considering that an equal number of students from the two different contexts would enable valid associations and comparisons (in total, twelve students were recruited). The selection of the students in both contexts was made on 'conceptual grounds' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 29). That is, following the study's focus, students had to have been identified with 'SEN/D'. It should be noted here that the study acknowledges the issues associated with the labelling and the use of 'SEN/D' categories (see Section 2.3.2). It is recognised throughout that neither a special educational need, nor a disability, adheres to the individual in isolation from the context. Therefore, the study uses the term 'SEN/D' as a contested and constructed concept which is under investigation and critique during data collection, analysis and interpretation.

From the beginning of the study the concept of 'SEN/D' and the variation that exists between different types of 'SEN/D' raised lot of questions with regards to student selection:

> Which specific categories of 'SEN/D' should I include? Will the process of identifying the students be methodologically rigorous if I am relying only on the SENCO's choices? I could start by looking at a particular classroom and then try to identify possible participants, but even in that case I will have to be guided from the SENCO to get into classrooms where I could find students with SEN/D. (Extract from research diary)

It became clear that the process for identifying potential participants had to include extended conversations with the link teachers (SENCOs and SEN teachers), in order to ensure coverage of different types of 'SEN/D', which would reflect different student needs.

It was made explicit to the teachers that a variation on the gender and ethnicity of the students was also desirable, employing in that way heterogeneous sampling (Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011). This sampling offers: 'a) high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and b) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity' (Patton, 2002, p. 235). In order to ensure that the student characteristics were parallel to each other sufficiently and could be compared (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009), specific criteria were discussed with the school professionals. According to these criteria, the student participants must:

1. **Be secondary students** (age range 12-16) who attend mainstream classrooms during the greater part of their school day. In the Greek context they were attending 'Gymnasio' level and in the English context Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4[6].
2. **Be competent to communicate verbally** and understand the purposes of the study. In order to assess each student's level of understanding, I sought the approval from the link teachers and I also relied on my professional judgement.

[6] In Greece, secondary education comprises two stages: the first stage is an academically-oriented three-year lower secondary school which is called 'Gymnasio', after which students can move to the second stage (upper secondary: 'Lykeio' or 'Vocational lykeio'). Gymnasio is comparable to British grammar schools. Secondary education in England covers the ages 11 to 16 and is subdivided into Key Stage 3 (ages 11 to 14) and Key Stage 4 (ages 14 to 16).

3. **Have been identified as having 'SEN/D'**, as these are defined in each country's official policy documents[7] and have been receiving additional educational provision. Purposeful and maximum variation selection was used to encompass as much population variability, with regards to SEN/D categorisation (Patton, 1990). The selected students were considered by the school professionals as being contrasting in terms of their additional needs and the educational support they receive. As Yin (1984) notes, 'by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can better understand a single-case finding' (p. 29).

After the initial discussions with the specialist staff, the following participants were recruited, as shown in the table below:

[7] It is important to note here that England and Greece use broadly equivalent criteria for identifying students with 'SEN/D'. In particular, students with 'SEN/D' in both countries might fall into the following areas of need: a) Cognition and Learning (e.g. SpLD, MLD), b) Behaviour, emotional and social development (e.g. BESD, ADHD), c) Communication and Interaction (e.g. SLCN, ASD) d) Sensory and Physical (DfES, 2001; Greek Law 3699/2008).

Table 3.2 Student participants and their characteristics

Name	School	Age	Education Level	Statement of SEN/D
JOHN	Oakland (UK)	15	Year 11	ADHD
JO	Oakland (UK)	14	Year 10	Social and emotional difficulties
MANI	Oakland (UK)	13	Year 8	Behavioural, emotional and social communication difficulties
LIAM	Mapleland (UK)	13	Year 9	Autism/ADHD
DEBBIE	Mapleland (UK)	11	Year 9	Complex needs resulting from a degenerative condition (Wheelchair user; vision, hearing, and learning needs)
RAHMAN	Mapleland (UK)	12	Year 9	Speech, language and communication needs
BEN	Ikarion (Greece)	14	B gymnasium (Year 9)	Autism
ANNA	Ikarion (Greece)	15	C gymnasium (Year 10)	Autism
YIORGOS	Ikarion (Greece)	14	C gymnasium (Year 10)	General learning difficulties (complex cognitive and social-emotional needs)
STATHIS	Zante (Greece)	14	B gymnasium (Year 9)	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, specific language impairment
MARIOS	Zante (Greece)	13	B gymnasium (Year 9)	General learning difficulties
IAKOVOS	Zante (Greece)	16	B gymnasium (Year 9)	ADHD

Adult participants

According to Yin (2003) a case study design covers contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomenon under study. In order to obtain information around the students' educational environment, I decided to further recruit school professionals from each participating school. By including interviews with school staff, I would be able to understand the context better and to gain complementary perspectives on student experiences.

At a first stage, my research plan included mainstream teachers and headteachers of the selected schools, as they are main stakeholders that could provide useful information about the organisation and their values/beliefs on inclusive practices in the schools. However, by focusing on this subunit level (i.e. the teachers and headteachers) I was running the risk not to return to the larger unit of analysis (i.e. the students' experiences), which is a common pitfall of embedded case study designs (Yin, 2009). In order to adhere to the target of the study, I decided to narrow down my focus to the views and perspectives of individuals who have been working more closely and interact on a daily basis with the targeted group, something that was not applicable with the mainstream teachers and the headteachers.

Whereas I also considered to recruit the students' parents/carers, by acknowledging that they could shed light on important aspects of the students' lives, I later decided to exclude them from the main data collection. By talking to parents/carers, there was a danger of raising suspicion to students and/or to school staff, which might have impeded the development of trust between myself and the participants. Also, given that the adults' perspective was going to be used peripherally in the study, there was a risk that with the inclusion of parents the adult perspectives would outweigh, which in turn would undermine the student voice focus of the study. Therefore, I finally decided to include only one SENCO[8] and one SEN/D teacher from each school. Any special support staff (Teaching Assistants) working more closely with the selected students were also recruited. In total, the following eleven adults/school staff participated in this study:

- Four SENCOs (one from each school)
- Four Special Education Needs Teachers (one from each school)
- Three Teaching Assistants (two from Oakland school, one from Ikarion school)

[8] Given that there is not an equivalent formal term in Greece, the term SENCO in this study is used for the Greek context to refer to the members of the school staff who concentrated more responsibilities for the operation of the inclusion classes.

Table 3.3 Adult participants

ADULT PARTICIPANTS	
Oakland school (UK)	1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher, 2 TAs (Mani's and John's support)
Mapleland school (UK)	1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher
Zante school (Greece)	1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher
Ikarion school (Greece)	1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher, 1 TA (Ben's support)

3.3.5. Methods

Silverman suggests that 'methodology' identifies 'a general approach to studying research topics', whereas 'method' refers to 'a specific research technique' (1993, p.1). Given the exploratory nature of the study, the use of multiple qualitative methods was considered appropriate, as it would offer a different vantage point in investigating in depth the students' inclusive experiences. To address the proposed research questions, a multi-method approach to data collection was used, which combined methods for eliciting the 'voice' of students, (such as learning walks and participatory photography activities) with more traditional research methods, like observations and interviews.

More specifically, the study utilised the following sources of evidence in order to address the research questions:

- Participant observations.
- 'Learning walks' with the students.
- Individual, semi-structured interviews with the students and the school staff.
- Reflective research diary.

For a visually clear indication of the research framework in each school see Appendix IV. The analytical timeframe of the fieldwork which details each method conducted with each participant is illustrated in the Appendix V.

The next sections detail how each method was conceived, developed and implemented during fieldwork, and outline the rationale for using each of the selected methods.

3.3.6. Observations

For the purposes of this study, systematic observations were conducted to gather information about the student experiences of inclusive practices (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 1993). Observational fieldwork has been widely used by educational researchers in order to

answer questions related to 'what is happening, specifically, in social action that takes place in this particular setting' (Erickson, 1985, p. 121). Among the advantages of the observation method are the direct and authentic data that it can provide (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 1993). In addition, observations offer valuable insights into specific characteristics of groups or individuals, impossible to discover in other ways (Bell, 2005).

Observations were carried out first to understand patterns that would guide the interviews. The observations included 'shadowing' each student during one school day (3 days of observations in each school, 12 observations in total). The stance that I took during the observations was 'observer-as-participant', given that the focal students were aware of my presence, yet I didn't have a great degree of contact with them during the observation sessions (Robson, 1993). However, there were some instances when I felt it was necessary to participate more actively in the classroom life (when, for example the TA had to leave the classroom and I helped the student in completing his task). I used 'focused' observations (Hopkins, 1993, p. 95) on students, by looking into: a) the human setting i.e. the organisation of people and their characteristics; b) the interactional setting, that involves the human interactions that are taking place; c) the programme setting, which refers to the educational resources, pedagogic styles, and their organisation (Cohen et al., 2007).

During the observations I decided to use open-ended field notes, by taking the abovementioned elements into consideration. However, following the initial observations, I realised that it was difficult to separate between the actual student behaviours I was observing and my interpretations of them. Therefore, I developed and used an observation schedule consisting of the following components: the time of the events, the classroom activities and actions, the behaviour of the focal student and her/his interactions, and my reflective comments. This structured observation schedule proved more helpful in order to keep me more focused and to maintain my criticality as a researcher. Although the aim of the observations was to provide contextual information and to inform the interviews, some of the observation data that were considered significant were taken into account for the analysis and are included in Chapter Six. An example of the observation schedule used along with my field notes is given in Appendix VI.

3.3.7. Learning walks

The learning walks with the students were used as an alternative means of exploring how students feel about their school. They also served as a useful way to achieve a certain level

of familiarity with the students before the interviews and, most importantly, to encourage their active participation in the research, following the study's inclusive student voice approach (see Section 3.3.2). O' Conor et al. (2011) note that 'participatory research methods offer a variety of strategies that can be employed to breakdown the power imbalance between child participants and adult researchers' (p. 292).

The learning walks were conducted separately with each participant. In particular, the students were asked to give me a 'guided tour' around their school for 30 minutes approximately. Digital cameras were also given to them to capture places in the school that they liked or didn't like. In that way, the students had the choice about what to photograph and were able to pick out places that were of importance for them. During the 'tour', specific questions were raised to prompt discussion. For example, what they did in school, what they found important, what they liked best in school and what they did not like, where they felt good and comfortable and where they did not.

Before the start of the data collection, I decided to keep field notes following the discussions with the students. This decision was based on two main reasons: Firstly, I was expecting a lot of disruptions that would downgrade the quality of the recording (i.e. possible noise, practical difficulty of recording while walking). Secondly, since this was an informal activity which aimed to establish a closer rapport with the students, I assumed that using a recorder might put unnecessary pressure to students. However, after conducting the initial interviews in Oakland school, I noticed that some students liked the idea of getting recorded. I therefore asked the next student to record our conversations during the learning walks and realised that holding the recorder has empowered him; it made him feel as being an 'expert' guide and added a sense of formality to the activity. This choice was given to all students, as another attempt to keep the inclusive student voice approach in the data generation (see Section 3.3.2).

The discussions from the learning walks were used after the observations, to inform further the interviews. The photographs produced during the learning walks were used later on in the individual interviews, as an alternative means of exploring the students' views of their school. Children's own photographs embedded into interviews adults have proved very useful in gaining deeper understandings of their lives in a range of school settings (Clark and Moss, 2001; Miles and Howes, 2015). In this study, the photography activity gave students an authentic opportunity for participation, by empowering students to act as 'active research agents in their own right' (Miles and Howes, 2015, p.1). This was evident

during the learning walks with all students, and especially with Liam, Rahman, Anna and Stathis, who seemed to enjoy this participatory activity the most and took the most photographs. The actual photographs are not presented here for confidentiality purposes i.e. to ensure that the participating schools will not be identifiable in any way. In a nutshell, the students chose to photograph areas in the school that they mostly liked, felt secure and had positive experiences (such as the school yard, school corridors and displays, specific classrooms). They also chose to photograph school areas where they experienced tensions, problems or provoked negative feelings (such as the toilets, teachers' office, school library). Table 3.4 below illustrates the exact number and the indicative content of photographs taken by each student.

Table 3.4 Photographs taken by each student

Name	School	Number of photographs	Content of photographs
JOHN	Oakland (UK)	5	IT classroom, lecture theatre, school yard
JO	Oakland (UK)	11	School corridors and displays, school yard, school library
MANI	Oakland (UK)	12	Basketball court, school exit, school toilets
LIAM	Mapleland (UK)	19	Inclusion centre, SEN department, Autism centre, school corridors and displays
DEBBIE	Mapleland (UK)	9	SEN department, school library, school corridors and displays
RAHMAN	Mapleland (UK)	28	Different mainstream classrooms, school corridors and displays, school outings
BEN	Ikarion (Greece)	14	Mainstream classroom, school corridor and stairs, displays in inclusion class, graffiti in the school yard
ANNA	Ikarion (Greece)	24	Different mainstream classrooms, inclusion class, teachers' office, graffiti in the school yard
YIORGOS	Ikarion (Greece)	19	School corridor and stairs, displays in inclusion class, IT classroom, school yard
STATHIS	Zante (Greece)	21	School yard, PE classroom, school entrance, school stairs
MARIOS	Zante (Greece)	7	School toilets, school stairs and corridor, basketball court
IAKOVOS	Zante (Greece)	10	Basketball court, school toilets, school canteen, teachers' office

3.3.8. Interviews

Individual, semi-structured interviews were used to uncover the students' perspectives on their experiences of inclusive practices, providing in that way different insights into the research questions. The first reason that one to one interviewing was preferred is the opportunity that gives to the respondents to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences that might be uncomfortable for them to share in the presence of other people. Additionally, the individualised interviews would be helpful for gathering additional information that might have been missed during observations, or for confirming initial conclusions or hypotheses about the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005). The specific semi-structured type of interviews would also allow me to change or exclude particular questions and to seek deeper explanations, according to the flow of the discussion.

All interviews were conducted after the observations and the learning walks with each student. In each school, six individual interviews were conducted with the students (2 interview sessions X 3 students) and two interviews with the school staff.

Interviews with the students

The interviews with the students explored in more depth their views and experiences of the support they receive. The interviews with the students were conducted in two separate 30-minute sessions. The reason of the two interview sessions was due to ethical issues (i.e. to avoid students' fatigue) as well as to allow time to reflect on previous student answers between the sessions. A set of activities took during the two interview sessions. In the first session, an initial discussion took place, which was facilitated by photo-elicitation. The photo-elicitation was used as a complementary method to gain insight into the perspectives of students. As Clark (2005) notes, photographs taken by young children can provide 'a platform of communication' with adults (p. 494).

The photographs produced by students during learning walks were used as a starting point for the first interview session. This photovoice activity gave the students the opportunity to express their views in different ways, by inviting them to combine visual and verbal language, which is particularly beneficial when working with children (Kaplan et al., 2011) and especially children with poor written or verbal language skills (Povee et al., 2014). Most importantly, by asking students to comment on their own photographs, I was giving them the opportunity to understand themselves as significant actors in the research process and

to reflect on their experiences in a way that promoted the sense of their own agency and enhanced the inclusive student voice approach of the study (see Section 3.3.2).

In the second session, the students were first engaged in a statement activity, where the students were asked to respond to several statements related to their school experiences with which they agree, disagree or feel neutral. Specifically, these statements were related to students' views covering several aspects of school life for example, how they feel about their teachers and lessons, homework, school curriculum and activities and so on (for more details see the section below: '*Development of the Statement Activity*'). The statements served as another means of eliciting students' views, as these were used as prompts for further discussion. Where it was necessary, I facilitated the process by reading aloud the statements. After this activity, a more in-depth discussion followed, using the interview schedule.

Development of the Interview schedule

The process of constructing the interview schedule was divided in two stages. At the first stage, the interview questions were formed, based on the research inquiry, and at the second stage they were refined and grounded in the primary analysis of the learning walks, the classroom observations and the statement activity. The questions were first organised in sections developed to examine a particular issue of relevance to the inclusive experience. This strategy would help me to focus or narrow my questions in ways that would create meaningful data (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). Probing questions related to each set were designed to elicit deeper explanation, relative to the participant's response to the initial question. Specifically, Section A covered themes related to the experience of the students within the classroom and the support they receive (A1) as well as their experiences during school breaks and school activities (A2). The questions in Section B gave the participants the possibility to add any concluding comment relevant to the topic of discussion. Regarding the type of questioning, the majority of the questions were open, beginning with the general prompt 'Tell me about...', which permits to the interviewee to drive the discussion in several directions (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). The student interview schedule is provided in Appendix VII.

During the second stage, the interview schedule was altered significantly, based on two realisations. Firstly, after looking at the data I had already gathered, I noticed that in many cases a lot of questions had already been covered from the discussions during the learning

walks and the statement activity. The second realisation came after two challenging interviews I had in Mapleland school. The following extract from my research diary captures my concerns regarding the quality of the first interviews I had with Debbie and Rahman:

> I felt that the discussions I had with the students were not so 'deep', with the exception of Liam, who was very articulate. I found it very difficult to approach the two other students, Rahman and Debbie, as they were mostly giving me 'yes' and 'no' answers, without elaborating much. In order to break the uncomfortable silence, I kept asking them questions, without leaving enough time for them to answer - it looked more like an interrogation, rather than an interview! (Research diary, 18/03/2016)

I realised that instead of focusing on specific questions, I needed to be more flexible. Gollop (2000) has suggested that it is more helpful to think of interviews with children as conversation - that is, listening to the children as opposed to interviewing them, and providing them with the opportunity to be heard.

Viewing the interview as a conversation would afford the students the time, flexibility and freedom to improve their ideas and would enhance their agency, as suggested by the study's student voice approach (see Section 3.3.2). As such, I decided to begin the interviews with the general prompts that were initially included at the end of the interview schedule (i.e. What is the best thing about school/other pupils/your friends? What is the worst thing about school/ teachers/other pupils/your friends?'). These prompts could facilitate a more open discussion and could lead to other relevant questions. Finally, given that the sentence structures had proved to be too complex for some students, the language of some questions was further simplified.

Development of the Statement Activity

The purpose of the statement activity was to gather a variety of student views that would enable an in-depth dialogue with the students during the interview process. In this way, this activity was used to complement the discussion. The statements included were based on the literature, which identifies several indicators that are important to examine when trying to understand inclusive practices. More specifically, the items of the questionnaire were based on 'Index for Inclusion' and 'Manchester Inclusion Standard', which constitute useful sources that review all aspects of an inclusive school. According to Booth and Ainscow (2002), inclusion and exclusion are examined through three dimensions: inclusive cultures, inclusive policies and inclusive practices. Since the focus of this study is on inclusive practices, I decided to adopt several indicators from this dimension. Some indicators of inclusive culture and policies were also used, as they could provide an overall picture of

inclusion in the school and at the same time, they could examine factors that were guided by the study's framework. Furthermore, I adjusted and used some items from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM), which is an 18-item scale developed for use with early and mid-adolescent students and examines the sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993) as well as the Quality of School Life (Q.S.L.), which has been widely used as an indicator of pupils' welfare (Anderson, 1982) (See Appendix XVIII).

It has to be reminded that the above methods were used universally with all participants but were also questioned reflexively during the research process (Davis et al., 2000), following the inclusive student voice approach of the study (see Section 3.3.2). For example, I noticed that for some students the photo-elicitation and the statement activity proved to be effective ways of promoting discussion (for example for Liam, Mani, Jo and John), but in the case of other students they didn't seem to contribute as meaningfully to the discussion (i.e. Rahman and Debbie). In these cases, I did not insist on the photo-elicitation activity and tried out different visual methods to generate new information, for example, by discussing other visual prompts, developing sociograms or drawing timelines (See Appendix XIX).

Interviews with the staff

The interviews with the school staff explored their views on how schooling in general and inclusive practice in particular was experienced by the focal students. The staff perspective was used complementary and purposively to cover aspects that would enhance my understanding of the students' educational and social context.

The staff interview schedule was also divided in two stages: before and during data collection. Prior to data collection, the interview questions were organised in three sections, developed to examine a particular issue of relevance to the research inquiry. Section A included basic information about the professional experience of the adult participant. Section B focused on classroom practice, including questions related to the specific experiences of the focal students as well as the organisation of SEN/D provision. The questions in Section C covered themes around the overall school culture (i.e. staff-student/school-family relationships). Finally, questions in Section D examined the staff's perceived effects of inclusive practice and gave them the opportunity to make concluding comments (see Appendix X). It has to be noted that during fieldwork, these questions were refined taking into account the primary analysis of the student data.

3.3.9. Research diary

The research diary was used as a valuable tool to reflect and to prompt insights which informed a variety of methodological and theoretical decisions throughout the whole research process. Reflexivity is central to fieldwork and analysis (Delamont, 2004) and involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of conducting research shapes its outcomes (Hardy et al., 2001). Schön (1983) has described reflection as a way to 'surface and criticise tacit understandings and make new sense of the situations of uncertainty' (p. 61).

Guided by the notion that research is an interpretive activity (see Section 3.2), I used the research diary in order to keep a reflective stance on the various influences which would inevitably impact upon my interpretations. I also used it as a space where I could consider my emerging data (or sense of the data) in the light of my critical intentions (see Section 4.3). Overall, the research diary enabled me to identify, understand, articulate and explicate my subjective thoughts through reflexivity. It included substantive, methodological and analytic accounts and was also used as a means of generating further data to complement observational and interview material, as well as comparing data collected by myself and by participants (Burgess, 1981).

3.4. Ethical considerations

While carrying out fieldwork research, 'ethical responsibility and scientific adequacy must go hand in hand' (Erickson, 1985, p.141). Ethics are rules of conduct, a code or set of principles that should be considered when carrying out social research (Robson, 1993). The discussion below covers important ethical issues of this study and the ways these were addressed. It is grounded on two different dimensions of ethics in research, which Guillemin and Gillam (2004) define as 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice'.

3.4.1. Procedural ethics

Informed Consent/Assent

An important ethical responsibility that has to be taken into account in a study involves the clear description about the arrangements made with the participants (Bell, 2005). In this effort, I contacted the link teachers (SENCO's and SEN teachers) via email, where I summarised the purpose and the nature of my study. Adequate documentation was attached into this email, which included leaflets for the school and the students, Participant

Information Sheets (PIS forms) and consents forms for all participants (See Appendix XI). The use of an 'informed consent form' is a common procedure in studies which require prior permission (Robson, 1993).

Informed assent/consent was sought both verbally and in written form at three levels: teachers, students and parents/carers. Firstly, informed consent was obtained from the headteacher and/or the link teachers via e-mail. Following that, a meeting took place with the SENCO and/or the SEN teachers, to discuss further the research procedure and identify suitable students to participate in the study. The discussion also included decisions about the use of language in the Participant Information Sheet for the students, as well as the research instruments. An adjusted information brochure was given to the selected children and their assent was elicited both orally and in written form (with the exception of one student, who gave me oral consent). The students were also asked to give to their parents/carers an information letter along with a consent form for them to sign. Adequate time was provided to all participants (2 weeks) to reach a decision. The ethics application for the study, the information packet for the participants as well as the research instruments have gained approval from the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee in the in the UK, as well as the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in Greece (See Appendix XII).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information generated form the study was treated as strictly confidential and was used only for research purposes. Confidentiality was ensured by making a commitment that I would keep the identity of the participant secret (Bell, 2005; Robson, 1993). The participants of the study were not presented in the study by an identifiable form, in the effort to protect them from any possible harm, whether physical, mental or social in nature. Accordingly, anonymity was ensured by referring to the school, the school staff and the pupils using pseudonyms. Further information that might reveal the identity of school or participants was not included in the written report (BERA, 2011; University of Manchester, 2014). Access to the data was granted only to University academics for supervisory purposes. Direct quotations were used in order to enhance the credibility of qualitative data. A generic permission to use such quotations was included in the participants' consent forms and was obtained prior to data collection.

Data Protection

The University Policy for Data Protection was applied rigorously to protect the personal information collected (University of Manchester, 2014). All the data were stored in password protected media (laptop computer and p-drive). Two electronic copies were made on portable devices (external hard drive, flash drive) to protect against data loss. Only the minimum necessary hard copies were made for purposes of data processing. Removable media and hard copies were stored in secure locations and destroyed six months after the end of the study.

3.4.2. Ethics in practice

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue that procedural ethics cannot in itself provide all that is needed for dealing with ethically important moments in qualitative research and stress the importance of the notion of reflexivity as a resource. During the data generation, all standard ethical considerations were followed according to the official guidelines (BERA, 2011; University of Manchester, 2014) and reflexivity was attempted when ethically important situations arose. Specific ethical issues related to data collection procedures that require gathering data in ways that do not create 'power imbalances and 'use' of the participants' (Creswell, 2007), are discussed as follows:

In all circumstances the well-being of the participants was of primary concern. I firstly considered that shadowing the participants during routine school activities might be a minor disruption in their school life. Therefore, efforts were made for the observations to remain unobtrusive and the students to be under constant supervision of the school staff. Care was also taken to arrange the data collection according to the students' availability so as to ensure minimal impact on their school routine. Students gave me options about the lessons they wished me to observe and a final decision on the timeframe was made after the approval of the SENCO/SEN teacher and the subject teachers. While English were used for my observational notes during fieldwork in the UK, I also kept some notes in Greek in order to ensure that the participants wouldn't have access to any comments or personal thoughts which may cause them discomfort or embarrassment (for example, in the cases that I had to sit too close to the students). For the same reason, I was switching between the Greek and English language during data collection in Greece.

During learning walks, students were under my supervision at all times and I made sure that the students did not photograph other people. In the case that faces appeared in any of the

photos, these were covered, or the photos were deleted. The interviews were conducted after the observations and the learning walks, when I had already ensured a high level of familiarity with the students. All participants gave me written and oral permission to record the conversations, with the exception of two teaching assistants in Oakland school. The research instruments made no explicit reference to sensitive topics. However, given the exploratory nature of the study and the unpredictability of pupils' behaviour (especially if they experience learning difficulties), there was always a likelihood that the participants would become embarrassed or upset by certain topics. I was aware that questions concerning school performance, or relationships with peers, teachers and parents may cause stress, if they trigger negative experiences. In the case that a student displayed signs of psychological pain, distress or embarrassment, I have decided that I would discontinue the interview and I would request assistance from school staff. However, it wasn't necessary to take any of these actions; in the cases that I noticed that students were experiencing low levels of stress, I changed the topic of discussion, which proved adequate to terminate any sign of discomfort. The students' wishes for silence, privacy and non-response were also acknowledged and respected. I sought permission to proceed on an ongoing basis and the participants were frequently reminded that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the research process.

Furthermore, I was prepared for possible incidents where the pupils reveal personal information or comments on sensitive issues, which may cause discomfort to me. Measures have also been in place if I became aware of activities that require action (i.e. bullying among students). In that case, I would make an effort to resolve these issues by directly addressing the school staff. In addition, I would report any disclosures related to child protection to the appropriate member of staff. It has to be noted that all the above-mentioned measures/possible actions were included both in the student and staff's information pack (See Appendix XI). Since I didn't encounter any of these issues, it wasn't necessary to take any of these actions.

When the data gathering was completed, an appropriate debriefing was provided for the students and the teachers. Teachers generally appreciate feedback and suggestions for their own professional development (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). I contacted the participants to thank them for their participation and to share with them some of my reflections, complying in that way with the legal and ethical requirements of the research process (BERA, 2011).

3.5. Trustworthiness

In the discussion of the trustworthiness of the study, it is important to share my role as a researcher, as the qualitative researcher's perspective and background influences how she/he approaches research and analyses the data (Maxwell, 2005). My 'outsider' position in the two fields points to the need for bracketing my assumptions which may have affected both the research design and data analysis. Some of the study's propositions, as shaped before the start of the data collection, were as follows:

- The practices in place may not directly reflect the students' sense of inclusive experiences.
- There will be some shared themes across cultures that define inclusion
- There will be some cultural differences in the definition of inclusion
- There will be mixed perceptions of how inclusive practices are experienced by students from themselves and the school staff.

As a means to increase the self-reflexivity of the inquiry, I included reflective accounts regarding my paradigm stance, as well as my assumptions and biases that may have shaped my interpretations (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Tracey, 2010). Furthermore, employing different methods in this study permitted methodological triangulation, which helped me to understand better the phenomenon under study, to minimise and check possible bias and, consequently, to enhance the credibility and dependability of the inquiry (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 1993). Methodological triangulation is a technique which provides deeper insights into human behaviours and depicts valuable 'correspondences and discrepancies' (Robson, 1993, p. 383).

An unsequenced structure for reporting the findings was used by constantly making sure that all topics are covered (Brown, 2008). I provided a 'thick description' of the actual practices and the contexts that have been investigated, in order to promote credibility (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) also notes that the development of an early familiarity with the school's culture before the start of data collection is important for ensuring the credibility of the study. This was achieved via consultation of appropriate documents and preliminary visits to the schools. Local sources of evidence, such as school inclusion policies and practices as well as students' performance and behaviour data were taken into account. In addition, international and national documents (i.e. literature on inclusive experiences, specific country inclusion policy) were examined to inform about the background and the

nature of the topic and to supplement information obtained by the other methods (Bell, 2005). In order to further enhance credibility, I proceeded to 'member checks', by asking the participants to review the conclusions both informally, during data collection, and formally, at the end of the study. I also used frequent debriefing sessions with my supervisors, as well as 'peer scrutiny' (Shenton, 2004), by asking colleagues and peers to challenge my biases and assumptions.

Throughout the report, I tried to clarify the method of the analysis and comment on the challenges I have encountered, in order to achieve sincerity (Tracy, 2010). Finally, a written output of the researcher's role was produced in a narrative form to further reflect on and give credence to the trustworthiness and transparency of the study (See Section 3.5.1 below).

Table 3.5 Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study

Qualitative term	Strategy used
Credibility	• Peer debriefing • Methodological triangulation • Local, national, international documents (contextual analysis) • Member checks
Transferability	• Providing thick description • Purposive sampling
Dependability	• Methodological triangulation • Peer/colleague examination
Confirmability	• Student voice critical framework • Reflexivity (research diary)

(Source: Anfara, Brown and Mangione, 2002)

3.5.1. *My role as a researcher*

As stated in Chapter One, my previous experience as a secondary teacher and special educator in Greece and my subsequent research experience in England have shaped my perspectives and values (see Section 1.2). Some of the issues that I had to address when entering the field sites were: positioning in the field and negotiating layers of authority and power relations; resolving the tensions between local and universal codes of ethics; negotiating my identity and practicing reflexivity. My dual identity and positionality as a researcher and teacher were inevitably influencing myself, my participants and the knowledge I was going to produce. My unique position in the two fields pointed to the need for bracketing assumptions and addressing the tensions which resulted from negotiating between my different identities (teacher/researcher, insider/outsider).

After reflecting upon my role in both contexts, I realised I was coming to the field mainly as an 'outsider' researcher. My role was more straightforward in the UK context: I was coming in the English schools mainly in my capacity of a foreign doctoral student from a UK institution, who was also a teacher from a small and rather 'exotic' country, Greece. In the Greek schools, I was moving from the position of an outsider to the position of an insider throughout the course of the study (Berger, 2015). Although I could be viewed as an 'insider', considering my deeper knowledge of the context and my 'lived familiarity with the group being researched' (Griffith, 1998, p. 361), my positionality as an 'outsider' researcher coming from an English university was undoubtedly outweighing the insider identity. In particular, my 'privileged' background was raising questions about the nature of my relationship with research participants, especially the adults.

However, overall, my lived experience and my understanding of the two contexts have safeguarded me and enhanced my awareness and sensitivity to many of the obstacles, decisions and issues encountered during the research process. Throughout this thesis, I am using vignettes in the form of analytic accounts from my research diary so as to illustrate the way I negotiated my roles, positions and assumptions throughout the whole research process, from the initial conception of the study up to the analysis and writing stage.

3.5.2. *Researching multilingually*

The complexities of researching multilingually were evident throughout the whole research process. During literature exploration, I have encountered a number of challenges, related to the concepts that underpin the study (i.e. inclusive practices, categorisation of SEN). To ensure conceptual clarity, I developed and provided clear definitions of the concepts of the study.

Prior to reporting the findings, decisions about which language to use were integral to the research process. Both languages were used during the fieldwork in both contexts (by switching between English and Greek) and English was used for the final report. It was important for me to translate the data from Greek to English before analysing them, so as to ensure continuity in meanings. In the cases where translation of raw Greek data was needed, I proceeded with caution by identifying and respecting linguistic boundaries. At the same time, I tried to raise awareness of any set of linguistic possibilities that the process of researching multilingually offers (Stelma et al., 2013). A qualified English teacher-translator from Greece helped me to check the translation of the Greek data. Using two languages in

my research developed a greater degree of sensitivity about my own identity as an 'outsider' researcher and the strategies that I could draw on in my research (Robinson-Pant, 2005).

3.6. Data analysis

The unified theoretical framework of the study (see Section 4.3) directed me towards a combination of an inductive and deductive approach for the analysis of the data (Patton, 2002). More specifically, at the beginning, the analysis took a data-driven inductive approach, identifying the emergent themes and issues that the students discussed during the interviews (data-driven approach). At this first stage, twelve 'personal experience' stories were developed to illuminate each participant's voice. At a second stage, I used a theory-driven deductive approach to explore the initial theoretical concepts and ideas of the PPCT framework. Specifically, at this stage the twelve student stories were examined for common themes and ideas following the structures of the PPCT framework. The combination of theory-driven (a priori) and data-driven approaches is considered common practice in qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and reflects a flexible approach to data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Patton 2002).

The data analysis process was based on the main method of study, which was the student interviews. Almost all interviews were initially analysed during the data collection, in order to keep myself close to the data and to guide the course of further interviews. Data collected from the observations, the learning walks and the research diary (which also included informal conversations with the subject teachers in the staff room or school corridors) were also used as a guideline to inform further data collection. When some of these data were considered of particular significance, they were embedded in the main corpus of data for further analysis.

The detailed steps that I followed to analyse the data are described in the sections that follow.

Step 1. Familiarising with the data: transcribing and initial coding

Before proceeding to the main analysis, the transcription of the verbal data was conducted. I decided to transcribe all data from students. I listened the recorded data from the learning walks and I transcribed only a few quotes which seemed of particular interest. I also proceeded to 'selective' transcriptions of the data from the staff interviews, which were

content focused i.e. included the data referring to the focal students. These transcriptions were then extracted and moved under the separate dataset of each student.

The process of transcription was useful to engage in a first level of familiarisation with the raw data. I decided to undertake the transcription process myself, as I saw it as 'a powerful act of representation' and 'an intermediate, reflective step' (Oliver et al., 2005, p.1) which was integral for the analysis process. The Greek data were transcribed by doing simultaneous translation in English. In the cases of ambiguity, I consulted a certified English language teacher from Greece, who cross-checked the accuracy of my translation. I tried to transcribe every utterance with as much detail as possible. I noted any nonverbal or emotional element of the conversation (i.e. intonation, tone, pauses, laughter, interjections), as I acknowledged that these can serve as useful indicator of the intended or latent meaning of the data (Bazeley, 2007). I chose to maintain informal phrases and expressions (such as slang terms, 'everyday' phrases, idioms, abbreviations) to retain the linguistic variety of the original data, which I considered as an important feature of the student identities. Contextual data were also added to provide explanations, where this was needed (i.e. abbreviations used, descriptions of local places and people). I only removed non-lexical utterances and repetitions, to provide a relatively clean transcript which would allow me to focus on the content.

As soon as the transcripts were produced, I read them carefully, again and again, and pointed out several 'codable moments' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 9). I started the process of 'seeing' emerging patterns by highlighting several words or phrases, writing down initial concepts and personal thoughts and generating short labels. This preliminary step helped me to acquire a general sense and to familiarise more with the raw data (see an example in Appendix XIII). I then revised my reading in order to unravel possible meanings and to make initial interpretations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As Bold notes (2012), it is beneficial when the analytical process starts with the researchers' interpretation of the data.

Step 2: Developing personal experience stories

The first step in the main analysis process was to understand each particular student participant before proceeding to cross-case (i.e. school) analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This study was drawn by the idea of 'student voice'; thus, starting the analytical process by looking closely and carefully at the student participant voices was in line with

the rationale and the inclusive student voice approach of the study, which intended to maintain the integrity of voice (see Section 3.3.2).

For this purpose, I transformed the interview transcripts into a purposeful and readable layout, using the process of restorying. Restorying is commonly used as a way of organising and presenting narrative data in a particular format (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Following this process, all data from the student interviews were presented in the form of 'personal experience' narratives. Bold (2012) notes that a personal experience narrative is an analysis and then a synthesis of data, repeated in cycles to formulate a final narrative. Narrative analysis allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning (Riessman, 2001). My own approach to narratives draws on what Riessman (2005) calls 'thematic analysis', where the researcher pays attention to the content of a text, and inductively forms conceptual groupings from the data (Riessman, 2005).

More specifically, for the development of the stories all student data were synthesised and organised into a coherent developmental account (i.e. their personal experience narrative/story). These took the form of a first-person account of the student experiences, after experimenting also with the third person. The first person was more powerful, as it provided a unique picture of the students and their stories through their own words. In this reconstruction of personal narratives, the students are storytellers and characters in their own stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

As Riessman (2001) notes, deciding which segments of the interviews to analyse and putting boundaries around them is an interpretive task. I chose not to add in the stories many words that were not part of the original transcripts. Instead, I retained the participants' own words and I also added some clarifications in square brackets, to assist the flow of the narrative. Grammar was not corrected, but indications of interview noises (e.g., stutters, pauses, etc.) were noted. Conventions in the storytelling process included:

Table 3.6 Text conventions in the student stories

...	Pause
(...)	Different segment of the verbatim data
( )	Non-verbal action or event
[ ]	Clarification details

In total, twelve 'personal experience' stories were developed -one for each student participant- by selecting the data segments from the transcriptions which illuminated each participant's portrait. The data segments were examined for common themes and ideas, following the concepts within the study's theoretical framework i.e. the PPCT model. These representative constructions included key issues, ideas, and experiences within the data from each student participant. All of the elements that were included were a series of key information within the PPCT model. At first, I looked at the transcribed data in terms of what they say about the 'person' element of the Bronfenbrenner's framework (i.e. demand, resource, force). Then I highlighted the 'process' element, drawing from the interview data segments that were referring to the student relationships with their environment (i.e. student interactions with teachers, peers, family, objects and materials within the school context). Then the 'context' element was examined more carefully by selecting and bringing together interview data referring to different systemic factors (i.e. school organisation, curriculum, community, external agencies, policies, culture etc.). Elements of 'time' were also embedded in the personal narratives, in the form of events, episodes or activities occurring within the school, or referring to the students' past or future.

By developing the 'personal stories' I was able to gain insights of student experiences from the perspectives of those who live it though the process of storytelling. This phase was essential for my own understanding and meaning making process. It was also important for 'voicing' the student participants, which was one of the study's purposes i.e. to focus on the 'speaking' person who gives the direction of knowledge as the subject -and not object- of understanding. Overall, the stories constructed included a set of events and experiences and enabled further depth of analysis 'through making often diverse pieces of data into a coherent, readable and understandable whole' (Bold, 2012, p.162). Using a thematic approach to the analysis of the student narratives proved to be a particularly useful method to uncover the commonalties that exist across the stories that made up the study's database.

Four out of the twelve personal stories are presented in Chapter Five: 'Presentation of the Schools and the Students'. The other eight stories can be found in Appendices XIV-XXI.

Step 3: Initial analysis using the PPCT structures

After the development of the twelve personal stories, I proceeded to the analysis of the 'Person', 'Process', 'Context', 'Time' elements of the PPCT model. This phase started by looking at the 'richest' personal experience story in each school, in terms of the amount of

information it provided about the school. More specifically, I first selected the personal experience story from each school which demonstrated more aspects of the school life when compared to the other two stories. These four personal experience stories (one from each school) were used as the basis for the further analysis. From these stories the first themes emerged, which were related to the different structures of Bronfenbrenner's framework (please refer to Chapter 3: 'Theoretical framework' and Chapter 6: 'Presentation of findings'). During this analysis stage, the initial codes were sorted into potential broader themes. Separate utterances of each text, combined with data from the staff interviews' transcriptions were extracted, classified, and gathered under these initial themes. An example of this initial analysis of the 'Person' element is provided in Appendix XXII.

Step 4: Reviewing and Defining themes

During this step of the analysis, the original lists of the themes were further scrutinised and compared with information from the other student stories. Specifically, this step included adding to the initial codes utterances from the whole dataset (i.e. the other personal experience narratives and data from staff interviews) and developing a separate corpus of data for each case/school (see an example in Appendix XXIII).

This process resulted in reviewing the existing themes and subthemes, by adding new and merging or deleting some existing ones and concluding to the final themes. For example, during the review stage, I found that the initial theme 'Social Skills' did not include sufficient supporting data to form a category, so it was not finally considered as a central organising concept. Instead, the more general theme 'Abilities and Skills' was kept as a main theme, as it proved to be a recurring pattern across the whole dataset. As soon as the more concrete themes started to emerge, all relevant extracts from the rest of the personal stories were collated under each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Table 3.7 below gives an example of the changes made between the initial and the final themes related to the 'Person' element of the PPCT model.

Table 3.7 Initial and final themes for the 'Person' element of the PPCT model

'Person' characteristics	Emerging themes →	Final themes
Demand	Age	Age
	Ethnicity	Ethnicity
	~~SEN / Disability~~	Type of SEN/D
Resource	Abilities / Skills	Abilities and Skills
	Autonomy / Independence	
	~~Social Skills~~	
	~~SEN status~~	-
	Learning style	Learning style *(including autonomy/independence)*
	~~Family~~	*(moved to 'microsystem')*
Force	~~Explosiveness / Anger~~	Temperament
	Fears / Struggles	Anxiety *(including fears/struggles and exam stress)*
	Exam stress	
	Anxiety	
	~~Sensitivity to noise~~	
	Motivation	Motivation *(including lack of motivation, goals/plans)*
	Goals / Plans	

After developing a separate corpus of data for each case/school, I highlighted and collected the key information which best described the way the two schools in each context were working in relation to the student participants and I located the data into the different systemic levels of the ecological model (i.e. microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem). By the end of this step, two 'ecological models' for each context have been developed.

Step 5: Integrated analysis

After studying both countries separately, I put the two ecological models into a comparative framework. Instead of a mechanical identification of similarities and differences between the two places, attention was paid to 'the underlying context of these commonalities and differences and to their causal relevance to the educational phenomenon being examined' (Manzon, 2011, p.88). This process led to the development of cross-case conclusions about the perceived experiences of the students in both countries. Constant reference to the original purpose of the enquiry and the possible alternative explanations helped to reduce potential distance from the study's focus (Yin, 2009).

In last phase of the analysis, I tried to make use of the constant comparative method, by 'seeking out and addressing deviant cases' (Silverman, 2011). It was at that stage where I

attempted to reflect critically upon the final themes by using the study's student voice critical framework (see Section 4.3.) so as to reach to new understandings and to connect my new interpretations with the research question, achieving in that way the meaningful coherence of the study (Tracey, 2010). Appendix XXIV shows an example of how the integrated analysis was attempted.

An illustration of the step-by-step data analysis process is provided in the Figure 3.3 below:

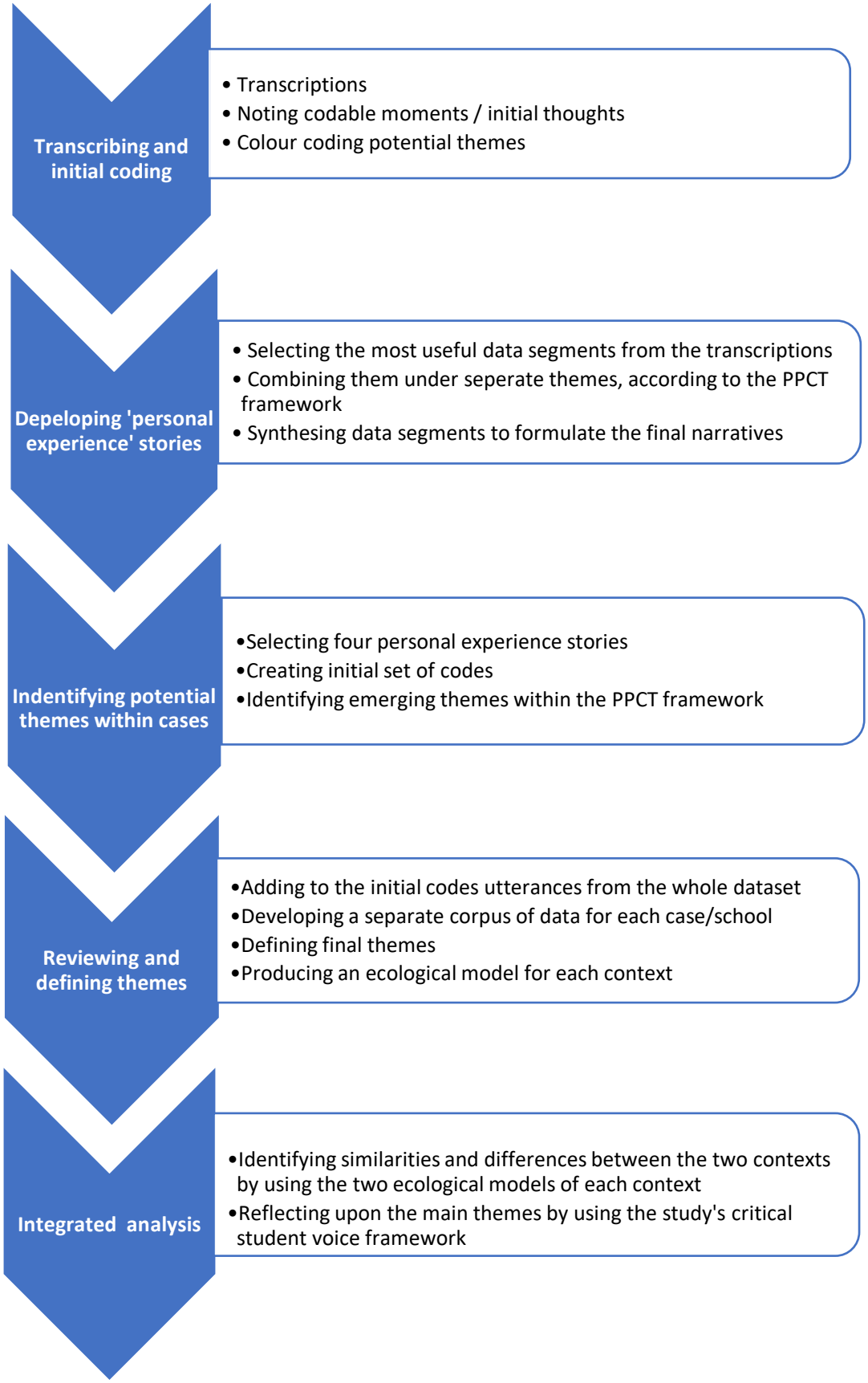

Figure 3.3 The step-by step data analysis process

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

Having introduced the various aspects of methodology, this Chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the research which was utilised for data analysis and interpretation. The research framework attempted to combine the 'subjective' student voice lens with a more 'objective' theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The Chapter begins by introducing the bio-ecological model of human development (Section 4.2), which represents the structured and more 'objective' framework of the research. It first provides a brief introduction to the original ecological model of human development (Section 4.2.1). It then presents the 'mature' Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model, starting from a general description of each element of the model and continuing with an explanation of how this was defined and applied in this study (Section 4.2.2). The Chapter goes on to discuss the student voice critical framework, which reflects the 'subjective' theoretical lens of the study. It explains how this framework was developed in order to embed student voice meaningfully in the data analysis process by keeping the integrity of voice (Section 4.3). Finally, the Chapter concludes by describing how this study attempted to combine these two theoretical lenses during data analysis and interpretation, using a dialectical approach (Section 4.4).

4.2. The Bio-ecological Model of Human Development

4.2.1. The original Ecological Model

The literature review (see Chapter Two) argues that research on inclusion can be enriched by exploring processes that account for the individual as well as the social factors within different national contexts, through the use of ecological models. In line with this argument and guided by the focus of the study, I considered that the 'ecological' work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005) would afford a particularly valuable tool for researching students' experiences.

Bronfenbrenner's perspective is connected with the work of social learning theorists (like Bandura and Vygotsky) in that environment is either explicitly or implicitly considered as a primary mechanism in a child's development. Specifically, Bronfenbrenner's original 'Ecology of Human Development' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and his revised 'Bio-ecological

Theory of Human Development' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) explain how the qualities of a child and the context of multiple environments -in the form of nested layers- in which he/she lives, interact to influence her/his growth and development.

This study recognises the inextricable link between students' educational development and Bronfenbrenner's theory. Conceptualising the development of individuals within a complex, dynamic, interactive web of environments, some of which do not even contain them, provides a rich contextual field for the study of educational development (Renn, 2003). Tudge and Hogan (2005) stress that ecological theories provide a systemic approach in the study of children and support attention being paid to their everyday experiences. Similarly, Renn (2003) notes that: 'in order to create environments most conducive to development and learning, it is not enough to know what outcomes are possible; educators must also know what processes lead to them' (p.386).

Bronfenbrenner first described 'The Ecology of Human Development' in 1979, by integrating the developing child into a set of ecological settings. According to the original model, 'The Ecology of Human Development' refers to:

> the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 21).

The original model organises the context of development into four settings of external influence. The immediate, ecological settings are defined as 'a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next' (Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 26). These nested systems, referred to as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (illustrated in Figure 4.1 below), are explained as follows:

- A **microsystem** is 'a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). This is the smallest and most immediate environment in which the child lives (i.e. home, school, peer group or community environment of the child).
- A **mesosystem** comprises the 'interrelation among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). It includes for example, the relations among home, school, peer group and/or neighbourhood.
- An **exosystem** refers to 'one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected

by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). Such places and people may include for example the parents' work environment, the larger neighbourhood, and/or extended family members.

- A **macrosystem** includes the largest and most distant influences of the child and is composed of the cultural patterns values and norms, dominant beliefs and ideas, as well as political, educational and economic systems within which the child develops.

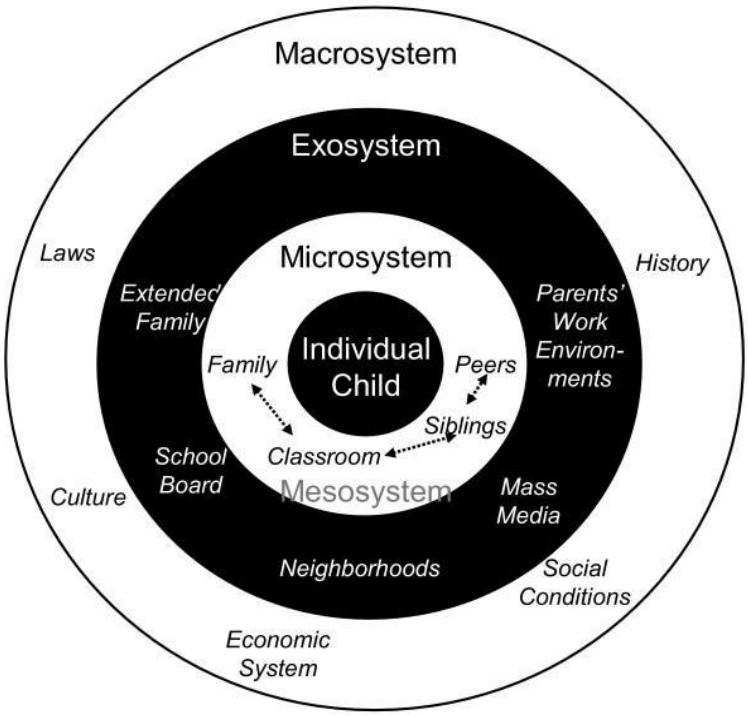

Figure 4.1 The original Ecological Model of Human Development

The human development conceived in the ecological framework also involves a change in the characteristics of the person and has some continuity over both time and space (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This dimension of time is reflected in an additional system, the 'chronosystem', which represents the environmental events and transitions over the child's life course.

Overall, this theory provides a systemic approach to researching students, one that acknowledges their active role in their own development while at the same time showing that development is also influenced by broader social and cultural forces, as they have developed over historical time. A critical element in the definition of the ecological model is the term **experience**, which:

> ...is used to indicate that the scientifically relevant features of any environment include not only its objective properties but also the way in which these properties are perceived by the persons in that environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

It becomes clear that this theory places equal emphasis on an objective as well as an experiential view, acknowledging the fact that very few of the external influences significantly affecting human behaviour and development can be described solely in objective physical conditions and events (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). In fact, when Bronfenbrenner uses the term experience in the definition, he stresses the phenomenological nature of all levels of ecological structure (Derksen, 2010).

The experiential and phenomenological perspective in this theory is important, as it assumes that the aspects of the environment that are most powerful in shaping the course of psychological growth are overwhelmingly those that have meaning to the person in a given situation. As already mentioned in Chapter Three, the ontological and epistemological foundations of this study, as well as the proposed methodology and methods of the research are well aligned with these underlying assumptions of Bronfenbrenner's framework, as both place emphasis and value on individual experience in context (See Figure 3.1).

4.2.2. The Process-Person-Context-Time Model

Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues (for example, Ceci and Morris) worked for over a decade to develop further the original ecological theory. The result of their work is referred to as the 'Bioecological Model of human development' or the 'Process-Person-Context-Time'(PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

The ecological framework was revisited as it was recognised that it paid too much emphasis on the context and did not adequately examine characteristics of the developing individuals (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009). The 'mature' model attempted to account for the influences of individuals (Person), their interactions with the environment and the responses they provoke from the environment (Process), their interactions within immediate settings (Context), and changing sociocultural influences on development (Time). The properties of 'Person', 'Process', 'Context', and 'Time' (PPCT) create a developmental environment unique to an individual (see figure 4.2 below).

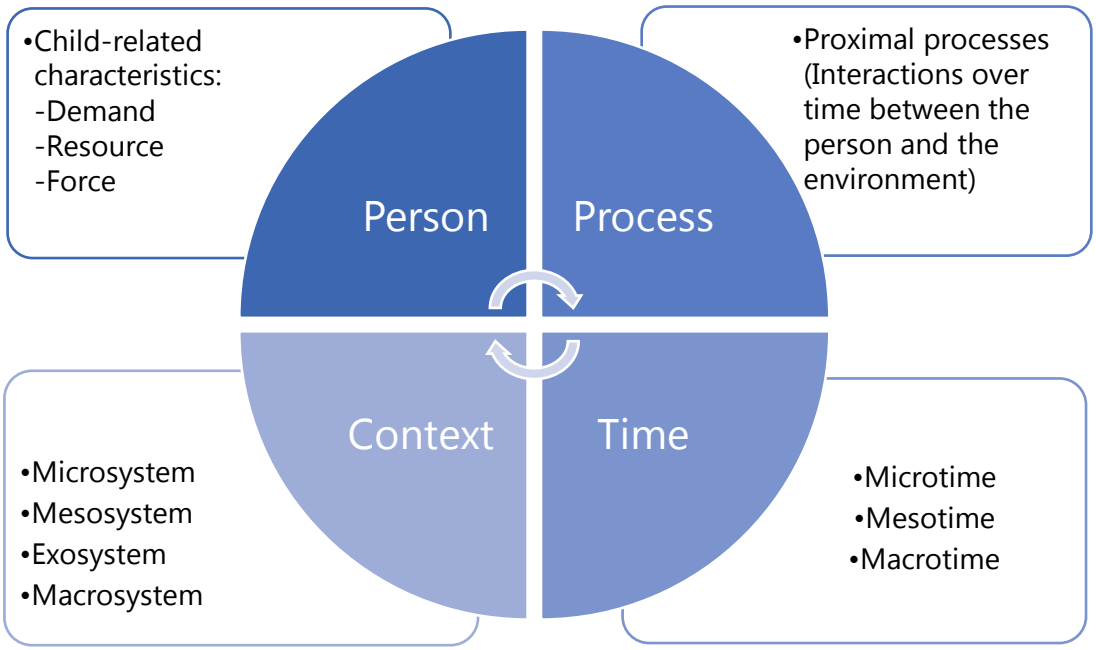

Figure 4.2 The Bio-ecological Model of Human Development

Within this newly formulated model, human development is defined as 'the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and groups' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, xxviii). The new theory pays particular attention to the ways in which reciprocal interactions between the systems influence development (Derksen, 2010; Lewthwaite, 2011). This is a major breakthrough in theorising complicated structures of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies (Krishnan, 2010).

The combination of outcomes and processes that the PPCT model entails is considered particularly useful in examining appropriately the students' environment and translating developmental theory to the field of inclusive education. While the mature model of Bronfenbrenner's theory has been previously used in published research (see for example Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013; Kamenopoulou, 2016; Leonard, 2011; Lewthwaite, 2011; McLinden and McCracken, 2016, McLinden, et al., 2016; Squires et al., 2013; Tetler and Baltzer, 2011; Zhang and McNamara, 2018), its application has not always been straightforward. In fact, Tudge et al. (2009) assessed the extent to which the theory was accurately applied in 25 previous studies and found that only four studies appeared to have used the mature form of the theory appropriately in their research. According to them (ibid.):

> a study involving the PPCT model should focus on proximal processes, showing how they are influenced both by individual characteristics and by the context in which they occur and showing how they are implicated in relevant developmental outcomes (Tudge et al, 2009, p. 207).

This study uses the bio-ecological framework as a tool to analyse and understand the influences of students' secondary experiences in the two contexts, by paying particular attention to the interactions between the students as 'persons' and their environment and how these contribute to their development as persons. However, it should be noted here that this study does not intend to test the theory in its entirety. As previously mentioned, it rather aims to combine the PPCT theory with the student voice approach in order to identify a range of factors within the PPCT model that independently and in combination influence student experiences. Specifically, it is used to highlight how these factors interact with one another, and how the complex interactions within and between the two different educational systems further mediate the young participants' experiences.

The four basic components of 'Person', 'Process', 'Context', and 'Time' (PPCT) and the way these were applied for the purposes of the study are discussed in detail as follows.

4.2.3. Person

The defining property of 'person' refers to the individual's attributes and traits and the ways these are perceived by others. This element of the model was given particular attention to fill a recognised gap in earlier conceptions of the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner (1997) defines this property as the person's qualities which 'induce or inhibit dynamic dispositions toward the immediate environment' and names them as 'developmentally investigative characteristics' (p. 303). Three aspects of the individual's characteristics are considered 'process-relevant' and most influential in shaping the course of future development: *demand, resource* and *force* characteristics (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; 2006).

Demand characteristics refer to the person's qualities that 'invite or discourage reactions from the social environment' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006, p. 832). These are apparent characteristics that act as an immediate stimulus to another person, hence are also referred as 'personal stimulus characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 303). These characteristics form immediate expectations and therefore, can influence initial interactions (Tudge et al., 2009). Tudge and Hogan (2005) specifically note that demand characteristics shape the goals, values, and expectations that people have for the developing individual and can have impact on the ways they deal with them. Examples of demand characteristics are: gender, age, ethnic background, race, skin colour, physical appearance.

Resource characteristics are the individual 'liabilities and assets that influence the capacity of the organism to engage effectively in proximal processes' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 812). These characteristics can limit or enhance the individual's capacity to function and progress effectively. Examples of conditions which disrupt functioning include: genetic defects, low birthweight, physical or intellectual disabilities, severe and persistent illness, degenerative diseases. By contrast, developmental assets take the form of ability, experience, knowledge, and skills which permit the effective functioning of proximal processes at a given stage of development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). These also include material resources (such as access to good food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities) (Tudge et al., 2009). While resource characteristics are not immediately apparent, 'sometimes they are induced, with differing degrees of accuracy, from the demand characteristics that are seen' (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 201).

Force characteristics are defined in the model as 'shapers of development' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) and can take the form of *developmentally generative characteristics* or *developmentally disruptive characteristics*. The first concept includes positive attributes such as curiosity; tendency to initiate and engage in activity with others or independently; readiness to defer immediate gratification to allow pursuit of long-term aims. The developmentally disruptive characteristics can take the form of: impulsiveness, explosiveness, distractibility, inability to defer gratification, inattentiveness, apathy, and a general tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity perhaps due to feeling of insecurity or shyness etc.

Bronfenbrenner distinguishes further between three types of developmentally generative person characteristics (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The first is *selective responsiveness*, which 'involves differentiated response to, attracted by, and exploration of aspects of the physical and social environment' (p. 810). The second is *structuring proclivities,* which refers to 'the tendency to engage and persist in progressively more complex activities' (p. 811). The third is *directive beliefs* (in short) which 'reflects the increasing capacity and active propensity of children as they grow older to conceptualise their experience' (p. 811).

Application in this study

The *'Demand'* characteristics of reference in this study included any apparent student characteristic that was expected to act as an immediate stimulus to other people (such as

their age, ethnic background, gender and/or type of SEN/D). It has to be noted here that the students' type of SEN/D was considered primarily as a 'demand' characteristic, as it was expected to act as a determinant for people's reactions towards and expectations for the participating students. However, the type of SEN/D as a 'demand' characteristic of a person did not imply the 'force' or 'resource' characteristics of that individual with that type of SEN/D.

The study also accounted for any mental and emotional *'Resource'*, by identifying any 'asset' (such as skills and talents), as well as any barrier that could limit students' ability to learn and progress (specific stressors, limited/lack of material resources i.e. access to good food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities etc.).

Finally, in relation to the *'Force'* concept, Tudge and Hogan (2005) stress the importance of identifying these characteristics that are clearly involved in child agency. This study accounts for the fact that children are the agents of their own experiences. Therefore, it pays particular attention to the participants' force characteristics by looking at data which reveal the participants' temperament. These could include developmentally generative characteristics (such as curiosity; tendency to initiate and engage in activity with others or independently; motivation and persistence) as well as developmentally disruptive characteristics (such as impulsiveness, explosiveness, nervousness, distractibility, inattentiveness, apathy, tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity).

4.2.4. Process

This defining property includes the important mechanisms, named proximal mechanisms (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994) which are characterised as key factors in a child's psychological growth (Tudge et al., 2009). Proximal processes, termed as the 'engines of development', are in the core of this theory and constitute the 'interactions between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment' (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 620). In other words, proximal processes are associated with the interactions over time between the child and her/his environment (including people and other important objects and symbols within this environment).

The examination of proximal processes, and their developmental outcomes under different environmental conditions, offers an indirect strategy for testing the limits of both genetics and environment in contributing to individual differences in psychological growth

(Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) explain the role of the proximal processes further in Proposition II:

> The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the *developing person*, of the *environment*—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place; the nature of the *developmental outcomes* under consideration; and the social continuities and changes occurring over *time* through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived. (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998, p. 996)

A focus on proximal processes deals with individuals' typically occurring experiences and involves the course of everyday activities (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). More specifically, the study of proximal processes includes examining carefully the typically occurring interactions of the child with objects, materials, and people.

In the new model, a critical distinction is made between the concepts of *environment* and *process,* with the latter not only occupying a central position, but also having a specific meaning (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006). Later writings (Bronfenbrenner 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) stress that context, while important, is only one of four interrelated aspects of the new bio-ecological model (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). As Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) note, 'the effects of proximal processes are more powerful than those of the environmental contexts in which they occur' (p. 804).

Application in this study

Applied to this study, '*Process'* refers to the dynamic interactions ('proximal processes') between students and key people in the school, as well as their interactions with non-living elements within their school. Specifically, the property of 'Process' was examined by mapping the influence of interactions within and between specific environments on students' experiences. That is, looking in particular at data which describe their typically occurring interactions with objects, materials, and people within and out of the classroom and -where possible- out of school. For example, within the school context, these could include data indicating patterns of students' social interchange, communication and activities with peers and school staff. Other 'processes' involving non-living elements (objects/materials) in the school could include: learning new skills, problem solving, reading, performing tasks, acquiring new knowledge.

4.2.5. Context

The 'Context' structure of the model refers to 'immediate and more remote' environments of the developing individual (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 795). The context is comprised of the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem* and the *macrosystem*, which have similar meaning to the concepts of the original model.

The micro-system involves the characteristics of people who participate in the life of the developing person on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time (such as parents, relatives, close friends, teachers, mentors, or others). Interactions within the microsystem typically might involve people (i.e. relationships with family members, classmates, teachers, caregivers), but also objects and symbols (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

A mesosystem is described as 'a system of microsystems' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25) and refers to the interactions between two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). For example, a mesosystem can be the relations of the child among home, school, and neighbourhood, peer group etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

An exosystem are contexts in which the individuals whose development is being considered are not actually situated but which have important indirect influences on their development (Tudge et al., 2009). Finally, the macrosystem involves the cultural norms and is defined as a context encompassing any group ('culture, subculture, or other extended social structure') whose members share value or belief systems, 'resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange' (Bronfenbrenner 1993, p. 25).

Application in this study

For this study, the *microsystem* includes the settings of family (including people and family norms), features of the school (school culture, school staff, peers, lessons, school resources, school policies and practices) as well as other important people and objects which are situated in the students' immediate environment (i.e. extended family members and close friends). The *mesosystem* is examined by looking at the interactions between the students' microsystems which might influence their experiences (that is home, school, and neighbourhood, peer group etc.). For example, the students' relations at home might have an impact in their academic engagement (e.g., attending lessons, doing homework). The *exosystem* is composed of the community environment and the external network of stakeholders within the community (such as external services). The *macro-system* is

embodied in this study by the entire societal culture (including national education laws and policies, social welfare conditions, economic system, political landscape, societal culture, education values and norms, and youth culture).

This study pays particular attention on how inclusive practices (as factors in the students' micro-system) and inclusion policies as well as the wider societal culture of the two contexts (as elements within the students' macro-system) shape their experiences and influence their development. Specifically, it was assumed that the inclusive practices of the school, as experienced by students in this study, would constitute a micro-system setting whose interaction and interrelatedness with the other subsystem settings within the eco-system cooperate to support them in their learning and educational growth.

4.2.6. Time

The structure of *Time* entails three elements: microtime, mesotime and macrotime. Microtime refers to 'continuity versus discontinuity in ongoing episodes of proximal process' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006 p. 796). In other words, microtime involves specific episodes which happen during a specific interaction. Mesotime is 'the periodicity of these episodes across broader time intervals, such as days and weeks' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006 p. 796). As such, mesotime focuses on the extent to which activities occur with some degree of consistency. Macrotime includes the 'changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006 p. 796). This can be translated to the timing of events and experiences within the developmental life span of an individual or to specific salient historical events happening at that moment in time.

Application in this study

This study investigates the property of '*Time'* by 'locating the developmental processes within their historical setting' (Tudge and Hogan, 2005, p.106); Tudge and Hogan (2005) suggest that the property of time can be considered by studying development over time for example, through longitudinal studies that allow one to examine development in process. However, in this study I was not tracing the participants throughout different years of schooling; although the students were coming from different years, data were not collected longitudinally. Also, while I gathered data relating to students' earlier and prospective experiences, these were not of a longitudinal, but rather of a retrospective and speculative nature, accordingly.

Specifically, the '*Time'* element is analysed by mapping data relating to episodes, activities and perspectives of students' earlier school experiences (i.e. experiences from primary school), as well as of their prospective experiences (i.e. future goals and aspirations). To investigate '*Microtime',* this study pays particular attention to specific events/episodes related to inclusive efforts. To examine *'Mesotime'*, attention is paid on how the students perceive the activities/interactions taking place (i.e. are these happening in the immediate present as students engage in it or they are happening frequently, as part of a larger temporal trajectory?). Finally, to examine *Macrotime*, I focus on events/episodes that occurred during transition from primary to secondary school, the impact of developmental stage of the young people as well as important events in the wider society (i.e. changing national policies or political landscape in both contexts). Table 4.1 below summarises how each property of the PPCT model was defined and applied in this study:

Table 4.1 Definition of the 'Process-Person-Context-Time' properties in this study

Property of the model	Aspects of this research related to the model properties
Person (Student characteristics): -Demand -Resource -Force	-*Demand:* gender, age, ethnicity, physical appearance, type of SEN/D -*Resource*: mental and emotional resources (such as ability, skills, experience, knowledge and other material resources i.e. access to good food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities) -*Force*: • *developmentally generative characteristics* (such as curiosity; tendency to initiate and engage in activity with others or independently; motivation and persistence) • *developmentally disruptive characteristics* (such as impulsiveness, explosiveness, distractibility, inattentiveness, apathy, tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity)
Process: 'Proximal processes' (interactions over time between the person and environment)	'*Proximal processes*': Students' typically occurring interactions with objects, materials, and people within the school context: (Examples: student activities with peers, school staff, learning new skills, problem solving, reading, performing tasks, group or solitary work, athletic or other leisure activities, acquiring new knowledge)
Context: - Microsystem - Mesosystem - Exosystem - Macrosystem	-*Microsystem*: features of the school (with a focus in inclusive provision/services) i.e. teachers, support staff, peers, family, parenting norms, close friends, important others/mentors -*Mesosystem*: interactions between the students' microsystems i.e. home, peers, school, neighbourhood -*Exosystem*: community environment, external services -*Macro-system*: inclusive policies, political landscape, societal culture, education values and norms, youth culture
Time: -Microtime -Mesotime -Macrotime	-*Microtime*: specific events/episodes related to inclusive efforts -*Mesotime*: frequent processes that occur within the school context -*Macrotime*: events that occurred during transition from primary to secondary; impact of developmental stage of students; specific salient historical events happening at the moment in both contexts i.e. changing political landscape, changing expectations in each society

4.3. The study's student voice critical framework

As shown in Chapter Three, the first dimension of student voice in this study is reflected in the inclusive student voice approach taken during data generation. This approach included promoting student agency and empowerment in the form of the opportunities given to

students for 'expression', 'reflection' 'participation' (see Section 3.3.2). The other dimension of student voice in this study refers to my attempts to respect and keep the authenticity and integrity of student data during the data analysis and interpretation process. In other words, it reflects my own positioning towards student agency and specifically the ways that I tried to interpret student voices. My intention was to focus particularly on the 'speaking' person who gives the direction of knowledge as the subject -and not object- of understanding.

For this purpose, I developed a critical framework using the concepts and issues identified by the student voice literature. This framework was comprised of a set of questions which would help me to reflect on student voice and would guide the interpretation process. The questions were based on the principles, concepts, and issues around student voice set in the literature review. Initially, a list of 18 relevant questions was developed (See Appendix XXV). These questions were later reduced and re-organised into five main conceptual areas: Representation; SEN/D identity; Adult perspectives; Power and Context. These final areas along with their associated questions are provided in Table 4.2 below.

Specifically, the framework draws on Fielding's (2004) critical questions and ethical considerations around the representation of student voice which should underpin any student voice work (see Section 2.5.2). It also takes into account Cook-Sather's (2006) calls to avoid tokenism and the danger of treating students as having a unified and single voice (See Table 4.2: questions 1-3). It incorporates other scholars' suggestions (see Komulainen, 2007; Spyrou 2011, 2016) about the need for more critical examination of student silences (See Table 4.2: question 4). The framework also considers arguments about the need to be attentive around issues of disability (see Allan, 2010b, 1999; Peters, 2010); as well as related calls to explore more adequately issues of identity and power (see Cumings Mansfield et al., 2012; 2018) (See Table 4.2: questions: 5-11). Finally, some questions related to context were adjusted from Booth and Ainscow's (2005) 'framework for local understanding inclusion' (See Appendix XXVI). These were considered essential in order to reflect upon the different student voices between the two contexts and to make explicit my own positions about the nature and investigation of inclusive practices in both contexts (see Table 4.2: Question 12,13).

Table 4.2: The study's student voice critical framework

Critical framework for reflecting on student voice	
Areas for reflection	**Questions**
Representation	1. Do I recognize the plurality of student voices? Do I respect the individuality of each student? 2. Do I downplay the voices that seem too strident and foreground those that most readily make sense to me? 3. Am I genuinely attentive to student judgement and criticism? 4. Do I respect and interpret student silences appropriately?
SEN/D identity	5. Am I seeing beyond the student labels? Do I emphasise equally to students' abilities and capabilities as to their deficits and vulnerabilities? 6. Am I sensitive to the existing tensions regarding the construction of SEN and disability in both contexts?
Adult perspectives	7. How does the staff's professional and adult status frame their perspectives? 8. Am I attentive to the differences between the staff and students' perspectives? 9. How does my own professional and adult status frame my interpretations?
Power	10. Do I view the students as equal members of the institutions? 11. Do I recognise the power relations within the student stories?
Context	12. Are the concepts of inclusion and exclusion seen as common by students in both contexts? 13. Do I connect the student views around inclusion and exclusion to wider social, cultural and political processes?

It is important to note that the questions above may be linked to more than one area (see for example question 6, which examines the construction of disability but is also relevant to contextual issues). This attests the frameworks' theoretical coherence, as it explores interrelated areas that are all significant and relevant to the concepts of voice and inclusion. This critical framework helped me to reflect on the whole study's dataset, attend to the students' voices with an open mind and to think behind the stated messages. In a nutshell, it represents my attempts to see students as agents and to give an ethical dimension to the findings by shining the lens of 'personhood'. I position this critical framework as a student voice-oriented approach to analysis that creates space for fundamental questions to be explored regarding whether students are valued and represented adequately in the analysis and interpretation process.

4.4. A dialectical approach for data analysis

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the process of interpretation involves comparing and contrasting varying social constructions (as student experiences and the concept of 'SEN/D' are regarded in this study) through a dialectical and critical interchange. After reviewing relevant literature, Gonzalez et al. (2017) found that only a few student voice studies explicitly state theoretical frameworks, which leaves room for building interdisciplinary collaborations with new theoretical framings. The authors suggest that future student voice scholarship can be enriched with theoretical tools and insights to examine student learning so that the idea of 'voice' is situated in broader sociocultural and political contexts. The literature review (see Section 2.3.1) also supports the view that 'the duality between individual and social elements, an artificial causal opposition, leads to limited and unsatisfactory conceptualisations of disability and special needs' (Terzi, 2005, p. 446). Guided by these views, this study aimed to explore both individual and social elements of student experience by bringing together the student voice critical framework and the bio-ecological theory of child development.

Specifically, this study attempted to combine the two conceptual tools by drawing on elements of Hegel's dialectics to analyse and interpret the data. The Hegelian philosophy can be of relevance to those involved in education (Tubbs, 1996) and those concerned with the divide and the dialectical between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' experience of schooling. For Hegel, 'no man can think for another, any more than he can eat or drink for him' (Hegel 1975, p.36). According to Kellner (2003):

> the Hegelian dialectic can help characterise relations between students and teachers today in which teachers force their curricula and agendas onto students in a situation in which there may be a mismatch between generational cultural and social experiences and even subjectivities (p.15)

This study builds on these basic premises and draws on the following major elements of Hegel's philosophical system: its phenomenological and experiential structure, and its dialectical contradictions. The study's overall theoretical approach relies on a Hegelian concept of critique, by criticizing one-sided positions and developing more complex dialectical perspectives.

More specifically, Hegel's dialectical method consists of 'triads' whose members are called 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis' (Stace, 1955 p. 93 in Maybee, 2016). A thesis gives rise to its reaction; an antithesis contradicts or negates the thesis; and the tension between the two

being resolved by means of a synthesis (Maybee, 2016). For this study, the three dialectical stages for understanding and interpreting student experience are the following: the 'thesis' is the stage of understanding by scrutinising the data through the 'objective' PPCT model; the 'antithesis' is the stage of examining the data through the 'subjective' student voice lens using the study's critical framework; and the 'synthesis' is the final stage of interpretation that unifies the two earlier stages (see diagram below).

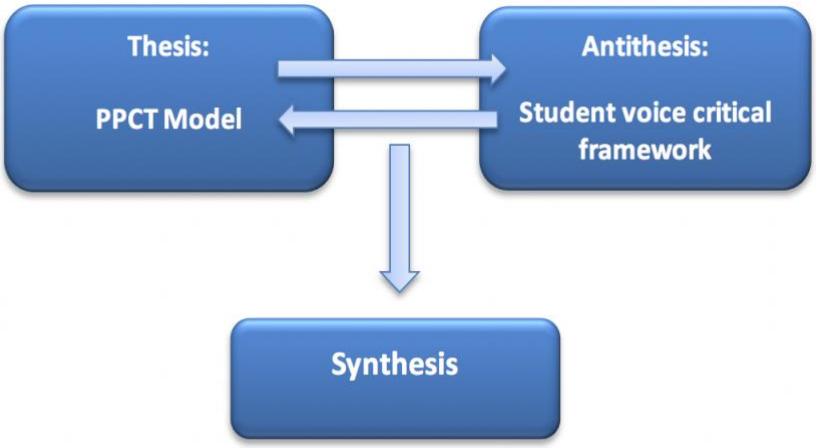

Figure 4.3 The dialectical approach of the study

The above dialectical approach which builds on the Hegelian concept of critique was used in the effort to develop a more holistic theory that attempts to make connections and articulate contradictions in order to conceptualize the totality of student experiences. Rather than limiting the current study to either framework, this study demonstrates how concepts from the PPCT framework, along with the concepts and issues identified by the student voice literature, can be synergistically combined to understand student experiences more adequately and to provide a more inclusive framework for data analysis, interpretation and conclusions drawn. More details on how this dialectic approach contributed to data analysis and interpretation can be found in Section 6.6 and Section 7.3.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE SCHOOLS AND THE STUDENTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter sets the context of the study by presenting the four schools and a representative part of student data in storied form. As context is crucial in qualitative case study research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), a detailed description of the research sites and participants are provided in the sections that follow. The following sections introduce the four participating schools: Oakland School (Section 5.2), Mapleland School (Section 5.3), Zante School (Section 5.4) and Ikarion School (Section 5.5). After the introductions of each school, the 'personal experience' stories of four students are presented, as these have emerged from the initial analysis of student data using an inductive approach. Specifically, readers are acquainted with one focal student out of the three student participants in each school: John from Oakland School (Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2); Liam from Mapleland School (Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2); Marios from Zante School (Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2); and Anna from Ikarion School (Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2). Led through the journey of each student in turn, the storied representations of their experiences follow the elements of the bio-ecological model. Rather than providing a mere descriptive summary of each student's account, the PPCT theory is integrated in each story, as an attempt to provide readers with a framework for understanding the complexity of their experiences and their development process. The personal experience stories of the other eight participants can be found in Appendices XIV-XXI.

5.2. Oakland School (UK)

Oakland High School is located in North West England and is a large multi-ethnic secondary school. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan constitute a low percentage of the student population. The school has an SEN department which educates different groups of students and is made up of the SENCO, Assistant SENCO, 3 specialists SEN/D teachers and 12 Teaching Assistants (TAs). The TAs provide focused support for students with SEN/D. The SEND team also runs a 'breakfast club' during morning registration time, where students on the SEN/D register or at risk of falling behind can access support. An experienced pastoral team (with 5 Heads of Year, 5 Pastoral Tutors and Heads of Key Stage 3 and 4) supports SEN/D provision, ensuring students attend lessons and display positive behaviour. The school also has close links with

several external agencies which provide educational psychology, occupational therapy and other 'well-being' services.

The fieldwork in Oakland School was conducted in the mainstream classrooms, as well as the SEN department. All student and staff interviews were conducted in the SEN department. John was one of the three students from Oakland School who took part in the study and his personal experience story is presented below.

5.2.1. Introducing John

John is 15 years old and attends Y11 in Oakland High School. He has been diagnosed as having ADHD. He gets on better with adults than children and he is very articulate in his conversations (SEN teacher interview). He faces particular difficulties in concentration and sustained work and has high resistance to learning (TA interview notes). In Y7 he had tantrums which were manifested by stubbornness and verbal aggression and he also faced problems with his social interactions (TA interview notes). His support was always tailored towards autism, because of the nature of his needs (SEN teacher interview). In Y7, Y8 and Y9 John attended mainstream classrooms in this school and he also had some supportive lessons in the SEN department focusing on his social interactions. Since Y10 John has been taught exclusively in mainstream lessons and has been getting academic support in some classes from a teaching assistant (TA), who has been working with him for 5 consecutive years.

5.2.2. John's personal story

When I first came here in Y7 you got lots of people showing you around, giving you bits of papers, so it is quite welcoming, you have got a good group of staff as well, which is always good… It wasn't much of a change from my primary school, it was kind of a simultaneous switch. I mean it was a change, but it was a good change, not a harsh change, more like a gentle change, still very welcoming, as my last school.

The first thing you need to get used in this school is the hustle and bustle, the busyness… …You get used to it in the first Year, Y7, you get treated more like an adult, and it's good because you kind of do what you like almost, but they are all very welcoming and stuff'… It's a lot easier in primary school than this place, because primary schools is only one building, whereas this [i.e. secondary school] is a group of buildings… more complicated, you have got to walk to classes, you have to memorize where the classrooms are. But when you come in Y7 is very welcoming and they make sure you know where you are going.

The teachers are definitely friendly to me in this school, but sometimes students can't be, especially in the first couple of years when I came here…it takes a while for everyone to adapt doesn't it? I would say the teachers have always been friendly, but the students not so much, I would say that the last two years it has kind of settled down…. It's kind of people… a couple of students who come from the same primary school, to the same high school. Unlike me, who I was the only one from my primary school who came here, so you kind of get that when come here and you don't know anyone. I didn't know any student when I came here in Y7, because I came from my primary school which nobody else came. But that kind of puts me in a disadvantage, because some people did come and they already had that kind of social groups… if you don't come here in a social group you have to start fresh really, which is quite good in some ways but if you think about friends and social groups, it can be a disadvantage.

I'll do on Monday morning breakfast club, just catch up on work etc. That is the only time that I go down there [in the SEN department], unless I go down myself and relax there. In Y7, Y8 and Y9 I had individual sessions there and then it kind of stopped in Y10 and then it completely stopped in Y11, but I still get teacher support in lessons… I think it is a good decision [that it stopped], it means that I am not missing out as much work as someone else is, I am more up to date, because I still have a teacher in the class, I am not completely taken out'…Sometimes I just stay behind in the SEN department and the teachers help me there to do some homework.

I am not very good at group work, I am more like an independent person… It's just kind of good in its own way [group work], but kind of bad in its own way, because they are always pros and cons on that. I guess the pros are that you can go with who you want, you don't have people who argue with your ideas and the cons is that you won't make much progress, because even if you think that your idea might be great, someone might have a better one… I guess the best thing is having an extra teacher in the classroom, extra teachers are always good…Yeah… [I get along with the TA], I got to know her a bit more in these 5 years I have been here. That is kind of good because you know the teacher and the teacher knows you, she knows your strengths and weaknesses, what you are capable of, how much can you write down in a period of time etc., which is always good.

It's fine the way they set it out. And when I don't have a TA it's good, because I kind of get on with it, I am quite good at computers. So not having a TA in subjects that I am stronger it's always better, the TA is helping other people. Again, it's not all about me, it's about other

students as well…I always go for the teachers first kind of approach…and if there is a TA in the room, I always ask the TA as well.

It's a good timetable, it's a broad range, some schools they don't even have DT [Design and Technology] … there is always the standard ones Science, Maths, English and RE [Religious Education] for this school…RE is important to get, but in other schools it wouldn't be. It's kind of good…it is good because you get more options. I guess in other schools you have to pick it as an option in Y9, which is kind of a barrier … History is a strong point, geography as well. I kind of see to be good at those subjects, I don't know why… it's just kind of the depth that goes into, you know, you've got these history books and all that stuff that go back up to 1500. History and Geography are my best subjects because you always learn something new. Again, with Geography it's the depth, you get to talk about the creation of the earth, and then you get the overview on the creation of the earth in RE. So, they kind of come together, they connect, because geography's way is kind of the science way and so when you are talking about the science way versus the religious way… it's all about people's different viewpoints and not concentrating in one, we try to keep it open.

I am quite good in computers, it's easier than writing, my hand kind of types quickly, my handwriting is quite slow, so…it's a long going battle trying to write fast…in primary school especially…I wouldn't say [my writing] is neat, it's just readable…'In terms of subject wise I would say I am not so good at Maths, Maths has sort of been a weakness, I just have never been good at adding large sums of numbers, I don't know a lot about numbers. Geometry has never been my strong point either. It's the actual numbers behind it. It sounds easy but when I attempt to do it in class it is not as easy as it sounds.

I don't like to play sports in general and just don't have the time to do clubs either… I used to do activities after school in Y9, 10 and 11, DT clubs and stuff like that… I have dropped them because of workload, there is not enough time for these kind of groups… I have kind of stopped it now, because some of the clubs have stopped, because some of them were kind of a pilot scheme… I am not too bothered because I do stuff at home with wild life stuff anyway so…I just kind of look around, in the garden there are birds that I can see, we have a hedgehog sleeping in our garden at the moment.

[After school], I just go home where I am just relaxing and try to get my homework out as soon as possible… You can stay after school to do homework, but I would say that is impossible after half term holiday, so I just get on with myself. Sometimes I can leave it last

minute, so it seems kind of a lot of bit to do… Parents help me at home… We occasionally use doodle [for homework]. But as long you are listening to the lesson you will definitely get on with the homework. But if you are just there, not listening at all, doing your own thing, you won't really get on with the homework, which is what you should be doing.

It's a lot of revising and homework that I am doing. The workload has changed from last year, there is definitely a lot of more work that I have to do, and homework…and revision seems to be the key word every teacher says…. It's alright, I guess that one of my weaknesses is getting the work done, but I do mind to see get it done… It's different [this year], but I know that I will be getting three months off, because we finish on June, so I will have three months of relaxation, I think of that three months that I can do nothing.

It seems that everyone has got its own territory. I can see certain group of people in one place. That's kind of what I see at lunchtimes… certain people in certain places. I don't personally go into there because it's getting kind of busy… I don't have a favourite place, I kind of float around in the middle, I am not really bothered where I go. I just usually eat in the canteen with everyone else in there.

I wouldn't go as far as saying they are all friends [my classmates], because I don't know them enough, even though I am with them for 5 years I don't know them well enough still. Just because I don't speak to them, I have that independence thing. I would have slight talks with them, you know friendly talks with them and then I would go along with it. I still wouldn't say they are friends, I would say that I have a good student relationship with them. I guess in the past there were some confrontations because we didn't know each other's personalities but apart from that I think it's just alright.

In the 6th form there are less options than the college maybe would have, there are limitations of what you can do… I want to do an apprenticeship, that's what I want to go down, to earn and learn at the same time. Once you left Y11, before then you would have done those applications, you could apply for different colleges and sometimes within that college you can do an internal apprenticeship scheme. And that scheme basically means you can go to a company and you can do work for them, kind of work experience but you can earn at the same time, you are getting paid, it won't be the full minimum wedge, it will be a bit reduced, but you are still be getting money in… [I want to do] Carpentry and joining. I think I have decided probably to go for that kind of course. Because it seems to be what I am good at… Just generally putting bits of woods together, making a table, desktop or

something like that, little coffee tables, or put stuff together…I started out just putting IKEA stuff together. I can make them, I just read from the booklet once and then I'll start from number one, and I am very organised when I do it.

It [the school] has been marked outstanding from Ofsted in all four areas, that's teaching, pupils, environment and something else…it's also a good school to be around because the staff are friendly, they are nice staff…It's a multi-ethic school and we have the SEN department for different abilities, which it is also good because it kind of accepts everyone, instead of being a school which accepts a certain amount of people… it's a good diversity school…The teachers are always fair in what they say. They apply discipline when they need to, and not when it's not necessary…I am thinking ''she must me telling me off for a reason''… My mum was definitely supportive of going to this school, she has said a lot of good things about it in the past. She was the one who chose the school and I just kind of went along with it and now that I came here I understand why she wanted me to come to this school, this school has certain standards, which can get quite high sometimes, uniform expectations, pay expectations and all that.

John provides here a very coherent and comprehensive account of Oakland school. In his story, he comes across as a reasonable, thoughtful student, with a high-sense of self-awareness. In fact, it is somewhat perplexing that such an articulate student was identified as having SEN/D. The extremely mature way of expressing himself does not correspond with his label of ADHD, which is frequently associated with difficulties in expressive language or the organisation of concepts.

5.3. Mapleland School (UK)

Mapleland School is located in North West England and is a large secondary school. The school population is highly diverse, including more than 100 students on the SEN register and many students coming from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The school has been marked as outstanding for its inclusive ethos, policy and practice and has also received

an Inclusion Quality Mark[9] (Field notes). The SEN provision is supported by key leadership staff (Director of SEN, Assistant SENCO/Head of Learning Support Department, Autism/Resourced Provision Lead, Lead TA Coordinator, Lead Sensory Support TA, Lead Medical TA, Assistant Medical TA) and a larger team of well-qualified and experienced specialist teachers and teaching assistants. The school aims to provide a variety of provision by way of: in-class support either individually or in small groups with specialist teachers and/or teaching assistants; strategic intervention either individually or in small groups with specialist teachers or teaching assistants; personalised timetables to provide bespoke support for pupils with complex needs; complementary curriculum opportunities. Student Voice is a valued contributor to the school's management structures.

The fieldwork in Mapleland School took place mainly in the mainstream classrooms as well as the SEN Department, where most of the student and staff interviews were conducted. Liam was one of the three students from Mapleland School who took part in the study and his personal experience story is presented below.

5.3.1. Introducing Liam

Liam is 13 years old and attends Y9 in Mapleland School. He holds a statement of autism/ADHD and attends mainstream lessons with shared TA support. He does not participate in RE and history, because of his phobia about death. He gets a lot of one-to-one sessions in the SEN department, which is a specialised support unit within the school for students with SEN/D. He also gets individualised support in the 'Inclusion Centre' of the school. He starts school later on Monday and ends earlier on Friday, as he faces difficulties in transition from weekends. His is very articulate and sociable with adults but has limited social interactions with his peers.

[9] This award recognises the ongoing commitment of UK schools to provide the very best education for all children irrespective of differences. For more details, see: https://iqmaward.com

5.3.2. Liam's personal story

Primary school was awful, I hated it a lot (...) I am glad that I am in this school because if I wasn't I wouldn't be getting nowhere near as much as support in other schools as this one. Because this one is providing so much support (...) that just proves that this school can help that kind of people [with different abilities], and they definitely can because they can help me. In primary school that was the worse. Because of my condition, I was worse when I got angry and this was because of my medication. It was pretty bad.

The main thing that I find about myself is that I can get angry very easily. I know why (...) and the reason for this is the fact that I have got a case of ADHD and autism. It affects me and basically it makes me angry. If I don't get medication, I can get angry very easily, I still can. Medication calms me down and basically helps me get through the day. There are some side effects, it affects my appetite during the day. I don't eat. I don't want to eat. (...) The most special about school is people who understand me really. Because when they understand me they understand my struggles and they just help me out. (...) not many do really understand me. If they do, they can understand me in a different way and that way can lead to stress and all that stuff. (...) I am a sensible person because... the friends who I have are most of them adults. Because I act like an adult, I am responsible like an adult even though I am 13 years old. That's why it's very difficult to me to make friends.

I do have a close friend. I have my best friend, I met him in Y9. We were both playing mindcraft. We have so much in common, he is in Y11 (...) but he is a person who...we kind of do have some differences you know, about how we think about reality and everything. But that's his opinion really...that was just super deep! (...) I don't really speak to so many people...if I ask for help, they will help, when I have asked, they have helped me. (...) Some of them [i.e. students] can be strict.

The inclusion centre it's the place where I go with the person that I do one to one with and we are doing work. (...) well basically PSD [i.e. personal and social development] work. Basically, you finish a section and then you get a reward and then you go higher and higher. It's like a Y11 thing. I started in Y7, I have done more than most Y11s in the PSD work (...) we did a lot of power points. When it was a new thing to me, I started to do two power points in one lesson, full of information. Now that I have done that much I am shattered through it! Now I am doing a power point about the first aid because I know a lot of stuff about it.

People there are very nice, I actually did the first aid course there! A few days ago, so now I am fully classified as a first aider. I know everything now, once I get my certificate it will be proved to tell that I am a first aider. And that's the place where I do the most one to ones and it's a very nice place. I have gone there sometimes when I have got angry if I want to run out, I would go there so someone knows where I am. You know most times things do happen and I just go there to calm down and so at least someone knows where I am and it's just a place where I can calm down and relax. The family room is one place and I can just speak to the person there, at the office, she is very lovely. And basically she is the one who calms me down. So, I don't want to run out of school so that people go everywhere to find me, most of the times I do go there. It hasn't happened for a while though, so that's improvement. Basically it's kind of a place where go to either do sort of activities or a place to relax (...) In the kitchen we do one to one (sessions). Sometimes we do cooking, anything really...I made this really thick pancake, it took forever to chew, it was that thick! It is a nice place. If someone is covering then we do it in the SEN department.

The SEN department is usually the place where I do go to calm down. When idiots... some people think they can get me angry, not pupils, it can be staff and this and that. (...) The SEN department is a place where people with disabilities and special needs go. So just me, I have a case of ADHD and autism. Now...I am classed as disabled because of that and it's kind of difficult for me just to do stuff on my own and they bring me support because of that. And they help me out a lot, there is a woman there who supports my mum and a man (referring to the SENCO), say Peter, he is very busy, he is always walking around, he is the one who confirms stuff with people, he is quite high. (...) It's the head of the years, then then is people in the pastoral team and then is people like the SENCO and he is the one who kind of agrees or disagrees with stuff. And there is a person [in the SEN department] who does a really busy job, he does most of the staff really, timetables and all that stuff. (...) [The SEN department] helped me out a lot. It's a place where I can go to bog down and people will understand you. There is one woman who understands me a lot and there is another woman who also understands me, the person who does one to one with me, my key-worker...and my second key-worker.

This place [the SEN department] might look scary at first, it looks a bit dark so basically this is where people do physio and all that stuff (...) They have all these supplies for people who do physio, people who pass out they would come here (...) I actually got sent home once because my back was really bad, I was in that much pain I could not move at all (...) Basically

it's like a two section The SEN department, it's like a physio room and it supplies all the kind of stuff that you need to help somebody. And you actually have this lifter thing for people on the wheelchair and it's very clever, because you can move it around and it's guaranteed safe, so yeah that's really good for the SEN department this kind of equipment to help out people. That has helped me out a lot.

The ASD base is similar to the SEN department but the SEN department is higher you know, in the rate of taking care of people. There is a missing door there, I got quite confused out there, why there was a missing door? I don't really know, but I used to go there to do one-to-one with a very nice woman. Basically, they are not many people there who would understand me and they stressed me out a lot, so now I do it in the inclusion centre. (...) They were very strict and they were like 'no, you need to be a timetable' and this and that and...there was no need for it. (...) Sometimes they don't understand my condition, autism, not very common my condition. They definitely know how to make it activate... they are quite strict.

The library is a place where people can go and borrow a book and they can go there, relax or read or do homework. I am actually enjoying the reading so far. It's books from the school and basically I kind of have to, because they are trying to get you to read and it's kind of a disappointment but it's a thing that gets in your way. By the way if you don't get a book to read you are getting detention, it's really strict. It's desperate measures, you are going to have to read it. But really they shouldn't because it's your choice and if that affects your future, it affects your future really.

I have been seven weeks straight to lessons (sense of pride) (...) What I find stressful is history. It's mostly too involved in death (...) and I have an issue about that. (...) Art is ok (...) Mathematics is very challenging and stressful but it is one of the core subjects so I have to do (...) In science we do practicals like microscopes, I actually used a microscope for the first time a few days ago, it's that powerful that it can reflect (...) it's more than just writing it because you actually remember that practically, physically. (...) I do like ICT, but it can be stressful, it's very challenging although I love computers (...) in ICT ... well sometimes when people don't understand it and they say different, it's when I disagree with them. You know, in general I am confused and it's just not working [the PC] even though it should. If you follow these steps exactly it's still doing that and then it's not working then you get anxious and I don't know what I am doing wrong, you know what I mean? (The TA) does help a lot, a lot of support help a lot. People say that I don't need it, but I do. It has basically convinced

me to do better. But you know I am doing my best and I do need help because without the support it is a lot more difficult to me.

There is a place where I can practice guitar (...) I only go there when it's my lesson, but we can go there at break and dinner (...) Playing the guitar is something that I really enjoy...I am the head guitarist now and I have been for a bit now and they also rely on me, they rely on me to play solos (...) It started with drums really, I asked this man and he said this student will teach you and now that student has left, it was years ago, in Y7. He taught me and next thing I started some bits on my own and I moved on to guitar, so I asked to do guitar (...) I was like ok, I'll give it a shot, didn't really like it so I asked if I can do electric, I started it out and he got me in the group and now here I am, I have been doing it for 3 years I think? I am the head of guitarist so I have to do solos and it can be embarrassing if you mess up. It could just be one little string and it can make a really weird sound. We have performed at three different concerts. Royal College of Music, this was on town a while ago (....) I have performed at a carnival, and I have performed in the school, at this...it was like an after school thing.

[Other activities...] We do football, we do baseball, we do rugby, we do basketball, netball.... technically classes are inside but it's outside, you know what I mean? We also used to do tennis, but they changed it (...) I would probably make more activities, I would make a dome, so that they can do outside activities but in a dome. For example, football, tennis, all that stuff...rugby...no that's going to hurt. You know they are actually stopping it now? Because its violent and you have to proper trained and if not, there could be a serious accident.

I have an issue about homework, I don't see it as this important. If you know what you are doing, if the teachers see that you understand it just from the work you shouldn't have to do that. [After school] I just go and slide in my bedroom really. Because that's the thing, I can speak to people and actually try to make friends .... why did I go just that super deep? You were not expecting that from a 13-year-old, did you?

And the worst thing...lessons (laughter). Well actually no, exams, exams. They make me so paranoid because they are going to be more difficult and they push you to the point where... and you know, if you are like me and you already know about reality you are getting to know the fact that how much GCSE's affect your future and (...) all you hear is like in year 10-11 it's about GCSE's, how they affect your future (...) I am in year 9 (sign). Terrified...honestly because I can't revise really. Because... here is the thing, we went through

Geography and then we got to do it again and I forgot everything instantly. I don't know why I forget a lot of things, really quickly and that can happen easily when I am tired (yawn). (...) I am sleeping, it's just the exams things. And I am not looking forward to that at all (...) We did our exams, one on Monday, three on Tuesday and Wednesday and it was...it was tiring (yawn). (...) Well that's what I am worried about, but I'll hope I'll do it. Even that or I will end up in the streets... If I don't do well really, I am going to have a crappy job. It determines what job you are restricted to. If I go to college or university I will be able to do any job I want, but I am not to say if I am going to do college fully or...I'll see how I think and if I think I want to go to university...you know, I don't want to be working in a corner shop!

My strength is fast reactions. I can actually react quite fast. I am not saying that because I think it, I have actually noticed it through the past years. I have a lot faster reactions that you would normally have, but I guess that's because of the games I play, I am a gamer (...) I also think that I have got it just in general. You know how you flinch sometimes? Well I can avoid a lot of things, like hitting my face with a ball, liquids falling on the floor, things spilling (...) Well I am into gaming...you know there is a job when you can work as a YouTuber. It's basically when people post videos, they are YouTubers. And that job can be like entertainers, a comedian, whatever you want to choose, and you are actually getting paid for doing this. At first you are going to think, yeah, I am going to do it for the money, like I did, but it's not that easy. I wanna try it but it's a lot of equipment that you need to get.

There is people who are just like...what we call 'cool heads'. I hate that people because they think they can do what they want and they can get away with everything and they can get a job and what they actually don't realise is that they need to go for reality to actually notice that. Now I already know part of reality, and it's not that simple. Once you are out there you are clueless. You need to go to college, you need to pick a college first don't you? And then when college accepts you then have to qualify for a job. Now that is also going to be difficult and people think that they have seen bad, but then you actually have to pay bills, electric and food. And you are not going to have very much spare time. So you need to focus on facts that are affecting your future. I absolutely hate these kinds of people who are...you know you are an idiot, you don't know how your future is going to be like...if they carry on what they are doing they are going to end up in the streets. And that's a fact.

I know most people would be like 'just burn down the whole school' but if it was future wise, I would give the thing that gives everyone knowledge, that simple. I would just build a

helmet that gives you all the knowledge, plants it into your brain, takes out the idiotic version of you out and put the right version of you in, doing proper and not stupid stuff, that simple really. And people experiencing more stuff, like instead of writing it actually physically seeing it. You can experience I don't know projects, stuff. I would change that and also… well are people not really strict. Do you know what I would do to the idiots? If they don't do well in the week, they would have to do every single work again, through that year form the beginning till the end and repeat until they actually learn. Basically, I would just give exams and then say you know what you got to do otherwise your future is messed up.

To be honest I just want to focus to stuff that I really need, and I am definitely not looking forward for adulthood and if you see other people's experiences from adulthood you get thinking… really? That's what it's going to be like? But you know you can actually change that. You can instantly change all bad things just work on it. Unless you have killed someone, you can't change that… But you know you can change anything bad. Just focus on your life really and yeah, you'll get through. And that ends it. Liam, twenty second of March (laughter).

Like John previously, Liam also offers here a detailed and well-expressed account of his secondary school life in Mapleland. Within his story, it is particularly interesting how he makes sense and reflects on the SEN/D structures of his school, and how he rationalizes his own need of support. Liam seems to be fully aware of his ascribed label of ADHD and autism and how it affects him, showing a high-level of self-consciousness. These personal characteristics give the impression that Liam has already made a step from a schoolboy towards a grown-up.

5.4. Zante School (Greece)

Zante School is a 'Gymnasio' (lower secondary education school) located in Athens (Central Greece). It has 30 students registered in the 'inclusion class', out of approximately 300 of the total student population. Students with a statement of SEN can register to this school irrespectively of their home location. The school provides specialist provision for students aged 11 to 15 in a separate resource base (SEN department), where the 'inclusion classes' take place. Inclusion classes have been operating since 2015-2016, and the school is the only one in the area providing this kind of support. Students with SEN/D follow the mainstream lesson and they also attend the inclusion classes for certain hours in the week, where they are provided with individualised and intensified support in core subjects (i.e.

Modern Greek, history, maths, physics, chemistry). The 'inclusion team' consists of a Greek language teacher -trained in special education- who acts as an 'inclusion coordinator' (equivalent to a SENCO in England); one SEN physics teacher; one SEN Greek language teacher; 2 SEN maths teachers. In the school there is also a support teacher for a child with autism (assisting him in the lessons) and a support worker for a child with a physical disability (providing everyday care/accessibility), who are both employed privately by the students' parents. The school is active in organising several extra-curricular activities (e.g. drama team, volunteerism, 'brotherhood' activities with other schools).

The fieldwork in Zante School was conducted in the mainstream classrooms, as well as the 'inclusion class' (SEN Department). Marios was one of the three students from Zante School who took part in the study and his personal experience story is presented below.

5.4.1. Introducing Marios

Marios is 13 years old and attends the mainstream class of the second level of Gymnasio (lower secondary school) in Zante School (Y9). He is a short kid and looks younger than his chronological age. He holds a diagnosis for general learning difficulties, and has been referred to a special school in the past (school archive). He is registered to attend lessons in the inclusion class, but he is not always willing to go to every class. Marios gives the impression of an introvert and shy kid, although his teachers characterise him as a rather 'intractable' and 'indifferent' student (SENCO and SEN teacher). He doesn't get along with all teachers in the school, but he is generally well accepted by his peers (SENCO). He usually takes up roles to tease his classmates and spends time with high school students (SEN teacher).

5.4.2. Marios' personal story

[When I started Gymnasio] I was a bit nervous…a bit nervous at the beginning, but then I got used to it (….) I came here because my brother was here (…) I have got three brothers, two younger and one older. The old one is in high school. (…) I would come here anyway because it's better than other schools. I met more kids here. It's better now in Gymnasio (….) I mean, we have got some things in our school that other schools don't have, for example football, and the room downstairs, where we play table tennis. When we have got PE and we want to play downstairs we ask teachers and they open the room (…) We have a very big space, we have got a football court and we can do many things here, there is gymnastics, music etc. (…) And now our Physics teachers told us that we will have chemistry experiments.

Experiments that other schools don't have…they might have the labs but they don't have the equipment…many kids have told me so (…) And there is the break that…it's better than primary because you did one hour lesson there and here you have got 40 or 45 minutes lesson.

In the basketball court, we play, we are having a good time there. Basketball and football… I play in PE, not during breaks. Usually I sit with the guys, we chat, move around, make jokes, this kind of stuff. We also have a table tennis room, there is the gym, where we play football, we have balls to take outside and play. And a PC cluster…Sometimes mister let us play and sometimes he gives us an assignment. It's good, I like it.

Lessons are a bit hard. I don't understand very well the way they explain things. Mister in Geography and Greek language [is ok]. There are some teachers that are…that I don't like them. And the inclusion class. Because sometimes they take me out of lessons that I don't want to leave and they put pressure on me. I mean in one lesson I wanted to stay because I didn't have a good grade and I wanted to stay [I am obliged to go] by my mum and dad. Because I had resit exams in French and they put me in the inclusion class after this. I took the resit exams and I passed (…) I don't do very well at French. English are ok, I go to evening classes ['frontistirio'].

In inclusion class they help in lessons that we struggle. One teacher is for Physics, Chemistry and Biology and another one is for Greek language and literature, ancient Greek…and there is another one. Sometimes I go alone, sometimes with four people. I prefer to work in groups. I like that I get help but I don't like it when they shout at me. For example one teacher when she sees me she says to me 'you will stay still, you won't talk and you will look at me'. And I didn't do anything and I left from the inclusion class. I had today too, the hour before but I didn't go (…) she doesn't help a lot. Last year there was another one, much better.

[I get along] with one teacher. Miss [SEN physics teacher] has shown us an experiment and she taught us how to do it and then she gave us roles and she said you will say this, you will do that and we learned it. But I didn't understand one thing… miss told me that this will help me and that the physics teacher [i.e. from mainstream class] will raise your grade. I mean, did I have a 7? She told me that he would raise 2 grades, and I took a 9? So…I had a 7 before? And she told me 'I don't know'. She has told us that mister would raise 2 grades, so if I hadn't done this I would have taken a 7? [I would put myself] either 13 or 14 and I am

not noisy at all in this class. Basically… I am in other subjects, where teachers don't shout and everyone is loud, I stand up. In Physics, Arts and French.

Teachers help in Maths, in Greek language, Physics and Chemistry…that's all. I ask either my teachers [for help], either my friends, my best mates. Tests are fine, ok… so and so. I don't really like the teacher who helps me. One teacher from the inclusion class tells me that I will repeat the class. The best thing about teachers is when they don't shout when we have not done our homework. One time that I haven't done my homework one teacher threatened me that she would call my parents. This teacher doesn't like me a lot. I have been once to her desk because I was talking to a friend and she shouted at me very badly and one time another kid came to her she said to him 'ok, but this should not happen again'. She is being unfair, and two or three other teachers too… and because it's so obvious I don't talk to them at all.

There is a group of kids [the 'group of friendship']…which goes around whenever we have got problems, it goes around with a box and we write in a paper and put it in the box, no names. Kids read it and something happens next, I don't know. Now they are…around six kids. They go in turns, in pairs or three together. And they go around whenever there is an issue. For example, if I have got an issue, I would go to one of these kids and would ask them to come around to give you some requests that we want. They are elected, like in the student council.

I am in the [school] chorus but sometimes I can't be bothered going because I need to go to English and they keep us during the 7th period and I need to go for English lessons after school, at 15:30 and I don't have the time. (…) I have taken part in school activities, like when we painted the school. When the primary school kids came to see our school and take books and stuff, we had a party. And before the party, this was last year…so one day before this we painted the whole school, I painted all the stairs red. Whoever wanted took part in this and the kids from the union came to help, I mean some kids whose mum or dad are teachers here, or some teachers, 7 or 8 parents, whoever wanted, some of the kids came from the group of friendship (…) And because a kid was missing from this group, and I happened to drop by the school and saw them painting…and they asked me 'do you want to join us'? and I said ok, and we started painting the school.

My manager in the team in Olympiakos [is close to me]… he is old. I've been there many years. It's been 2 years that I have been playing, I was in another team and my coach brought

me to this one, it's a bit far away. My dad takes me there every Thursday. The coach has helped me a lot, he has done a lot of things for me. There is another old person, he has helped me a lot too. For example, when we were playing games with my old team, he used to video us and he was the one who gave my video to my manager and this is how they took me in Olympiakos team (...) I don't know [silence] I might change team. My team is not Olympiakos, I want to go to Panathinaikos. I used to go swimming as well, but I stopped, my parents didn't want it.

Most of my friends are not from school. I know most of them from primary, some of them I met in the neighbourhood (...) we hang out together (...) Vangelis, from the 4th high school, Alex is from here, Dolori, from the 6th high school, he comes from Albania, Makis (...) Basically Vangelis is very close to me. I have known him since primary school, until now, we are best mates, he is like a brother to me, he sleeps over at my place.

Today the lyceum was closed, the kids were squatting. I don't know their demands. Basically, I get angry sometimes, why we cannot squat? Because there are many things that they haven't...we have many demands. The lyceum kids had closed the school first (...) We would close down the school, but they have voted against it, half of the school. A kid said that we are going to miss excursions etc. and as soon as they heard it, they voted against. They told us that there are a lot of demands. (...) Can I tell you about the other school [i.e. neighbourhood school]? This school is like a prison, they have put high railings everywhere because some kids ages ago have closed the school for 3 or 4 months and they had made it a prison so that kids don't squat.

[I get scared] sometimes. Sometimes when I sit in a dangerous spot, sometimes when I stand up, they would push me, and I would fall down, or some other things that they do, like when they one would hold a kid still and another one would push him, and he will fall down. (...) Like games...I don't do that, I have done it once basically. We have pushed a kid, but he fell where it is soft (i.e. surface) not in the yard. (...) A few days ago, a kid was sitting there and was looking down and there is a game, basically it's not a game but some kids do that, they went there and they were pushing the kid towards the railings and the kid was about to fall down...they did it for fun, they didn't attack him, and he was about to get hurt and the kids who did that got a severe punishment. Miss headteacher said that the railings were not steady and that if you push them hard, they might fall and she punished them very strictly, I think they got one- or two-days expulsion from school. I saw the kid that was about to fall down. I...I got scared, I couldn't believe that they would do that...and as soon as I saw that...

The kids would go to the kiosk outside the school when these railings didn't exist and would buy things like energy drinks that our canteen doesn't have, and they would bring them in and they would escape school. And when a teacher found out that outsiders might come in, now they have put these railings so that they cannot enter the school easily (...) I have seen a lot of kids that tussle in the stairs for fun, they think that this is a game... I don't know...sometimes they make it, sometimes I have seen them getting hurt. When a kid slipped and fell down badly, they put these (i.e. anti-slip pads).

I forgot to tell you something. Some kids draw some scary things in the toilet doors and some freshers who have got a problem don't go there, they are scared (...) I don't know [what problems], the teachers have told me that this kid has a problem because they are in the inclusion class. They do it to all kids, but now they have found out that a kid is scared and...another thing is that they keep the door closed so that kids get scared, they think that the door is locked, and they shout and as soon as they leave the door open, they close the outside door too and they run. that in the toilets they write some bad things about the freshers (A' Gymnasio) (...) I wouldn't shout because I would know that this is joke. At the beginning I wouldn't take it so seriously and if they wouldn't open to me, I would tell them to do so and if they wouldn't, at some point they would.

[I would like] the break to last longer, to have only 5 hours and 6 hours lessons per day, to have PE more often, let's say three times per week, I would put more things in the canteen, for example doughnuts (...) in three hour expulsions not to take one day expulsion from school, I have got one for now. I would turn the radiators on a bit earlier, because they normally turn them on when we enter the class and not earlier. I would change some teachers and I would put others. I would keep the inclusion class but with other teachers and I would sort out the school a bit better, I would put many things. For example, I would buy more balls, the PE teachers don't have balls and we need to bring balls from home. We had three authentic balls expensive, Nike and stuff and older kids from lyceum have stolen them.

Marios' narrative, like John's and Liam's previously, reveals a quite articulate student who is willing to talk about various aspects of his school life in much detail. In fact, within his story, many honest references can be traced which reveal important elements of the school culture. In some parts of his story, Marios comes across as a rather 'critical' student, who does not hesitate to complain overtly about the tensions he experiences with the school staff. However, the fact that he details and attributes positive meanings to particular

activities and other school elements, indicates that he generally appreciates being a member of Zante school.

5.5. Ikarion School (Greece)

Ikarion School is a 'Gymnasio' (lower secondary education school) with a population of 273 students. The school is located in a disadvantaged area of Athens -in terms of socio-economical background. The school has a reputation in the area for its inclusive ethos and practice, as a result of continuous leadership initiatives and commitment (Field notes). The school provides specialist resourced provision for 45 students in the SEN register, aged 11 to 15. This resource base (SEN department) is commonly called 'inclusion class', with one Greek language teacher/Special educator responsible for its operation. The 'inclusion' team is also comprised of an SEN physics teacher and an SEN arts teacher. During the course of the fieldwork, another SEN Greek language and an ICT teacher were appointed. This centre is a big space, separated by curtains into 3 rooms. The SEN teachers run a flexible programme, taking the students out from the mainstream classes. Students with SEN follow the mainstream lessons and they also attend the inclusion classes for certain hours in the week, where they are provided with individualised and intensified support in core subjects (i.e. Modern Greek, history, maths, physics, arts). In the school there are three other support workers for three students with SEN/D, who are hired privately by the students' parents.

The fieldwork in Ikarion School was conducted in the mainstream classrooms, as well as the 'inclusion class' (SEN Department). Anna was one of the three students from Ikarion School who took part in the study and her personal experience story is presented below.

5.5.1. Introducing Anna

Anna is 15 years old and attends Ikarion secondary school for the third year (C' Gymnasio / Y10). She comes from Russia and was born in Greece. She holds a formal diagnosis of autism and according to her teachers, she has normal cognitive ability. Since Y8 she has been attending mainstream classes in the school and she has also been having lessons in the 'inclusion class'. Her teachers stress her great talent in drawing and her efficiency at computers. According to the SENCO, she has obsessions and exhibits stereotypic behaviours which however, are not very intense and don't last long (SENCO interview). She is always willing to talk about herself, but her self-esteem is low. She tends to complain a lot, especially about the tensions she experiences with her mother, who often makes her anxious

(SENCO interview). She is quite isolated in school and spends most of her time with another student with low cognitive ability, Klara (SEN teacher interview).

5.5.2. Anna's personal story

I take the bus to come here, it takes 15 minutes. If the bus is late, it will take long, if there is a strike it will take one or two hours. I lost 2 hours once. I come to school on my own. At the beginning with my mum, now I come alone. And by the end of primary I was coming alone, without my mum. But the primary was very close to home. (...) Of course, I had support there, I was very good there. I had a lot of friends, I had a friend in the first grade but then she left. There was inclusion class but it was very very very rare that I would go there. The difference [with Gymnasio] is that I don't see any of the people that I had [in primary] and that the lessons are a bit more difficult and other friends that are a bit more...I don't know what they are with the puberty... that's all, I have nothing else to add. [I came to this school] because I still have dyslexia, this is why I came to the inclusion class. Because I have a bit of dyslexia. This is why I was chosen to come here. They told me that we are going to find a school with an inclusion class and here I am (...). All people have searched for it, my mum, my dad, my brother, the whole family. My brother used to go to another school, far away.

I am almost 15. The truth is that I come from Russia, Yes, Da! My mother came in Greece before I was born, sometime around 1993 I think. I was born here, my brother was born in Russia. My brother is old, he is 27. We have got 13 years [difference]. My brother will work at some point but now he is unemployed. There are a lot of unemployed people (...) he used to do drawings in the computers, I mean drawing houses with a specific programme. (...) My mother is a cleaner and my father is a sailor, very creative [ironically]... my father is away every day. But I am a bit [creative] with the drawings and computers...and my brother, we are the same.

I don't like it [school], it's very boring. The lessons are nice sometimes, but I can't, I get annoyed! I want to sleep in my home until 12 pm. (...). I have got some lessons that I cannot stand, for example history (...) I can't. I will start hitting my head on the wall with history...it's nobody's fault, I just cannot understand history (...) I don't like technology so much, I prefer computers. We have technology this year, but I am not used to the new teacher this year. At this moment we are doing exercises, but I am not used to it. I never liked a lesson of technology, I prefer computers. (...) I like the most computer science, arts, maths, whatever has to do with science, a bit of physics, a bit of chemistry. To tell you the truth, I preferred

physics and chemistry, and last year's biology because it was easier, but now I don't really like it. Something that disgusts me the most is history and a bit of ancient Greek. No, ancient Greek are ok, but I cannot understand them. Music is ok, but we don't do anything in music, we only do songs and stuff, but irrelevant… I like the songs, but I don't like the lesson. The music teacher is good, he's cool, plays the guitar. I think he is famous in a way, but I don't know, I haven't really listened to him, he is a celebrity I think. (…) We rarely work in groups. We do more in Social and Civic education, but I decided to do the work alone. And in the past I think I used to do work with Klara in the computer, to search for information, this kind of stuff (…) I have always been interested in computer science, to learn…how to explain…everything that has to do with computers. At the moment we are doing 'scratch' a programme which includes animation. The rest of my mates know this programme from primary school. I don't because I didn't go to the same primary as they did.

I pay attention to lessons, I have been paying attention lately, but in the past I was paying attention and I was sketching at the same time, I don't know because I was bored at that time. You should see something that I am making…I create my own characters, but my mum and my psychologist tell me, just to inform you that I am also going to speech therapy…anyway they tell me that I need to evolve, to draw more than imaginary things and animals. I like to draw mostly dragons from my imagination, I go to a website, 'DeviantArt', I like this style. (…) It's been a while since we had a drawing contest, like which drawing will go out of each class door. We did this every year. I haven't won anything, but I am drawing each year. This year I drew a dragon and it's better than the previous ones, I was sick of the others. I have kept the drawings, but they are at home, unfortunately… [Students] make an effort to draw. It doesn't matter if it sucks, what matters is that they are trying. (…) but my mum doesn't think so… anyway.

Inclusion class…inclusion is just fine. They always help me, they are very good teachers. I only miss one computer science teacher that I had in the first grade…I haven't met the new teacher yet, I hope that it will be the same teacher as the first year. Not last year, because she wasn't that good. It [inclusion class] has helped me a lot … [without it] I would try to do things on my own but unfortunately my grades wouldn't be that good. I would have failed again. With the teachers that I have now…they have helped me a lot, I have passed some subjects with good grades. Just in the beginning there were moderate, like last year when I took 15 point something, I don't remember…it was moderate at this time but later it went up to 17 [out of 20]. This year that the grades are every four months, it will be worse, I don't

know. No, the B' Gymnasio was more difficult for me. (...) Just leave it...I cannot really understand the exams so much. Tests are ok, but I am a bit more anxious with the exams because you get the grades every three months, every four months... I don't like exams and grades.

[During breaks] I do absolutely nothing. I get some rest, I eat...umm no I don't really eat at school, I am trying not to eat because sometimes I don't feel very well. It's nothing wrong, I just don't eat. I eat a lot at home (...) I go to the school yard, but at the first grade I didn't use to go down in the yard. I don't know, I was hanging out with Klara at first, then in the second grade I was going in the yard. [We were sitting] not in the class, outside the teachers' room.

Sometimes teachers are fair, sometimes people tell me that they are unfair, I don't know, they have got their own problems. When the students are being loud they [teachers] yell at them. (...) I don't make fun of or I don't hate any teacher. I like them all. And one time I have been told that 'you are a geek' and I didn't react...I don't know... I just told my opinion that I don't make fun of teachers, because some people do, but I like them all. (...) Half of them [peers], you know, they don't like the teachers. It's because of their age, their mood and stuff (...) When I have a problem with lessons or with a kid who is bothering me I go to my teachers and I say so. And to the headteacher too, the headteacher helps more. (...) Some students help me [in lessons], some don't. Most of the times they don't help. Mostly teachers help, in speech therapy, outside school. (...) [I do] speech therapy and English. Speech therapy since I was in primary school, since...the first or the second grade. No, from nursery school. Two times per week, one hour on Wednesday, two hours on Friday. In the past I had different teachers, now I have only two. For English, I have got one. One teacher is for the languages and Maths (...) and one lady is a psychologist. We discuss problems and we play games, I win at UNO, I am good at UNO. They have helped me a lot, I am a lot better now.

My class...my class is just fine, I have nothing to say, but... the only thing is, I have an issue with my classmates. They are being silly. We have a few girls and the boys are more, so they are being noisier. They are the majority and, to be honest, they are talking a lot, they are being noisy, they are being 'smart', doing whatever they fancy, not serious kids at all, I have never seen something like that in my life (...) I do [have friends], but from primary school not so much, I have lost them all. I still have their phone numbers but unfortunately, I don't call them (...) There are half of the people [in the school] that are my friends, and they understand me and they are friendly to me. (...) Nikos...Nikos is a boy but it doesn't matter,

he is quite ok. Klara, Ioanna, Pelagia, Valentina, these are from my class. Dora not so much, we used to hang out in the past but now I don't know what got into her and her behaviour has changed, I couldn't understand her, but she is talking to me a bit. Katerina and other kids from other classes. I have always had contacts with other classes in the last three years. And there is the other half, eighty per cent from boys who are not friendly to me, they are making fun of me, they don't treat me right. (...) And we have Syrians here, we have three Syrian kids (...) Refugees because the war in Syria and Iraq is still going on. You didn't know? You don't watch the news? There are three kids, they are attending the A' Gymnasio. They try, they know English, Syrian, but not Greek. They know English better than myself (...) they have friends who help them to learn Greek, and the teachers [help] too. They help them learn Greek better, until the war is over. Why is there a war in Syria, what is this disgusting thing that I hear? (...) Is something bad going to happen if they [kids] are altogether? It's good, I don't know (...) I have heard about schools that are only for good students...I don't know I think this is a bit unfair. All students should be together, the good ones, the moderate ones, the exceptional (...) You learn new things from foreigners, I mean their anniversaries, what they do in their countries, their customs, the language (...). We also have a Ukrainian student in our class and they ask him too. Really, I don't know why people are not asking me...anyway. They know, they know very well that I am Russian, I was telling them that... I believe that nobody cares about me.

I take part in school activities (...) I used to parade, but not now. I decided not to parade in the C' Gymnasio. I keep forgetting my parade clothing, and the weather will not be good again. Last year and the year before I kept doing the same mistake with the skirt and the trousers. I am most used to wearing trousers. (...) Sometimes I cannot go to many events because (...) I have been to this kind of events and I am sick of them. I participated in the school event in October. And in the Christmas events I may take part, but normally I don't want to participate. It is obligatory that you go, because if you don't go you take an absence. And in school excursions, if you don't join, you will need to stay and have lessons, normally. Half of the people might go, half not. Seriously? This shouldn't be happening, I don't want to have lessons while others are on an excursion, I would like to stay at home. (...) I like going on excursions! I have always liked it. The other day I went to the 'Village' (i.e. Village cinemas: amusement centre) with school, we did our walks there, it was interesting.

To be honest Gymnasio has been ok, the lessons ok, at the second grade were difficult, but with the friends that I had it was certainly so and so. But it's ok, the time I had here was so

and so, it doesn't matter. Soon I will be leaving this school, I am done with Gymnasio. I will only miss the people that I know, Klara and all the other students I mentioned from other classes. I am not going to be upset just because of those people that I have met and they embarrassed me and did stupid things. No, they haven't embarrassed me, they have just made fun of me, they were being 'smart' and all, they called me 'baby' and stuff. Mates from different classes, but now they are not doing it so much, I am used to it and now in a while I will be leaving… I don't give a damn about them, I couldn't care less. (…) Six years of primary, then Gymnasio, then lyceum and then I don't know what else. This is the third and the last year of the Gymnasio. After this I am going to lyceum. But in which lyceum, I don't know yet. Now I am waiting for a new school to open, an arts school. It will open soon, I think in two years' time. (..) You know that I am very good at drawing, but my drawings are the same and I need to…. evolve! I will try to create animation and stuff. Firstly, I will have to know how things are moving, I will have to find a special archive of photoshop. (…) and then (…) I can go even further, maybe I will go to an arts school or computer school to learn more things because I am interested and there are more things to learn, besides of what I know.

Anna's story also provides a coherent account of Ikarion school- even though compared to the other three stories, it seems to include more information about her own trajectory as a person. Anna talks with openness and does not hesitate to reveal her negative feelings related to issues around her family, peers or academic pressures. While she seems to have low academic self-esteem, she also emphasises and ascribes positive meanings to her unique painting skill. Overall, the way Anna expresses about herself gives the impression of a quite independent and goal-oriented student.

Overall, these narratives represent the idiosyncrasies, particularities, and individual modes of expression of these particular students. By reading them, it is possible for the reader to get a 'sense' of them as people. While this can be potentially misleading -as an individual is more than any single narrative she/he constructs- these first-hand narratives provide a significant, holistic counterbalance to an analytical approach which can tend towards objectification and fragmentation of the 'person'.

6. INTEGRATED ANALYSIS

6.1. Introduction

The previous Chapter presented the accounts of four students in the form of 'personal experience stories'. As explained in Chapter Three (Section 3.6), all student stories have emerged from an inductive analysis of the student data; this first stage of analysis included identifying initial themes, which were later organised according to the PPCT structures. This chapter presents and discusses the research findings following an opposite, deductive analytical process. In particular, at this stage of analysis, themes were identified on the basis of the PPCT model[10] and were later enriched and inflected by 'student voice', using the study's student voice critical framework (see Section 4.3). As explained in Chapter Four, this framework was used to reflect further and illuminate issues of identity and power, contradictions and distinctive differences within and between the students, schools and contexts, as well as between the students' and adults' perspectives. The overall aim of mapping the student accounts onto the PPCT framework was to further elaborate, extend and 'structure' student voice, allowing in that way voice to 'speak' more clearly.

The final themes that have come up from this integrated analysis are presented in the following sections together with their sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes are not mutually exclusive but should be regarded as in dynamic interaction with one another. They are illuminated by using direct quotes from the students' stories (provided in italics). Quotes from the staff interviews, as well as extracts from field notes and research diary reflections are also included in order to shed light on different perspectives and aspects of student experience. The interpretations included in this Chapter have emerged by scrutinizing the main themes further through the student voice critical framework. The final part of the Chapter (Section 6.6) presents the 'bio-ecological framework of student experience' which constitutes the overarching theoretical model of the study. It discusses how the 'dialectic'

[10] The thematic analysis was drawn from the whole study's data set i.e. the four student stories presented in Chapter Five, along with the other eight stories which are available in the Appendices XIV-XXI.

between the PPCT elements and the critical framework for reflecting on student voice has led to a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the main themes.

6.2. Person

Person characteristics influence how individuals interact with and respond to their environment. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) distinguish three types of person characteristics: 'Force' characteristics (dispositions), bioecological 'Resources' and 'Demand' characteristics ('personal stimulus characteristics'). These characteristics are the most influential in the student proximal processes i.e. their interactions with their environment. This section discusses the students' person characteristics[11] as these have emerged from their own personal stories. The analysis includes interpretations relating to the way the students' SEN/D interact with their other 'person' characteristics. Through the study's theoretical lens, the discussion sheds light on the particular student characteristics and elaborates their meaning.

Rather than organising the 'Person' element by school, I chose purposefully to analyse and present the student characteristics on an individual level. This 'person' perspective was more in line with the particular element of the model I was focusing on, as well as with my overall approach of treating the students in this study as 'persons', and not merely as 'pupils' i.e. members of the particular schools. I considered the person characteristics as unique traits of each student, which are not necessarily affected by or directly related to the specific school or the national context. Following this rationale, it would not be possible to categorise the person characteristics under the umbrella of a specific school (as I did for the rest of the model's elements i.e. 'Context', 'Process', 'Time').

The discussion below is structured around the main themes that have emerged after the analysis of the person characteristics. The main themes are given schematically in the Figure 6.1 below. As shown in the figure, in the centre of the diagram it lies the 'Person with SEN/D', instead of just the 'Person'; this is because, as mentioned above, all main themes related to

[11] A list of the student participants and their main characteristics (name, school, age, SEN/D type) is given in Table 3.2

the 'Person' are analysed and discussed around the contested concept of 'SEN/D', as an interpretive layer included in the study's critical framework.

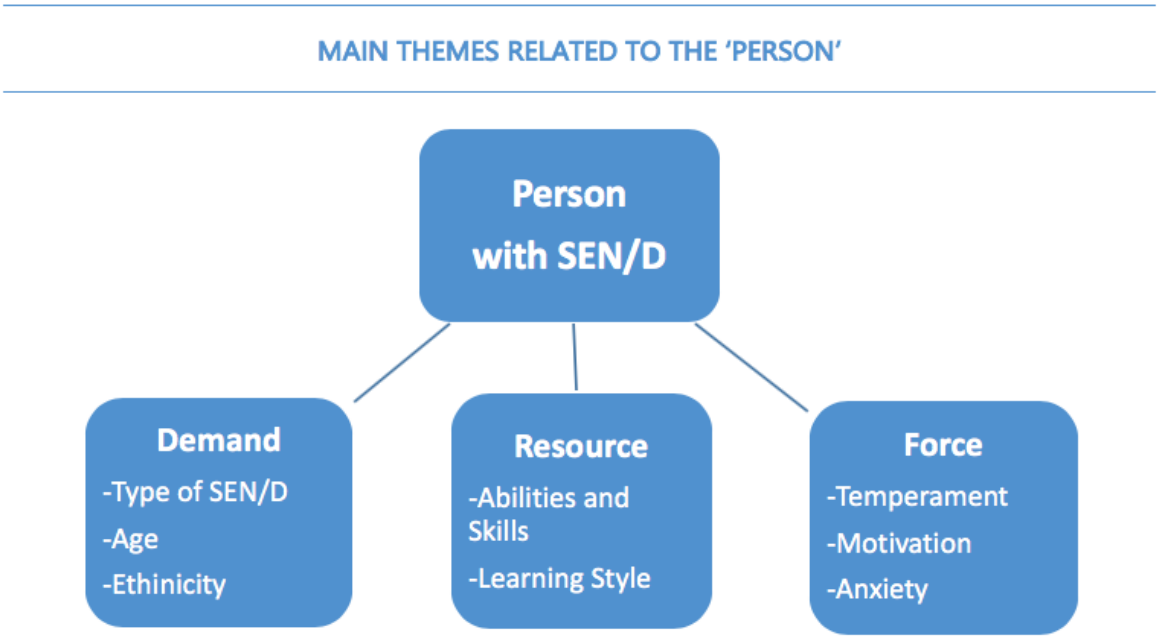

Figure 6.1 Main themes related to the 'Person'

6.2.1. Demand

Demand characteristics, as explained in the theoretical framework chapter, refer to individual qualities which 'invite or discourage reactions from the social environment that can disrupt or foster processes of psychological growth' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 812). These are considered 'personal stimulus characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 303) and can influence the ways in which other people respond to, and the expectations they have for a given individual (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). The demand characteristics of the students that were found to be important in this study for the student experiences were related mainly to the students' type of SEN/D, their age and ethnic background.

The students' **type of 'SEN/D'** was classified primarily as a 'demand' characteristic, as it emerged as the central factor which determined people's reactions towards and expectations for the participating students. For example, Debbie's severe and complex needs, coming from a degenerative condition, were considered particularly 'challenging' by her teachers. Debbie commented on her health issues which have affected remarkably her presence and participation in school, throughout the course of her school life. In her story (see Appendix XVI), she made specific references to her personal struggles while coming to secondary school: '*It was sort of hard because when I came here I have just got out of hospital. I had surgery*'. The SENCO stressed the severity of her needs by noting that: *'She*

is the one we are worried the most'. Commenting on her needs, the SEN teacher also mentioned that *'if she tired she is having a lie down on the physio bed'*. Debbie's physical conditions and poor health were affecting considerably her wellbeing, and this was the reason why her teachers were trying to respond to her needs by increasing her emotional health through different activities, rather than focusing on academic targets.

Another indicative example is Rahman (see his story in Appendix XVII), whose severe social communication difficulties were affecting immediately his social interactions in the school. The SEN teacher commented about Rahman: *'He takes things very literally, so in conversations with him you have to be really specific about what your expectations are, because everything you say he will take literally'.* The teachers' remarks were echoed during my own encounter with him, and specifically during our first interview, where I found myself feeling quite frustrated by his inability to express himself. My expectations for a deeper communication with Rahman, where he would share with me his thoughts, ideas and feelings, have immediately changed after I realised his struggles in expressive language. My own experience with Rahman is indicative of the way his communication difficulties affected the way I, among other people in his environment, chose to respond to him.

The following example from Mani (see his story in Appendix XIV) enlightens further this topic. Mani's story included narrations about his tantrums and emotional outbursts and the way these affected his interactions with different people in and out of school. As he noted:

> *When I am angry, I want to punch people, throw tables, smash doors and beat people up, and stab people. It's like… (shouts), it's like a monster and then you won't like it. And then teachers try to restrain me, like at home when I am angry, I would get my mum to squeeze my hands.* (Mani, Oakland school, UK)

The impact that Mani's social and emotional needs had in his school life was confirmed by his teachers. As the SENCO put it: *'He presents emotionally as a two or three-year-old child. Doing what he wants, how he wants, tantrums if he doesn't get it. With Mani it's been how we deal with a two or three-year-old'.* It appears here that the more challenging behaviour Mani was exhibiting, the lower the behavioural expectations from his teachers. The extract above reveals how the students' challenging behaviour, coming as a result of their SEN/D, affected the way people chose to respond to them. Similarly, Liam's disability was an important trait which formed immediate expectations and reactions from his environment. As he puts it:

> *Now I am classed as disabled because of that and it's kind of difficult for me just to do stuff on my own and they bring me support because of that (…) The main thing*

> *that I find about myself is that I can get angry very easily (...) and the reason for this is the fact that I have got a case of ADHD and autism (...) Medication calms me down and basically helps me get through the day. There are some side effects, it affects my appetite during the day. I don't eat. I don't want to eat.* (Liam, Mapleland school, UK)

It seems that Liam's 'label' of autism has resulted in a direct reaction from his environment, which is the additional support and the medication he receives, based on his specific needs. Most importantly, in this extract it is interesting how Liam rationalises his need of support and how his knowledge about his 'case' of ADHD and autism raises his awareness about his struggles. This knowledge seemed to be necessary for him in order to adjust and cope better with the demands of secondary school life.

However, data showed that the students' type of SEN/D and their labelling did not always act as a source of information, like in Liam's case. In fact, there were some examples where the students' diagnoses and statements were not taken into serious account, as these appeared to be causing confusion to the school staff. For example, John's teachers did not take into sole account his main official diagnosis for ADHD. They were convinced that John was primarily exhibiting autistic characteristics and have structured his provision accordingly. As the SEN teacher noted, '*...his support has always been tailored towards autism, because of the nature of his needs'.* Another example comes from Zante School, and especially Marios' case. Marios' statement included his referral to a special school, because of his 'general learning difficulties' (School archive, Field notes). However, attending a special school was a decision that both his teachers in the inclusion class were opposed to:

> He seems like a kid with limited abilities, he has definitely got issues and I think that he used to attend a special school or he was referred to one, I am not sure. But I think it would be a mistake to go to a special school (SENCO, Zante School, Greece)

> Marios in a special school? No, no, he would be left very much behind. Marios needs boundaries, he has got more capabilities (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece)

The extracts above show that the labels of SEN/D that were included in the students' official diagnoses and statements did not always direct the way their teachers chose to respond to their needs. Rather than following the official guidelines about how to respond to specific types of SEN/D, they trusted their professional judgment in making decisions about the additional support of their students.

Age was another person characteristic which was found to affect the way students perceived their school experiences. It was common among most students to feel challenged with the complexity of the secondary school, during their transition from primary school. However,

these transition experiences seem to become 'smoother' as the students were getting older and were gaining more familiarised with their new environment (this theme interacts with the 'Past experiences' theme, see the analysis of the 'Time' component). This was more evident in the case of Iakovos, who was considerably older than his classmates, as he had repeated the B' class of Gymnasio twice (see his story in Appendix XVIII). His age was inevitably influencing the way he was viewed by his classmates and was determining his current role, not only in the class, but also the school. In his story, he notes: *'if I see anything, that a kid is hitting another one, seriously of course, I will be the first to stop him and others will follow for sure'.* This extract is indicative of how Iakovos benefits from and embraces the profile of the older and 'mature' student. The SEN teacher confirms this:

> I think that his confidence has boosted in that way, that I am older and that I can do this and I can coordinate. He is trying to coordinate the team, to take up roles, he wants to be visible, he is positive, he doesn't feel that he is exposed in a way (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece)

His age and maturity permit him to act as a 'leader', by showing the correct route that his younger classmates are willing to follow. Here, it seems that Iakovos' diagnosis of ADHD did not affect in any negative way his social status.

A different case was Debbie, who was inevitably placing greater emphasis on her differences with her conventionally healthy peers in the school, as a result of her increasing age. Getting older allowed Debbie to develop a more sophisticated understanding of her disability and to realise the limitations that this was bringing in her life. As her SEN teacher put it:

> She is not very happy in her own skin at the moment (...) it's got worse recently, with children in wheelchairs we find that they get to a point when they are teenagers, I think they realise the implications of what life is going be and we see the emotional rollercoaster that they go through as teenagers. (SEN teacher, Mapleland School, UK)

Debbie's disability in connection to the sensitive period of adolescence that she was going through, was increasing her vulnerability; her age was adversely affecting her mental health, as it enhanced her understanding of how her disability was hindering her daily functioning and the extent to which it would affect her future life.

Ethnicity was a demand characteristic which was evident only in Anna's case and was found to affect her expectations from other people in the school. Anna was the only participant in this study who had a non-native background in the Greek context. Commenting on her Russian origins, she compared herself with other foreign students in the school. In her story, she mentions:

> *The truth is that I come from Russia, yes, да [dah]! My mother came in Greece before I was born, sometime around 1993 I think. I was born here, my brother was born in Russia. (...) Really, I don't know why people are not asking about me...they know, they know very well that I am Russian, I was telling them that.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

Anna appears to seek for the attention that her foreign background could offer, as this is common with other foreign students in the school. However, her expectations seem to conflict with reality, and this seems to cause her complaints and frustration.

6.2.2. Resource

The 'Resource' element of the model includes the students' characteristics that influence their capacity to engage effectively in proximal processes. In this study, 'Resource' was found to include students' mental and emotional resources, and more specifically, their abilities and skills, as well as their learning style.

Abilities and Skills: Another topic which emerged as common among all of the student stories was related to their specific abilities and skills. 'Abilities and skills' found to be a significant resource characteristic which affected the quality of their classroom experiences and their learning progress. For example, Marios from Zante School highlighted his special talent in football *('I've been there (i.e. in 'Olympiakos' football team) many years. It's been 2 years that I have been playing')*. Similarly, Liam and John have commented in their narratives about their computer skills with a sense of proudness. John in particular was very articulate when he was talking about his construction skills:

> *...it seems to be what I am good at, just generally putting bits of woods together, making a table, desktop or something like that, little coffee tables, or put stuff together. I started out just putting IKEA stuff together. I can make them, I just read from the booklet once and then I'll start from number one, and I am very organised when I do it.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

Likewise, Anna's talent in drawing seemed to receive special attention in Ikarion School (Greece). Her artwork was exhibited in the inclusion class and was admired by her teachers and other students. In her story, Anna talked very confidently about her drawing skills and was fully aware of the steps she had to take to develop her talent further. The arts teacher from the inclusion class also commented on her skills in an enthusiastic manner: *'She has a huge talent in drawing, she is doing amazing things. The kids would come and say 'miss, this is certainly Anna's'...they keep saying that. She has a great hand'.* It appears here that Anna's skill was acting as a 'bridge' between her and the teachers, as well as other students, who respected and admired her work. Her drawing skills were promoting her social status in the art lessons, which, in turn, played a positive role in her self-confidence. Interestingly,

when it comes to her art skills, Anna's type of SEN/D is forgotten and does not seem to affect negatively the way she is viewed by her teachers and her classmates. It has to be noted here that inferences about students' interpersonal /social skills are included in the analysis of 'Process' (see Section 6.3).

Learning style: Finally, it emerged that some of the students' personal learning styles were an important resource characteristic which impacts on the quality of their classroom experiences and their learning progress. Students' learning styles included different preferences in respect to working independently, working in groups and seeking the support of peers and adults in the classroom. For some students, their learning style was found to be a form of social resource which influenced their interactions with the contexts and in turn their educational development. Some students reported that they enjoyed the benefits of working in groups (Iakovos: *'It's nicer to work in groups' /* Rahman: *[I prefer working] in groups, in case I need help')* and viewed their classmates as sources of help and support. In contrast, working with peers was not John's and Liam's favourite activity, with John noting that *'I am not very good at group work, I am more like an independent person'* and Liam saying that: *'I am not really good in working in groups, unless I know them'*.

6.2.3. Force

Force characteristics include students' particular personal traits that affect their proximal processes. These are further categorised as developmentally generative characteristics and developmentally disruptive characteristics. Key force characteristics revealed by the interviewees were their temperament, motivation and anxiety.

Temperament: The temperament of some students appeared in almost all of their stories as an internal factor which had a direct impact on their proximal processes. These students reported frequent experiences of being *'angry'* (Liam and Mani) *'mad'* (Ben) *'annoyed'* (Anna) when they got upset, something that affected their ability to keep harmonious relationships within the school context or, in some cases, to follow the regular school life. Overall, anger and frustration in reaction to relatively minor stressors were recurring themes especially in Anna's, Ben's, Liam's and Mani's story. Anna, for example, would get upset and would be particularly resistant to attend the inclusion classes, after last minute changes in the school schedule. Similarly, Liam would leave the mainstream class when he was feeling anxious. In his story, Ben explains why he gets 'mad' frequently throughout the school day:

[I get angry] because they [people] won't listen to what I am saying (...) I shut my mouth, because I get mad. I don't talk to anybody, whoever talks to me.' (see Appendix XXI)

This extract shows that Ben's 'mad' behaviour could be a manifestation of his frustration because his voice is not heard adequately at school. Reflecting critically upon the study's student voice framework revealed this possible lack of agency and highlighted the different interpretations of Ben's anger that were provided by his teachers. For example, his SEN teacher explained his disruptive behaviour as following: *'the issue is that when Ben is annoyed and doesn't like something, for example, I had here some charcoal and he would take it and break it'.*

Finally, Mani's anger was a key characteristic that he and his teachers commented upon extensively. Mani describes his emotional outbursts in his story: *'Sometimes I take it out on my little brother, sometimes I take it out on my classmates, even sometimes I take it out on my little sister, or my mum. It depends who is there.'* This extract from Mani's story reveals the impact that his anger had in his interpersonal relations and interactions with his environment.

Motivation: Another important force characteristic that emerged in almost all narratives was related to students' levels of motivation. Motivation appeared in the student stories both as a generative characteristic and as a disruptive characteristic. Students variously reported being extrinsically motivated by job prospects, exams and so forth, and being intrinsically motivated by an interest in a particular subject or enjoyment of doing it.

More specifically, the lack of motivation which was evident in some students (i.e. Debbie, Mani, Ben) could be regarded as a disruptive characteristic which affected negatively their engagement and participation in the classroom. For example, Debbie's lack of motivation served as a disruptive characteristic, as it was reinforcing the established views about her disability and affected the way people in their environment were responding to her. From a teacher's perspective, her condition presented a profound challenge and she was considered *'among the most difficult cases in her class'* (SENCO). Debbie had a lack of interest in the classes and motivation to work, and she rarely participated in school activities. She would frequently resist to the learning support she received, which made her teachers even more attentive to her. In her narrative, she mentions:

> *I have better things to do than just sit and do homework (...) Sometimes I just don't want to do any work and I don't feel like it and the teachers will come and start talking and they won't stop.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

Her story also revealed that her severe condition was not allowing her to make concrete plans for the future *('[Future plans…] I don't know yet (…) I don't know'*). It seems that Debbie's lack of motivation had a direct impact not only on her learning, but also on her relationships with teachers.

On the contrary, clear goals and future plans proved to be a generative characteristic for some students. Intrinsic motivation, coming from personal skills and preferences seemed to encourage students' engagement and progress in particular subjects. For example, Anna, John, Iakovos and Liam reported very concrete future aspirations and appeared to have a clear idea of how they want to proceed in their education. To quote Anna: '*This is the third and the last year of the Gymnasio. After this I am going to lyceum. (…) I will go to an arts lyceum which will open soon, I think in two years' time'.* Here, it seems that Anna's level of self-awareness and understanding of her individual strengths directed her future plans. Her motivation to gain expertise and to cultivate her talent in arts was a force characteristic that seemed to be unaffected by her disability.

Iakovos was greatly inspired by his brother and has set the goal of becoming a car-engineer. Although he was a struggling learner, he seemed to be particularly motivated in the physics lesson, because he knew that this was a core subject which would permit him to follow this professional route. He explains this in the following extract:

> *In the beginning I didn't like any subject. Then I was engaged with physics, I liked it a lot. (…) Mr Karallas is doing physics, his lesson is very good and enjoyable. (…) [My favourite subject is] Physics. Basically, it has stuck in my mind because I want to be a car engineer, like my brother. I asked him about the basic subjects, and he told me that physics, maths and I think a bit of chemistry is needed too.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

The SEN physics teacher confirmed Iakovos' increased motivation levels in physics:

> Iakovos has had huge progress in my class. He gets lost sometimes and I need to remind him but he has improved a lot. He is another kid in the class, in his interest, but he gets distracted very often. I see that from the beginning of the year he is another kid (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece).

This example is indicative of the way students' engagement in certain subjects is directed by their aspirations and goals for their future. Here again (as in Anna's case) it seems that Iakovos' diagnosis for AHDH does not act as a barrier in his goal setting; despite his frequent distractions, in this extract he comes across as a mature and focused student who has made a conscious choice to follow the route of his sibling; he has developed a clear plan for his future and is fully aware of the steps required to accomplish this plan.

A similar case was John, who was very articulate and concrete about his future path. In his account, he mentions:

> *I want to do an apprenticeship, that's what I want to go down, to earn and learn at the same time…Carpentry and joining… I think I have decided probably to go for that kind of course. Because it seems to be what I am good at. I want to do something I am good at, rather than do something than I am not good at really, it makes more sense.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

As in the previous cases, it is worth noting the high level of self-awareness that John shows in this extract. Overall, the student data presented above showed that the students' SEN/D were not acting as a barrier to their self-awareness, motivation, goal setting and the development of their future plans. This finding proves that student voice can bring into light unique student preferences, tendencies and other important personal variables.

Anxiety: Student anxiety was another 'force' element, which acted as a disruptive characteristic, since it affected negatively students' experiences in school. Specific fears in particular subjects as well as personal struggles stemming from the school reality provoked increased stress. Some students in this study were found to have awareness of their social, behavioural and adaptive challenges, which were associated with their type of SEN/D. For example, in Liam's case, problems with the computer in the ICT class regularly acted as a source of anxiety and increased his tendency to withdraw from classroom activities. As he puts it:

> *I do like ICT, but it can be stressful, it's very challenging although I love computers (…) in ICT (…) in general I am confused and it's just not working [the PC] even though it should. If you follow these steps exactly it's still doing that and then it's not working, then you get anxious and I don't know what I am doing wrong, you know what I mean?* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

In addition, regarding the history subject, his fear of death has resulted in specific measures for him, allowing him to be exempted from the particular lesson. As he notes: *'What I find stressful is history. It's mostly too involved in death and I have an issue about that'.* These comments are indicative of Liam's difficulties in coping with his frequent stressors which, up to an extent, can be attributed to his diagnosis of autism.

Another symptom of student anxiety that has emerged was some students' sensitivity in classroom noise. Specifically, the most introverted students in this study were found to be greatly affected by classroom noise, which, in turn, led to increased stress. For example, Yiorgos' and Rahman's narratives (see Appendix XX and Appendix XVII, respectively)

revealed their reduced tolerance to 'noisy students' and their inability to engage in a classroom where the levels of noise are increased. Rahman notes specifically:

> *Other people are so many naughty, they mess about, I don't like that (...) Sometimes people don't listen, sometimes people talk over the teacher, that's very rude. Teachers are disappointed by other people and [I get] a little bit worried, a bit anxious (...) Sometimes lessons if it is too noisy, once or twice I go to different rooms. I go to the SEN Department.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

Likewise, Yiorgos commented:

> *...when you have a lot of teachers and kids there is noise and you cannot have a lesson [i.e. in the inclusion class] (...) we have got a kid that the head has sent to us who is very noisy and we cannot have a proper lesson (...) I agree when they (i.e. teachers) shout sometimes, because we don't listen sometimes in the class, we mess about and they cannot teach the lesson. (...) The lesson needs to be done with calmness.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

It comes as no surprise that these two students have the same reactions towards noisy classrooms, as they could both be characterised as quiet and introverted kids. Perhaps these characteristics were not irrelevant to their type of SEN/D: Yiorgos had social-emotional deficits and Rahman had social communication difficulties; therefore, it could be argued that their tendency to develop symptoms of anxiety triggered by school noise was associated with their specific type of SEN/D.

6.3. Process

As explained in Chapter Four, proximal processes are situated at the core of the bioecological theory and constitute primarily the 'engines of development' (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 200). Bronfenbrenner categorises interactions in the proximal processes into two types: relationship (interpersonal interactions) and tasks (interactions with objects and symbols). By engaging with such tasks and people, students 'come to make sense of their world and understand their place in it' (Tudge et al. 2009, p. 200).

Applied to this study, 'Process' refers to the dynamic interactions between students and key people in the school, as well as their interactions with non-living elements (objects/materials) within their school. Since the main themes were directly related to the specific school, the themes are presented primarily by school, using extracts from individual students to illuminate their meaning. In the discussion which follows, some differences and similarities between the national contexts are also highlighted. The themes are given schematically in the Figure 6.2 below.

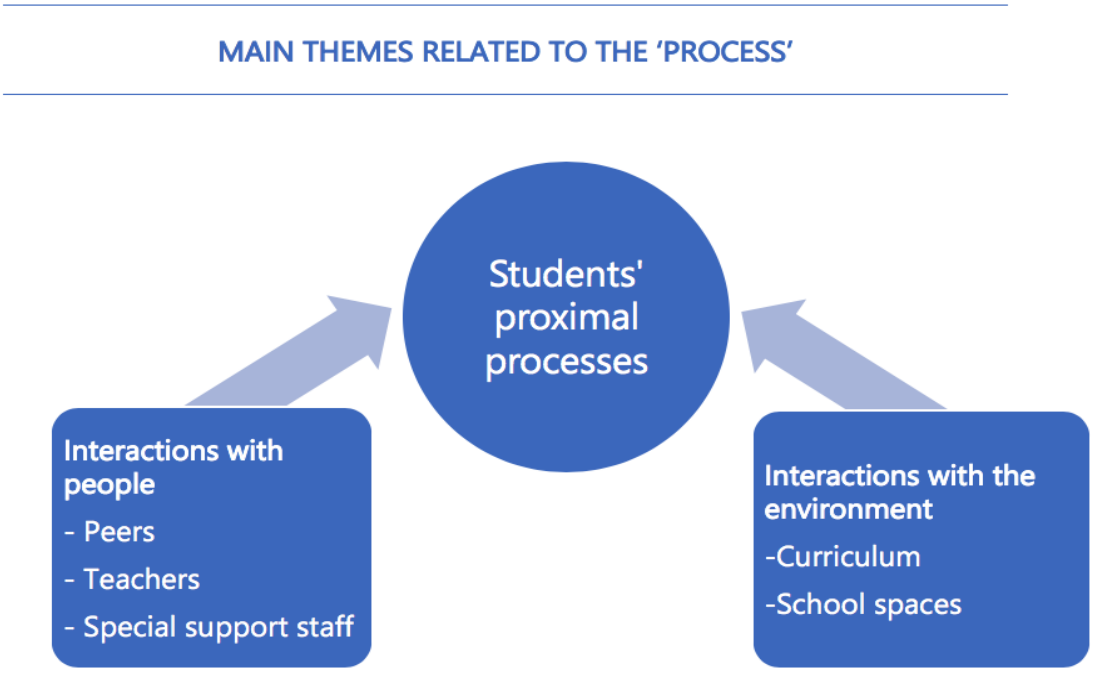

Figure 6.2 Main themes related to 'Process'

As shown above, the main interpersonal interactions of the students were found to be with their peers, their mainstream teachers and the special support staff. Regarding the second type i.e. the student interactions with the environment (objects and symbols), two basic themes emerged: 'curriculum' and 'school spaces'.

6.3.1. Interactions with peers

For most students, social interchange and communication with peers was a factor which affected considerably the quality of their overall experiences in school. Peer relationships were found to be particularly important in Zante School (Greece), as relevant references were made by all participating students (Iakovos, Marios and Stathis). In the UK, friendships with peers were also important, especially for Mani (Oakland) and Debbie (Mapleland). For example, Mani mentioned in in his story:

> *Sometimes I feel happy because I have all of my friends, but sometimes when none of my friends are there, I just feel lonely and sad… because I can't find them, or general are sick or off.* (Mani, Oakland School, UK)

The SENCO's comments enlighten this issue further: *'If he would fall out with his friends and it's a big deal, he can't manage emotions, he will come down here and he will be really upset or really angry'.* These extracts testify Mani's perceived importance of peer relationships and the extent to which these affect his well-being in school. Similarly, for Debbie, friends were the main reason for choosing that particular secondary school setting, despite the fact that her bigger sister was attending another school. As she noted:

> *She [i.e. my sister] went to another school, she wanted a girls' school and I wanted to be with my friends. (...) I don't know, just like knowing my friends are here [made it easier].* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

However, it is worth noting here that Debbie's friendships have been formed mainly within the SEN department, where she spent her breaks, and not the mainstream classroom. As she notes: '*I like spending time with my friends (...) we just talk and we play games with my phone'.* In another part of her story, Debbie commented on her relationship with her classmates from the mainstream classroom. She perceived her relationships with her non-disabled peers as neutral, and sometimes positive, when they are willing to help her with coursework. As she notes: '*Pupils are nice...not all of them, some of them. They are like helpful and stuff (...) Sometimes I just ask them for the answers'.* It can be inferred that Debbie's relationships differentiated between her disabled and non-disabled peers. She was showing a clear interest and preference to spend her time in school with her peers with disabilities, valuing specifically her friendship with another student who was also a wheelchair user (Debbie's observation, 4/12/2015, Field notes). This indicates a clear tendency to form connections with students who shared similar characteristics with her and with whom she could identify.

Some other participants reported rather negative experiences with their mainstream peers (i.e. in the case of Yiorgos, Jo, Anna, Liam), regardless of the national context. For example, Yiorgos has shared in his story experiences of rejection from other students in the school: *'Sometimes they (i.e. peers) would say to me to go away and then I understand that they might not want me...some kids'.* This behaviour on behalf of his peers seemed to affect Yiorgos' life in school to a great extent. Yiorgos was found to spend the breaks on his own and did not seem to experience any kind of closeness with his peers in the mainstream classes (Yiorgos' observation, 8/12/2016, Field notes). His interactions with his classmates were restricted to the ICT lesson, when a few students would support him after the teachers' encouragement: '*They (i.e. peers) always help in computing, not so much in other lessons... if you ask the teacher and she is busy, a child comes'.* The following extract from Yiorgos' story sheds more light on this issue:

> *I don't have many [friends], because the ones I had in primary, some of them are here, but some have gone to other schools. It is not possible to be with all children from primary (...) I hang out with one, Spyros, I sit next to him in the class.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

Here, Yiorgos seems to value primarily his peer relationships which started at primary school. It is interesting that the peer he mentions, Spyros, had also learning difficulties and was also

registered in the inclusion class. Here, like in Debbie's case, it is obvious how the students' person characteristics affected their proximal processes: specifically, their type of SEN/D was the determining factor which made them feel closer with peers with shared interests and similar abilities to themselves, than other peers of the same chronological age.

In some cases, some contradictory views regarding the quality of their social interactions were evident between the focal students, their peers and their teachers. For example, Stathis (see his story in Appendix XIX), although he was found to spend his time in school consistently with a group of three boys from his mainstream classroom, he was '*not generally accepted by his peers'* and was characterised by his teachers as being '*peculiar*' and *'socially awkward'* (SENCO). This was also confirmed by the SEN teacher, who noted that:

> He is not accepted by his classmates as far as I can see, and in the inclusion class he is in a group of four and he is…I don't know if they inform him and he is not coming, but I see that the kids don't really want him to come in the inclusion class. (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece)

Stathis' social and emotional needs were found to have a great impact on his social status within the school. The more important finding in Stathis' case was the obvious conflict that was depicted between the way he and his classmates viewed their mutual relationships. The following extract from Stathis' story explains this:

> *My friends…my classmates are the ones who are with me in the school, it is good to sit with them. The best thing about them is that they give me their notes, they let me sit with them.* (Stathis, Zante School, Greece)

In this extract it is particularly interesting how Stathis conceptualises the meaning of 'friendship'; he considers all of his classmates as friends, just because they are willing to help him in course work. Throughout his narrative, Stathis uses warmth to talk particularly about one of his peers: '*I ask for help from my friend, Johnny. He is my best friend…and Antonis, these are my true friends. He gives me his notebook and I write the homework'.* The closeness and affection towards him become apparent even by the use of the diminutive of John i.e. 'Johnny'. Nevertheless, John was not found to share the same feelings about Stathis and their relationship. The following extract, coming from Stathis' observations, testifies this:

> During the break, Stathis hugs John really tight and John seems annoyed. Stathis stays attached to him and does not let go. John gets upset and starts pushing Stathis away fiercely, until he manages to 'escape' from him (Stathis' observation, 27/01/2017, Field notes).

It should be noted that 'Johnny' seemed as a mature and conscientious child who was providing important support for Stathis, mostly in the form of practical help. Although he seemed to be tolerant with him, the instance above might reveal possible feelings of pressure by the 'obsession' that Stathis had with him. This incident illuminates Stathis' *'antisocial sociability'* (Arts teacher, Field notes) and is indicative of the quality of his interactions with his peers, which were mostly one-sided.

Another student who was experiencing a 'one-sided' friendship, although in a different way was Anna, from Ikarion School. Generally, Anna's social interactions with her peers were few, and in her narrative, she revealed some negative experiences with her classmates. For example:

> *There are half of the people that are my friends, and they understand me and they are friendly to me. And there is the other half, eighty per cent from boys who are not friendly to me, they are making fun of me, they don't treat me right.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

Anna's most important relationship was with Klara, a student with intellectual disability, with whom she was attending inclusion classes. Anna commented positively on her friendship with Klara, which started early when they came into secondary school (*'I was hanging out with Klara at first'*). According to Anna's teachers, Klara was emotionally immature and seemed to be 'attached' to Anna. This fact frequently made Klara annoyed, as she was now experiencing a 'forced' friendship with Klara. Here, Anna's personal characteristics, and especially her level of functioning, along with her level of maturity as a result of age seem to have affected her relationship with her closest friend in school.

Overall, several instances found within the student stories indicated that the students' type of SEN/D was affecting in many different ways their social experiences with their peers in school. Looking at these in more depth, it could be argued that the stronger influence of students' type of SEN/D (as a 'person' characteristic) was evident mainly in the presence of dysfunctional proximal processes.

However, the students' negative, limited or lack of interaction with their peers did not appear to have always a consequent negative impact on the quality of their overall school experiences. This was evident in Liam's, story, where he discussed about how his 'adult' behaviour had implications for his social interactions with his classmates. As he notes:

> *I don't really speak to so many people (...) I am a sensible person because I... the friends who I have are most of them adults. I act like an adult, I am responsible like an*

> *adult, even though I am 13 years old. That's why it's very difficult to me to make friends.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Liam recognises here that his 'adult' behaviour has resulted in his limited ability to bond with students in his age. However, it appears that his difficulty in making friends from the same age does not necessarily have a negative impact on his school experiences. On the contrary, Liam chooses to paint a portrait of himself as the 'mature' and 'sensible' student, which might also entail a nuance of his sense of 'superiority' in relation to his classmates, who do not have the privilege to interact with the adults within the school the way he does.

A similar case was John from Oakland school, as his 'adult' behaviour was viewed as *'an eccentricity, a quirkiness'* (SENCO) which affected his relationship with his peers. John spent most of his time in school on his own, a fact upon which he commented on as following:

> *I am usually by myself… I wouldn't go as far as saying they [his peers] are all friends, because I don't know them enough, even though I am with them for five years…just because I don't speak to them, I have that independence thing.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

John, like Liam, justifies his limited interactions with his peers as a result of his character, which is quite independent. This was also echoed in his teachers' perceptions:

> He doesn't care (…) I think he is quite happy with his own company (…) and he gets on better with adults than children because obviously we accommodate his… his differences. And he is… in conversations he is quite… adult, you know very articulate (SEN teacher, Oakland School, UK).

The TA added to this:

> We have tried many interventions for him to get more socialised in the past…but why we should pressure him? He just doesn't want to interact, and our job is to make his life as happy as possible in the school (TA, Oakland School, UK)

At a superficial glance, John's lack of interactions with peers could be attributed to his ADHD and autistic traits, which is a main demand characteristic (i.e. type of SEN/D). However, reflecting more critically on this issue and taking into account the views above, John's social world is illuminated in a way which goes beyond the 'label' of ADHD and autism. This way considers the possibility that his limited social interactions might be his deliberate choice and could be interpreted differently (for example, as an effect of family upbringing).

John and Liam were not seeking the closeness and support from other peers in their school, and most importantly, they both appeared unaffected from this lack of bonding. Both students did not place great importance to connecting with people at their age, as they did with adults. These subjective perceptions prevented them from experiencing loneliness and

as such, safeguarded their well-being. John's and Liam's examples showed that it was their independent character which served as the main engine of their development, rather the quality of their peer interactions. It should be noted that this finding could not have been illuminated without reflecting critically upon the student views on this matter.

6.3.2. Interactions with teachers

Generally, it emerged that the interactions between the students and their teachers in the mainstream classrooms were rather limited, particularly in comparison with the frequency and quality of the students' interactions with the specialist staff. This was evident in all schools, but mostly in Ikarion School (Greece) and Mapleland School (UK). This can be understood better by taking into account that the specialist provision structures in these two schools were perceived as 'safer' places compared to mainstream classes, where students were experiencing positive feelings of acceptance by the special support staff. A more detailed discussion of this matter is provided in the 'Context' analysis, under the theme 'Supporting structures and practices' (see Section 6.4.1).

Some participants seemed to hold general positive views of their mainstream teachers. They tended to appreciate more the teachers who were not shouting, and who were 'nice', 'kind' and 'willing to help' them. Rahman from Mapleland school was the participant from the UK who talked more positively about his teachers: *'every teacher is very good (...) I like every teacher. One thing I don't like is...I don't like teacher waste...it's not teachers' fault, it's pupils' fault, unfortunately, when they kind of shout, I don't like teachers shouting'*. It is worth noting here that Rahman was attending all mainstream classes with TA support and did not have individual sessions in the SEN department on a regular basis.

When students had some kind of close relationship with their mainstream teachers, this seemed to be particularly beneficial for their school experience and their educational growth. An example comes from Iakovos who, despite the general tensions he was experiencing with his teachers, highlighted his special connection with two mainstream teachers who have played an important role in his school life:

> *...the music teacher, he treats me very well, he is trying to help me (...) He doesn't just help me, he is very nice, he is willing to help every child and... that's all. I would put very close to me miss Helen (language teacher) (...) She used to help me pass the exams and she was on my side so that I can pass the grade...and she has tolerated me many times, after all these things I have done to her.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

John from Oakland school (UK) also shared his positive feelings about his teachers and commented particularly on the issue of teacher fairness: *'The teachers are always fair in what*

they say. They apply discipline when they need to, and not when it's not necessary. I am thinking ''she must be telling me off for a reason'. In this case, reflecting upon the student voice critical framework has revealed implicit power dynamics between John and his teachers: even when John was not clear about the reason that he is being reprimanded, he would not think to question their professional judgement and their discipline tactics. In the previous section (see Section 6.3.1: 'Interactions with peers'), it was shown that John valued his relationship with the adults in the school. John's standpoint on this matter might derive from his personality characteristics and his inherent respect for the seniors, but it might also reflect existing perceptions about the role of teachers, shaped by the classroom or the whole school community.

Despite the general positive comments about the mainstream teachers, the negative relationships and the tensions that the students were experiencing with some of them appeared to have a greater impact on their school experiences. Negative views about teachers were identified in many student stories, regardless of the national context. For instance, Mani from Oakland school (UK) was very critical about his teachers and questioned their discipline tactics:

> *Sometimes I have problems with the teachers, only sometimes (...) some of them are mean, like you'll have a note, and you are told to be in detention. (...) I don't like the teachers, they just annoy me and when I get angry at them they get me in trouble...detention.* (Mani, Oakland School, UK)

When Mani shared his feelings about his teachers, he also admitted that these were sometimes dependent on his mood. As he noted: *'it depends on how I am feeling...I get along with teachers, not all them, some of them annoy me and I want to punch them, but I don't punch them because I know not to'.* Here, it is obvious how Mani's temperament, as an important 'person' characteristic, interacts with his proximal processes with his teachers in the mainstream classes.

The same applied for Debbie, from Mapleland School. Debbie's comments reveal a lack of interaction with her mainstream teachers and her rather negative feelings about them, with a few exceptions. As she noted:

> *Music teacher is alright, PE teacher is alright, drama teacher is alright. All the ones I didn't say [are not alright] (...) I don't' think that the teachers are so fair, I don't really tell teachers my ideas (...) I never listen to them anyway.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

Similar negative views about teachers were also expressed by students in Greece (i.e. Marios, Iakovos). A notable example of problematic proximal processes with teachers comes from Zante School and specifically Iakovos, who commented the following:

> *I feel welcome from my friends but not so much from the teachers (...) this has changed...when I repeated the same year. Things between myself and the teachers have changed a bit. I mean I felt a bit uncomfortable, it was like they were telling me off in the class*. (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

The SENCO, who used to have lessons with him in the mainstream classes in the past, and at that time she had one to one sessions with him in the inclusion class, confirmed the issues that Iakovos was experiencing with his mainstream teachers:

> In the mainstream he is very noisy, he would stand up all the time, he has got ADHD, he wouldn't sit down. He would be told off all the time, by other teachers too, not just me. Many times he would ask to go to the inclusion class and I would let him go, and I feel bad about it now, because I wanted him out, he would ruin my lesson. He is a totally different kid in the inclusion class; the other day he told me that I want to do history because I don't understand this. He is another kid, he needs to have someone next to him, individualised lesson. This is lost in the mainstream, I don't know, maybe he gets carried away by other kids? It's what has happened with me last year; you can't approach him individually so he gets bored, he cannot do anything in mainstream. (SENCO, Zante School, Greece)

According to the SENCO, Iakovos' tensions with his teachers could be attributed to his type of SEN/D or to the peers' influence in mainstream classes. What is more interesting in this extract is the different profile that Iakovos has when he is having lessons with the SENCO in the inclusion class. This indicates that Iakovos' relations with his teachers were affecting considerably his learning behaviour; and perhaps these relations were dependent on the teachers' knowledge and understanding of his struggles and particular needs.

6.3.3. Interactions with special support staff

Some divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged regarding the interactions of the students with the special support staff, which were related mostly to the level of dependence that the students had with them. For instance, in Mapleland School, students held generally positive views about the support they received from the specialist staff. Rahman was found to value the TA's help in the mainstream classes the most; but at the same time, he seemed to be particularly dependent of this support. In his story he mentioned:

> *Sometimes if I have no support, I have to ask the normal teacher (...) Sometimes there is not a support worker in here and I need help. If the teacher are helping all the people and no support worker in my class I have to wait. I very very like once the support worker sits next to me.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

It is obvious here that Rahman seeks constantly the help of the TA, and prefers this kind of in-class support rather than waiting for the help of the 'normal' teacher. Such a mindset was reflective of the character traits that his teachers ascribed to him. According to them, Rahman was lacking confidence and was constantly seeking the help of other teachers. As the SEN teacher noted: *'Rahman needs somebody to build confidence with him, he is not confident, he is quite a nervous child, so he needs somebody sat by him, supporting him in everything he does'.*

Similarly, positive relationships, but also dependence on the special support staff were found to exist on Liam's case. Liam highlighted in his story the special bond he was experiencing with certain people within the SEN Department:

> *She does help a lot (the TA), a lot of support help a lot. People say that I don't need it, but I do. It has basically convinced me to do better (...) There is one woman who understands me a lot and there is another woman who also understands me, the person who does one-to-one with me, my key-worker... and my second key-worker.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Debbie was also dependent academically on the TA support for her attendance to the mainstream classes. As she noted: '*The TAs are kind and nice (...) TAs help me a lot, like sometimes they get me the answers'*. Enlightening information on this issue comes from Debbie's observations during the 'Design and Technology' lesson:

> A classmate passes through Debbie's table and asks: 'Is Miss (i.e. referring to the TA) doing well, Debbie?' Debbie does not respond. It is interesting that the boy didn't ask Debbie how *she* is doing, or *they* are doing, but how the TA is doing. His question possibly indicates that it is perceived as common practice that the TA is doing all the work instead of her (Debbie's observation, 4/12/2015, Field notes).

Nevertheless, this level of attachment to special support staff was not so evident in the other UK school, Oakland. The following extract shows that John, although he valued the TAs help, he did not seem attached to this help, at least academically:

> *I guess the best thing is having an extra teacher in the classroom, extra teachers are always good... it's fine as it is, the way they set it out. And when I don't have a TA it's good, because I kind of get on with it (...) So not having a TA in subjects that I am stronger it's always better, the TA is helping other people. Again, it's not all about me, it's about other students as well.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

Here, John's relationship with the TA seemed to be smooth and balanced. The TA noted that John was depending on her mostly in managing behaviour issues. As she noted: *'He needs the adult's reassurance to relax. If I say to him ''leave them, they are being childish'', for example, he calms down'* (TA, Oakland School).

For Mani, the TA's constant presence in the lessons was not always welcome. In his story, he mentions: '*the TA annoys me (...) she keeps annoying me, I am tired and she says 'get up!' and it is just annoying. She is like my mum, but I don't want her to be my mum'*. Mani's negative feelings about the TA could be attributed to the pressure she was putting on him in order to participate and engage more in the classroom. The TA mentioned: *'I don't mess about, I don't joke'*, something that clearly had an impact on their relationship dynamics.

In Greek schools, students' relationships with the specialist support staff were formed in the 'inclusion classes'. On a general note, students in Ikarion School seemed to be closer to the 'inclusion' teachers, rather the mainstream teachers. For instance, Anna noted for her 'inclusion' teachers: '*They always help me, they are very good teachers'.* Parallel support in classes, equivalent to the TA support in the UK schools, was found only in Ben's case, from Ikarion School. Ben was receiving parallel support on a permanent basis during his whole school life. This was provided by a support worker from a private special education centre, who was paid privately by Ben's parents. When Ben was asked about his relationship with the support worker, his comments were the following:

> *[In primary school] I had Gianna (the TA) with me. I don't remember...two or three years...not all years. No, basically all of the years (...) [Gianna is] Ok... (lowers voice) ...ok (silence).* (Ben, Ikarion School, Greece)

In this extract, it is interesting to note Ben's brief and rather neutral comment about the TA ('Ok...ok'), followed by a long silence. His silence prompted a lot of reflection facilitated by the study's student voice critical framework. An attempt to interpret this silence is provided in the following extract from the research diary:

> Ben's silence can be interpreted as a deliberate choice and a constitutive feature of his voice. Taking into account the nuances of his tone during the interview, as well as the subsequent silence, it was obvious that Ben was avoiding commenting overtly on his relationship with the TA. Perhaps his choice to keep silent indicates his rather negative or at least neutral relationship with his TA (Ben 1st Interview, 22-12-2016, Research diary).

Nevertheless, his other relationships with the specialist support staff in the school were clearer. In fact, he was found to have a special bond with the SENCO, which played an important, if not the most important, role in his life in school. The SENCO had a unique position of trust, care, and influence on Ben, as the following extract reveals: *'The teachers are distant [to me]. The inclusion teachers are a bit closer' (...) [I prefer] individual lessons, with miss Helen (i.e. SENCO), she is good'*. His positive feelings about the SENCO are also obvious in the following extract from her own interview: *'he is tender, he would hug me*

every time, I can even tell you that he has proposed to me officially (laughter) (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece).

Less consistent views regarding the students' relations with the specialist staff were reported in Zante School. For example, Marios was experiencing considerable tensions with his 'inclusion' teachers. Marios attributed his negative relations to the pressure they were putting on him. As he noted:

> *There are some teachers that are…that I don't like. And the inclusion class. Sometimes they take me out of lessons that I don't want to leave, and they put pressure on me. I mean in one lesson I wanted to stay because I didn't have a good grade and I wanted to stay.* (Marios, Zante School, Greece)

Stathis did not make any specific references about his 'inclusion teachers' in his story; the observations showed that his relationships with them were rather neutral (Stathis' observation, 27/01/2017, Field notes). Iakovos was the only participant who had better relationships with the special support staff, and specifically with the SEN physics teacher, and the SENCO. He also seemed to have a caring and trusting relationship with the SENCO, as the following extract reveals:

> The other day I got upset because he told me ''I am not clever miss'' and I asked him 'why do you say that?'. Honestly, I don't think he has an issue with his intelligence, he has an issue with distraction, this is what keeps him (...) What I have seen is that when he is next to me, he has a will to learn. (SENCO, Zante School, Greece)

6.3.4. Curriculum

Curriculum emerged as an important a factor which constituted the students' main interaction with objects and symbols (i.e. tasks). A common theme in students' stories was related to the complexity of certain curricular subjects in the secondary school level. Whilst a minority of students reported being rather satisfied with the school schedule, most of them characterised the lessons in secondary school as being 'hard'. For instance, Rahman noted the following in his story:

> *High school is a bit…hard (…) sometimes homework are very hard and I don't know what to do, I am stuck sometimes (…) If I were a lessons manager, I would change it. First I would put…beginning with the least preferred [i.e. subjects] and at the end of the day the most preferred, to make a very happy ending, end of the day I mean.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

Particular subjects, like mathematics, were commonly reported as causing pressure to students, because of the highly demanding content and examinations. However, 'softer' subjects, like PE and music were preferred by many students (i.e. Ben, Iakovos, Stathis,

Debbie, Jo, Mani). PE in particular was reported as one of the most pleasant and least demanding subjects. It seemed to be a popular lesson possibly because of the freedom and the opportunities for student interaction that it had to offer. As Iakovos noted:

> *During PE is the only time when we can cooperate with other children because in the classroom…how to say, it is as if they [i.e. the classmates] have got another character in the class and in the other lessons and they have got another character during PE. I mean during the class there is not cooperation in the lesson, while outside is ok, it's better.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

One interesting finding was that Debbie, even though she had limited mobility, also reported PE as her preferred subject: *'The least boring is PE. Sometimes we go to the gym and sometimes we do other stuff. I like going to the gym'*. It is striking in this instance how a student in a wheelchair benefitted from physical education the most, in comparison to other lessons. Despite her physical barriers, not only was she willing to attend to a mainstream physical education setting, but she also showed a high level of motivation and her maximum participation during the PE lesson.

It becomes evident that certain curriculum subjects received special attention in the students' stories, because of the personal interest that these had for the students. This finding corresponds with the 'Person' characteristics, and in particular with the students' 'motivation' for specific subjects. For example, Jo's story (See Appendix XV), included a number of discourses about religion and the RE lesson, and during observations, Jo's engagement in the RE lesson was notably higher than in other lessons (Jo's observation, field notes, 12/02/2016). Likewise, John was very articulate when he was commenting on his favourite curriculum subjects. In his story (see Section 5.2.2) he seems capable of identifying the conceptual links between different subjects and to understand the way these are aligned within the curriculum. It seemed that his behaviour in these curriculum areas was somewhat in advance of his behaviour in others. This constitutes evidence that the curriculum structure was a school feature which helped John's progress, and therefore acted as one of the engines of his development.

6.3.5. School spaces

Students' interactions with the school environment, and in particular with the school spaces where the students preferred to spend their time, were found to play an important role in their school experiences. As its name indicates, this theme corresponds with the 'Context' component of the PPCT model. It was included in the 'Process' analysis, as the data related to the school spaces have emerged primarily from the students' guided tours, during which

they commented spontaneously about their interactions with the school environment. In the follow-up discussions, participants commented on various aspects related to the physical environment of the schools which seemed to have an impact on their school experiences.

Specific school spaces were reported as particularly important and contributed to the students' well-being in school. For instance, Liam made special references on Mapleland's 'Inclusion Centre' (located next to the main school building) which he viewed as a calm and friendly place where he would go to relax. As he narrated, this place seemed to serve as a kind of safety valve when he did not like to be in school:

> *The inclusion centre… that's the place where I do the most one to ones and it's a very nice place. You know most times things do happen and I just go there to calm down and so at least someone knows where I am (…) Basically it's kind of a place where go to either do sort of activities or a place to relax.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Students in the UK also commented on the big size of their schools, and the challenges that this was posing to their everyday lives. For example, John from Oakland School noted the following:

> *It's a lot easier in primary school than this place, because primary schools is only one building, whereas this [secondary school] is a group of buildings… more complicated, you have got to walk to classes, you have to memorize where the classrooms are.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

The same views were expressed for Mapleland School, and especially from Rahman: *'To be honest, this is a very big school. I might get lost sometimes but I got used to it. (…)* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK).

In Greece, students focused more on their school's availability of facilities and material resources. For example, students in Zante School reported to be privileged, because of the advanced facilities and spaces that their school had to offer, in comparison to their primary school, or other neighbourhood schools. As Stathis noted:

> *My school…it is big, it has a lot of things that I like (…) I liked the space a lot, that it had a gym, the basketball court… in primary school there was a court but not a gym (…) Kids are coming here from other regions (…) if a kid lives close they have to come here or in St. Peter's school. It's the same, but it is not better than this school. This school has inclusion class but St. Peter's school doesn't have one.* (Stathis, Zante School, Greece)

However, an important disadvantage that came up was related to the layout of the 'inclusion classes', which had an open plan design in both Greek schools. In particular, Iakovos from Zante School commented the following on this issue:

> *What I would change? I would make a separate space so that every student would go without feeling embarrassed, to go to a separate room, a small one, so that it would just be the two of them. For example, English would be in one room, physics in another room etc.* (Marios, Zante School, Greece)

Similarly, Yiorgos from Ikarion School commented the following on this matter:

> *They should have made it better, we shouldn't have curtains there (i.e. in the inclusion class), we should have walls. So that when you enter, you cannot listen what the other kid is doing.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

Looking at this issue through the study's critical framework, I noticed that the student views contradicted with the 'inclusion' teachers' views. In fact, the SENCO from Ikarion School noted that despite its disadvantages, this layout offered opportunities of cooperation and enhanced their collegiality. As she specifically mentioned:

> …there is a clear issue with noise, especially after the third period where everybody is there. But because I am a positive person, I want to stick to the positive. That in the inclusion class I think that we promote cooperation and collegiality (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece)

Such contradictions, illuminated by reflecting on student voice, seem to be particularly important to understand factors that affect student learning and facilitate their development.

Students in both contexts also expressed positive experiences of learning that were extended outside the classrooms. For example, during her guided tour, Jo made a special reference to the boards that existed in the school corridors and explained how these acted as a valuable source of help in particular lessons. As she narrates:

> *[In the school corridors] you can see your own targets and ask other people too. Like in History, we put them on the board and then people can see the results and then we can ask other people for advice in lessons about how to improve…we do it in lessons. Students who have higher grades can explain it in different ways that make it easier…. they can explain it differently. If all [students] had the same abilities, then nobody can really help them… If somebody is better in one bit, he can help others.* (Jo, Oakland School, UK)

Here it seems that Jo, thanks to this practice, has become conscious of the benefits of peer-learning and the opportunities of learning directly from other students. She appreciated the help that this target system had to offer, as it was supportive of learning and was also enhancing peer interactions. Finally, outdoor activities offered opportunities for social interaction, which created a sense of belonging in the school community (see for example, Marios' story: Section 5.4.2).

6.4. Context

The bioecological framework highlights the centrality of mutual, bidirectional interaction between an individual and their context. In this study, the 'Context' analysis includes the mapping of the influence that the immediate contexts (Microsystem and Mesosystem) had on the student experiences across the four schools. It also includes elements of the Exosystem and Macrosystem, which were also found to influence the student experiences. The Figure 6.3 below illustrates the most important themes that have emerged after the analysis of context:

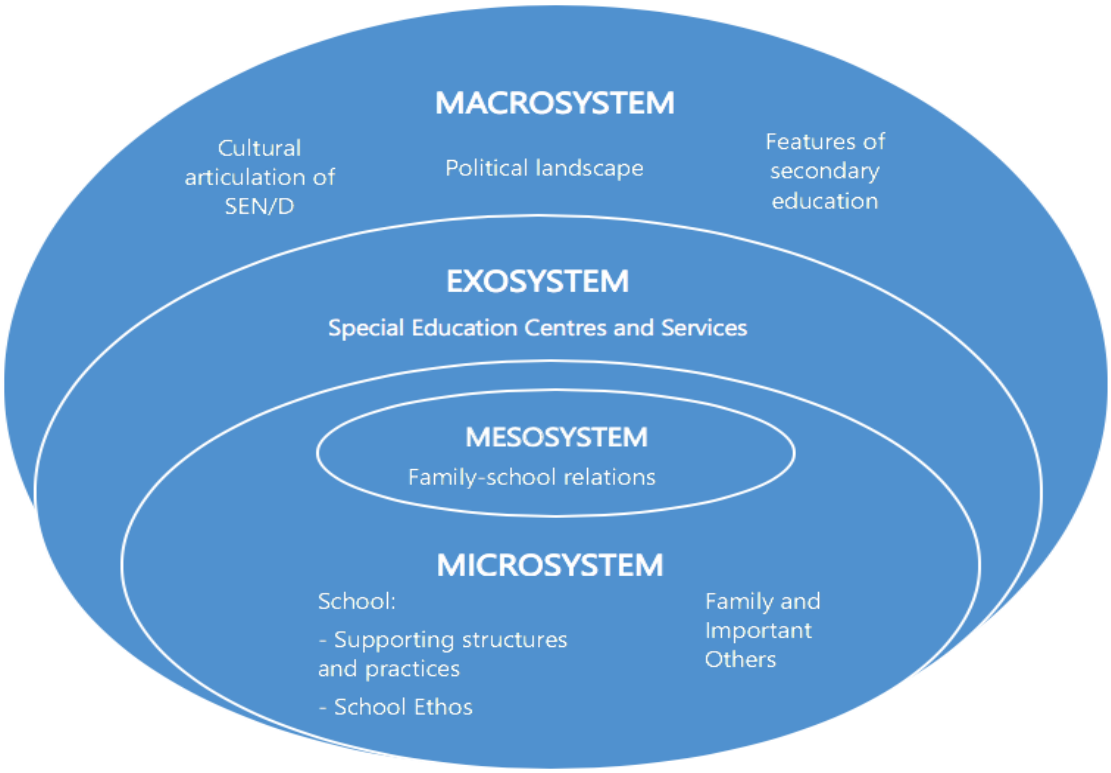

Figure 6.3 Main themes related to the 'Context'

6.4.1. Micro-system

Two main microsystems were found in this study, as immediate environments surrounding the students: 'Family and Important others' and 'School'. The microsystem of the 'School' was represented in this study by two sub-themes: 'Supporting structures and practices' and 'School ethos'.

Family and important others: Almost all students have commented on their family circumstances which affected in different ways their experiences in school. For instance, some students (e.g. Marios, Jo, Iakovos, Stathis) reported that they have chosen to attend

the particular secondary school because of their siblings. In some cases, family members affected the students' experiences in a positive and beneficial way. For example, Debbie's relationship with her siblings and especially her brother was an important factor which made her life happier in primary school.

> *[I have got] two brothers and one sister. (...) They are nice, I've spent my whole life with them, and I like my family. I was with my brother in primary and it was funny, everybody thought we were twins. He hasn't changed, we both are in electric chairs, we are both wearing glasses and I have got a little higher voice than his (laughing), he is 11.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

It is clear that Debbie enjoys her special bond with her brother, which, up to an extent, can be attributed to their common characteristics. There was every indication that she identified more with him, rather her sister. In another part of part of her narrative, it became evident that Debbie expected eagerly her brother to join her school. Although she was generally disengaged from classes and school activities, she agreed to participate in a school 'transition' activity which aimed to welcome new students, because her brother would be one of the 'freshers'. The following extract shows how Debbie's anticipation of her brother increased her motivation to be more actively engaged in the school.

> *We are doing...some pupils in Year 6 they are coming in next year, like my brother is coming next year, and some other kids and... [the purpose is] to show them what the school is like.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

Similarly, the presence of siblings was particularly important for Iakovos and Stathis. For Stathis in particular, the headteacher noted: *'his sister is ok and acts as a positive model to him'.* Finally, in Jo's case, her family supported and encouraged her learning, by offering help in home: '*I prefer to do work at home (...) my parents understand the topics because my sister and my brother did it when they were here'.*

For other students, the presence and involvement of specific people, external from the core family, was of particular importance, each of them for different reasons. For example, Yiorgos referred to close relatives, like his cousin, who helped him in school *('I had my cousin who would help me'*). The presence of grandparents in his life was also very important for him (*'Closer to me I have my grandpa and grandma'*), to the extent that it sometimes affected his views about some teachers in his school. The following extract is indicative of this topic: *'The technology teacher is good, but (...) he makes jokes about grandparents and I don't like it'.*

Other important people in students' stories were specific professionals outside school. For example, Marios mentioned his football coach ('*The coach has helped me a lot, he has done*

a lot of things for me') and Anna her psychologist as very influential people in their lives. Anna recognised in her story the contribution of her psychologist to her better life circumstances: '*Mostly teachers help, in speech therapy, outside school. (...) one lady is a psychologist. We discuss problems and we play games (...) They have helped me a lot, I am a lot better now.'*

In contrast, for other students it became evident that multiple factors within their family environment might have been influencing them negatively. For example, Ben's family circumstances were clearly affecting his interactions in school. As an only child and having lost precious time out of school during his primary school years, he seemed to value and seek the company of his classmates and peers. The following excerpt enlightens this further: '*I would like to have [siblings] because I am bored at home all the time'*. His sense of loneliness also became evident when he commented on his parents' working commitments:

> *[I have been going out alone] since I was nine...I used to run out of home without my mum noticing...and I went to the internet café (...) Now I see them [my parents]. My mum is working, she is not retired (...). My dad used to work, now he is retired. He used to be a director (...) Do you know what time he left home? 5am he took the bus to take him there! And (...) he stayed there until late at night, until the time they closed down.* (Ben, Ikarion School, Greece)

According to his teachers, Ben's problematic behaviour was manifested as a result of a mismatch between his needs and his parents' capacity to meet those needs. Ben was coming from a privileged background, which was encouraging his 'obsession' with money. In fact, references about money were evident all throughout his narrative, for example: '*My dad used to work, now he is retired. He used to be a director and he earned 1200 euros'.* His teacher in the inclusion class also mentioned the following:

> He has stolen from his mum in the past and he usually goes to buy things –even electronic cigarettes- and the owners give it to him, to calm him down, otherwise he might break everything in the store. (SEN teacher, Ikarion School, Greece)

It seems here that Ben's family background was reinforcing his materialistic tendency; having anything he wanted, in the context of a disadvantaged school, was clearly affecting the way he was viewed by his teachers and his classmates, which, in turn, was influencing his experiences in school.

On another note, Anna's family relations and specifically the tensions she experienced with her mother were obvious throughout her narrative. All references to her mother were emotionally charged, which indicated the negative impact that their conflicts had on her mental state. This inevitably affected her presence in school. She mentioned for example:

'*My mother shouts at me when I have school in the morning. (...) Yes, but I don't want my mother to shout at me (raises voice), when she says, 'go to bed!'... I can't, I can't stand it'.* Anna was open to discuss her issues with her mother at school, and especially with her teachers in the inclusion class, who noted the following: *'She gets very anxious with her mum. Her mum is really pressuring, she tells her off'* (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece)

By reflecting also on the staff's perspectives through the study's critical framework, it was possible to see that staff members in both countries also recognised the influence of family. Overall, family and important others appeared in some cases to have a positive impact on students' experiences; however, some students' disruptive behaviours were found to be present in the school as a function of the lack of parental responsiveness. Further analysis of this issue is provided later, as it corresponds with the theme 'Family-school relations' (see 'meso-system' analysis).

Supporting structures and practices: In this study, the supportive structures and practices provided in the schools, as experienced by students in this study, constituted micro-system settings which supported students in two distinct ways i.e. their learning and their socialization. Overall, students talked extensively about the kind of support they were receiving and acknowledged this as important factor that affected their life in school, positively to a great extent. Students' satisfaction on this support varied only in Zante School.

More specifically, differences were found in Zante School regarding the way students viewed the 'inclusion' classes. The inclusion class was perceived primarily as a support centre which provided intensified academic support in specific subjects, and the participation in it was becoming more necessary around the period of exams. The 'inclusion class' was not perceived as such a 'important' place in Zante school, as neither of the participants chose to take a photograph of the class during the learning walks (contrary to the students in Ikarion school). In fact, Marios, Iakovos and Stamatis, admitted that were not always willing to go, or sometimes forgot to attend the inclusion classes. Marios, for instance, was attending sparsely the inclusion class and only when exams were close. He commented that his attendance in inclusion class was obligatory:

> *[I am obliged to go] by my mum and dad. Because I had resit exams in French and they put me in the inclusion class after this. I took resit exams and I passed. (...) I like that I get help but I don't like it when they shout at me. For example, one teacher when she sees me she says to me 'you will stay still, you won't talk and you will look*

at me'. And I didn't do anything and I left from the inclusion class. (Marios, Zante School, Greece)

From the extract above it can be inferred that the academic support that the inclusion class offered to Marios was not experienced positively by him. Perhaps his resistance to engage in the inclusion classes is related to the fact that he was never given the freedom of choice; on the contrary, this support was rather 'imposed' on him. Reflecting on the critical framework here revealed Marios' limited sense of agency regarding his participation in the inclusion class. This had possibly a negative impact on his will to attend and his overall behaviour. And in turn, his resistance to attend frequently led to teachers' punitive disciplinary practices which contributed to the coercive interactions he had with his teachers in the inclusion class. The same applied for Stathis: although he acknowledged the importance of this supporting structure *('this school has inclusion class, but St. Peter's school doesn't have one'*), his comments about the help received in the inclusion class were rather neutral:

> *I go there sometimes. Sometimes I don't. I go when I have got a programme, I don't go when I am bored…that's all. I cannot miss lessons from here (i.e. mainstream class). I shouldn't miss lessons when I am in the inclusion class. I go on my own there and I am on my own in the lessons.* (Stathis, Zante School, Greece)

Stathis here raises another important issue which concerned all students in Zante School: the fact that their attendance in the inclusion class had as a consequence to miss important lessons from the mainstream classes. Finally, Iakovos was the one participant who commented more positively about the help he received in the inclusion class:

> *I like it because it helps me progress in lessons, to raise my mean score so that I can pass the grade. Because the main thing that I want to leave Gymnasio and (the inclusion class) helps me to learn better.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

In a nutshell, according to all three students of Zante School, the inclusion class was mainly seen as an intensified academic support centre which was useful mainly during exam periods. However, it was not associated with particular social benefits. A similar situation was found in Ikarion School (Greece). This school had a history of operating 'inclusion' classes, with the headteacher and the support staff being fully committed to this endeavour. Its 'inclusive' reputation was highlighted by the participating students and was identified as the main reason that the participants had chosen to attend Ikarion school. The inclusion class was operating for 10 years and the more experienced SEN teacher acted like a SENCO, who was responsible for its overall organisation. As the SENCO noted, students programme was flexible, especially close to exam periods, when the students' needs for academic

support was more intensive. Overall, students' comments on the inclusion class were either positive or neutral, as the following extracts reveal:

> *[Inclusion class] It's ok. Nobody said that it is not good.* (Ben)
>
> *Inclusion is just fine. They always help me, they are very good teachers.* (Anna)
>
> *I like it because they help you in lessons mostly when you have an exam (...) They help me a lot, they cover the gaps that sometimes I have.* (Yiorgos)

In the UK, Mapleland was found to be the school with the most variability regarding supporting structures and practices. All students seemed to be satisfied with the support they received in their school. The SEN Department was viewed by all students as a 'shelter', in which they enjoyed a sense of security and belonging in a community. Besides the SEN department, Rahman mentioned in his story other support structures of his school:

> *We have got 'SEN department' and 'Learning Support'. Learning Support is like... low set people go there. Those people with special needs and people who need lots of help. If they are very very low set, like bottom set, not top bottom one, they go there. They do lessons but a little bit easier one.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

Liam was very enthusiastic in his narrative about the support he receives, and particularly about the SEN department and the 'Inclusion Centre'. As he noted:

> *I am glad that I am in this school because I if I wasn't I wouldn't be getting nowhere near as much as support than other schools as this one, because this one is providing so much support.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

For Liam, an exception was only the 'Autism centre', a separate department within the school designated for targeted support for students with autism. As he put it:

> *[The 'Autism centre'] it's like the SEN department, they take care of people that are disabled. But it is not as good as the SEN department, because sometimes they don't understand my condition, autism, not very common my condition. They definitely know how to make it activated, they are quite strict.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Here, it is interesting that Liam was experiencing negatively the support he had received in the past from the centre which was the most specialised in his condition and he placed particular importance to the people who would understand him.

Oakland school, like Mapleland, was flexible in the support it provided to students, a factor which was viewed positively by students. The SEN Department in Oakland was a separate department within the school that educated two different groups of students: the 'HOPE' Group, where children receive intense support and follow a curriculum pathway and the 'SHELTER' Group, where children were getting prepared to access the mainstream classroom. Jo commented on the SEN support she had been receiving: *'If you have a*

disability you can come down to the SEN department and we then have a talk, when we have a problem, we tell our problems with each other'.

The TAs in Oakland school were key workers for specific children, closely working with them and addressing their needs as a priority, but they also helped other children in the SEN/D register (TA interview). John from Oakland School described in his story the role of TAs in the mainstream classrooms:

> *Sometimes the TA it's not just for that one pupil, it's usually for the whole class as well… It's not for every class, they kind of put mix and match for all students. The majority of the time when a TA is in the room, a student might ask that TA first if the teacher looks busy with another people and it kind of balances the teachers' workload.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

For Mani, the TA support he was receiving in mainstream schools appeared to be somewhat undesirable. As he explained, he preferred to have lessons with a small group of students in the 'HOPE' group on a permanent basis: *'I would be in 'HOPE' all the time, I would prefer that. And I still got to see my friends at break and lunch'* (Mani, Oakland School, UK).

Generally, the support provided in the UK Schools seemed to be adaptable and included making special arrangements for certain students according to their individual needs. For example, in Mapleland school, adjustments were made in the schedule of specific students: John was exempted from the history lesson due to his phobia about death (see also the 'Anxiety' theme under 'Person' analysis) and Debbie, who was a wheelchair-user, was leaving the classes five minutes earlier, to ease her mobility in the school corridors and classrooms and to make her transitions between classes possible. Debbie made reference to this special arrangement in her story: *'I move around only when there is not much people around. I go to class like the normal time and leave five minutes early'.*

Another example comes from Oakland school, where the teachers within the SEN department had noticed that Mani's mother was not able to prepare him properly for school, because of the competing demands of her two younger kids. As the TA noted, *'he is not organised, often he is not coming on time, and he hasn't eaten breakfast'.* To deal with this, it was decided that the TA would accompany Mani in registration every morning and would be responsible to check every day if he has eaten and if he has his school equipment.

Special arrangements for specific students did not seem to be so frequent in Greek schools, compared to the UK schools. Perhaps one exception was Ben from Ikarion School; the specialist staff had decided to adapt the mode of his support by changing his lessons in the

inclusion class from group sessions to one to one. As the SEN teacher notes, his disruptive behaviour was the main reason for this change:

> We have been different towards Ben… when he was damaging art material, I had to deal with this in a way that he wouldn't be angry and that he would understand what he has done, but also to ensure that the other kids would not think that this is not fair. I decided to take him alone for this reason and I have seen that this works, because I know that this is better for Ben (SEN teacher, Ikarion School, Greece)

Overall, students' views on the supporting structures and practices of their school varied and were found to be mostly positive or neutral. In the Greek context, the 'inclusion' classes were identified as intensified support classes targeting the students' academic progress. In the UK, although more variability in the supporting structures was reported, students focused mainly on the academic support they received from the TAs within the SEN Departments. Students' sense of agency regarding the operation of these structures (for example, the mode of attendance and their level of flexibility) was found to be particularly important here, as some data showed that it can have a direct impact on the students' will to engage in school.

School ethos: This theme reflects the shared values and beliefs, responsibilities and boundaries that are accepted in the school community especially with regard to diversity. School ethos was considered a significant part of the students' day-to-day lived experience within the school microsystem. In particular, it referred to the schools' 'inclusivity' and the 'sense of belonging' that the students experienced, and to the perceived degree to which schools embraced and celebrated racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity.

Generally, students stressed the 'openness' of their schools and reported that their schools accepted all children, despite their different background, abilities, skills, and learning needs. They all commented on their school's high level of 'inclusivity' and made references to the shared values of participation and acceptance that it embraced. Overall, they felt that their school's inclusive ethos had a positive social impact and enriched their overall school experiences by providing diversity and giving them the opportunity to learn about people who face challenges or have a different background.

Anna, from Ikarion School (Greece) sounded like a 'multicultural agent', when expressing her strong belief that students who are culturally diverse enrich life in school. As she noted:

> *Is something bad going to happen if they [kids] are altogether? It's good, I don't know …I have heard about schools that are only for good students…I don't know, I think this is a bit unfair. All students should be together, the good ones, the moderate ones, the*

> *exceptional (…) You learn new things from foreigners, I mean their anniversaries, what they do in their countries, their customs, the language. We also have a Ukrainian student in our class, and they ask him too.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

What is more, in the Greek context, the inclusive school ethos and values was attributed by some students to the headteacher. Yiorgos (Ikarion School) for example, noted: *'The headteacher is nice, he accepts every child'.* Positive feelings of inclusion and acceptance were also evident in the UK student stories. For example, Liam, from Mapleland School (UK) mentioned: *'The most special about school is people who understand me really. Because when they understand me, they understand my struggles and they just help me out'.* Similarly, John commented on the inclusive values and ethos of Oakland school:

> *It's a multi-ethic school and we have the SEN department for different abilities, which it is also good because it kind of accepts everyone, instead of being a school which accepts a certain amount of people… it's a good diversity school.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

Culturally diverse classrooms were found to be a common feature of schools in both contexts. However, only Greek students made specific references on the way student diversity and multiculturalism was embedded in school life. For example, Iakovos noted:

> *We have kids from Egypt, Albania, Russia (…) Every child, no matter of religion, or if he is black or any colour for example, I believe that they have the right to school and every right that a white kid has got, or is Greek (…) It's good for them to talk to somebody or become friends with kids who are against racism, so that they can mediate with other kids.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

Iakovos' words above testify the multi-ethnic environment of Zante School, but at the same time they might indicate a lack of clear school policy for dealing with racist incidents between students. The following extract reveals the foreign cultures that also existed in Ikarion School. As Yiorgos mentioned:

> *Students from other countries? This happens. In our class for example there is a kid from Romania…I saw very recently a little girl who has a scarf in her head [surprised tone]. Now I don't know what this is…do they believe in Allah? She speaks a foreign language… how can I know? I don't speak English well.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

Yiorgos here seems to experience feelings of frustration in the view of his cultural differences with some foreign students and the impact that their language-barrier had on their interactions. Most importantly, Yiorgos' perplexity on how to approach foreign students might reveal the lack of appropriate strategies to implement multicultural education as part of the school's inclusive practice.

Overall, all students expressed positively about their school's inclusive ethos and stressed that promoting diversity had a positive impact in their school experiences. However, the way this inclusive ethos was embedded into the everyday school life was raised as an issue of attention, especially for the Greek schools.

6.4.2. Mesosystem

Applied to this study, the mesosystem within Bronfenbrenner's framework represents the ways in which the microsystems work together, how these interact with the students and the impact of these interactions. A recurring theme that emerged through the students' narratives was the *'Family-school relations'* and as such, it was regarded as the main element of the mesosystem[12].

In the UK, some positive examples of co-operation between the students' family and school became evident. For example, Liam from Mapleland School testified in his story the close relationships that the specialist staff had with his mother: *'there is a woman there [in the SEN department] who supports my mum'.* In addition, staff members in Oakland School reported positive interactions with the students' parents. For example, the SENCO commented on the cooperation she had with John's mum:

> His mum has been great, if there has been anything she's contacting, she is always being proactive, she has always been supportive, it's that partnership and that relationship that means that you can move forward in the right way (...) which is why he will be successful. (SENCO, Oakland School, UK)

However, evidence of close relations between family and school was missing from the Greek students' stories. Parental involvement in Greek Schools seemed to be restricted mostly in the selection of their children's school. The following extracts from Yiorgos' and Anna's story testify this:

> *When I was in primary school (...) they were anxious about which school to send me (...) but this is where I wanted to come. They have heard that this is a good school.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

[12] It should be noted that while other mesosystems might have an influence on student experiences (i.e. the interaction between the SEN/D departments and the mainstream classes), these were not identified as recurring themes within student stories, and therefore are not included in the analysis of the 'mesosystem'.

> *I was chosen to come here. They told me that we are going to find a school with an inclusion class and here I am (...) All people have searched for it, my mum, my dad, my brother, the whole family.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

Besides this, no references in student stories indicated any other kind of parental involvement in the students' everyday school life. As already mentioned in the section 'Person characteristics', difficult family conditions in students' homes had direct impact in their academic engagement (e.g. attending lessons, doing homework), which in turn, affected the quality of their experiences in schools. For example, in Marios' case, the full absence of parents from the school reality, was a fact that might be associated with his detachment from school and his lack of motivation. As the staff members noted: *'I believe there is an issue with the family too. I have never seen them, they have never come to say something'* (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece).

It's worth noting here a unique finding from Ikarion School, regarding the quality of home-school relationships. The SENCO appeared to have close links with Ben's family. She lived in Ben's neighbourhood and sometimes took care of him, as the following extract reveals:

> *He has a good relationship with me, very good. He lives very close to my home and until recently he was going to the same conservatory with my son. And sometimes when it was needed, when he was taking medication, I went to give it to him.* (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece)

The time and energy that the SENCO was devoting to support Ben probably stemmed from her sense of duty and personal commitment to safeguard his well-being. In fact, the SEN teacher confirmed that Ben was more receptive to his inclusion teachers, rather than his parents. Although Ben's bond with the SENCO was discussed previously (see: 'Interactions with special support staff'), here it seems that she was also taking up parental roles. Further reflection on this issue fact revealed a possible cultural difference between the two contexts, as it would be extremely rare to find in the UK such an initiative taken from a SENCO. It is not common for educators in the UK to get so much involved into a students' family and such a practice would probably mean crossing professional boundaries.

Overall, the examples above showed some close links between home and school; these links were affecting positively students' experiences in school and were found to be most of the times dependent on the close student relationships with the special support staff (proximal processes). On the contrary, the absence of home-school links was found to have a negative impact on the students' motivation and engagement with school. Reflecting upon student voice contributed significantly here, as it revealed how the components of a student's life

might fit together, or not (i.e. lack of parental/family responsiveness and its possible reasons).

6.4.3. Exosystem

In this study, the exosystem referred to contexts in which students were not directly involved. This was represented mainly by the external special education centres and agencies, as their services (in the form of specific therapies, interventions and academic support) were acknowledged by students in both contexts. For example, Ben and Anna from Greece commented on the private support they received from special education services:

> *I have got a psychologist who comes to my home (...) I go to the centre [i.e. the special education centre] (...) Everybody knows me there* (Ben, Ikarion School, Greece)
>
> *Mostly teachers help, in speech therapy, outside school (...) Speech therapy and English. [I go to speech therapy] since (...) nursery school.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

The data showed that the external services which provided support to students in the Greek context were working in parallel and independently from the schools; no evidence of cooperation between the services and the schools was found within the students' stories or the staff interviews. However, in the UK, unlike Greece, it was possible to identify closer links between the school and external agencies. For example, in Debbie's case, the school was in regular contact with a specialised centre to organise joint activities which would raise Debbie's self-confidence and well-being. Debbie made references about her future activities within this centre:

> *I am nearly going to work in a dog's home. I don't know much because I haven't started yet. Just walk dogs, I don't know, like anywhere. My support worker from here is going to help. The school has talked with the dog's home and they have decided that I could go.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

Similarly, in Oakland School, the specialist staff kept frequent contact and participated in joint meetings with external services in order to coordinate better the efforts to support students' well-being. The SENCO or one of the SEN teachers were attending meetings with Mani's mother and the social services on a regular basis, to discuss issues around his social adaptation and well-being. It appeared that such close links between the external agencies and the school provided opportunities for more quality support for students.

6.4.4. Macrosystem

The Macrosystem refers to the broader contexts in Greece and the UK which cover the entire societal culture (including national education laws and policies, economic system, political

situation, societal culture, cultural values and norms). More specifically, elements of the 'political landscape' in Greece, 'features of the secondary education system' and the issue of each society's 'cultural articulation of SEN/D' have formed the main themes of the Macrosystem.

Political landscape: This theme covers some important features of the political landscape which were found to have an influence on students. Overall, only students from Greece touched upon issues of the wider political landscape, which were mainly related to the economic crisis, unemployment and migration crisis. As these were all context specific issues, it came as no surprise that they did not appear in the UK student stories and therefore, this theme applies only to the Greek context.

In particular, it was striking how Greek students commented in their narratives on the struggles that people in their life were facing due to the economic crisis. Anna, for example, commented on her brother's unemployment, which reflects the problematic situation that exists in Greece:

> *My brother will go at some point to work but now he is unemployed, and he sits in the computer until 3am. There are a lot of unemployed people. What to say? He has been working on the computer, he is going out too, but he hasn't found a job yet. He will at some point.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

When Greek students were asked about what they would change in their school, they appeared to be socially conscious and expressed their will to be able to cover the shortages of human and financial resources. For example:

> *if a student had a problem and could not attend the lessons, I would pay the fees to study at home so that they can pass the grade.* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)
>
> *the kiosk would give free food to all children, as much food as they want. And I would give them money to buy what they want.* (Marios, Zante School, Greece)

Students from Greece also commented on migration issues, which seemed to affect their everyday life in schools. Anna, for example, appeared particularly concerned about the inclusion of migrant students in her school. In her story, she sounds like a 'political actor' by expressing her repulsive feelings about the war in Syria. To quote:

> *We have Syrians here, we have three Syrian kids. The only thing I know is that three Syrians came, refugees. Refugees because the war in Syria and Iraq is still going on. You didn't know? You don't watch the news? There are three kids, they are attending the A' Gymnasio. They try, they know English, Syrian, but not Greek. They know English better than me. Ok, they are trying to help them, they have friends and they help them to learn Greek, and the teachers [help] too. From this school, from here, they help*

them learn Greek better, until the war is over. Why there is a war in Syria, what is this disgusting thing that I hear? (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

Anna's remarkable observations about migrant students who were on the margins of Greek schools might also stem from a unique perspective that she was able to gain as a foreigner herself - which also corresponds with her Russian 'Ethnicity', as one of her 'Person' characteristics.

Features of secondary education: This theme refers to the wider secondary education system and some elements of its structure which were found to affect the student experiences in both contexts. Unique systemic influences in the two contexts were either related to the organisational structure of schools (such as assessment and grading culture; school hierarchy) or to particular national educational laws and policies (such as teacher shortages and frequent gaps in Greek schools; and the type of schools and Ofsted inspections in the UK).

More specifically, exams and grades are discussed here as macro-systemic elements of secondary school systems in both contexts which were found to affect considerably student experiences. This theme could also be part of students' microsystem, given that it affects them directly, or it could be related to students' interactions with objects and symbols. However, in this study it is viewed as an important element of the wider secondary school system in both contexts. Participants in both countries perceived exams and grades as major factors in their secondary school life which was influential in shaping their experiences. A recurring theme that emerged from the student stories was related to the levels of stress that were stimulated by the recurring exams that are taking place in secondary schools. Liam articulated vividly the way he was affected by the 'harsh' reality of school exams and grades:

They (i.e. exams) make me so paranoid because they are going to be more difficult and they push you to the point where and you know, if you are like me and you already know about reality you are getting to know the fact that how much GCSE's affect your future (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Similarly, Jo and Anna commented negatively on the frequent examination, as a characteristic of secondary school which causes a lot of stress to them:

We are studying for our GCSE's, but these tests start in Y11 (...) It makes me nervous because I don't know what grade I am going to get...We have to do tests every half term and nobody likes to do tests over half term (Jo, Oakland School, UK)

Just leave it...I cannot really understand the exams so much. Tests are ok, but I am a bit more anxious with the exams because you get the grades every three months, every four months. I don't like exams and grades (...) I would try to do things on my

own but unfortunately my grades wouldn't be that good again. I would fail again (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

This theme was common in both contexts and also corresponds with the 'Person' component of the PPCT model (see the 'Anxiety' category of 'Force' characteristics). Secondary schooling was characterised as 'harder', compared to what students have experienced in primary school, as it is more exam-oriented and places much more emphasis on grades. For example, Yiorgos noted:

> *In primary school I had a better time, because we didn't have exams so often. Not like Gymnasio, where you take exams all the time, in the first semester, the second, the third… in primary I had exams very rarely.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

The schools in the UK followed a hierarchical model, based on specialisation, with tighter control and clearer lines of responsibility, in comparison to the Greek context. Students in the UK schools contacted the senior management of the school, mainly when they had to deal with important issues. For example, Jo explained what she usually does when something upsets her in school: *'[If something upsets me] I will go to the SEN Department and if they are all out on a trip I will go to my head of year'.*

On the contrary, in the Greek schools had less hierarchical organisational structure with the headteachers concentrating more power in the management processes. Students in Greece recognised headteachers as persons of authority, but they also characterised them as being approachable. References were found in the students' stories where headteachers appeared to have direct contact with them and to be actively involved with daily issues that might concern them. The following extract illuminates this:

> *When I have a problem with lessons or with a kid who is bothering me I go to my teachers and I say so, and to the headteacher too, the headteacher helps more.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

In the Greek schools, students also commented extensively on the shortage of teachers or the teacher turnover, which had a direct and negative impact on their school reality. For instance, Stathis from Zante School, although he was registered as in need of parallel support, he followed mainstream classes without adult support. In addition, Anna commented on the teachers' turnover, which is very common in Greek schools:

> *I only miss one computer science teacher that I had in the first grade…I haven't met the new teacher yet, I hope that it will be the same teacher as in the first year, not last year, because she wasn't that good.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

Greek schools commonly suffer from a lack of teachers and every school year cover teachers are hired to soften the impact of these shortages. However, the hiring process usually takes

time, which has apparently a direct impact on both teachers and students. The frequent 'gaps' that exist throughout the school year were reflected in data from both Greek schools. In Zante School, for instance, Iakovos notes:

> *I would hire more teachers, so that we don't miss lessons when a teacher is absent. Of course, it's the best thing for students when a teacher is absent but…we need to learn. Now [i.e. during gaps] we are partying [laughs].* (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

In Ikarion School, when a mainstream teacher was absent, the 'inclusion' teachers would take the opportunity to get the 'inclusion' students for a lesson to the inclusion class. Anna was getting frustrated and was resisting at this practice, which frequently resulted in tensions with her inclusion teachers. The SENCO stories this vividly in the following extract:

> She will come to you and say 'Look, I am obliged to be with you -she knows the rules- I can't say no. But I had a gap now and I am not having a lesson'. This doesn't change, it's like that in her head, like a box. (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece)

Overall, it seemed that this instability and unpredictability of the daily life in schools which was related to the shortage of teachers and the frequent gaps in Greek secondary schools affected students' experiences to a great extent and undermined their developmental process. This situation can only be paralleled with some lessons delivered by the supply teachers in the UK schools. Rahman, for example, explained in his narrative the nature of these lessons: '*If one normal teacher is not here sometimes we read the books (…) sometimes we read books for the whole hour.'* Although supply teachers in the UK usually have the same teaching responsibilities as permanent members of staff, this was not confirmed from the classroom observations, which raised a question about the quality of the teaching provided. The following extract from the field notes explains this further:

> During Period 5 Rahman has English, but the teacher is absent. A supply teacher is there, and tells the class to read a book aloud, in turns. At some point, students start complaining about the fact that they have to read for the whole hour. Rahman does not react to the 'chaos' that follows but starts to rock nervously in his chair; his anxiety is possibly triggered by the lack of clear structure and the noise caused in this lesson (Rahman's observation, 07/03/2016, Field notes).

On another note, a unique characteristic of the English secondary education system was associated with the different type of schools that exist, which seemed to have an impact on student experiences in some cases. More specifically, this was evident in Oakland School which was a multi-faith school and was placing a particular focus in religious studies. This special characteristic of the school was perceived positively by Jo and John from Oakland School. For example, John commented on this issue:

> *RE isn't for every school, but this is a faith school so RE is important to get, but in other schools it wouldn't be. It's kind of good, it is good because you get more options. I guess in other schools you have to pick it as an option in Y9, which is kind of a barrier.* (Jo, Oakland School, UK)

Finally, another unique characteristic of the English education system was related to the Ofsted inspections, which also appeared to have an indirect influence in students' life in school. For example, Rahman from Mapleland made references to the inspections that are taking place in his school:

> *Art work [i.e. displays in corridors] is good, because if like people like inspectors they came here, see our work. Inspectors, like special person, an adult came to see the school, how is it and if they look at our work, that's good, they like it, they like the school. I think…someone was watching me and the whole class, I was just carry on with the lesson, to see how people do, once. (…) DT is also on Ofsted.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

The results of Ofsted inspections seemed to have an influence on how the students viewed their school. In John's case, the ratings that the school received from the evaluation determined his expectations about the school quality. As he noted in his story:

> *It [i.e. the school] has been marked outstanding from Ofsted in all four areas, that's teaching, pupils, environment and something else…it's also a good school to be around because the staff are friendly, they are nice staff (…) My mum was definitely supportive of going to this school (…) I understand why she wanted me to come to this school, this school has certain standards, which can get quite high sometimes, uniform expectations, pay expectations and all that.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

In the extract above, students seem to understand the significance of doing well in Ofsted inspections. Such perceptions about Ofsted evaluations were embedded in the schools' culture and were affecting students' everyday lives in school. This theme did not come up in the Greek stories, given that the educational system does not have similar external evaluation mechanisms for public schools such as Ofsted.

Cultural articulation of SEN/D: Another interesting feature that was identified was the cultural articulation of SEN/D, as this was reflected in the language students used to discuss disability issues. After reflection on the study's critical framework, it was possible to identify certain contrasting ways in which the students perceived their additional needs, which might also reveal a cultural difference between the two contexts. Students from the UK were found to have internalised a more-adult like and sophisticated definition of disability. For example, Liam from Mapleland School was very open to discuss his condition and used the labels of 'autism' without any hesitation *('I have got a case of ADHD and autism (…) Medication calms me down and basically helps me get through the day).* This can be understood as issues

around SEN and disability are usually discussed more commonly and openly in the English society, compared to Greece. In England, the use of clinical terms as 'special need', 'disorder', 'condition' and so on seemed to be frequently used in everyday school reality.

On the contrary, in Greece, students avoided mentioning 'labels' of SEN/D; they did not seem comfortable to use labels about themselves or other students with SEN/D. They used rather vague definitions to refer to students with SEN/D, such as 'kids with problems'. To quote Marios (Zante School): *'the teachers have told me that these kids have a problem because they are in the inclusion class'.* Similarly, Stathis (Zante School) noted: *'Inclusion class is there to learn things…for kids that are not… [silence]…I mean…. we do exercises, we do everything'.* A possible interpretation of the silence in this extract, would be that that Stathis chooses silence here deliberately as a way to avoid the use of labels.

Another interesting example comes from Anna (Ikarion school), who did not seem to be fully aware about her given 'label' of autism. The following extract reveals this: '*Because I still had dyslexia, this is why I came to the inclusion class. Because I have a bit…I have a bit of dyslexia'.* Anna was holding an official statement of autism and has been receiving special support since primary school. However, she had been told that her support is given to her because she has dyslexia. What is interesting here is that people around her have chosen to ascribe to her a 'lighter' version of SEN (i.e. dyslexia), perhaps because the label of autism is more stigmatised in the Greek society, compared to dyslexia. Overall, this example reveals a cultural trait of Greek society which reflects that people are generally reluctant to use medical terms to characterise a child, and often feel uncomfortable to discuss issues around SEN and disabilities openly, a situation which is not so evident in the English society. The student voice critical framework contributed again here by allowing to identify such cultural traditions and out-of-school experiences that students bring to the school setting.

6.5. Time

This section captures the temporal aspect of experiences by considering the dimensions of 'Time'. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, all three types of 'time' (microtime, mesotime and macrotime) are present in proximal processes. The first two types of 'time' have already been indicated in the previous discussion of students' proximal processes. In particular, they were highlighted in the analysis of specific episodes which occurred (micro-time) or were occurring with some frequency (mesotime) between the students and people or

objects/tasks within their immediate environment (i.e. peers, teachers, special support staff, family, or curriculum and school spaces).

In this section, a more detailed discussion is provided in relation to the processes that occurred with a relevant frequency within the students' school life (mesotime). Mesotime is represented by two recurring themes that have emerged from the analysis of student stories: *'Participation in school activities and events'* and *'Bullying incidents'.* Finally, considering that the theory emphasises a historical perspective on human development, macrotime is also illustrated further through the analysis of two main themes that emerged, the *'Past experiences'* and *'Behavioural progress'.* These themes capture students' experiences from a longitudinal perspective, beginning from primary and across different years of secondary schooling. These themes related to the 'time' element are presented schematically in the Figure 6.4 below:

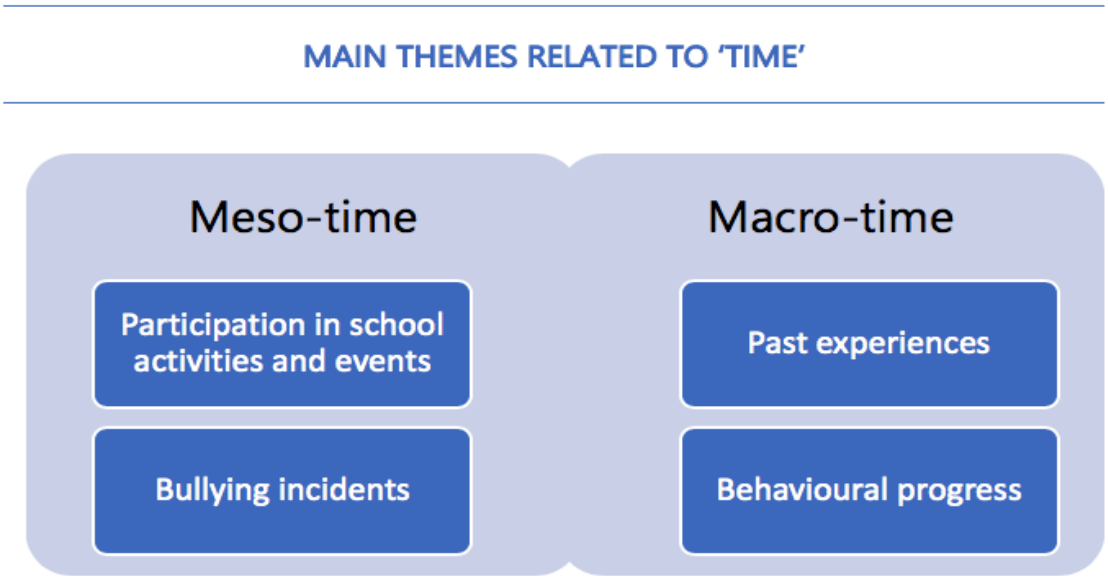

Figure 6.4 Main themes related to 'Time'

6.5.1. Mesotime

Participation in school activities and events: Generally speaking, students in both countries appeared rather uninterested in joining student societies, attending events or participating in school activities. One exception was Jo, from Oakland school, who seemed to enjoy the school excursions ('*We go on different trips, like in RE we go to the Buddhist Centre in the City Centre.*'). However, the majority of students did not find school events so pleasant and enjoyable, especially when the attendance in these were obligatory. The following students

for example, highlighted the obligatory nature of school events and activities in their accounts:

> *I may take part, but normally I don't want to participate. It is obligatory that you go, because if you don't go you take an absence. And in school excursions, if you don't join, you will need to stay and have lessons, normally. Half of the people might go, half not.* (Anna, Ikarion School Greece)
>
> *Every Wednesday we have got assemblies in tutor time. Not the whole school, only the year. I just listen to the head of the year talk about stuff and I just sit there basically nearly going asleep. She is actually really boring.* (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)

Bullying incidents: This theme captured any form of tension, conflict and argument between students in school which entailed a power imbalance. For example, incidents of intimidation were reported from Jo:

> *(...) somebody tried to take my phone, they took my sim card out of my phone. I don't know why. They put them in LSU [Learning Support Unit], the place that you go when you don't have the correct uniform on or if you misbehave...you are not allowed to go out on break or lunch, so it's like a punishment.* (Jo, Oakland School, UK)

More references to this kind of incidents were made by all three participants of Zante School, Greece. Specifically, Marios (Zante School) revealed some incidents of bullying in his school towards the 'freshers': 'Some kids draw some scary things in the toilet doors and some freshers who have got a problem don't go there, they are scared'. In addition, Iakovos mentioned about frequent conflicts between students in the school and explained how these are usually dealt with:

> *Yesterday there was a fight. A serious one (...) As far as I understood it started from a joke, some kids said to another one that 'he swore at your mum' and then there was a mess and luckily they stopped it. If I had seen them I would have stopped them of course (...) the first thing to do is to take the kid that receives bullying and to talk to the other one, in a strict way, otherwise he won't listen, and to sit him down, even though he doesn't want to, and listen to what we have to say. After this we take him to the headteacher, the punishment comes (...) that's it (...) We clear things out and we leave it there*. (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)

This extract explains that in Zante School other students acted as mediators or neutral third parties which would intervene and assist other students in the resolution of interpersonal disputes. Stathis also confirmed that kind of peer mediation in his story: *'Mostly teachers help, sometimes we make out on our own'.* Stathis and Marios also explained in their narratives how the school was putting forward specific practices, such as the 'Peace box' of the 'Group of Friendship', to prevent and deal with this kind of incidents:

The peace box is when kids hit other kids, it's called bullying. (Stathis, Zante School, Greece)

> *There is a group of kids [i.e. the 'group of friendship'] which goes around whenever we have got problems, it goes around with a box and we write in a paper and put it in the box, no names. Kids read it and something happens next, I don't know. Now they are around six kids. They go in turns, in pairs or three together. And they go around whenever there is an issue. For example, if I have got an issue, I would go to one of these kids and would ask them to come around to take some requests that we have. They are elected, like the student council.* (Marios, Zante School, Greece)

Incidents between the focal students and their peers were also reported in Ikarion School (Greece). For example, Anna narrated in her story past tensions that she had experienced with some of her peers, and especially boys:

> *They haven't embarrassed me, they have just made fun of me, they were being 'smart' and all, they called me 'baby' and stuff. Mates from different classes, but now they are not doing it so much, I am used to it and now and in a while I will be leaving... I don't give a damn about them, I couldn't care less.* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)

In this extract, Anna admits that she has been victimized in the past but also seems to keep an apathetic stance towards her peers' provocative attitude, which perhaps acts as a defensive mechanism. However, it is not very clear the extent to which her feelings had actually been hurt in the past and whether that 'teasing' had crossed the lines and reached that level of bullying. It should be noted that here, as in the previous examples, the dividing line between teasing and bullying is an invisible one.

6.5.2. Macrotime

Past experiences: A number of students in the two countries have commented on the impact that their past school experiences had upon their current experiences in secondary school. For example, Mani's previous traumatic experiences during his primary school years had a direct impact on his present interactions and responses to stressors within the school environment. As Mani revealed in his story: *'When I was finishing primary school, then it happened, something happened, and I just got angrier, and then angrier and then angrier.'* A similar example comes from Marios, and his past history of resit exams which was apparently increasing his levels of anxiety and was reinforcing a sense of failure in him (*'One teacher from the inclusion class tells me that I will repeat the class'*).

A more positive example comes from Jo from Oakland School. Her past experiences with a TA have resulted in developing a more independent character, which in turn has influenced her support arrangements in secondary school. As she noted:

> *In primary, I used to have a teacher coming into my lessons with me and sit next to me, a TA...I didn't like somebody sat next to me. In this school I never had a TA. It's*

better in this school because then I interact with people in the class. (Jo, Oakland School, UK)

Almost all students made special references to their transition experiences from primary school, which were also mostly negative. Overall, the student voice critical framework revealed students' enhanced awareness of their individual differences, as well as the perception of their problems as being more substantial at the secondary school level. Among others, students reported practical challenges in their adjustment in the new secondary school environment. For instance, Rahman did not seem to have overcome completely his difficulties in orientating on his own, which have started in primary school:

> *At the beginning of the year I was getting lost, but now I practiced it with the support worker, extra support. Even before that, before high school, when I was in primary school in Year 6, the teachers would tour around. When I needed help now in Year 7, I got lost because it's so big school, I practiced with someone else and I got used to it and now I know everything in this school.* (Rahman, Mapleland School, UK)

The differences between the primary and secondary school structure were also related to Yiorgos' adjustment issues:

> *In the beginning I didn't even know what the inclusion class was, because, I was going in primary school too, but a miss would take me to another class, one class. Here, when I came in the A' Gymnasio, there were so many teachers and I didn't understand what their role was. There was a technology teacher, two language teachers, one teacher for chemistry, physics, biology.* (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)

Students also referred to the social problems they faced during their early experiences in secondary school. For example, Jo, mentioned in her story: *'I was the only one who came from my primary school, so I found it hard to make friends'*. John also explained the difficulties he encountered in adapting socially with his peers in this new school environment, where all of them were strangers to him:

> *The teachers are definitely friendly to me in this school, but sometimes students can't be, especially in the first couple of years when I came here…it takes a while for everyone to adapt doesn't it? (…) I didn't know any student when I came here in Year 7, because I came from my primary school which nobody else came. But that kind of puts me in a disadvantage, because some people did come, and they already had that kind of social groups… if you don't come here in a social group you have to start fresh really, which is quite good in some ways but if you think about friends and social groups, it can be a disadvantage.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

Despite his social struggles, John was one of the few students who commented positively about the support he received from the school staff during his transition from primary school:

> *When I first came here in Year 7 you got lots of people showing you around, giving you bits of papers, so it is quite welcoming, you have got a good group of staff as well, which is always good… It wasn't much of a change from my primary school, it was kind of a simultaneous switch. I mean it was a change, but it was a good change, not a harsh change, more like a gentle change, still very welcoming, as my last school.* (John, Oakland School, UK)

Behavioural progress: Another 'Time' theme that came up was associated with the students' positive changes in behaviour over time. In particular, significant progress was reported for many students (e.g. Liam, Stathis, John, Debbie and Jo), which was manifested mostly as a reduction of their past aggressive behaviours. As Liam admitted in his story:

> *In primary school that was the worse. Because of my condition, I was worse when I got angry and this was because of my medication. It was pretty bad.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)

Members of school staff confirmed that as students were gradually adjusting to the new environment, positive developments were evident in their behaviour. For example, for Stathis, it was mentioned that: *'Stathis is better now, last year he used to hit kids'* (SEN teacher, Zante school, Greece). Similarly, the TA from Oakland School noted that John's behaviour has significantly improved compared to the past, when '*he was rude verbally, angry, became red, stubborn. He had these tantrums all the time in Y7'.* In addition, the SENCO commented positively on Debbie's progress:

> *She is 10 times better than she was. In the beginning of the year she was very bad, not wanting to go to any lesson, not to engage with anybody, not drinking, not eating, self-harm.* (SENCO, Mapleland School, UK)

Finally, it is worth noting that in some cases the students' behavioural progress followed changes in students' support. For example, Jo, was receiving intense support in the SEN Department during the past year because of her *'complete lack of confidence and self-esteem'* (SENCO, Oakland School, UK). Jo's progress had as a result her gradual distance from the SEN department, where she had individual sessions only once a week. As she noted:

> *If I have a trouble I can go down [i.e. in the SEN department] and see the teachers. I have done that last year. I did agriculture, like planting, interact with others with different abilities…we sorted out my problems* (Jo, Oakland school, UK)

The school staff seemed to be particularly proud of Jo's progress. This was echoed in the following SENCO's comments:

> She is more independent. She did agriculture last year which she really enjoyed, and that really worked on her confidence, talking to people. We have come a long way.

> She still comes along. She has become more resilient. If people say things to her, she deals with it in a more mature way. (SENCO, Oakland school, UK)

Overall, students' behavioural progress emerged as a significant temporal element which had a clear impact in their proximal processes, mostly with their peers and school staff. This progress might have been the positive outcome of the targeted support the students had been receiving in the supporting structures of their school. However, it could also be attributed to the developmental growth of students, which is associated with the 'Age' theme of the 'person' characteristics. It should be noted that reflecting critically on the way students perceive their own progress proved particularly helpful, as it revealed indirectly student levels of self-awareness and motivation.

6.6. An overarching bio-ecological framework of student experience

So far, this chapter has presented the study's qualitative findings which derived from the deductive analysis based of the PPCT model. In the course of this analysis, the student voice critical framework was used as a tool to reflect on each of the main themes and sub-themes, highlighting personal aspects of experience from a subjective, individual point of view. This final section considers how this unified conceptual framework brought together the study's themes.

This overarching framework considers this dialectical relationship of the PPCT model with the student voice lens and illuminates how this dynamic view of the two provided a deeper understanding of student experience. Specifically, the study's student voice critical framework not only provided evidence for the key factors affecting student experiences or the way these factors interact with each other within the PPCT model, but it also offered explanations for the significance of these factors. Furthermore, it helped to identify contradictions with the school staff's perceptions which highlighted issues of student identities and power, and their correlations to inclusive processes.

Figure 6.5 shows in detail how the overarching framework integrates all themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the analysis[13]. This framework places the student at the centre and each contributory factor is located in relation to her/his unique interactions (proximal processes) as well as aspects of her/his educational ecosystem, resulting to a bio-ecological framework of student experience.

[13] It should be noted that the themes and the sub-themes covered in this conceptual framework should not be considered as normative, as they are derived from the empirical findings in this study which are by no means exhaustive.

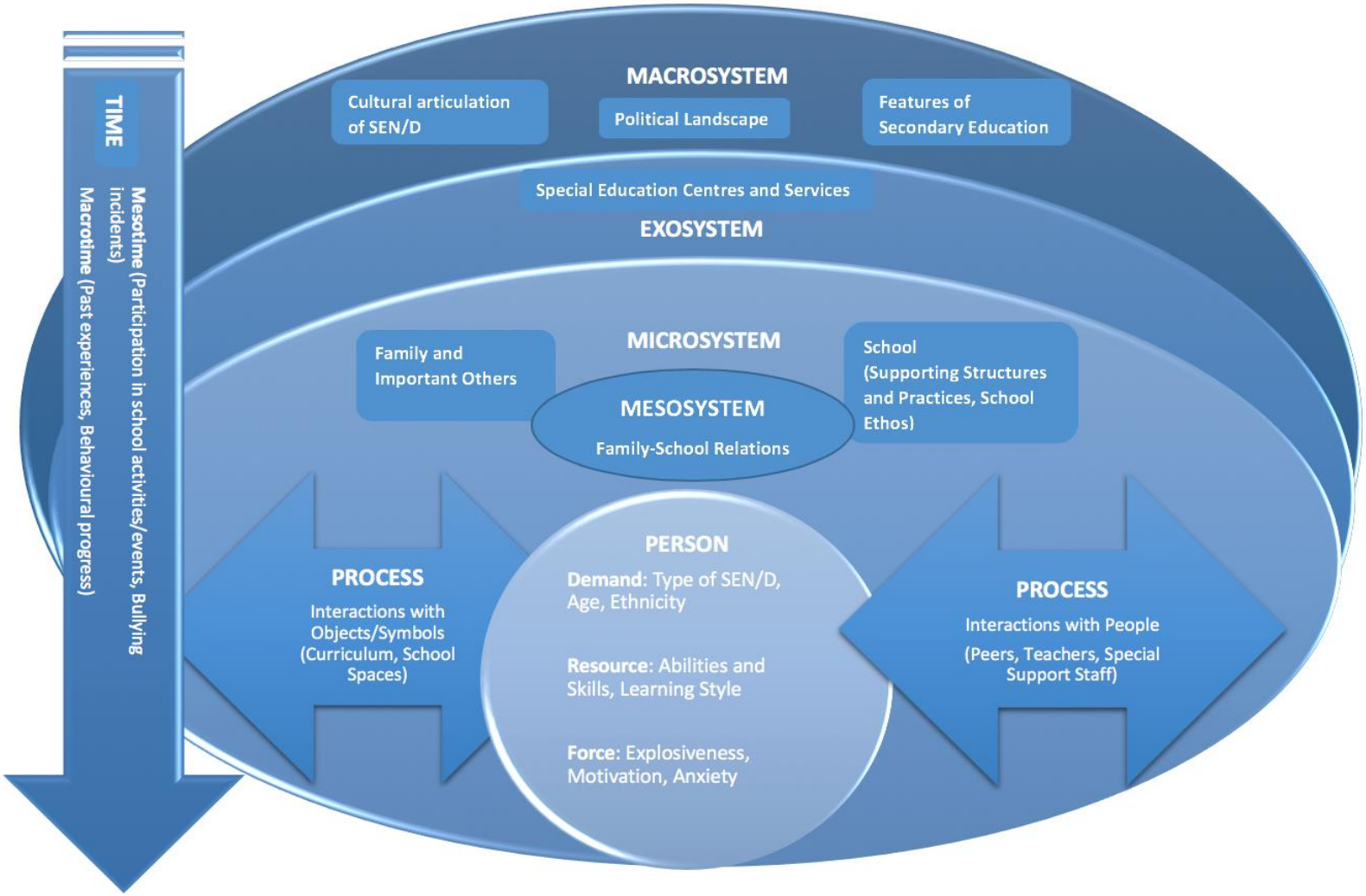

Figure 6.5 The study's bio-ecological framework of student experience

As shown in the diagram, the components 'Person' (Force, Resource, Demand) and 'Process' (quality of interactions with peers, school staff, curriculum and school spaces) of the PPCT model interact with each other and occupy both a dominant position in the conceptual framework.

The central position of the '**Person'** characteristics in this framework suggests that these might shape student experiences in multiple ways. In the course of this analysis, the critical framework has shed light on these important personal variables and illuminated how these interact with each other. For example, data from this study showed that some students' symptoms of anxiety, (as a 'Force' characteristic) could be associated with their specific type of SEN/D (as a 'Demand' characteristic). However, while students' temperament (as another 'Force' characteristic) might be attributable to the type of SEN/D, it could also be a manifestation of frustration on behalf of the students because their voice is not heard, according to some data. Similarly, other data showed that students' SEN/D was not found to act as a barrier to their motivation, goal setting and development of their future plans, something which contradicted with some teachers' views. The latter finding shows exactly how student voice can bring into light such contradictory views and highlight student preferences, tendencies and other important personal variables.

Looking more closely at the **'Process'** component, it is evident that student experience is shaped mainly through proximal processes within the immediate context, and in particular, the microsystem of the school. Data from this study indicated a student tendency to form connections with other students who shared similar characteristics with them. Sometimes special bonds with peers and teachers formed within micro-settings of the school, like the 'inclusion classes' played the most important role in some students' life in school and acted as the motive of their participation in school and therefore could be regarded as their main engines of their development. Finally, other data from this study revealed that the more students emphasised on the importance of peer and teacher relationships, the more these seemed to affect their experiences and well-being in school; it should be noted that this finding could not have been illuminated without listening and reflecting upon the student views on this matter. What is more, students' interactions with objects and symbols in their school (i.e. tasks), such as certain curriculum subjects and school spaces / facilities, were found to play an important role in shaping student experiences, as these contributed to student learning and well-being in school. Specific data on the school spaces in the Greek context have revealed some contradictory views between the students and their teachers in relation to the design of the 'inclusion classes'. Again, such contradictions illuminated by

the student voice critical framework have proven important to understand factors that affect student learning and facilitate their development.

The component **'Context'** is illustrated in this framework as a set of overlapping circles beginning from the micro-system of the school and moving towards the broader socio-cultural context. Overall, the 'Context' component of the framework offers a setting and a mediating milieu in which student shape their experiences and develop as persons. Immediate micro-systemic influences can be, for example, the 'School ethos' or the 'Supportive structures and practices' provided within the micro-setting of the school (i.e. the SEN departments, TA support). Students' sense of agency regarding the operation of these structures (for example, the mode of attendance and their level of flexibility) is particularly important here, as it can have a direct impact on the students' will to engage in school, as data of this study showed. Exosystemic influences for student experience might constitute for example the 'External special education services' available at any given national context; macrosystemic elements can be related to certain 'Features of secondary education' system (i.e. assessment and grading system). Other contextual issues on several system levels (such as the migration and the economic crisis in Greece) as well as cultural issues (such as the cultural articulation of SEN/D) were also found to have an effect on the way the students were conceptualising their experiences. The student voice critical framework contributes again here by helping to recognise such cultural traditions and out-of-school experiences that students bring to the school setting.

The components 'Process' and 'Context' interact with each other and generate various mesosystems. In this study, a recurring mesosystemic theme was 'Family-school relations'. In the case of incongruent mesosystemic features, when for instance there is a lack of family-school relations, students' proximal processes within the school are greatly affected. Listening openly and carefully to student voice contributed significantly here, as it revealed how the components of a student's life might fit together, or not (i.e. lack of parental/family responsiveness and its possible reasons), information which is essential for designing proper interventions in order to support student growth and progression.

Another important element of the framework is that of '**Time'**, which implies that proximal processes take place on a regular basis ('Mesotime') and over time ('Macrotime'). These two components of 'Time', existent in students' processes of their interaction with the context,

can also shape school experiences. As students develop over time in the proximal processes of interacting with their environment, their conceptualisations of their experiences at secondary school evolve; these conceptualisations can in turn mediate students' interactions with the context. In this study, the student voice critical framework revealed students' enhanced awareness of their individual differences, as well as the perception of their problems as being more substantial at the secondary school level, something that was possible only by listening to their voices. The main elements of 'Mesotime' found to affect their school experiences were related to the students' 'Participation in school activities and events', as well as some 'Bullying incidents'. Regarding the 'Macrotime' elements, it was found that 'Past experiences' related mostly to the transition experiences from primary school affected considerably the students' current school experiences. Student voice has shed light on this theme by providing rich information about students' primary school experiences, which could not have been revealed otherwise. Finally, through time, significant 'Behavioural progress' was also reported for many students, which sometimes resulted in changes in students' support, shaping their school experiences accordingly. Reflecting critically on the way students perceive their own progress has also proved important here, as it revealed indirectly student levels of self-awareness and motivation. It therefore becomes clear that student voice critical framework can illuminate significant information for understanding student experience, which otherwise would lack or would be incomplete (for example, by listening only to teachers' views on this matter or looking at performance/behaviour school data).

Overall, in the study's proposed overarching model, student experience is seen as a function of the interaction between individual, social and contextual factors. The central focus on the person and the unique contribution of the study's student voice critical framework highlights the importance of considering and reflecting upon students' perceptions (for example, their views about their own identity, their aspirations or their social interactions with peers/adults) when trying to understand the quality of their school experiences. A more general reflection on the dynamic and dialectical relationship between the bio-ecological framework and student voice is provided in the following Chapter (see Section 7.3).

7. DISCUSSION

7.1. Introduction

This Chapter synthesises the findings of the previous chapter and links them with relevant literature with the aim to address the overall research aim and question underpinning this study. To reiterate, the aim of this study was to explore students' views and perspectives about their experiences of secondary schooling in two different cultural contexts, England and Greece. The integrated framework which combined the PPCT model with student voice acted as a descriptive and analytical tool to explore the study's main research question, namely: *'In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes?'*

The process of analysis has revealed four corresponding and interrelated dimensions of student experience: the 'personal', 'interactional', 'contextual' and 'temporal' dimension. Each of these four dimensions of student experience correspond to the following orienting questions of the current Chapter:

1. How do students' personal characteristics affect their experiences in each context? (the 'personal' dimension)
2. What is the nature of the students' interactions in the two contexts? (the 'interactional' dimension)
3. How do the different systems operate in each context and how do these impact on student experiences? (the 'contextual' dimension)
4. How do specific events/activities of secondary school life and students' past histories impact on their current experiences? (the 'temporal' dimension).

In particular, the questions above are used to guide the discussion of this Chapter. Although these have already been answered in Chapter Six, this Chapter goes on to link those answers to the literature. Specifically, it begins by deconstructing the method and process of analysis adopted. It continues with a discussion structured around the four dimensions of experience that have come up from the integrated analysis (Sections 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3, 7.2.4). This includes the main findings presented in Chapter Six (Presentation of Findings), linked with relevant literature which draws mainly from Chapter Two (Literature review) and Chapter Four (Theoretical Framework). The study's overall question is answered clearly at the end of the chapter (Section 7.3). This final section provides an overall account of the use of the bio-ecological framework and how this has contributed to unravel the meaning of student voice

in this study, and vice versa. The account also includes methodological reflections on the implications that this dialectical view of the two theoretical perspectives has for inclusive research, policy and practice.

7.2. Understanding student experience from a bio-ecological perspective

This study aimed to understand the nature of the dynamic forces that shape students' development, by beginning from the experiential side and examining how the environment of secondary schooling is perceived by students. The integrated theoretical framework of the study (see Section 4.4) permitted a meaningful exploration of the students' lived experiences within and across the two systems of England and Greece. This was achieved in two subsequent phases. Firstly, individual student data were constructed into students' personal experience stories. Through this process I was able to tease out a number of aspects of secondary school life that students perceived as important and to organise them according to the PPCT structures. This approach permitted the illumination of the complexity of student experiences and provided a first level of reflection regarding these experiences.

The second level of reflection around student experiences was done through the systematic process of making sense of the student voices captured in their stories. This was done systematically and thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by looking closely at each component of the PPCT model that was entailed in all student narratives (see the four student stories presented in Chapter Five, as well as the eight other stories available in the Appendices XIV-XXI). During this phase, the individual stories were selected and grouped for collective sense-making and were further scrutinised through the study's student voice critical framework so as to provoke meaningful reflection, interpretation and discussion (See Section 4.3).

This process of applying the specific elements of the PPCT theory has helped me to unravel four corresponding and interrelated dimensions of student experience: the 'personal', 'interactional', 'contextual' and 'temporal' dimension. These four dimensions of student experience are discussed below.

7.2.1. The personal dimension of student experience

(How do students' personal characteristics affect their experiences in each context?)

To reiterate, the bio-ecological model acknowledges that a child's own repertoire of personal characteristics serves as a primary source of influence shaping her/his development. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) three aspects of the individual's biopsychological characteristics are deemed most influential in mediating interactions at the microsystem level: dispositions ('Force' characteristics), bioecological 'Resources' and 'Demand' characteristics. 'Demand' refers to 'personal stimulus characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 303) which can influence the ways in which other people respond to, and the expectations they have for a given individual (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). The 'Demand' characteristics of the students in this study were related mainly to the students' type of 'SEN/D', age and ethnic background.

In particular, this study has illuminated that the students' type of 'SEN/D' was a major characteristic, affecting their experiences in multiple ways. The analysis included detailed interpretations relating to the way the type of SEN/D interacts with the other personal characteristics (see Section 6.2). It is noted that the level of severity of SEN/D is conceptualised in this study in terms of the degree that the disabling condition (type of SEN/D) affects their participation and engagement in the school. In that sense, some data suggested that the more severe the students' type of SEN/D and the more challenging were their needs, the more responsive was the environment around the students, which, in some cases, also lowered the teachers' expectations about them. In these cases, the type of SEN/D appeared to act for some students as a disruptive characteristic (for example, in the case of Mani, Ben, Yiorgos), as it was found to provoke negative reactions and lower expectations from their teachers, which in turn had direct implications for students' chances of development in school. This latter finding is consistent with previous research indicating that teachers are significantly influenced by child-related variables, such as the nature and severity of the disabling condition (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006); teacher's attitudes towards disability per se have been found to 'lead to low expectations of a person with a disability' (Forlin et al., 1999, p. 209) which in turn could affect their effectiveness of their inclusive practices and could lead to reduced learning opportunities for students with SEN/D (Campbell et al., 2003).

In this study, when the type of SEN/D was not very clear from the official diagnoses, the students' statements and labels did not necessarily dictate the type of their provision. Such findings link to the previous discussion about the issues associated with labelling, categorisation and normality, which were analysed in Chapter Two. Firstly, they provide further support to the view presented in the study's review that labelling might serve more administrative and funding purposes, rather than pedagogical and learning purposes (Avramidis, 2013; Norwich, 2010).

Another important finding was that the students' type of SEN/D was not always acting as a barrier to their self-awareness, motivation, goal setting and development of future plans. Therefore, this study's data, although they highlight the barriers that the students face due to their particular SEN/D, they also challenge the sub-conscious negative assumptions of teachers about students' capacities and goals which often derive from a 'medical model' way of thinking (Rieser, 2012). In some cases, these assumptions have been found to impede students' opportunities for growth (for example, in Iakovos' and Marios' case).

These findings validate the contested and constructed nature of the concept of 'SEN/D' and support the idea of placing less emphasis on the identification and labelling students; such practice might not prevent them from being stigmatised, but it is necessary in an effort to see beyond the labels, challenge pre-conceived notions about disability and treat students as persons, and not merely as individuals with disabilities. Such efforts to remove forms of exclusionary beliefs, assumptions and practices are necessary in the quest for a more equitable and inclusive education (Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006).

'Age' was another personal component which emerged as a 'Demand' characteristic and was found to have a differentiated impact on student experiences. For example, being older seemed to have a positive impact on Iakovos, whereas Debbie's age was found to affect adversely her mental health. The latter finding has also been stressed by Campbell (1975) who has noted that age-liked intellectual development and health experiences as moderated by age contribute to more sophisticated definitions of disability. Overall, these findings suggest the idea that the personal variables of age and maturity affect considerably the experiences of adolescents in school; in particular, the enhanced awareness of individual differences and the perception of problems as being more substantial at the secondary school level indicates the students' greater needs in the area of social support. Finally, the

ethnic background, which constituted a unique 'Demand' characteristic for one student from Greece (Anna), confirms the importance of considering different personal characteristics when trying to include students in the secondary education level.

According to the study's theoretical model, 'Force' characteristics include students' particular traits of their temperament that affect their proximal processes i.e. the forms of their systematic interactions in their immediate environment. These are further categorised as developmentally 'generative characteristics' -when they support their growth and development- and as developmentally 'disruptive characteristics', when they impede a person's development. In this study, the key 'Force' characteristics revealed by the students were related to their temperament, motivation and anxiety levels.

Some students appeared as 'quick-tempered', a personal feature which affected considerably their experiences in both contexts. Some student data implied that students' anger might have been a sign of frustration because they were being misunderstood, unappreciated by teachers and classmates and their voices were not adequately heard in school. This finding is consistent with other studies (see for example Reid and Button, 1995) and stress the need to develop appropriate strategies for the prevention and management of student anger and frustration, as essential skills to be acquired in inclusive settings (Hill and Ryan, 2010; Winter, and O'Raw, 2010).

Some students showed a clear tendency to develop symptoms of anxiety, which could also be associated with the specific type of SEN/D. Other studies have also indicated a number of barriers for students with SEN/D which increase their exposure and vulnerability (see for example Humphrey and Lewis, 2008). Stress and anxiety as a condition has been documented as a strong limiting factor for academic achievement (Puskar and Bernardo, 2007; Rothon et al., 2009). As noted in the literature review, the competition and social comparison that exists in secondary school life can create considerable barriers (De Vroey et al., 2015), contributing to feelings of stress and fear of failure which might in turn have negative psychological and motivational effects for students.

Although students' nervous temperament and anxiety levels was found in some cases as a disruptive characteristic which hindered their development, 'motivation' appeared in the student stories both as a disruptive characteristic and a generative characteristic. Students differed considerably in terms of their personal goals and aspirations and how these were

constructed. Lack of motivation was evident in some students (i.e. in the case of Debbie, Mani, Ben, Stathis), which constituted a disruptive characteristic as it affected negatively their engagement and participation in the classroom. Students' low levels of motivation might contribute further to the construction of their SEN/D; and teachers, by increasing their demands and 'pushing' for participation, can in turn reinforce students' lack of interest and resistance (for example in Debbie's case). This finding agrees with others showing that despite the high level of support provided by schools, motivation is still a challenge for some students (Squires et al., 2016).

Contrary to the data above, there were cases where students' clear goals and future plans proved to be a generative characteristic, as they acted as a motive for their progress in learning. Most students reported being extrinsically motivated either by job prospects or exams and being intrinsically motivated by an interest in a particular subject. However, the study's critical framework revealed that some SEN practitioners were unaware of these students' aspirations and believed that they did not hold any ambition. This finding shows clearly how student voice can illuminate important personal variables, such as students' levels of motivation. It also highlights the need to question such contradictory views about SEN/D students' attitudes, level of engagement and how these students are positioned within the school. Finally, it validates the claim of this study that the best way to better understand students and their experiences is to take the time to listen for understanding, by trying to challenge pre-determined beliefs about SEN/D. As other researchers have suggested, emphasising on motivational factors and personal agency is key to student growth and achievement (Elliott, 2014). Overall, the findings related to 'Force' characteristics are in accordance with a significant body of research evidence which indicates that positive and negative subjective forces can contribute in powerful ways to shaping a child's course of development (Bronfenbrenner and Evans 2000; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998, 2006).

In this study, the 'Resource' element of the model referred to the students' characteristics that were influencing their capacity to engage effectively in proximal processes. The analysis of the student data revealed as major 'Resource' characteristics the students' perceived skills and abilities. When students emphasised on their specific talents and skills (i.e. Anna, John), these were found to act in most cases as a boost to their self-esteem and self-confidence, which had a positive impact on their engagement and personal development. This result is

consistent with other studies indicating the correlation between personal skills and student engagement (Zhang, 2015; 2018). There were also instances where students did not mention any remarkable skill and ability (i.e. in the case of Jo, Ben, Yiorgos). However, the fact that the students did not acknowledge any other resources in the form of capacities and strengths could be associated with their low level of self-awareness. These findings are pertinent to the ongoing discussions around the need to improve the self-concept of students with SEN/D (see for example Avramidis, 2013).

Finally, students' personal learning styles emerged as another 'Resource' characteristic. These included different preferences in respect to working independently, working in groups and seeking the support of peers and adults in the classroom. These findings stress the need for flexibility in teaching and learning approaches and are consistent with the literature noting that a flexible continuum of provision is needed in schools to account for different student preferences and styles of learning (Vlachou et al., 2006; European Agency, 2016a).

The analysis has also illuminated the way that the 'Resource' characteristics are linked with the 'Force' characteristics of the model. In some cases, the apparent lack of certain 'Resource' and 'Force' characteristics (e.g. perceived abilities and skills, motivation) seemed to hinder students' effective interaction with the immediate contexts at school and, in turn their development as persons. These person characteristics have been found to work together with the dynamics of the other ecological levels to influence students' development of individual talents, skills and abilities in school, something that has been validated in past relevant studies (see for example Thor, 2016; Zhang, 2015). Overall, this study has demonstrated students' different and unique skills, abilities and interests that go beyond their labels, agreeing with a considerable amount of literature which stresses the need to challenge the attitudes and stereotypes that society attaches to the students with a label of SEN/D (see Humphrey and Lewis, 2008). It also highlights the need for inclusive structures to include more holistic programmes, relevant to different student profiles, which can promote positive experiences of learning and real opportunities of personal growth.

7.2.2. The interactional dimension of experience

(What is the nature of the students' interactions in the two contexts?)

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), the term 'experience' can relate to feelings about self or to others and can also apply to the activities in which we engage. This study has revealed that as students developed in the proximal processes of interacting with their environment, their conceptualisations of their experiences at secondary school evolved, and these conceptualisations in turn mediated students' interactions with the context.

The 'Process' lens of the bio-ecological model was found to have the biggest impact on shaping the student experiences and has revealed the interactive dimension of experience, which proved to be the key engine of students' development. In this study, the main interpersonal interactions of the students were found to be with their peers, their teachers and the special support staff. Regarding the student interactions with tasks, two basic themes emerged: 'curriculum' and 'school spaces'.

Peer relationships: Overall, data of this study showed that when students valued their peer relationships, these were found to affect their experiences and well-being in school. The perceived quality of the students' proximal processes with their peers was also related to their type of SEN/D. Specifically:

- Some students formed connections with other students with SEN/D who shared similar characteristics and with whom they could identify (i.e. Debbie, Yiorgos). Previous studies confirm this finding, by noting that social acceptance and indices of peer-related social competence are associated with the type of disability and characteristics of individual children (see Odom et al., 2006).
- A tendency to prefer adults than peers was found in two students in the study (John and Liam), who were both sharing similar characteristics of ADHD and autism. This finding is in line with other research showing that students with autism often struggle to develop age-appropriate friendships (Dawson et al., 2004; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008).
- Some contradictory views were found regarding the quality of peer friendships between the focal students, their peers and their teachers, which sometimes resulted in 'one-sided' friendships (for example, in the case of Stathis and Anna). Such findings indicate the need to examine more closely the quality and durability of the friendships of students with SEN/D, as suggested by other studies (Avramidis et al., 2018; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008).

What is more, although some students reported that they were receiving support from their classmates (e.g. Stathis, Debbie), this was not necessarily enhancing their inclusion. As other studies have shown, being in close proximity to typically developing peers does not necessarily result in meaningful interactions (see Humphrey and Lewis, 2008; Kauffman and Badar, 2014). This finding suggests that teachers need to take account of the power of peer relationships and status to increase students' involvement in classroom activities (Nuthall, 2007).

Overall, the students in this study reported few instances of peer acceptance, limited social interactions with their peers and had few friends, a finding that is in line with other studies (see Avramidis et al., 2018; Squires et al., 2016). Findings from this study confirm previous research findings which suggest that meaningful peer relationships are important for the creation of a supportive environment for the students with SEN/D (Squires et al., 2016).

Relationships with mainstream teachers: Interactions between the students and their teachers in the mainstream classrooms was rather limited, particularly in comparison with the frequency and quality of their interactions with the specialist staff. Negative relationships and tensions experienced with some of their mainstream teachers appeared to have a great impact on their school experiences. In some cases, students' learning behaviour and level of motivation was dependent on the relationships with the teachers (i.e. in the case of Iakovos and Marios).

This finding is in line with other research suggesting the importance of developing a close and positive rapport between mainstream teachers and students with SEN/D (see Crouch et al., 2014). As stressed in the literature review, mainstream teachers fail to do so, as they often feel that these students are not their responsibility. The students' labelling and type of SEN/D might also be a contributing factor to their weak relationships, as it can also lead teachers to believe that they are not qualified to teach these students (Slee, 2009). Research evidence coming from the UK also suggests that mainstream teachers tend to rely on TAs to include students with SEN/D in mainstream classrooms, a tendency which may imply teachers' failure to articulate appropriate and pedagogically sound models of inclusive provision (Webster, 2014).

Students tended to appreciate more the teachers who were not shouting, and who were 'nice', 'kind' and 'willing to help' them. When students had formed at least some kind of

close relationship with their mainstream teachers, this seemed to be particularly beneficial for their school experience and their educational growth. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of struggles and particular needs were affecting students' proximal processes with them. Such findings prove that meaningful interaction with mainstream staff can influence students' learning particularly when it happens in response to individual student needs. This person-environment co-variation underscores why it is important for teachers specially to establish rapport and to care for students as individuals before effective learning can occur. It comes in accordance with other research that calls for the development of closer and more positive student-teacher relationships (see for example Backman et al., 2012; Thor, 2016).

Relationships with special support staff: In both contexts, divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged regarding the interactions of the students with the special support staff. These were related mostly to the level of dependence that the students had with them. In the schools where the special unit or inclusion class was acting as the 'shelter' of students (i.e. in Ikarion and Mapleland School) the relationships with the special staff were stronger in comparison to the mainstream teachers. Sometimes these special bonds played the most important role in some students' life in school and acted as the engines of their engagement and academic development (for example, for Ben, Iakovos, Liam). Contrary to expectations, two students' social self-concept (Liam's and John's) was not related to their acceptance by peers but was positively related to the quality of their interactions with adults, and especially the specialist staff in their school.

This finding is echoed in previous research on the impact of adult support on the participation and learning of students in mainstream schools. For example, the review of Howes et al. (2003) has provided strong evidence which proves that the efforts of adult support staff have a direct impact on students' participation in school and are generally important and useful in promoting inclusion. However, some data from that study also highlighted a high level of dependence of students on their support workers, something that questions the extent to which supporting the development of such relationships is indeed beneficial for students' independence. In fact, some other researchers have shown that, in general, the more support students receive from teaching assistants, the less progress they make (Blatchford et al., 2012) or that too much support can increase student

feelings of inadequacy and dependency (European Agency, 2013). Overall, this study's findings related to the students' relationships with the special support staff highlight the interactional dimension of experience and underscore that a student's own ecology of relationships is a primary condition fuelling her/his development.

Curriculum: Curriculum constituted the students' main interaction with objects and symbols (i.e. tasks) and in certain subject areas it appeared to be an element that helps them develop. Some curriculum subjects received special attention in the students' stories, because of the personal interest that these had for the students. This finding corresponds with the 'Person' characteristics, and in particular with the students' 'motivation' for specific subjects. Softer subjects were reported as preferable. It was striking that Debbie, who was a wheelchair user, reported increased motivation for the PE lesson. This example proves that with the appropriate adjustments, all lessons can promote a transformative change to students who experience physical barriers.

However, many students commented on the complexity of certain curricular subjects and the highly demanding content and examinations in the secondary school level, which seemed to act as a barrier to their development. This finding is associated with the current discourses about assessment frameworks in secondary education. As noted in the review, these commonly rely on narrow, standardised measures of attainment and do not take into account wider and more authentic learning outcomes (European Agency, 2018d; Kefallinou and Donnelly, 2016).

School spaces: Overall, satisfaction was expressed about school spaces and facilities; students also reported positive, informal experiences of learning that were extended outside the classrooms. These were offering social opportunities which made school more fun and enjoyable. This finding has been emphasised by other studies, such as Backman et al. (2012), who found that the learning processes in outings were among the most important aspects perceived by students for promoting a positive school environment.

Despite the general positive perceptions of the school outings, students in this study were found to be adversely affected by attending large schools. The large school size was posing challenges especially for students in the UK, who reported difficulties in orientation and finding certain classes. The impact of school size is a factor which has been extensively researched previously, especially in relation to its impact on school performance. Although

there are empirical results that suggest a positive relationship between student outcomes and large secondary school size (see for example Barnett et al. 2002), other reviews provide persuasive support about the negative impact of large schools and the superiority of smaller schools, especially for minority students (see Cotton, 1996), something that was suggested from the student data in this study.

Finally, it's worth noting here a unique example from the data related to the school spaces, which indicates the potential of student agency. The Greek student views on the layout of the 'inclusion classes' contradicted with the 'inclusion' teachers' views. Such contradictions show that consulting students and listening to their opinions on important and basic issues, such as how they can concentrate and learn better, cannot be neglected in school reality. As highlighted in the literature review, students' insights about their own learning and school experiences can encourage appropriate changes which can in turn facilitate their academic development (Groves and Welsh, 2010).

7.2.3. The contextual dimension of experience

(How do the different systems operate in each context and how do these impact on student experiences?)

This dimension of experience considers the factors operating in each of the wider systems comprising the students' world i.e. the mesosystem, exosystem and macro-system. As outlined in Chapter Four, for this study the micro-system included the settings of family, features of the school (i.e. school culture, lessons, school resources, school policies and practices) as well as other important people and objects which are situated in the students' immediate environment (i.e. extended family members, close friends, other professionals). The mesosystem was examined by looking at the interactions between the students' microsystems which might influence their experiences (that is home, school, and neighbourhood, peer group etc.). The exosystem is composed of the community environment and the external network of stakeholders within the community. The macro-system was embodied in this study by the entire societal culture (including national education laws and policies, social welfare conditions, economic system, political landscape, societal culture, education values and norms, and youth culture).

These three outer ecological layers made up the context component of the PPCT mode. Providing to the student stories adequate contextualisation contributed to the sense-

making of their experiences in a broader sense. When connected to the study's student voice critical framework (see Section 4.3), stories in their collective form helped to draw attention to important issues which were relevant nationally and/or internationally. Through this fresh insight into the stories it was possible to draw certain differences and similarities of student experiences between the two cultural contexts.

To reiterate, this study might have used the term 'cross-cultural comparison', to refer to this comparative element of the study, but its focus was far beyond the scope of what has been described as a strictly comparative education study. I share D'Alessio and Cowan's (2013) concerns on the use of the term 'comparative', who note that 'the appropriation of such a term might imply or evoke an idea of a standardized 'model' or a template that is described and understood in order to be transferred and adapted from one setting to another' (p. 229). Rather, as explained in Chapter One, the role of the cross-cultural insights in this study was to engage with the complexities of local education processes, as there were observed and perceived by my participants, while at the same time being able to abstract 'regularities' (Artiles and Dyson, 2005) that can inform the reader about student diversity and the inclusion process at a wider, international level.

The contextual analysis of student experiences included a mapping of the influence that the immediate contexts (Microsystem and Mesosystem) had on the student experiences across the four schools. Within the students' Microsystem, different processes operated which were not separate, but rather interrelated with each other. It was by establishing and maintaining various relationships and by engaging with different tasks (both academic and non-academic) within these immediate systems that students achieved development as individual persons. Moreover, student experiences and development were under the influence of certain Exosystems (such as external special education services) and Macrosystems (elements within the English and Greek socio-cultural contexts). These four contextual dimensions of experience are discussed in the sections that follow.

The microsystem: Although the students' contextual influences originate from sources at multiple levels of the environment, this study revealed that students were mostly influenced by the direct interaction with individuals, activities and objects in the microsystems of the school and the family. What emerged from the analysis was that the micro-systemic ecologies of each student differed in relation to the level of opportunities and progression

they had had, thereby influencing the quality of their school experiences. In this section, I mainly focus on these immediate environmental influences which were represented by the 'Family and important others', and the schools' 'Supporting structures and practices' and 'School ethos'.

Overall, 'Family and important others' has emerged as an important micro-systemic factor within students' stories and seemed to have considerable power to affect the students' experiences in school. In some cases, family and important others appeared to have a positive impact on students' experiences; however, some students' disruptive behaviours were found to be present in the school as a function of the lack of parental and family responsiveness. This finding is consistent with a bulk of research evidence which indicates that family support and parental involvement in school has a powerful impact on students' engagement, adjustment and attainment (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

Another important micro-systemic factor that has emerged from the analysis of the student data was the 'School ethos', referring to the schools' 'inclusivity' and its 'sense of belonging'. Overall, students agreed on their school's inclusive ethos and felt that this had a positive social impact for them. Students mentioned that this element of their school enriched their overall school experiences by providing diversity and giving them the opportunity to learn about people who face challenges or have a different background. The value of an inclusive school ethos and culture has been well documented in the literature (see European Agency, 2018e; López et al., 2016). However, the way this inclusive ethos is embedded into the everyday school life was raised as an issue of attention, especially for the Greek schools.

What constituted the most important micro-system setting in this study were the 'Supportive structures and practices' provided in the schools, as these experienced by students. Significant differences were found in the way these structures were operating, even within the same national context. This finding is in line with previous studies which highlight the obvious lack of coherence in the development of support services for students with disabilities and the prevailing variety in placement patterns (European Commission, 2013; Rix et al., 2013; Vislie, 2003).

Overall, the specialist units contributed to the students' learning and the well-being and seemed to be what made them feel included. In fact, fewer bonds with mainstream teachers were found to exist in the schools where the provision structures were perceived as 'safer'

places, compared to mainstream classes. Students within the SEN/inclusion departments were probably experiencing enhanced attention and acceptance by the special support staff, something that was missing from the mainstream classes. This finding agrees with previous research which has highlighted the important distinction between inclusive schools and inclusive classrooms (see for example Norwich and Kelly, 2004). Other studies have also showed that a sense of belonging in a school is more likely to result from placement in a resource room or special class than a mainstream classroom (Hornby, 2015). This is also linked with previous research findings which show that personal characteristics and the type of SEN/D affect their perceptions and preferences about supporting structures and practices. As noted in the literature review, the more severe the type of needs, the more likely students prefer to be educated in segregated, special settings (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). In previous research attempts to surface students' views, it appeared that students had distinct opinions over the type of provision they preferred, opting for a continuum of services to be available rather than reliance on any particular approach (see Squires et al., 2016).

However, some differences were found regarding the way students viewed the 'inclusion' classes in individual schools and contexts. In the Greek context, the 'inclusion' classes were targeting the students' academic progress. This finding aligns with the Greek literature which stresses that SEN/D specialists are the only professionals responsible for students with SEN/D in mainstream schools (Lappas, 1997). Therefore, these data from this study agree with other researchers who have stressed that inclusive education in Greece is synonym with the process of accommodating children with SEN/D mainly through increasing and expanding special education (see Reraki, 2015; Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006; Vlachou, 2006).

The support provided in the UK schools seemed to be more adaptable and included making special arrangements for certain students according to their individual needs. For example, in Jo's case (Oakland school) the staff has adapted her support according to her progress, something that was appreciated by her. However, although more variability and flexibility in the supporting structures were more evident in the English schools, all students focused particularly on the academic support they received from the TAs and within the SEN departments, and not on the support they received from other school staff in the school.

In fact, while the form of the supportive structures might have been inclusive in shape, it seemed to rely often in a pull-out model and, as such, become somewhat segregative. For example, in Mapleland School, although all participating students attended mainstream classrooms, they seemed to be attached to the support workers and the SEN department. Such data are linked to the traditional tension between special and educational services, described in the literature review as the 'dilemma of difference' (see Section 2.3.2). The specialist units that were examined in this study prevailed as the major structure of provision for students with SEN/D, regardless of the national context. However, as mentioned in the study's review, the full inclusion model sees special units and programmes as a form of exclusion, even within a mainstream setting (Ferguson, 2008; Slee, 2010).

Taken together, the data of this study regarding 'Supporting structures and practices', along with the findings of the literature review, validate the notion that despite the theoretical ground of a full inclusion model, major inconsistencies still exist about its implementation (Vislie, 2003). The literature review, combined with the empirical findings above have validated the view that 'inclusive education, despite its commitment to addressing the needs of all learners, is mainly implemented in the form of programmatic regularities, which fail to initiate broad school reforms' (Strogilos and Avramidis, 2017, p. 96). The theory-practice gap confirmed in this study highlights the need of finding the 'how' of the full inclusion theory, so that it is not characterised as being solely 'ideal'.

The mesosystem: Data of this study have shown that students' experiences are shaped as a result of their interactions within overlapping microsystem settings, such the family and school environment. More specifically, the 'Family-school relations' have emerged as the main mesosystemic feature affecting students' experiences. Examples from student stories showed some close links between home and school, especially in the UK schools; these links were affecting positively students' experiences in school and were found to be most of the times dependent on the close student relationships with the special support staff (i.e. their proximal processes). Conversely, absence of home-school links were found to have a negative impact on the students' motivation and engagement with school. The dynamics of home-school relations have traditionally been an issue of concern (McNamara, et al., 2000), with a vast amount of literature documenting the benefits of family involvement in students' academic growth (European Agency, 2016a).

Finally, when student data showed incongruent mesosystemic features (for example, Ben's different behaviour management strategies in school and at home), students were less likely to benefit from sustained proximal processes that are necessary for their development. These data highlight the importance of identifying and understanding different mesosystemic elements and the way these might affect student experiences. As previous studies have highlighted, 'giving attention to how the components of a student's life fit together' is central to the effort of supporting student growth and progression (Thon, 2016, p.166).

The exosystem: Despite the differences between the countries, it can be inferred that the special education services outside school had an indirect, but in some cases, significant impact on the student experiences in school. In the UK, references within students' stories indicated closer links between the school and external agencies, which seemed to provide opportunities for more quality support for students. However, in Greece, external special education centers and agencies which provided support to students were working in parallel but independently from the schools; no evidence of cooperation between the services and the schools was found within the students' stories or the staff interviews. This has been a consistent finding within the inclusive literature: while the active interagency cooperation has been emphasised, in many countries the lack of sufficient collaboration between services and schools seems to remain a main challenge and a barrier to the quality of the education provided to learners with disabilities (European Agency, 2018d).

The macrosystem: Elements of the 'political landscape' in Greece, 'features of the secondary education system' and the issue of each society's 'cultural articulation of SEN/D' have formed the main themes of the Macrosystem in this study.

Similarities between the two contexts: The most important macrosystemic elements for student experiences were mostly related to certain aspects of the organisation of the secondary school systems. Specifically, it was found that certain aspects of secondary school life (i.e. flexibility of specialised support, smooth transition experiences from primary school), were perceived positively by students in both contexts. These findings reveal that students in both contexts share many of the same views documented in the international literature (see for example Squires et al., 2016).

Other secondary school aspects, such as the frequent exams and the grading system, were affecting negatively student experiences regardless of the particular school or national context. There is a general agreement within the literature that exams and assessment frameworks, as main features of secondary schooling, affect the quality of teaching and learning (Kefallinou and Donnelly, 2016). Secondary education's demands for accountability are high, hence schools tend to define school effectiveness solely by the learning outcomes of their students (Davies and Howes 2005; De Vroey et al., 2015). Because of these pressuring demands, assumptions about ability and diversity may be more persistent in secondary schools (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; De Vroey et al., 2015). It is therefore important to ensure a balance between on-going formative assessment and summative assessment (European Agency, 2018e; Kefallinou and Donnelly, 2016). Care must be taken not to allocate more resources to the subjects and skills that are tested reducing the time given to formative feedback and the development of learners' vital personal competencies (Muskin, 2015).

The abovementioned contextual elements were found to be similar for both English and Greek students. However, even though resources in schools might have been limited in Greek schools, compared to the UK, data from this study did not provide evidence of a strong or consistent relation between the availability of resources and student positive experiences of schooling. Although students in Greece expressed their will for more advanced facilities and resources, this had also been a wish for all students in the UK. Students in both contexts viewed their schools as being unique, especially when compared to other neighbourhood schools. Therefore, it can be argued that student positive views on their school, at least around this matter, were mostly shaped through comparisons within their immediate environment (for example, when they compared the resources and availability of neighbourhood schools), rather than wider contextual comparisons.

Differences between the two contexts: Unique systemic factors were found to somewhat differentiate the student experiences in the two systems. Specific contextual and cultural issues on several system levels were identified to have an effect on the way the students were conceptualising their experiences. In particular, perceptions about school inspections were embedded in the English students' stories ('Ofsted' inspections); relevant references were not found in the Greek stories, as school inspections are not part of everyday school life in Greece.

In Greece, the organisation of the schools had less hierarchical organisational structure with the headteachers concentrating more power in the management processes. Students in Greece recognised headteachers as persons of authority, but they also characterised them as being approachable. What is more, students in Greece have touched upon issues around the financial and social crisis, and migration issues. Regarding the migration issue in particular, students talked about the right of all students to be educated together; in many ways most interestingly, the capacity of some students to reflect on their experiences and views on these sensitive issues was impressive (see Anna's story, Section 5.5.2). This underscores again the danger that many school professionals should guard against, namely a tendency to underestimate the potential of all students -including those with SEN/D- to provide valuable data regarding current forms of provision as well as projected changes and developments (Vlachou et al., 2006).

Although students shared their anti-racist feelings and commented on migration issues from a human-right perspective, they did not refer to any concrete actions on how these principles are put into action in the school reality. This links to the literature review finding which has underscored that the human rights position on inclusion has yet to find the important answers to empirical questions around the development of more inclusive practices which should contribute to the improvement of education for all students (Lang et al., 2011). The efforts of eliminating racial and socioeconomic disadvantage is 'both a means and an end of this process' (Hamilton, 1984). To make more beneficial influences on adolescent development, it seems now more important than ever to develop strategies to tackle racist incidents in schools. Also, there is a need to create more opportunities for adolescents to interact with students of a wider range of ages and cultural backgrounds so as to better equip young people for contemporary society. Such opportunities might entail extending the developmental experiences of students out of the school borders, to the larger community (European Agency, 2018e).

In addition, contrasting ways emerged in which the students perceived their additional needs, which possibly reveal a cultural difference between the two contexts. Some students from the UK were found to have internalised more-adult like and sophisticated definition of disability. On the contrary, in Greece, references on labels, disabilities or SEN did not come up to any student story, with the exception of Anna. It was interesting that Anna used a

'lighter' term to describe her needs ('dyslexia', rather than 'autism'), which was perhaps what she has been told throughout her school life. Therefore, in the Greek context, students were not found to be stigmatised necessarily as a result of the process of identification or labelling, which very often lacks of systematic individual diagnostic procedures (Vlachou et al., 2006); rather, it seemed to be more associated to the fact that having any type of SEN/D and being the 'inclusion kids' marked them out as being different from their classmates in some way.

Coleridge (2000) notes that without an awareness of cultural issues surrounding disability and specifically how disability is perceived and discussed in a specific culture, special programmes do not stand much chance of being relevant or sustainable. Previous studies have also shown the importance of information and knowledge of disability issues internationally (Davis, and Watson, 2001; Magiati et al., 2002) and particularly for the Greek context (Kalyva and Agaliotis 2009; Ralli et al., 2011). The data in this study around the cultural articulation of SEN/D link directly with the review's discussion around the issues of labelling and categorisation, stressing the need to further raise awareness around disability. In particular, they show the importance for students to be exposed to a positive language concerning disability and SEN/D, which will allow them to discuss difference without causing feelings of discomfort or embarrassment.

7.2.4. The temporal dimension of experience

(How do specific events/activities of secondary school life and students' past histories impact on their current experiences?)

The bioecological model is a lifespan approach to human development; as such, 'Time' (also known as the 'chronosystem') was considered in this study as an important component in the way that students change and develop. The temporal dimension was illuminated through an examination of the student experiences in two levels: a) the level of mesotime, which captured the processes that occurred with a relevant frequency within the students' school life; b) the level of macrotime, which included students' processes from a more longitudinal perspective.

Two recurring themes related to mesotime have emerged from the analysis of student stories: '*Participation in school activities and events'* and *'Bullying incidents'.* As far as the first theme is concerned, in their vast majority students did not find school events so

pleasant and enjoyable, but characterised them as being rather 'boring', especially when their participation in these was obligatory. At a first glance, this finding contradicts with previous research suggesting that participation in extracurricular activities and school events enhances students' academic performance and sense of belonging (Hanewald, 2013). However, it is very likely that this finding indicates the inappropriate nature of these school activities, which highlights the need for schools to engage students in events and activities that are relevant, interesting and meaningful to them (European Agency, 2012b).

The other theme, *'Bullying incidents'* reflected the students' negative experiences related to incidents of tension, conflict and argument between them and their peers which entailed a power imbalance. Although such incidents were reported in both contexts, and with more consistency in the Greek schools, it has to be noted that the nature of these incidents was not so clear to permit a strict characterisation of 'bullying'. It is also important to note here that the students who clearly mentioned being the subject of bullying were the ones with the poorer social skills and fewer friendships. In fact, bullying is a contested concept that has been researched widely the last years, with international reviews showing that students with SEN/D tend to be more vulnerable to bullying incidents than those without SEN/D and that the type of SEN/D has a clear impact in the experience of bullying (see Humphrey and Hebron, 2015; Squires et al., 2016). Similarly, regarding the Greek context in particular, previous research has found that students receiving special education support provision are actively involved in both bullying and victimisation, with higher rates in victimisation (Andreou et al., 2013).

Taken together, the above findings stress the importance to educate students around the forms and manifestation of bullying behaviours as well as to develop the necessary social skills that may be preventative of bullying. This might be done through specific and targeted programmes which aim to prevent and tackle bullying incidents in schools (European Agency, 2018e; Winter and O'Raw, 2010). Most importantly, incidents of risky and antisocial behaviour can be minimised by enhancing the sense of belonging in school (OECD, 2017) and by focusing on a positive school environment and an inclusive ethos (European Agency, 2018e).

The temporal dimension of students' experiences was also examined from a longitudinal perspective ('macrotime'), beginning from primary and across different years of secondary

schooling. Two main themes have emerged related to the 'macrotime' element: 'Past experiences' and 'Behavioural progress'.

Firstly, all students in both countries have commented on the impact that their past school experiences had upon their current experiences in secondary school. Almost all students made special references on their transition experiences from primary school, which were mostly negative. Among others, students reported practical challenges in their adjustment in the new secondary school environment and social problems during their early experiences in secondary school. This finding agrees with the transition research which stresses early adolescents' concerns and anxieties related to transfer to secondary school (West et al., 2010). In fact, previous research has stressed that transitional issues can have a profound impact on the remaining years of students' school experience and even life after they finish compulsory schooling (Hanewald, 2013; West et al., 2010).

In this study, students in both contexts acknowledged that they felt supported through the transition process through familiarity with the building and developing relationships with 'key' members of staff; this last point was very important for all them and shows the importance of the staff's role in guiding students smoothly through the transitional period. As the data showed, student positive relationships with special support staff played an important mediating role in the process of students' transitioning from primary to secondary school. Therefore, it becomes evident that a positive start and appropriate preparation for the more demanding secondary school life is crucial for students' overall experience at secondary school, not only in terms of their academic engagement and progress (Wang and Eccles, 2012), but also of shaping their identities (Ecclestone, 2009; Hernandez-Martinez et al., 2011).

Finally, another significant temporal element which has emerged was the progress in terms of behaviour which was reported by many students, which sometimes resulted in changes in students' support. In some cases, this progress was manifested mostly as a reduction of their past aggressive or negative behaviours. The students' behavioural progress had a clear impact in their proximal processes, mostly with their peers and school staff. This progress might have been the positive outcome of the targeted interventions that the students had been receiving within the supporting structures of their school. However, it could also be attributed to the developmental growth of students, which is associated with personal

characteristics, and in particular, the 'Age' theme. The latter point implies that it is always important for educators to account for the individual developmental characteristics, which might interfere in students' progress. Another clear indication of this finding is that any progress of students, especially of those with SEN/D, needs sufficient time to be surfaced. As such, allowing more time to evaluate student progress might be a key strategy, which can help both teachers and students to develop the necessary growth mindset (Dweck, 2006; European Agency, 2018e).

7.3. An overarching conceptual framework of student experience: a dialectic between the bio-ecological perspective and the student voice critical framework

As shown previously, this study has followed a bio-ecological perspective to student experience, an approach which was married with the student voice lens of this study. In this section, I discuss how these two main elements of my study, brought together, contribute to a better understanding of inclusive processes, providing a clear answer to the study's main question i.e. '*In what ways can student voice increase our current knowledge and understanding of inclusive processes?*

Bronfenbrenner (1995) has underscored the key role element of the proximal processes and the need to focus on the operation of these processes and its effects. As shown in the literature review (Chapter Two), research on inclusive processes has received little academic attention and tends to be under theorised. This study used the PPCT framework to draw together the influences of student experience. I considered student experience as a developmental process where students mature intellectually, personally and emotionally. I decided to draw upon the nested levels of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to select, re-order, and re-shape the voice of my participants. The four dimensions of experience (personal, interactional, contextual and temporal) essentially provided a means of exploring the factors operating within the developing individuals and their multi-level environment. Taken together, they served as a powerful theoretical lens for understanding the students' developmental journeys, offering an explanation for the quality of their experiences in all levels: the level of the individual, the wider conditions that surround them and the intricate mechanisms of their processes over the course of time.

As shown in Chapter Two and Four, Bronfenbrenner's theory is highly structural and has been used in a variety of ways to understand different ecologies around the child. However, according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998, 2006) the scientific features of a person's environment do not only include its objective properties, but also the way in which the properties are subjectively experienced by this person living in that environment. As such, when applying the bioecological model, it is important to understand the forces which are driving the course of human development, beginning on the phenomenological or experiential side (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). In Chapter Two, I acknowledged previous studies which used the PPCT framework and stressed that what was missing from the current theory's applications was this experiential aspect from a subjective point of view. The study's review also noted that there are limited data available to explain the effects of

listening to individual student perspectives in inclusive research (See Section 2.7). The analysis concluded that inclusive processes can be studied through eco-systemic frameworks which expand across time and give the appropriate 'space' for student voice.

I began exactly from this experiential, subjective side by using the students' views and perspectives to propose a multi-layered understanding of their lived secondary school experiences. I attempted to provide and promote student agency, by giving opportunities to students to express freely their opinions about how they connect to their own identity and learning. This process included encouraging them to actively make sense of their experience and to take a more active role in the projects' planned activities (See Section 3.3.2). Student voice was the approach taken in this study of seeing and treating students as people first, with their own understandings and their own significant influence of their experiences. Overall, seeing and treating students as agents -rather than as just participants or subjects of the study- gave an ethical dimension to the findings by shining the lens of the 'personhood'.

Chapter Six proposed a bio-ecological working model of understanding student experience as an overarching theoretical framework in order to focus on the interactions in the inclusion process, rather than isolating selected variables of students and the environment. This model was used in dialectical relationship with the study's student voice critical framework, as explained in Chapter Four (see Section 4.3). These two analytical lenses have proven to be an effective means to understand each of the two dynamic forces which shape a person's development i.e. the objective and subjective. The dynamic view of both, illustrated in Figure 7.1 below, enabled me to communicate the richness of this study's data to the reader:

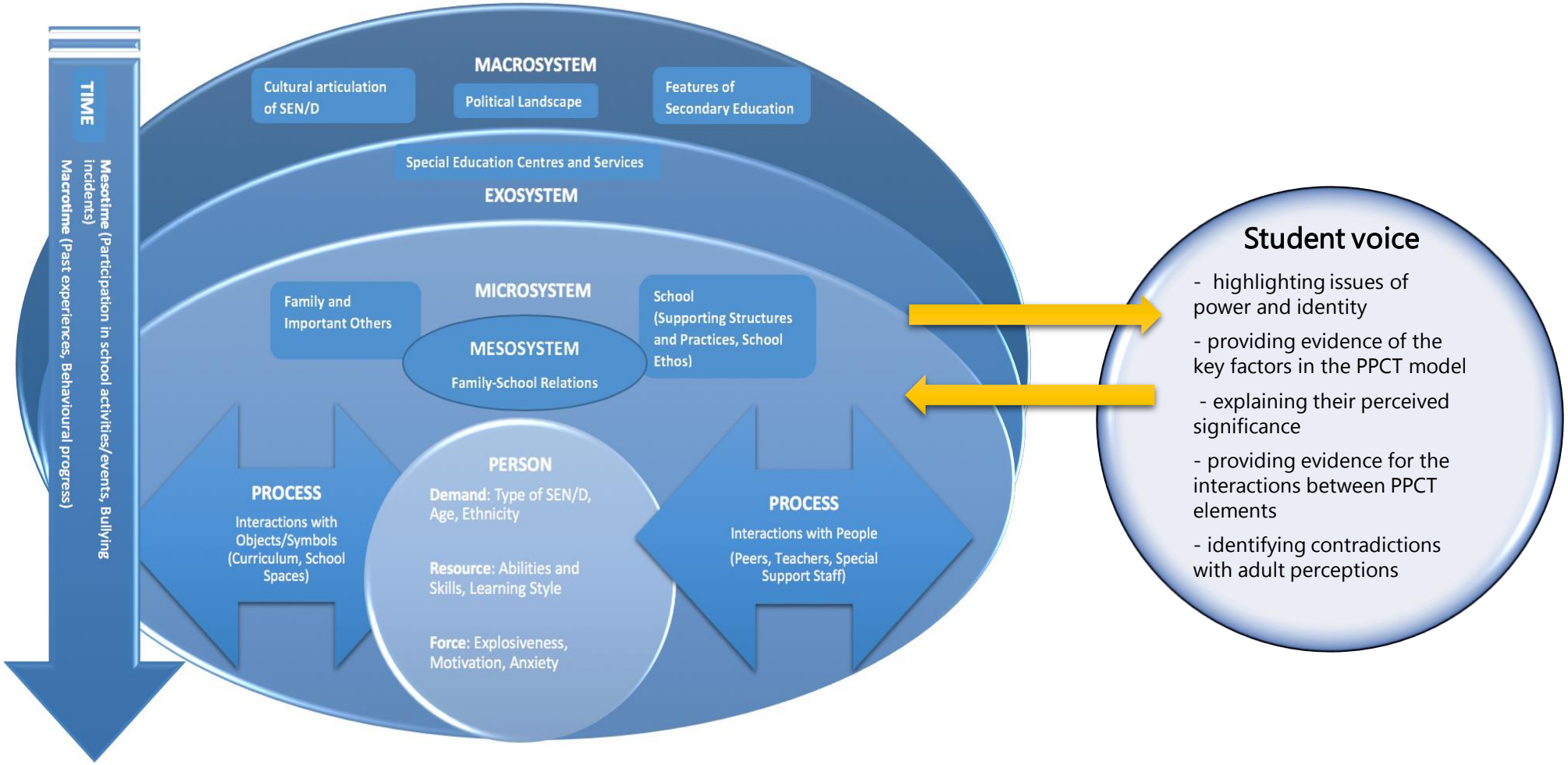

Figure 7.1 The Bio-ecological framework in dialectical relationship with the Student Voice critical framework

The dialectical relationship between the two analytical lenses are represented by the two orange arrows in Figure 7.1. The right arrow indicates that the elements of the PPCT model 'structure' the student voice, a process which allows to expand to many more areas of experience than student voice usually offers. At the same time, the left arrow shows how student voice strengthens the ethical significance of the PPCT analysis and offers new dimensions by placing the 'person' (i.e. the students) and the 'process' (i.e. their relationships) at the centre of the analysis. This combined approach leads to a comprehensive understanding of the students as 'persons', as well as the dynamics of the interaction between them and their multi-level interacting environments.

Specifically, the set of circles at the left of the figure represents the study's bio-ecological model of student experience, presented in Chapter Six (see Section 6.6). This model reflects the structured view of student experience, which was made possible by the application of the PPCT model. The overarching framework does not only reflect the objective side of experience (i.e. the contextual influences), but also emphasises on the subjective element of experience that drives student development. As shown in Chapter Six, this framework accounts particularly for student voice, by considering the perceived factors that contribute to the empowerment of students and allow them to apply their agency and develop as persons. The framework demonstrates how students, as the ultimate agents of experience, and the proximal processes of their interactions with peers, school staff and objects/symbols (e.g. curriculum, school spaces) are fundamental to the shaping of their identities, their participation in school life and their academic and personal development. It also illustrates how the support from schools (e.g. through supporting structures and practices, family-school relations), certain aspects of the broader socio-cultural environment and the wider culture (e.g. features of secondary schools, political landscape) as well as the dimension of time (e.g. transition from primary school) could mediate students' personal growth and shape their experiences accordingly. Overall, the bio-ecological framework of student experience suggests that the way students perceive their individual characteristics, their relationships with key people in school and their multi-level ecological system environments are inextricably intertwined in shaping their school experiences.

The right part of the figure represents the student voice critical framework used to reflect on the bio-ecological model of student experience. Reflecting through the student voice lens has contributed to a more holistic analysis of experiences, specifically by:

- highlighting issues of power and identity
- providing evidence of the key influencing factors in the PPCT model;
- explaining their perceived significance;
- providing evidence for the interactions between PPCT elements;
- identifying contradictions with others' perceptions (i.e. the school staff's and the researcher's).

In particular, students' insights revealed their sense of agency regarding the operation of the inclusive structures and practices and brought into light issues that would not normally be raised by adults (i.e. bullying incidents); they also illuminated unique student preferences and talents and other important personal variables (such as their awareness of their individual differences, primary school experiences, or how other components of their life might fit together, or not); finally, they recognised other cultural traditions and out-of-school experiences that students bring to the school setting. In a nutshell, student voice offered powerful evidence, explanations, counterpoints and highlighted important issues around student identities and their correlations to inclusive processes.

The dialectical view of the two analytical lenses influencing the project was based on the idea that such a dynamic view is necessary to capture the findings in a comprehensive way. On the one hand, by looking at the specific structures of the PPCT model through student voice, it was possible to get a particular understanding of how students situated themselves in their school, as well as in the wider policy contexts. Students did that in a meaningful way that allowed a better understanding of their experiences. On the other hand, the unique element of student voice has highlighted how inclusive processes, as an integral part of school experiences, are perceived by students in two different national contexts. It has also illuminated the value of investigating these processes through the bio-ecological lens. In this way, this study showed the increasing potential of listening to students in the understanding of inclusive processes and practices. The analysis of the data affirms the claim that this dynamic and dialectical view of the two lenses is a powerful way of looking at inclusive structures and processes. As such, the dialectic used in this research comes to plug a theoretical gap and helps the reader to see the inclusive structures and processes and how the students in their lived experiences understand those.

Finally, this study indicates that the dialectical view of the bio-ecological framework and student voice also provides opportunities for a deeper examination of inclusion in diverse settings. This can be achieved by exploring inclusive processes that account for the individual, as well as social factors within different national contexts. I have illustrated that the PPCT theory can provide the appropriate 'space' for student voice, which can promote inclusive research and practice locally, but also internationally. Data from this research have shown that this framework is not only relevant to individual contexts but can be distributed over people and systems and can help to better understand the interrelation between local and global policies and practices (as discussed in Chapter Two and Three). As already highlighted in the review of this study, cross-cultural and international research could reveal the shared challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the inclusion movement by understanding different system practices, their effectiveness, and thus adding knowledge to system capacity (Strogilos and Avramidis, 2017). The understanding of local inclusive processes and structures can serve as a productive resource for researchers and practitioners and can inform feasible suggestions for individual and societal developments. The significance of this study lies exactly in this proposition of a context-sensitive as well as subject-sensitive, systemic but also person-centered theoretical model which is able to examine locally inclusive processes, with the potential to cross national and cultural boundaries.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1. Introduction

This final Chapter offers an overview of the current research, by presenting the overall conclusions emerging from the findings. The Chapter begins with a summary and a brief critique of the study's empirical findings (Section 8.2); the discussion progresses to consider the empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution of this study (Section 8.3) and continues by providing the implications of the findings (Section 8.4). An overall reflection on the research journey and the research process follows (Section 8.5), outlining the study's challenges and limitations and suggesting future research directions (Section 8.6). The Chapter ends with some final thoughts about this thesis (Section 8.7).

8.2. Summary of key findings

This research explored the experiences of students with SEN/D in two English and two Greek secondary schools, by adopting their own perspectives and voice. It looked in particular at how secondary schooling is perceived by students in the two contexts through a bio-ecological lens i.e. the Process-Person-Context-Time model (PPCT). The overarching theoretical framework that this study proposed (see Section 7.3), substantiated in the two cultural contexts, showed how students' views and perspectives can provide a multi-layered understanding of their lived secondary school experiences. In a nutshell, this study has indicated that student voice combined with the PPCT framework provides opportunities for a deeper examination of inclusive experiences in diverse settings.

The findings of this study revealed four different, but interrelated aspects of secondary school experiences, corresponding to the main dimensions of the PPCT model: a) the *personal/individual aspect*, which included experiences affected mostly by students' personal characteristics (such as the type of SEN/D, their level of motivation or their abilities/skills). This aspect of experience encompassed students' sense of identity and therefore, was most directly connected to student agency and voice; b) the *interactional aspect* of experience, which was related to experiences resulting mainly from their interactions with people (such as peers, mainstream teachers, special education staff) and

objects/tasks (such as curriculum, school spaces) within the school c) the *contextual aspect* of experience i.e. the students' experiences formed by their interactions with elements of their immediate environment (such as the supporting structures and practices within the school, the school ethos, family-school relations) as well as elements of their less immediate environment (such as the external support services and cultural/societal norms); d) the *temporal aspect* of experience, which included certain students' processes occurring frequently within their school life and from a more longitudinal perspective.

The analysis demonstrated that focusing separately on each of these four dimensions of experience (personal, interactional, contextual and temporal) essentially helped to explore the factors affecting the students and their interactions with their environment. More specifically, the study's empirical findings indicated that the students' individual characteristics (such as their type of SEN/D, unique abilities/skills, level of motivation, temperament) constituted important factors which affected considerably and differently their experiences in both contexts. For some students, the type of SEN/D was found to have direct negative implications for their experiences and chances of development in school; however, it did not always act as a barrier to their self-awareness, motivation, and goal setting. It is interesting to note the differences found between the students' views about their future plans and levels of motivation and their teachers' opinions on these matters.

What occupied a central position in this study's dataset was the interplay between personal and interactional components (i.e. interactions with peers, school staff, curriculum and school spaces). For example, an important empirical finding was that in the case of some students with a more severe type of SEN/D (an important 'Person' characteristic), the environment was more responsive around them, but at the same time, teachers' expectations were lower, as indicated by the quality of their interactions with teachers ('Process').

The students reported few instances of peer acceptance, had fewer friends and fewer social interactions with classmates than their typically developing peers. A student tendency was surfaced to form connections with other students with SEN/D as well as adults, rather than their peers in the mainstream class. Some students' views on their social interactions contradicted with some observational data as well as teachers' opinions on this matter; these

contradictory data revealed the rather 'one-sided' friendships that some students had. Overall, the main factor which determined the quality of proximal processes with peers was found to be the value that the focal students attributed to peer friendships. What is more, students' interactions with certain curriculum subjects and school spaces/facilities, were found to play an important role in shaping student experiences, as these were contributing to their learning and well-being in school.

While a general lack of interaction with mainstream teachers was reported in and out of the classroom, divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged regarding the interactions of the students with the special support staff. Special bonds with the SEN staff formed within the supportive micro-settings of the school (i.e. the SEN departments in the UK and the 'inclusion classes' in Greece) were found to play a pivotal role in some students' life in school and acted as the motive of their participation and engagement in school. Students' relationships with 'key' support staff was also found to play an important mediating role during the process of transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Students' views on the supporting structures and practices of their school varied and were found to be mostly positive or neutral. In the Greek context, the 'inclusion' classes were identified as intensified support classes targeting the students' academic progress. In the UK, although more variability in the supporting structures was reported, students focused mainly on the support they received from the TAs and within the SEN Departments. An important aspect that was highlighted by students in both contexts was the level of flexibility in the support they received.

Certain aspects of secondary school life, such as the flexibility of specialised support and the inclusive school ethos, were perceived positively by students in both contexts. Other secondary school aspects, such as the frequent exams and the grading system, were found to affect negatively student experiences regardless of the particular school or national context. Students also reported positive views with regards to the availability of resources of their school in both contexts. Finally, through the course of time, significant behavioural progress was reported for most of the students in both contexts, which sometimes resulted in changes in their support, shaping their school experiences accordingly.

Nevertheless, unique systemic factors were identified to have a differential effect on the way the students were conceptualising their experiences. For example, students' stories indicated closer links between the school and external agencies in the UK compared to Greece. In addition, the lack of continuity in SEN teacher recruitment and therefore in student support, was found to affect negatively the experiences of the Greek students. This issue was not raised in the English context, as students in the UK are usually secured continuous SEN support. Students in Greece also reported being somewhat affected from the economic and migration crisis, issues that were not so relevant to the English context. Finally, contrasting ways emerged in the way students in the two contexts conceptualised and discussed about their additional needs. Some students from the UK were found to have internalised a more-adult like and sophisticated definition of disability. On the contrary, in Greece, references on labels, disabilities or SEN were avoided. This finding possibly reflects a cultural difference related to each society's different ways of discussing SEN and disability.

Overall, the process of analysis showed that whilst contextual issues related to policy and the wider culture might shape student experiences to an extent, it was primarily the students' continuing personal feelings and interpretations in dynamic interaction with key people in their school which determined the way they perceived their secondary experiences.

8.3. Contribution to knowledge

The unique contribution of this study lies exactly in the demonstration of the value of student voice to the actual meaning of the process of inclusion. From an empirical point of view, this study provided a level of cultural understanding of inclusion in diverse settings as it produced unique findings related to the secondary experiences of students with SEN/D across two diverse countries, England and Greece (outlined in Section 8.2). By looking across policy levels, it provided an understanding of each students' microsystems (such as school, family), mesosystem (such as family-school relations), exosystem (such as external support services), and macrosystem (features of secondary education) and the way these systems operate in the two countries. It also demonstrated the effects of national policies on individual student experiences. Overall, the study's findings support and expand other research findings and add to cross-cultural research in the secondary education level.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, the study's contribution lies in the dialectic approach of the PPCT framework with student voice that this study has proposed (see Section 4.4). The study's overarching bio-ecological framework of student experience provided a systematic and holistic approach to understanding the complexities involved in the secondary school life of students with SEN/D. In this overarching framework, the elements of the PPCT model structured the student voice and allowed to expand to many more areas of experience than student voice usually offers. At the same time, student voice strengthened the ethical significance of the PPCT analysis and offered new dimensions by placing the 'person' (i.e. the students) and the 'process' (i.e. their relationships) at the centre of the analysis. This combined approach has led to a comprehensive understanding of the students as 'persons', as well as the dynamics of the interaction between them and their multi-level interacting environments.

Such a dialectic approach can help stakeholders to think more carefully about the quality of student experiences in diverse contexts and possible ways to remove barriers to learning and participation. By using student voice as a starting point and by attempting to maintain its integrity, this study provided evidence to support the view that it is possible for all practitioners, policy makers and other researchers to place student voice at the core of inclusive processes and by doing so, move a step further towards the 'ideal' of inclusion.

8.4. The study's implications

This study stresses the equal importance of exploring students' perspectives and of investigating deeper the nature of their interactions within their school environment. Data of this study have provided evidence to support the view that inclusion incorporates:

> …a view of the human self that finds meaning in relationship to others, rather than being about the development of isolated individuals, and a view of education as an open-ended process of becoming for each person, rather than the achievement of pre-specified ends (Howes et al., 2009, p. 4).

To continue to objectify student existence and participation in education research, practice and policymaking is incongruous with the concept of inclusion. Therefore, the most important implication of this study is the need to re-conceptualise student development from a wider perspective, without objectifying students, but seeing them as persons with

unique characteristics. This can be achieved by empowering students and by paying attention to the different dimensions of what can be better understood by listening to students -not as 'experts' in institutional analysis, but as equal members of that institution.

More critical, systematic and 'objective' frameworks to work with students -such as the overarching framework that this study proposes- can help to 'resist the temptation to glamorize student voices' (Shor cited in O'Loughlin, 1995, p. 112), while at the same time can still keep the visibility and authenticity of voice in any discourse about student experiences. By identifying the different dimensions of experience within multiple ecological levels from an individual perspective, it becomes possible to describe and establish the conditions of learning and development for every student. In this way, students are given the freedom and space to develop their voice, while resisting to the challenge of 'romance' or 'tokenism' which is frequently associated with the student voice movement.

Finally, by testifying to the value of student voice in the actual meaning of the process of inclusion, this study showed why listening to students should not be neglected or used in a fragmented way, but should be part of everyday school practice. While equal opportunity policies in schools and the wider society are clearly essential, sound data from this study support the notion that these policies need to be advocated within a framework of a longer-term commitment to equity and human rights, including students' right to be heard in a meaningful way.

8.5. Reflection on the research journey

This research has taken me on a development journey from a PhD student to a professional researcher in the field of inclusive education. As mentioned in Chapter One, this journey started in Greece, where I developed my initial interest in the topic of inclusion as a secondary teacher and later as a post-graduate student. This journey continued in the UK, allowing me to undertake research activities and to look closer at the inclusive processes of another system, through the eyes of a foreign PhD student. This experience was the pivotal point that has persuaded me to scrutinise inclusive processes not only in Greece, but also in the UK, in an effort to learn 'from the outside'. Gradually, I developed the cross-cultural

perspective and the systemic focus of my study by focusing my research on the students' inclusive experiences in these two different contexts.

The second step sharpened my role as a researcher of children, when I engaged and practised the proposed student voice approach during my fieldwork in the two countries. The professional experience I had previously gained within different school contexts supported the development of trust between me and the participating students and provoked discussions that documented their school experiences and their developmental journeys. One strength of this study is that it allowed students to focus on their personal views, allowing them time for reflection and providing them with different opportunities to discuss their experiences outside the formalities of classroom life. The students in both contexts approached the guided tours and the photo-elicitation activities during the interviews with enthusiasm. My reflections on this activity suggested that the students enjoyed the process of consultation and had the necessary skills to develop their understanding through our open dialogue. Most importantly, this way of reflecting, sharing, and acting upon the data collection process promoted their agency. During the interviews, the students had the opportunity to discuss about their learning progression and developments offered by the class teachers; the support they received within the inclusive structures of their school; the concerns associated with secondary school life and beyond; the influence of their family, important others and teachers on their developmental journey; and their future goals and aspirations. The student accounts were further enlightened when teachers allowed me to discuss with them and to visit their classrooms and observe the actual students and their processes. Further conversations emerged by evaluating their school experiences and the roles of school structures, practices and teachers within their schools. On reflection, the students were a joy to work with, offering agency and honesty in all their contributions.

The final step of my research journey brought me out of the fieldwork and allowed time to reflect on and analyse the overall student experiences in the two contexts. My professional experience at the European Agency has helped me significantly to deal with the complexity of interpreting data from different educational systems. Most importantly, it enabled me to clarify the systemic focus of my study and to realise the potential of the bio-ecosystemic

perspective when researching in diverse contexts. The analytical process I followed has allowed me to discover the potential of combining the student voice critical framework of the study with the PPCT theory and to attempt to substantiate this theory in the two contexts I was researching. This analytical process has resulted in the development of the overarching framework that this study finally proposed.

8.6. Challenges, limitations and future directions

It is important at this point to acknowledge the study's challenges and limitations. These were imposed mainly by the two different contexts I was researching, the time frame of the study and the research design. At the very beginning of the project, I have encountered conceptual challenges related to terminology and specifically to the key concepts that underpin the study (i.e. inclusive practices, categorisation of SEN/D). I had to acknowledge that terms such as 'SEN/D' and 'inclusion' are perceived and addressed differently in England and Greece respectively, and therefore I had to provide clear, operational definitions of the study's concepts.

Relevant contextual issues coming from interaction between the Greek and British context and the differences of the two educational systems can be traced throughout this thesis, in both theoretical and methodological aspects of this study. For example, the background literature is international (theoretical aspect) while the Greek data were translated into English for the data analysis process and the final report (methodological aspect). Despite the breadth of the study, the fact that it took place in two national contexts meant that there was only a short time to work with students in each school. Despite the positive acknowledgements of contributions and the co-operation of the student participants, data collection could have been improved by subtle changes to the design and purpose of some activities.

Other challenges were related to several ethical issues that are inevitably raised when doing research with children (see Section 3.4). For instance, a relevant issue is the selection of areas to explore, which followed the adult agenda and may not coincide with student agendas. For feasibility purposes, I had chosen an approach which was committed to following the student voice values as closely as possible, whilst recognising its limitations: this was not a

full-scale participatory project with everyone involved in determining the agenda; my methods were predetermined, my presence in the schools was rather limited and the students' involvement, although flexible, was set in advance. Therefore, future research on student voice might consider how to increase participation of students, for example by providing longer and more flexible timescales, promoting further students' decision-making roles or treating them as co-researchers.

There is also potential bias in the selection of student participants, since their recruitment relied on teacher judgements. However, it has to be noted that students talked rather freely about their negative experiences as well as their positive experiences. It is also worth mentioning here that the experiences and characteristics reported in this study are not claimed to be unique to the participating SEN/D students, as no attempt was made to compare their experiences with those of their mainstream peers. What is more, no attempt was made to triangulate the accounts of lived experience being offered.

In addition, it is acknowledged that the claims made in this study came from a very disparate student sample. There is also an under-representation of students with severe disabilities and needs (only one participant had more severe needs) as well as other disadvantaged students, such as immigrant students. Future projects could consider focusing on the experiences of students with more complex needs as well as other disadvantaged groups of learners.

It is also acknowledged that this study involved a limited number of students from two schools in each context, as this was considered appropriate for the purposes of the study's in-depth enquiry (see Section 3.3.4). Although a representation of the two systems through the use of a larger sample was far beyond the scope of this study, future research may consider involving several schools to allow for a deeper examination of multiple contextual factors along with individual elements.

Finally, using a bio-ecological perspective to examine student experience inevitably raises important research questions, related for example to the kinds of character traits that optimise student development or the kind of environmental characteristics that elicit developmentally generative student traits; such questions also suggest possible future research directions. Overall, the study's overarching theoretical framework (see Section 7.3)

has helped to understand student experiences in the two national systems. However, it is not suggested that this framework can function as a tool for a systematic evaluation of inclusion practices in Greece and/or England. Rather, it is proposed as a theoretical tool, which reflects both the objective and the subjective side of experience and can be used to examine in more depth the quality of secondary experiences in different national contexts.

8.7. Final thoughts

The theoretical lens of the study has proved useful for understanding the students' developmental journeys, offering an exploration of the quality of their experiences in all levels: the level of the individual, the wider conditions that surround them and the intricate mechanisms of their processes over the course of time. The study's findings have highlighted the need for policy and practice to become more person-centered, especially in secondary schools, by acknowledging students' rights of participation and inclusion and promoting further student agency. Future research on inclusion needs to go beyond evaluating the provision of support to focus on student experiences and support students to reflect on a clear rationale for their own situation.

Overall, this study has indicated how student voice can shed light on the meaning of the process of inclusion and, combined with the bio-ecological framework, can provide opportunities for a deeper examination of inclusive experiences in diverse settings. This approach can help to contextualise global debates around inclusive processes. It has the potential to move the discourses of inclusion towards how we should respond to student voice, rather than solely investigating questions around inclusion drawn from an adult agenda. Understanding the process of inclusion in local cultures through the bio-ecological perspective of student experience can reveal several factors that enhance or hinder the inclusion movement internationally. This framework can be used as a tool to communicate student voice through the education systems and to make sure that we are recognising all aspects of inclusive processes and student experience, something that fits the inclusive research per se.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I. Literature Review Methodology

The first step in the literature search was to identify an initial set of papers to use for the snowballing procedure (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The search strategy attempted to locate literature which focused on the review's main areas of interest (i.e. inclusive education/practice, student voice, secondary education). For this, the terms 'inclusion', 'inclusive education/practice', 'student/pupil voice', and 'student/pupil experiences', combined with terms such as 'disability' 'students/children with disabilities', 'students/children with special educational needs' and 'secondary education' were entered into various databases and search engines (for example Sage, Elsevier, Scopus, ERIC, PsychINFO). General search engines (such as Google Scholar) were also used to find 'grey' materials. Searches were also made of relevant websites, online reports and dissertations from Europe and worldwide. The combination of these key terms resulted in the identification of a huge amount of theoretical and empirical studies and reports.

The second step of the snowballing technique was to examine reference lists from the initial set of papers and select relevant peer-reviewed papers, as well as key literature reviews and overviews (e.g. Dyson et al., 2002; Göransson and Nilholm, 2014; Lindsey, 2007; Vislie, 2003; European Agency, 2013; 2016; 2018, among others). Material were only included if they had a clear focus on the inclusion of students with SEN/D. The specific criteria used are presented in more detail in the table below:

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
English language	Language other than English
International studies	N/A
Compulsory education	Higher Education or Vocational Education and Training
Students with SEN/D	Other 'at risk' students (such as minority students or students from low socio-economic background)
Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, narrative reviews	Opinion or anecdotal evidence

Since the aim of the review was to examine the development of the concepts 'inclusion' and 'student voice' internationally, it was decided not to include all empirical studies found in the literature search, but mainly indicative studies (such as literature reviews and meta-analyses). Reports from international organisations (such as OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF) as well as projects compiled by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education were also included, as they were closely related with my current and previous work in the area of inclusive education (see European Agency, 2016, 2017, 2018). These materials provided important comparative information for the topics under investigation.

APPENDIX II. The Multiple Embedded Case-Study Design

UK	GREECE
CASE 1: OAKLAND SCHOOL	**CASE 3: IKARION SCHOOL**
Sub-unit of analysis 1: 3 Students: John, Mani, Jo	Sub-unit of analysis 1: 3 Students: Yiorgos, Ben, Anna
Sub-unit of analysis 2: 1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher, 2 Teaching Assistants	Sub-unit of analysis 2: 1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher, 1 Teaching Assistant
CASE 2: MAPLELAND SCHOOL	**CASE 4: ZANTE SCHOOL**
Sub-unit of analysis 1: 3 Students: Liam, Rahman, Debbie	Sub-unit of analysis 1: 3 Students: Stathis, Marios, Iakovos
Sub-unit of analysis 2: 1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher	Sub-unit of analysis 2: 1 SENCO, 1 SEN teacher

APPENDIX III. Pilot Study

Introduction

The purpose of the pilot study was to gain more experience in conducting qualitative research and to test various components of the data collection and analysis protocols. The specific question that this pilot study addressed was: *'How do students with SEN in an English secondary school experience inclusive practice?* The pilot study took place between 17 November and 4 December 2014 at Oakland High School (pseudonym), which is situated in Greater Manchester, UK and was also selected for the main data collection. The particular school was recommended by a researcher from the University, who has been collaborating with the school and had kindly agreed to put me in contact directly with the SENCO of the school.

Oakland High School is a faith school and has a reputation of collaborating with University students and researchers. The pilot study was conducted in the classrooms of the SEN Department as well as several mainstream classrooms. The SEN Department is a separate department within the school which educates two different groups of students: the 'HOPE' (pseudonym) Group, where children receive intense support and follow a curriculum pathway and the 'SHELTER' (pseudonym) Group, where children are being prepared to access the mainstream classroom. A SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) with the help of a HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) are responsible for the administrative work and the organisation of the Department.

Participants

Two students with disabilities were recruited for this pilot study. Both students were holding a statement of SEN. Particularly:

- The first participant, Bill (pseudonym), attended Key Stage 3 (Y9) and was a member of the HOPE group since he came to this school, in Y7. The HOPE group is a group of 5-6 students who receive intensive teaching and do not attend the mainstream classroom. Bill is in the autistic spectrum and he has also been diagnosed as having ADHD.
- The second participant, John (pseudonym), was in Key Stage 4 (Y10) and has been diagnosed as having ADHD. John first came to this school when he was in Y7. At this time, he attended mainstream classrooms, but he had some supportive lessons in the SEN department. Since Y9 he has been taught exclusively in mainstream lessons

and he is getting support from a teaching assistant in some of the lessons. It has to be noted that John was later selected as a participant in the main study.

Data Collection Methods

The pilot study included three main data generation strands:

a) **Observations**, focusing on the two participants. The students were shadowed during their school day activities (including classroom lessons and school breaks). The observations focused on the daily school activities as well as the interaction patterns between peers and school staff. Each student was observed in four different subject lessons. The observations didn't exceed two hours per school day, according to the official university guidelines for a pilot study. In total, 8 lessons were observed (4 lessons X 2 students), which is translated to 8 hours of observations.

b) **Learning walks**, which were used to complement data collection. Learning walks were used after the observations, to further inform the interviews. This method was tested appropriately only with one participant. After the advice of the HLTA, I decided not to test this method with Bill, as he enjoyed playing with his friends during breaks and a learning walk would affect his school routine. The second participant, John, gave me a 'guided tour' around his school for 20 minutes, in a school break. During the 'tour', specific questions were raised about aspects of the school environment that make him feel included or excluded. Field notes were recorded following the discussions.

c) Two individual semi-structured **interviews** with the students, to explore their experiences of the support they receive. Each of the interviews lasted 60 minutes and was held in a quiet room of the SEN department.

I also had the chance to engage with school documents (student timetables) as well as several students' documents (student planners, books, performance and behaviour data).

Learning from pilot study

Recruiting schools and participants. This study has prepared me appropriately to proceed to the recruitment phase for the main project. The ethics application for the pilot study, the information packet for the participants as well as the research instruments have gained

approval from the Ethics Committee of the University and were further adjusted for use in the main study.

Maintaining research integrity. Throughout the whole process of the pilot study, I had to constantly reflect upon several ethical issues that came up. For example, although efforts were made for the observations to remain unobtrusive, I've noticed that not only the participants, but their classmates as well were often distracted by my presence. I realised that involving individuals in a study without their prior knowledge and consent raises ethical issues. To make sure that I would not be a threat to the classroom's balance in the future, I decided to gain informed consent from classroom teachers, even if they are not the main focus in my investigation.

Another issue that came up was related to the danger of coercing participation in the study: At the end of the first day of observation, Bill seemed annoyed by my presence and was reluctant to talk to me. In order to address the power imbalance between myself and Brad, I decided to have a long discussion with him, during which he was reminded of the research process and his right to withdraw. We negotiated the timing of the interviews and the order of the activities during the interviews. I also emphasised the importance that his 'voice' had for my study. I felt that the latter argument in particular has empowered him and was what made him change his mind and decide to be interviewed. For future data collection I kept in mind that I had to ask permission to proceed on an ongoing basis.

In addition, I had the opportunity to acknowledge and respect the influence that certain interview questions might have on the students. Questions concerning school performance or relationships with peers and teachers seemed to cause low levels of stress to one participant of this study (John). Specifically, during the interview with John, I felt that I shouldn't insist on questions related to social interactions with his peers, when he revealed that he spends the school breaks usually by himself.

Finally, this pilot study has taught me how to deal with constant changes in the planned research schedule. I realised the need for being constantly flexible when doing research in schools, especially when this involves young individuals. Due to some changes in the school timetable, I had to re-schedule my visits twice, so as to ensure the most appropriate time to occupy the students for the interview.

Testing methods and making decisions for the main study.

Observations: The pilot experience made me realise that remaining a distant, non-participant observer in a classroom is very hard to achieve. I felt that I had to act upon certain circumstances/incidents (e.g. when I witnessed tensions between students). I used open ended field notes during the observations, which proved appropriate. Instinctively, most of my notes were written in Greek, to ensure that the participants can't read any comments or personal thoughts which may cause discomfort or distress. This proved to be an effective practice and I decided to write down my observation notes in Greek for the future fieldwork in UK schools, and in English for the fieldwork in Greece.

Learning walks. The learning walk I had with John proved very useful in order to identify elements of the school environment that were of particular interest to him. These elements were embedded in the main interview to elicit deeper explanations. I have decided to use the learning walks with flexibility in the main study.

Interviews: The observation notes were used to refine the interview protocol. The update of the interview schedule was done individually for each participant. After the amendments on the interview schedule, it was possible to ensure the depth of understanding, by clarifying incidents or processes observed in the classroom. The semi-structured interview format seemed the most appropriate to address the questions of the inquiry. An open discussion took place in both interviews, which lasted nearly an hour. The students seemed generally comfortable to talk; I was convinced that this might have not been possible if I hadn't spent time with them during my prior visits. Previous engagement is necessary in order to familiarise with the school culture and build trusting relationships with the participants, so that they open up during the interviews.

Visual methods: I have identified some photos that worked well and elicited some further information about the students' experiences. In addition to the photo-elicitation that was used during the interviews, a map of the school (provided by John) has proven to be successful in facilitating our discussion around the spaces in his school. However, the additional information that came up from the use of visuals seemed quite limited in relation to my expectations. The need for other visual stimuli which was identified during the pilot study has led me to use the photo-voice activity during the learning walks for the main

study. Finally, I realised that the use of visual stimuli at the end of the interviews was not the best choice, as we have already covered many aspects of the school life and the students seemed tired. Thus, I decided to introduce the photo-voice activity, as well as other visual stimuli in an earlier stage of the interview process.

Reconsidering the focus of the study. The piloting process prompted a lot of reflection upon the focus of my study. After observing and reflecting upon the participants' interactions with peers, I considered the possibility of including peers in the research project, as I considered that it would be interesting to explore their own experiences and views on inclusion by using focus groups. The following extract from my research diary explains further this thinking:

> 'My perception of inclusion is based on the 'organisational paradigm', i.e. it concerns the learning and participation of all students, emphasising on the context, rather than individual pupils' characteristics. Including students with and without disabilities in this study would be more consistent with the above conceptualisation of inclusion that I embrace, and it would also be useful for triangulation purposes'. (Extract from research diary)

However, this thinking has shifted again before the start of the main data collection. I encountered a number of challenges, some of which are discussed in the following extract of my research diary:

> '...even the characterisation 'peers' implies that I focus more on students with disabilities. My rationale is guided by my perception of inclusion: learning and participation for all. But how am I going to select the peers? There are so many diverse needs across the wider student population which are not related to the non-disability status, coming of the students' different socio-ecomonic, ethnic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds. And then there is the feasibility with regards to recruitment. How easy will it be to recruit all of these participants in two different contexts? And what questions will I ask them? Will they be able to comment on inclusion? Will they have experiences on inclusion – in both contexts? There is a danger of slipping my focus and discuss only about their general experiences in school and not the inclusion they experience'. (Extract from research diary)

Finally, it became clear to me that the selection of peers would add many limitations on the design of the study. For the reasons outlined above, I decided to abandon the idea of including peers and I was convinced to keep my focus only on students with 'SEN/D'.

Most importantly, the piloting process has revealed some significant tensions regarding the focus of my study. The following extract from my reflective research diary is indicative of these tensions:

> …even when I give students the freedom to talk about what they want, they tend to focus on a rather narrow range of things. They comment on immediate and 'obvious' things, rather than taking a step back and talking more widely about their school experiences. In other cases, they like to talk about themselves as individuals and not as members of their school; they even reveal a lot of personal information, for example regarding their disability or their families. And although I understand that this is important information, connected to their school experiences, I feel that it is driving me into different directions. I find myself trying to 'paint' the psychological portrait of the child – which is not the focus of my research. Perhaps it means that I am slipping my focus towards their general experiences in and outside of the school- distancing from the actual inclusion they experience? (Extract from Research Diary)

The extract above reveals my frustration about the focus of my study, which prompted further reflection: I wanted to gain an understanding of student experiences of inclusive practice – but would this not just be their school experiences? How could my student-participants know what is and is not inclusive? And most importantly: was I looking at their individualistic experiences by approaching every student participant as a separate case? Or was I searching for an overarching set of experiences to document inclusive practice in the two different contexts?

I became aware that I needed to address the 'dilemma' that emerged between life/school experiences and inclusive experiences and, notably, the tension between individual and collective experiences in order to be able to approach appropriately the data I was collecting. This reflective process has resulted in re-visiting my original research questions and developing one final, overall question which would guide my whole inquiry.

Reflecting on my role as a researcher. I felt that my different background affected the process of data collection in the English schools rather positively. Using my identity as an outsider student-researcher from Greece has triggered the students' interest for my research. As a result, they were more open to share their school experiences with me. Accordingly, my role as a foreign researcher in a UK school has facilitated my communication with the school staff (SENCO, teachers and TAs). In many cases, they seemed very keen on answering my questions or explaining even the most obvious information

about their school. This enhanced my understanding of the context and gave me the opportunity to unravel their views about their life in the school.

Familiarising with the data analysis process. I had the opportunity to engage holistically with different sources of information: my observation notes, my research diary as well as the transcribed interview scripts. After I gained an overall picture of the data collected, I proceeded to a preliminary analysis of the interview data. The interviews prompted qualitative data in a narrative form, which were transcribed (2 hours of transcription). Some categories were developed taking into account Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and various themes have emerged related to the students' school life (i.e. teaching and learning, favourite subjects/activities, role of the mainstream teacher and the TAs, spaces in the school, peer relationships, extra-curricular activities). Some examples of the main features within the students' micro- and meso-system that emerged from the analysis are given below:

MICROSYSTEM: Features of the school

<u>SEN Support</u>

John described the work he had done in a supportive group within the SEN department, which facilitated his transition to the mainstream classroom:

> '...down here were some supportive lessons... It's completely different to what we are doing over there to the mainstream classroom, it's a separate half an hour and we just catching up to see how I am doing, how I am coping...' (John)

Both of the students also highlighted the important role of the Teaching Assistants in their classrooms:

> 'TAs come to the lessons and help you keep the work and wake you up when you are distracted by something else'...'TAs focus on two students but they also help the rest of the classroom. The TAs do a quite good job...The TA is there to just be more flexible while the other teacher is focusing more on the rest' (John)

> 'the TAs help you and if there's no TAs around then you would be struggling and then if there was only the teacher and no TAs then...and a fight ends up happening then one kid would be getting hold back by the teacher and the others holding back by other kids' (Bill)

Teaching practices

A combination of group work with independent work was reported as being preferable: *'I prefer both actually (independent and group work). Because then you communicate with all your friends around you'* (Bill)

However, John, who attends the mainstream classroom, mentioned that he likes to work on his own: *'Miss thinks it is appropriate to work as a group but also thinks we need to focus more on independence because when you are giving an exam…I prefer independent'*

Behaviour management

Bill was particularly opposed to a specific teacher's discipline tactics that seem to affect considerably his life in school:

> '…if you talk, trying to get help sometimes from another adult or try to help another kid, he's like just stop talking and that's when people start having an argument and he ends up telling me 'you need to get out of the classroom' and I just walk downstairs…'

Transition to different classrooms

The transition to different classrooms throughout the school day is problematic for John: *'Walking to lessons and not having a certain classroom…it can be confusing… not having the subject that you do in the subject corridor'*

Extra-curricular activities

Certain extra-curricular activities were reported as important elements of the school that enhance students' experiences and facilitate their participation within the school community:

-Art therapy: '*We just like talk or play with action figures… We talk about my family, what I might do in the future… just a mixture of staff for my family'.*

-Breakfast club: *'there is an opportunity in the morning to come down in Tuesday morning to the Breakfast Club, 8.30 where you catch up with any work, socialize with other peers, have hot chocolate, bagels…'*

-Wild Life Club: *'We are part of this big group of High School Wild Life observers, where High School are joining and contribute differently to say this is how many birds there are now in Manchester than it was before'*

MICROSYSTEM: Features of the individual

Some individual characteristics of the students were reported as obstacles to their learning and participation in the school. According to Bill, the lesson gets boring *'when I am in a mood…'* John also attributes his difficulties in Maths lesson to his own efforts and potential: *Occasionally sometimes I get it, if I listen hard I can understand it but sometimes…I find it quite difficult to learn something new'*

MESOSYSTEM: Interactions

Student and Peers

The two participants seemed very different in terms of their interactions with their classmates. Bill mentioned that during the school breaks: *'We even stay here (SEN Dep.) and just play with the tech decks or…play out… football, basketball or just run about…me and the rest of the 'HOPE' group'* (Bill). Even though he doesn't interact with the 'mainstream' students, he seems to be well included within the 'HOPE' group.

On the contrary, John seems to spend most of his time in school on his own: *'I like to go round. I am usually by myself'*. Similarly, he rarely interacts with his classmates during the lesson: '*You just have to sit next to…where the teacher puts you next to, if you benefit when you sit to someone, you don't really talk, so…we can talk to lessons occasionally if you have got all the work done you are just chatting'*

Parents and School

John seemed to be concerned about the help he receives from his parents in home:

> 'when you are actually at home your parents might not be doing that subject that you are doing and they might not know as much… my dad because he was educated before 2000…any dad, any parent basically can struggle'

His parents' inability to help him with his homework results in feelings of frustration:

> 'The worst thing about school is… (silence) homework…it might become a bit fiddly trying to find the right information''

APPENDIX IV. Research Framework per school

Participants	Selection Criteria	Methods
Students with SEN/D (3 in each school)	They must: -Be secondary students (age range 12-16) -Have been identified as having SEN/D and receive additional educational provision -Be competent to communicate verbally and understand the purposes of the study.	- 1 school day observation - 1 Learning walk (30 m) *Photo generation* - 1st Interview Session: *Photo elicitation & discussion* -2nd Interview session: *Statement activity* & *In-depth interview* (30m)
School Staff *- SENCO or SEN teacher* *- 1 Special Support Staff*	They must work closely with the selected students.	- 1 Interview (30 m)

APPENDIX V. Fieldwork Timeframe

FIELDWORK UK	
Mapleland school	
Data collection dates	*Research activity*
18 November 2015	School visit, meeting with SENCO, discussion about student recruitment
2 December 2015	Meeting with the students, gaining consent, agreement on timetables
3 December 2015	Learning walk and observation day with Liam
18 March 2016	1st Interview with Liam
22 March 2015	2nd Interview with Liam
4 December 2015	Observation day with Debbie
8 March 2016	Learning walk and statement activity with Debbie
18 March 2016	1st Interview with Debbie
12 May 2016	2nd Interview with Debbie
6 March 2016	Learning walk and observation day with Rahman
18 March 2016	1st Interview with Rahman
22 March 2016	2nd Interview with Rahman
15 March 2016	Interview with SENCO and SEN teacher
Oakland school	
Data collection dates	*Research activity*
20 October 2015	School visit, meeting with SENCO
25 January 2016	School visit, discussion with the SEN teacher about student recruitment
3 February 2016	Meeting with the students, gaining consent, agreement on timetables
5 February 2016	Learning walk and observation day with John
12 February 2016	1st Interview with John
24 February 2016	2nd Interview with John
11 February 2016	Learning walk and observation day with Mani
11 February 2016	1st Interview with Mani
24 February 2016	2nd Interview with Mani
12 February 2016	Learning walk and observation day with Jo
23 February 2016	1st Interview with Jo
24 February 2016	2nd Interview with Jo
16 March 2016	Interview with SEN teacher (and Teaching Assistants)
25 April 2016	Interview with SENCO
FIELDWORK GREECE	
Zante school	
Data collection dates	*Research activity*
18 October 2016	School visit, meeting with the headteacher, the SENCO and the SEN teacher
15 December 2016	Meeting with the students, gaining consent, agreement on timetables
20 December 2016	Learning walk and observation day with Iakovos
31 January 2017	1st Interview with Iakovos
10 March 2017	2nd Interview with Iakovos
16 December 2016	Learning walk and observation day with Marios

8 March 2017	1st Interview with Marios
10 March 2017	2nd Interview with Marios
27 January 2017	Observation day with Stathis
31 January 2017	Learning walk and 1st Interview with Stathis
8 March 2017	2nd Interview with Stathis
22 March 2017	Interview with SENCO and SEN teacher
Ikarion school	
Data collection dates	***Research activity***
30 September 2016	School visit, meeting with the headteacher
1 November 2016	School visit, meeting with the SEN staff
20 November 2016	Meeting with the students, gaining consent, agreement on timetables
24 November 2016	Observation day with Ben
14 December 2016	Learning walk and statement activity with Ben
22 December 2016	1st Interview with Ben
9 and 23 March 2017	2nd Interview with Ben
8 December 2016	Observation day with Yiorgos
14 December 2016	Learning walk with Yiorgos
22 December 2016	1st Interview with Yiorgos
23 March 2017	2nd Interview with Yiorgos
1 December 2016	Observation day with Anna
14 December 2016	Learning walk and 1st Interview with Anna
22 December 2016	2nd Interview with Anna
02 February 2017	Interview with SEN teacher and TA
9 March 2017	Interview with SENCO

APPENDIX VI. Example of observation schedule and field notes

PERIOD 2: HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE			
Time	**Events -Activities/Actions**	**Focal Student's behaviour/interactions**	**Reflective comments**
11:20	We are going to a big PC cluster. 17 students total, all girls – most of them black, 9 of them wearing turbans - and John. He has no support by a TA in this lesson. The TA escorted me to the class and introduced me to the teacher. Since there is no space to sit next to John, I sit in another table, where I can see him.	John is sitting in the right corner next to another girl.	The teacher at the beginning didn't seem so happy with my presence. When I told her I am focusing on John, she seemed to relax.
	Long introduction from teacher about today's lesson and behaviour – she gives instructions about today's task: working independently on PC, finding information about proteins, macronutrients etc.	John is facing the PC, then turns and listens to the teacher	
	Teacher is going to John to check if he knows what he is asked to do	John is working independently	Is the teacher doing that because I am watching?
11:40	Pupils work independently and teacher supervises Some girls get quite noisy. The teacher shouts and threatens for discipline actions: 'Do you want to go to LSU?'	John still works alone	John doesn't seem affected by the teacher's shouting. What is LSU? I guess it stands for Learning Support Unit. It is a place where students go for detention?

	The girl next to John has problems with her PC.	John says something to her – probably gives a brief advice/ direction of what she should do and goes back to his work.	I recall the TA's opinion about John's interactions. Maybe they are right, and he is just not interested to interact more? Considering that he is efficient in computer use, he probably could do something more to help his classmate, but he chose not to. Maybe he just doesn't like her?
	Independent work continues – teacher circulates around the class and supervises student work	John asks the teacher a question about the task	Again, I don't know if he asks questions because he is not sure of what he has to do next, or because he seeks adult's attention?
11.47	The teacher gives praise ('well done') to John – then she gives further instructions to find photos on the web, in order to make his presentation look more attractive	John finishes his task, holds his head and calls the teacher	He is looking impatient to announce that he has completed his task
11.49		John stops the work and looks at the girls next to him. He initiates a brief discussion which ends soon	This is the first time he initiates interaction, but it doesn't last long. Maybe he is tired of working.
11.53	The teacher approaches John	John searches for images on the web. He stops and poses a question to her.	

APPENDIX VII. Student Interview Schedule

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. School Experiences

- Tell me what you usually do during an average day (at school and after school). (Prompts: What time do you start school? What classes do you attend? What time do you leave school? What do you do next?)

A1. Teaching and learning

- Which class/subject do you prefer?
- Can you describe one of these lessons?
  (Prompts: What types of activities do you do?)
- How do you feel about different kinds of lesson? a) When the whole class is working together b) when you work by yourself?
- If something unexpected happens during the lesson, who deals with this?
- Tell me about how you get on with your classmates.
- Tell me how you get on with your teachers.
- Tell me how you feel about tests-exams-assessments.
- Tell me how you feel about homework.
- If you need any help during the lesson, who helps you?
- How do you feel about the help you receive? What do you like about it? What you don't like?
- How is your school life different from primary school?

A2. School breaks/activities

- What do you normally do during school breaks and lunchtime?
- If something upsets you during school breaks, who do you contact?
- Do you enjoy taking part in special events/school trips and visits? How do you feel during these activities?

B. Closing Questions

- Do you enjoy coming to school? (What's the best thing in school? What's the worst thing?)
- Are you happy with the help you receive? (What's the best thing about this support? What's the worst thing?)
- If you were in charge, and money was not a problem, what would you do to make your school better?
- How would that make it better?
- If you could change anything, what would you change?
- What are your future aspirations? What would you like to do in the future, when you finish school?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences in the school that we haven't talked about so far?

APPENDIX VIII. Statement Activity

- Objectives: To identify how pupils feel about certain statements relevant to their perceived experiences in school.
- Materials: List of statements and feelings
- Time: 30 minutes
- Procedure: The student is presented to the statements and the feelings (see below). The student is asked to respond to the statements and to discuss about her/his choice. The activity is audio-recorded, and notes are also taken.

Introduction to the activity:

'These sentences are talking about how you feel about your school. These are some faces showing different types of feelings.

Please read the sentences and choose the faces that come closest to showing how you feel about them.'

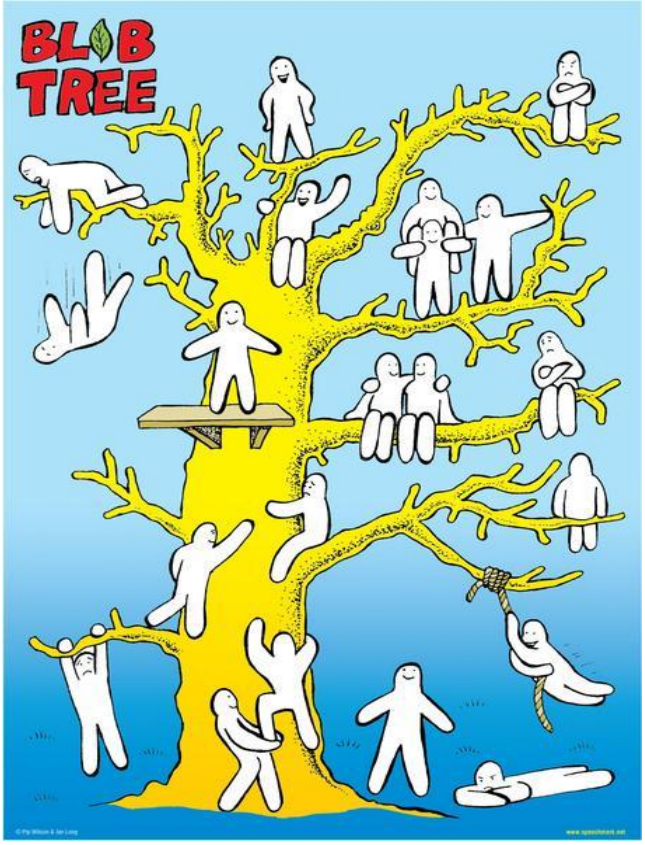
Feelings:

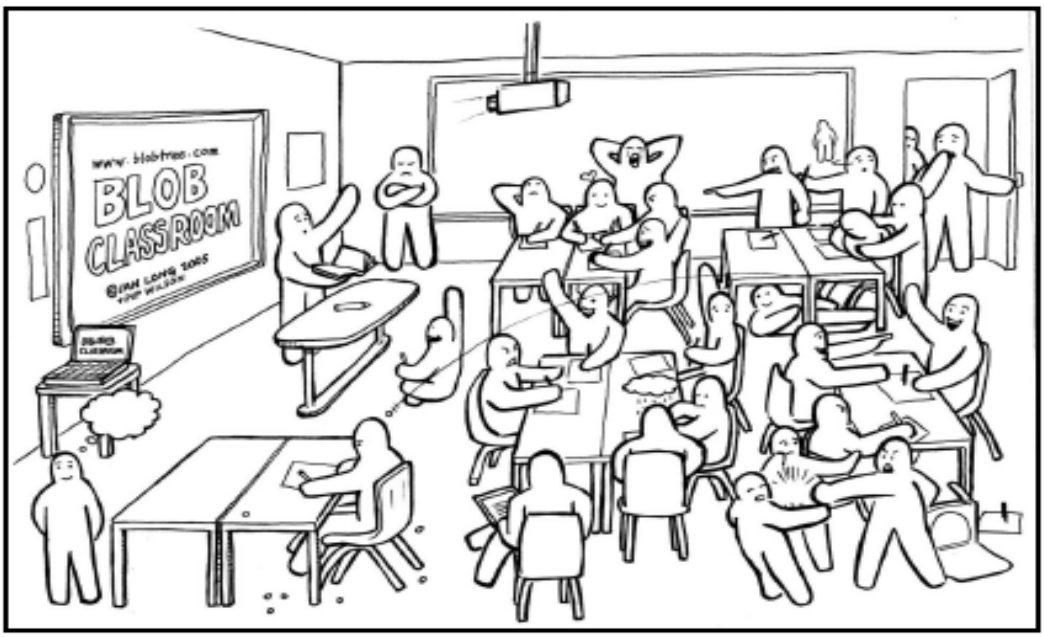
Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree
		

STATEMENTS	FEELINGS
1. I feel welcome at this school	
2. I feel proud to be a pupil of this school	
3. The school makes it easy for pupils with different backgrounds and abilities to come to this school	
4. When I have a problem, I ask the teachers for help	
5. Other students help me when I am stuck with my work	
6. People at this school are friendly to me	
7. I think the teachers are fair towards pupils	
8. I take part in lots of activities (at the school)	
9. In lessons teachers are interested in my ideas	
10. Other students listen to my ideas	
11. It's good to have students from different backgrounds and abilities in this school	
12. When I am given homework, I usually understand what I have to do	
13. My parents/carers think this is a good school	
14. I have some close friends (in this school)	
15. I work well with other students	
16. I sometimes join in clubs or play sports after school	
17. My parents help me with my homework	
18. Teachers help me to learn new things that are difficult	
19. I enjoy school breaks/lunchtimes at school	
20. I am satisfied with the timetable at school	

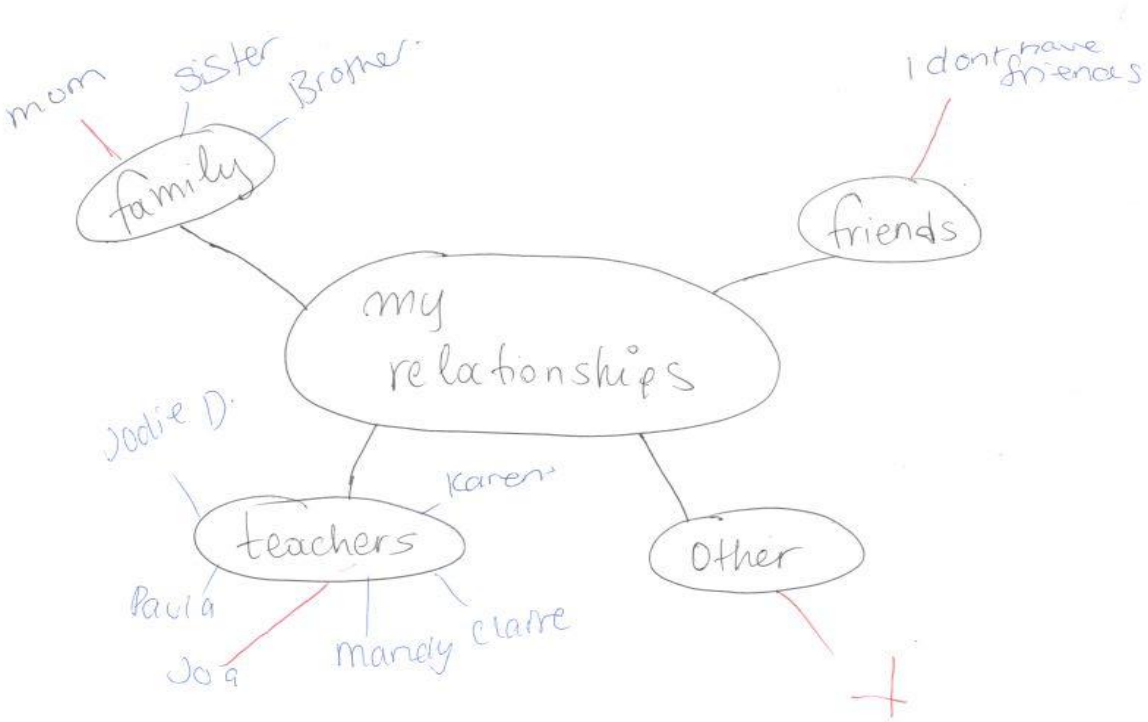
APPENDIX IX. Visual methods

'Blob' tree and 'blob' classroom

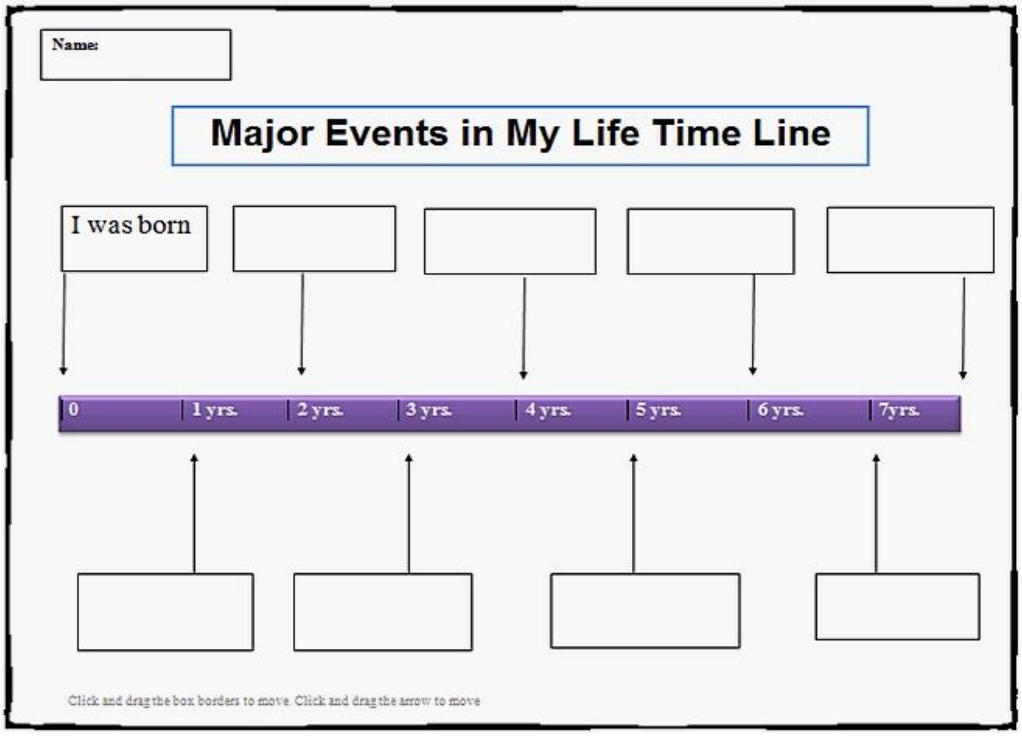




Graphic showing relationships



Timeline



APPENDIX X. School Staff Interview Schedule

SENCO/SEN TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Background knowledge

• How many years have you spent in the teaching services?

• How long have you been involved in teaching students with SEN/D?

• Do you have any additional qualifications related to teaching students with SEN/D?

B. Classroom practice

• Can you describe me a typical lesson that takes place in your class?

• Tell me about how you address different student needs in your classroom.

(Prompts: Differentiate instructional practices, managing behaviour, keeping children on task, support learning)

• What kind of support do you receive in your lessons? How do you make use of this support?

• How does your teaching support the learning experiences of all children?

C. School culture

• How could you describe your relationships with the staff and students?

• Tell me about any challenges or conflict you have experienced either with students or the teaching staff (How do you handle these challenges?)

• How could you describe your relationships with the students' parents?

D. Perceptions of inclusion

• How do you feel about the trend towards inclusive education?

• What do you feel are the attitudes of other staff towards promoting inclusion?

• In your opinion, what are the factors within the school and more widely which would facilitate the process of developing inclusive practice?

• What are the barriers to developing more inclusive practices? How could they be addressed?

• Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked so far?

TEACHING ASSISTANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Background knowledge

• To begin, I would like you to tell me how you started working in this school.

• How long you have been working as a teaching assistant?

• Do you have any additional qualifications related to teaching students with SEND?

B. Classroom practice

• Can you describe me a typical lesson that takes place in your class?

• Tell me about how you address different student needs in your classroom.

(Prompts: Differentiate instructional practices, managing behaviour, keeping children on task, support learning)

• How do you think you are viewed by your students?

• How does your collaboration with the teacher support the inclusion of all students?

C. School culture

• How could you describe your relationships with the staff and students?

• Tell me about any challenges or conflict you have experienced either with students or the teaching staff (How do you handle these challenges?)

• How could you describe your relationships with the students' parents?

D. Perceptions of inclusion

• How do you feel about the trend towards inclusive education?

• What do you feel are the attitudes of other staff towards promoting inclusion?

• In your opinion, what are the factors within the school and more widely which would facilitate the process of developing inclusive practice?

• What are the barriers to developing more inclusive practices? How could they be addressed?

• Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked so far?

APPENDIX XI. Information pack for schools and participants

E-mail sent to schools

Invitation to research: Anthoula Kefallinou

Anthoula Kefallinou

Actions

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Attachments: Leafet for school_9 Octobe~1.pdf (105 KB) [Open as Web Page]

Sent Items

09 October 2015 12:59

Dear [redacted]

I would like to invite your school to participate in a research project I am conducting with the University of Manchester. This research forms part of my PhD studies and aims to investigate how students experience inclusive practice in secondary schools. You can find more information about this research in the attached document.

I am currently in the process of gaining ethical approval for my study. At this stage, I would be keen for an opportunity to visit your school and provide you with more details about my research plans, so that you might decide whether you would be interested in participating.

I would also appreciated it if you could send me the headteacher's email, in order to send this information.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Anthoula Kefallinou

Anthoula Kefallinou | PhD Candidate | Research/Teaching Assistant | Room B2.2.| Ellen Wilkinson Building | Manchester Institute of Education | School of Environment Education and Development | University of Manchester | Oxford Road | M13 9PL

Leaflet for schools (English)

Research Summary

Anthoula Kefallinou
anthoula.kefallinou@manchester.ac.uk

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools

What is this research about?

This PhD research project is an investigation of the way students experience inclusive practices in English and Greek secondary schools.

Existing research in inclusive education has focused on practices of integration and inclusion, without much attention being paid to what inclusion means to young people.

The aim of the project

The aim of my PhD research project is to increase our understanding of the way students experience inclusive practices in English and Greek secondary schools. Cross-cultural comparisons of different pupils' voices between European countries will provide evidence about areas for school improvement and highlight policies that work best for pupils. Exploring the perceptions of pupils will also add to our understanding and methods for giving all children a voice.

Why your school has been selected

Your school has been invited because of its capacity to contribute meaningfully to my investigation. Your school has been involved in inclusive practice and was recommended by University researchers who have worked with you.

Why participate?

It is important to document students' views and use them to construct strategies for inclusion that are both relevant to the educational context and practically orientated. In addition to the indirect benefits, taking part in this research will allow you to discuss and reflect on experiences that matter to you.

Below you can find information about the study. If you are interested in taking part, you can contact me via e-mail (given above) to arrange a meeting where we can discuss the research process in more detail.

How will this research do that

Participants & Methods

- Within your school, I intend to identify **3 students with SEN. The SENCO and a special support staff (TA)** will also be recruited.
- I will conduct **3 observations** of classroom lessons, by 'shadowing' one student-participant each time. The observations will be carried out during the whole school day.
- The participants will also be asked to give me a **'guided tour'** around their school for 30 minutes approximately. During learning walks with the students, disposable or digital cameras will be used by students to capture any place in their school which they find interesting.
- Finally, I will conduct two **individual semi-structured** interviews with each student and one interview with the school staff, to explore their views on experiences of inclusion. Every interview will last 30 minutes approximately and will be held in the school building, during working hours.

Ethical Considerations

- The data will be collected according to the school staff's and students' availability, to ensure minimal impact on their school routine.
- In all circumstances the well-being of the students will be of primary concern.
- I will seek permission to proceed on an ongoing basis and care will be taken to avoid stress and anxiety. However, should any student displays such signs, the interviews will be discontinued and assistance from school staff will be requested. The students' wishes for silence, privacy and non-response will be acknowledged and respected.
- I will not use the students' and staff's real names, or the name of your school in the reports I write.
- The interviews will be transcribed, and information from the interviews will be reported and disseminated exclusively for academic purposes (PhD thesis, academic journals, academic conferences and/or book contribution).

About me

My previous experience as a **secondary teacher and a special educator** in Greece for six years has shaped my perspectives and values. I hold a master's degree in special education and more recently I have completed MSc training in educational research, as part of my PhD studies in University of Manchester. During the previous academic year I have also worked as a research assistant in two university-led projects, helping English schools in their action research efforts. I currently hold a research position in a European Organisation which promotes inclusion across European Member Countries (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education).

Other contacts

My teaching and research experience so far have enhanced my awareness and sensitivity to many of the obstacles, decisions and issues encountered during the research process. However, should you have any concerns about my research activity you can contact my academic supervisors, **Dr. Andy Howes** (andrew.j.howes@manchester.ac.uk) and **Professor Olwen Mcnamara** (olwen.mcnamara@manchester.ac.uk), who make certain that my work conforms to the ethical guidelines of the University of Manchester.

Leaflet for schools (Greek)

Περίληψη μελέτης

Ανθούλα Κεφαλληνού
anthoula.kefallinou@manchester.ac.uk

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

'Οι εμπειρίες των μαθητών πάνω στις ενταξιακές πρακτικές: μία συγκριτική μελέτη σε Ελληνικά και Αγγλικά σχολεία δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης.

Περί τίνος πρόκειται;

Αυτή η μελέτη έχει ως σκοπό να διερευνήσει τις εμπειρίες μαθητών πάνω στις ενταξιακές πρακτικές που εφαρμόζονται στο σχολείο σας. Έρευνες πάνω στην ενταξιακή εκπαίδευση έχουν εστιαστεί σε πρακτικές ένταξης και συνεκπαίδευσης, χωρίς να δίνουν σημασία τι σημαίνει ένταξη από την πλευρά των μαθητών.

Γι' αυτό είναι σημαντικό να καταγραφούν οι απόψεις των μαθητών και να χρησιμοποιηθούν για το σχεδιασμό κατάλληλων στρατηγικών ένταξης που να είναι σχετικές με το εκάστοτε εκπαιδευτικό πλασιο και, κυρίως, να έχουν πρακτικό προσανατολισμό.

Γιατί αυτό το σχολείο;

Το σχολείο σας επιλέχθηκε γιατί μπορεί να συμβάλει σημαντικά στην έρευνά μου. Στο σχολείο σας λειτουργούν δομές ειδικής αγωγής, οι οποίες παρέχουν στήριξη σε μαθητές με διαφορετικές ανάγκες.

Γιατί να συμμετέχετε;

-Μάθετε το σχολείο σας καλύτερα. Θα προσπαθήσω να βρω απαντήσεις σε απορίες που μπορεί να έχετε για το σχολείο σας. Μπορεί να θέλετε να μάθετε για την ικανοποίηση των μαθητών, την αποτελεσματικότητα των διδακτικών πρακτικών ή για συγκεκριμένα δυνατά και αδύναμα σημεία του σχολείου σας.

-Μπορεί να είναι ανταποδοτικό. Θα σας επιτρέψει να συζητήσετε και να αναστοχαστείτε πάνω σε εμπειρίες που είναι σημαντικές για εσάς και το σχολείο σας.

Η ευρύτερη έρευνα

Ο σκοπός του ευρύτερου ερευνητικού σχεδίου είναι η βαθύτερη κατανόηση των τρόπων με των οποίων οι μαθητές βιώνουν τις ενταξιακές πρακτικές στα ελληνικά και τα αγγλικά σχολεία. Η διαπολιτισμική σύγκριση μαθητικών εμπειριών ανάμεσα σε δύο διαφορετικές χώρες στοχεύει στην ανάδειξη των αποτελεσματικότερων ενταξιακών πρακτικών και πολιτικών. Η διερεύνηση των μαθητικών αντιλήψεων θα συμβάλει επίσης στην κατανόηση των ερευνητικών μεθόδων με τις οποίες μπορεί να 'ακουστεί' καλύτερα η φωνή των μαθητών.

+ Τι περιλαμβάνει η έρευνα

+ Συμμετέχοντες

-Με τη βοήθειά σας, θα επιλέξω **τρεις μαθητές με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες**. Δύο καθηγητητές/τριες (ειδικοί παιδαγωγοί) των συμμετεχόντων μαθητών θα επιλεγούν επίσης για τις ανάγκες της έρευνας.

-Θα παρατηρήσω τους τρεις μαθητές κατά τη διάρκεια των μαθημάτων μίας σχολικής ημέρας.

-Οι συμμετέχοντες μαθητές θα με ξεναγήσουν στο σχολείο για περίπου 15 λεπτά και θα φωτογραφήσουν μέρη του σχολείου τα οποία βρίσκουν ενδιαφέροντα.

-Θα ακολουθήσουν δύο **ατομικές συνεντεύξεις με τους μαθητές και μία ατομική συνέντυξη με τους καθηγητές/τριες**, για να διερευνήσω τις εμπειρίες των μαθητών σχετικά με την υποστήριξη που λαμβάνουν. Οι συνεντεύξεις θα διαρκέσουν 30 λεπτά περίπου και θα διεξαχθούν στο σχολικό κτήριο, κατά τη διάρκεια εργάσιμων ωρών.

+ Τήρηση ερευνητικής δεοντολογίας

-Τα δεδομένα θα συλλεγούν ανάλογα με τη διαθεσιμότητα των μαθητών και του προσωπικού, για να διασφαλίσω την ελάχιστη παρεμπόδιση της σχολικής ρουτίνας.

-Σε κάθε περίπτωση η ευημερία, η προστασία και το συμφέρον των μαθητών των μαθητών θα τεθεί σε προτεραιότητα.

-Θα αναζητήσω άδεια από τους συμμετέχοντες για τη συνέχιση της διαδικασίας σε συνεχή βάση και θα θα αποφύγω ερωτήσεις που μπορεί να προκαλέσουν άγχος ή στρες στους μαθητές. Σε περίπτωση που κάποιος μαθητής εκδηλώσει ανάλογα σημάδια, η συλλογή δεδομένων θα διακοπεί και θα ζητηθεί η βοήθεια του σχολικού προσωπικού. Θα αναγνωρίσω και θα σεβαστώ τη σιωπή ή την άρνηση απάντησης από πλευράς μαθητών.

- Τα ονόματα των μαθητών, του σχολικού προσωπικού και του σχολείου δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν στις ερευνητικές αναφορές που θα γράψω.

-Οι συνεντεύξεις θα απομαγνητοφωνηθούν και κάποια από τα δεδομένα θα παρουσιαστούν στην διδακτορική διατριβή.

+ Λίγα λόγια για μένα

Η προηγούμενη εμπειρία μου ως φιλόλογος στην Ελλάδα για έξι χρόνια έχει διαμορφώσει τις αξίες και τις αντιλήψεις μου πάνω στην εκπαίδευση. Κατέχω μεταπτυχιακό δίπλωμα στην ειδική αγωγή και έχω ολοκλήρώσει έναν κύκλο εκπαίδευσης πάνω στις ερευνητικές μεθόδους ως μέρος των διδακτορικών σπουδών μου στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Μάνστεστερ. Έχω εργαστεί στο παρελθόν ως ερευνήτρια στο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας καθώς και σε ερευνητικά εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα του Πανεπιστημίου του Μάνστεστερ. Τέλος, εργάζομαι ως ερευνήτρια στον Ευρωπαϊκό Φορέα Ειδικής Αγωγής και Ενταξιακής Εκπαίδευσης, ο οποίος προωθεί την εκπαιδευτική ένταξη στα Κράτη-Μέλη της Ευρώπης.

+ Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας

Εάν έχετε ανησυχίες σε σχέση με την ερευνητική μου δραστηριότητα, μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με τους ακαδημαϊκούς μου επιβλέποντες:

-Δρ. Άντυ Χάουζ

(andrew.j.howes@manchester.ac.uk) και

-Καθηγήτρια Όουελν Μακναμάρα

(olwen.mcnamara@manchester.ac.uk),

οι οποίοι βεβαιώνουν ότι η δουλειά μου είναι σύμφωνη με τις κατευθυντήριες γραμμές ερευνητικής δεοντολογίας.

Student Information Sheet

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Title of the study: 'Student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools'

My name is Anthi and I am a student at The University of Manchester. I would like to invite you to take part in my study. Before you decide, it is important that you read the information below:

What is it for?

The aim of my study is to see how secondary students feel about the support they receive in their school.

Why me?

You have been chosen to take part in the study because you are a member of a school that provides support to students with different educational needs.

What will I have to do?

I will spend time with you during lessons and school breaks, so that I can understand what school is like for you. I will also ask you to give me a 'guided tour' of your school and to take some photographs of places in your school. Finally, you will take part in two interviews with me, to discuss about the photographs you took and how you feel about your school and the support you receive.

Where will it take place?

The study will take place in your school. I will arrange an interview with you at your school, at a time that you choose.

How long will it last?

I will spend one day with you in the school. The guided tour will last around 30 minutes. The interviews will take about 30 minutes each.

Will my name be used?

I will not use your real name, or the name of your school or your teachers in the reports I write. I will not repeat anything we have talked about to anybody else, unless I am worried about you. I will discuss my work in your school with my teachers at the University.

What if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you and your parents/carers to decide whether or not to take part. First your parents will have to agree and sign a consent form. Then, if you do decide to take part, you will receive a copy of this form to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you can change your mind at any time without giving a reason.

What happens to the information I collect?

I will discuss what I have found with my teachers at the University. The information I will collect might be used in the future when I write about this work.

Leaflet for Students (Greek)

Ενημερωτικό έντυπο μαθητών

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Τίτλος μελέτης: Εμπειρίες των μαθητών πάνω στις ενταξιακές πρακτικές

Ονομάζομαι Ανθή και είμαι διδακτορική φοιτήτρια στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Μάντσεστερ, στην Αγγλία. Θα ήθελα να σε καλέσω να λάβεις μέρος στην έρευνά μου. Πριν αποφασίσεις, είναι σημαντικό να διαβάσεις τις παρακάτω πληροφορίες:

✓ Περί τίνος πρόκειται;

Ο σκοπός της έρευνάς μου είναι να ανακαλύψω πώς νιώθουν οι μαθητές δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης σχετικά με τη στήριξη που λαμβάνουν στο σχολείο τους.

✓ Γιατί επιλέχθηκα?

Επιλέχθηκες να συμμετέχεις στην έρευνα γιατί λαμβάνεις υποστήριξη στο σχολείο σου.

✓ Τι πρέπει να κάνω;

Θα περάσω χρόνο μαζί σου κατά τη διάρκεια των μαθημάτων, για να καταλάβω πώς περνάς μία συνηθισμένη μέρα στο σχολείο. Θα σου ζητήσω επίσης να μου δείξεις το σχολείο σου και να βγάλεις κάποιες φωτογραφίες. Μετά, θα λάβεις μέρος σε δύο ατομικές συνεντεύξεις όπου θα συζητήσουμε πώς νιώθεις για το σχολείο σου και την υποστήριξη που σου προσφέρει.

✓ Πού θα πραγματοποιηθεί;

Η έρευνα θα διεξαχθεί στο σχολείο σου. Θα κανονίσω την ξενάγηση και τις συνεντεύξεις μαζί σου σε χρόνο που θα συμφωνήσουμε από κοινού με εσένα και τους καθηγητές σου.

✓ Πόσο θα διαρκέσει?

Θα περάσω μία ημέρα μαζί σου στο σχολείο. Κατόπιν, θα προχωρήσουμε στην ξενάγηση και την πρώτη συνεντεύξη που θα διαρκέσουν περίπου 40 λεπτά (μία διδακτική ώρα). Η δεύτερη συνέντευξη θα κρατήσει επίσης 40-45 λεπτά (άλλη μία διδακτική ώρα).

✓ Θα χρησιμοποιηθεί το όνομά μου?

Δεν θα χρησιμοποιήσω το πραγματικό σου όνομα, ή το όνομα του σχολείου σου ή των καθηγητών σου στις εκθέσεις που θα γράψω. Δεν θα επαναλάβω τίποτα από αυτά που συζητήσαμε σε κανέναν άλλο, εκτός αν ανησυχώ για σένα. Θα συζητήσω τη δουλειά μου στο σχολείο σου με τους καθηγητές μου στο Πανεπιστήμιο .

✓ Κι αν δεν θέλω να συμμετέχω ή αν αλλάξω γνώμη?

Από σένα εξαρτάται να αποφασίσεις αν θες να συμμετέχεις ή όχι. Αν αποφασίσεις να λάβεις μέρος, θα λάβεις ένα αντίγραφο αυτού του φυλλαδίου και θα σου ζητηθεί να υπογράψεις ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεσης. Ακόμα κι αν έχεις συμφωνήσει να λάβεις μέρος, μπορείς να αλλάξεις γνώμη οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσεις κάποιο λόγο.

✓ Τι γίνεται με τις πληροφορίες που θα συλλεγούν?

Θα συζητήσω αυτά που ανακάλυψα με τους καθηγητές μου στο Πανεπιστήμιο. Οι πληροφορίες που θα συλλέξω μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθούν στο μέλλον όταν θα γράψω για αυτή τη μελέτη.

Student Assent/Consent form (English)

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

STUDENT ASSENT/CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Please Tick Initial Box
1. I confirm that I have read this form and have asked any questions I may have. All of my questions have been answered and I understand what I am being asked to do.	
2. I understand that I can change my mind and stop taking part in the study at any time without giving a reason.	
3. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, or that notes will be taken during the interview.	
4. I understand that Anthi will discuss with her teachers at University about this work. I also understand that she might use the information in the future, when she writes about this work.	

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of student	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee

Student Assent/Consent form (Greek)

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Αν δέχεσαι να συμμετέχεις στην έρευνα, παρακαλώ συμπλήρωσε και υπόγραψε το παρακάτω έντυπο συγκατάθεσης:

	Παρακαλώ σημειώστε √
1. Επιβεβαιώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει και έχω υποβάλει όλες τις ερωτήσεις που μπορεί να έχω σχετικά με την έρευνα. Όλες μου οι απορίες έχουν απαντηθεί και κατανοώ τι μου ζητείται να κάνω.	
2. Κατανοώ ότι μπορώ να αλλάξω γνώμη και να σταματήσω να συμμετέχω στην έρευνα οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσω κάποιο λόγο.	
3. Κατανοώ ότι η συνέντυξη θα ηχογραφηθεί ή ότι σημειώσεις θα καταγραφούν κατά τη διάρκεια της συνέντευξης.	
4. Κατανοώ ότι η Ανθή θα συζητήσει με τους καθηγητές της στο Πανεπιστήμιο για αυτή την έρευνα. Κατανοώ επίσης ότι μπορεί να χρησιμοποιήσει τις πληροφορίες που θα συλλέξει στο μέλλον, όταν θα γράψει έκθεση για αυτή την έρευνα.	

Δέχομαι να συμμετέχω στην παραπάνω μελέτη

Όνομα συμμετέχοντα/ουσας	Ημερομηνία	Υπογραφή
Όνομα ατόμου που λαμβάνει συγκατάθεση	Ημερομηνία	Υπογραφή

School Staff Information Sheet

Title: 'Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools'

School Staff Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research study sponsored by the University of Manchester. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by Anthoula Kefallinou, a PhD student in the University of Manchester.

Contact details: anthoula.kefallinou@manchester.ac.uk | PhD Candidate -Research/Teaching Assistant | Room B2.2.| Ellen Wilkinson Building | Manchester Institute of Education | School of Environment Education and Development | University of Manchester | Oxford Road | M13 9PL

Title of the Research

This PhD research project is an investigation of the way students experience inclusive practice in English and Greek secondary schools. The title of the research is: 'Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools'

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of my PhD research project is to increase our understanding of the way students experience inclusive practice in English and Greek secondary schools. Cross-cultural comparisons of student voices between European countries will provide evidence about areas for school improvement and highlight policies that work best for pupils. Exploring the perceptions of pupils will also add to our understanding and methods for giving all children a voice.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited because of your capacity to contribute meaningfully to my investigation. You are a member of teaching staff in a school that has been involved in inclusive practice. Except for you, students from your school will participate in the study. Your school was recommended by University researchers who have worked with you.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

I will conduct an individual semi-structured interview with you, to explore your views on student experiences of inclusion. Every interview will last 30 minutes approximately and will be held in the school building, during working hours.

What happens to the data collected?

The interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed qualitatively. Direct quotations may be used in order to enhance the credibility of qualitative data. Information from the interview will be reported and disseminated exclusively for academic purposes (PhD thesis, academic journals, academic conferences and/or book contribution).

How is confidentiality maintained?

All information generated from the study will be treated as strictly confidential, and will be used only for research purposes. Confidentiality will be ensured by promising that you will not be presented in the study by an identifiable form. Accordingly, anonymity will be ensured by referring to the school, the school staff and the participants with the use of pseudonyms. Access to the data will be granted only to University staff or academics, for supervisory purposes. On completion of the research, the data will be passed to the academic supervisors for archiving at the University for a period of 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No direct payment will be provided. However, by participating in this study, you will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on experiences that matter to you.

What is the duration of the research?

You are expected to take part in the data collection process for a period of 4 weeks. I will be observing 3 students in your school, during regular classroom lessons, for a period of 2 weeks. During this period, you will be asked to give me an interview, which will be conducted after the observations and will last 30 minutes approximately.

Where will the research be conducted?

The data collection will be held in your school building, during working hours.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The findings of this research will be disseminated exclusively for academic purposes: PhD thesis, academic journals, academic conferences and/or book contribution.

Disability and Barring Service (DBS) Check (if applicable)

I have undergone a satisfactory DBS check, which permits me to have access to children or vulnerable individuals.

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information

My teaching and research experience so far have enhanced my awareness and sensitivity to many of the obstacles, decisions and issues encountered during the research process. However, should you have any questions or concerns about my research activity you can contact my academic supervisors, ***Dr. Andy Howes*** *(andrew.j.howes@manchester.ac.uk) and* ***Professor Olwen Mcnamara*** *(olwen.mcnamara@manchester.ac.uk), who make certain that my work conforms to the ethical guidelines of the University.*

What if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns or wish to complain, you should contact the researcher, ***Anthoula Kefallinou,*** *or the academic supervisor,* ***Dr. Andy Howes,*** *in the first instance (contact details above).*

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Governance and Integrity Team by either writing to 'The Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: Research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 8093 or 275 2674

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee

School Staff Consent from

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Title: 'Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools'

SCHOOL STAFF CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Please Initial Box
1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded	
4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes	
5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.	

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee

Parent/Carer Letter

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

PARENT/CARER LETTER

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am a PhD research student at the University of Manchester. My research will explore secondary students' school experiences of inclusive practices and your child has agreed to participate in this study.

The proposed research has satisfied the criteria outlined by the ethics committee within the Manchester Institute of Education. In addition, the Headteacher _____ and _____ (SENCO) have approved this research to be carried out _____ High School.

Should you agree to your child participating in my research, he/she will be observed for one school day during classroom lessons and school breaks; he/she will also be asked to give me a 'guided tour' in the school for around 30 minutes, during which he/she will take photographs of places in the school. Finally, the data collection will include two 30 minute interview sessions with your child which will focus on his/her experiences of the inclusive practices that are implemented in the school. This research will not involve intervention work and will have minimal impact on your child's school routine.

You and your child have the right to withdraw any consent given to participate in the research and can request for their data to be destroyed at any time. Measures will be taken to ensure anonymity of all participants (students, school staff) and the school. The information gathered will be used only for academic purposes (PhD thesis, academic journals and conferences, book contribution). You can also find a more detailed information sheet attached to this letter.

Please sign and date the consent form below to confirm you are both aware and approve of your child taking part in my research.

Should you have any queries or wish to seek confirmation on any of the above issues, please do not hesitate to contact myself at the school, or my research supervisors at the university: Dr. Andy Howes (andrew.j.howes@manchester.ac.uk) & Professor Olwen McNamara (olwen.Mcnamara@manchester.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely,
Anthi Kefallinou
anthoula.kefallinou@manchester.ac.uk

Parent/Carer Consent form

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Title: 'Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English Secondary Schools'

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM

If you approve of your child taking part in the research project, please complete and sign the consent form below

	Please tick Initial Box
1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2. I understand that my participation of my child in the study is voluntary and that he/she is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	☐
3. I understand that the interviews with my child will be audio-recorded.	☐
4. I agree to the use of my child's anonymous quotes.	☐
5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.	☐

I approve of my child taking part in the above project

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX XII. Permission to conduct research

Approval letter from the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee (UK)

Research Ethics, Governance and Integrity Manager
2nd Floor Christie Building

Tel: 0161 275 2206/2046
Email: timothy.stibbs@manchester.ac.uk

3rd July 2015

Research Ethics Committee 3
Kefallinou: Exploring student experiences of inclusive practices: A cross-national study in Greek and English secondary schools (ref 15258).

I write to thank you and Anthoula for coming to meet the Committee on 10 June and for the subsequent correspondence. I am pleased to confirm that the revised submission in your email of 1 July satisfies the concerns raised by the Committee and that the above project has a favourable ethical opinion on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation as submitted and approved by the Committee.

This approval is effective for a period of five years. If the project continues beyond that period an application for amendment must be submitted for review. Likewise, any proposed changes to the way the research is conducted must be approved via the amendment process (see below). Failure to do so could invalidate the insurance and constitute research misconduct.

You are reminded that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a secure university computer or kept securely as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

Reporting Requirements:

You are required to report to us the following:

1. Amendments
2. Breaches and adverse events
3. Notification of Progress/End of the Study

Feedback

It is our aim to provide a timely and efficient service that ensures transparent, professional and proportionate ethical review of research with consistent outcomes, which is supported by clear, accessible guidance and training for applicants and committees. In order to assist us with our aim, we would be grateful if you would give your view of the service that you have received from us by completing a feedback sheet [https://survey.manchester.ac.uk/pssweb/index.php/779758/lang-en]

We hope the research goes well.
Yours sincerely,

Dr T P C Stibbs

Secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee

Approval letter from the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (Greece)

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ
ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ

ΓΕΝΙΚΗ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΒΑΘΜΙΑΣ & ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΒΑΘΜΙΑΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΕΙΔΙΚΗΣ ΑΓΩΓΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ.
ΤΜΗΜΑ Α

Ταχ. Δ/νση: Α. Παπανδρέου 37
Τ.Κ. – Πόλη: 151 23 Μαρούσι
Ιστοσελίδα: http://www. minedu.gov.gr
Email: t08dea1@minedu.gov.gr
Πληροφορίες: Τουρούκης Χ
Τηλέφωνο: 210 3442190- 3442577
Fax: 210 34423193

Μαρούσι, 27-10-2016
Αρ. Πρωτ 180450 /Δ3

ΠΡΟΣ: 1) κ.ΚΕΦΑΛΛΗΝΟΥ ΑΝΘΟΥΛΑ
ΔΑΦΝΗΣ 34
ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ
ΑΘΗΝΑ
Τ.Κ 15772
2)ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ Β/ΘΜΙΑΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ Α' ΑΘΗΝΑΣ
3) ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ Β/ΘΜΙΑΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ

ΚΟΙΝ: ΣΧΟΛΕΙΑ (ΜΕΣΩ ΤΩΝ ΟΙΚΕΙΩΝ Δ/ΝΣΕΩΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ).

ΘΕΜΑ: Έγκριση Διεξαγωγής Έρευνας

Απαντώντας σε σχετικό αίτημα και έχοντας υπόψη την με αριθμό 40/06-10-2016 πράξη του Δ.Σ. του Ι.Ε.Π. σας κάνουμε γνωστό ότι εγκρίνουμε τη διεξαγωγή έρευνας της κ. Κεφαλληνού Ανθούλας, υποψήφια διδάκτωρ του Πανεπιστημίου του Μάντσεστερ Ινστιτούτο Εκπαίδευσης με θέμα: «Οι εμπειρίες των μαθητών πάνω στις ενταξιακές πρακτικές: μία συγκριτική μελέτη σε Ελληνικά και Αγγλικά σχολεία δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης», στο Τ.Ε του [redacted] και του [redacted], καθώς πληροί τους επιστημονικούς όρους και τις προβλεπόμενες παιδαγωγικές προϋποθέσεις.

Ενδεικτικά αναφέρεται ότι η εν λόγω έρευνα αποσκοπεί στη συγκριτική μελέτη και στη συστηματική αξιολόγηση των ενταξιακών πρακτικών που εφαρμόζονται σε δυο διαφορετικά εκπαιδευτικά συστήματα, της Αγγλία και της Ελλάδας, σε σχολικές μονάδες της Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης για μαθητές με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες.

Ως ερευνητικό εργαλείο θα χρησιμοποιηθεί η μέθοδος της μη συμμετοχικής παρατήρησης - μια σχολική μέρα για κάθε μαθητή, χωρίς την απασχόληση του μαθητή και η συνέντευξη. Η συνέντευξη, μόνο για την περίπτωση των μαθητών, θα γίνει σε δύο φάσεις και θα συνοδεύεται από εναλλακτικές ερευνητικές τεχνικές –χρήση δραστηριοτήτων. Οι δυο δραστηριότητες,

APPENDIX XIII. Example of transcribing and initial coding

MARIOS' INTERVIEW		
TIME	**EXTRACTS**	**Initial codes**
19:26	In inclusion class they help me in lessons that we struggle. One teacher for Physics, Chemistry and Biology and meanwhile another one is for Greek language and literature, ancient Greek...and another one.	Inclusion class
20:00	*-Are you happy with the help you receive there?* -Umm so and so. I like that I get help but I don't like it when they shout at me. For example, one teacher when she sees me she says to me 'you will stay still, you won't talk and you will look at me'. And I didn't do anything, and I left from the inclusion class. I had today too, the hour before but I didn't go (...) she doesn't help a lot. Last year there was another one, much better.	Inclusion class – tensions with teacher
21:13	*-Do you get along with the other teacher in inclusion class?* -Yes, with one teacher yes. Sometimes I go alone, sometimes with four people. I prefer group work	Inclusion class – group work
22:05	Miss (SEN physics teacher) has shown us an experiment and she taught us how to do it and then she gave us roles and she said you will say this, you will that and we learned it. But I didn't understand one thing: miss told me that this will help you and that the physics teacher (mainstream) will raise your grade. I mean, I had a 7? She told me that he would raise 2 grades, so I was a 7 and I took a 9? And she told me I don't know. I think, this is what I think, she has told us that mister would raise 2 grades, so if I hadn't done this I would take a 7?	Experiment in physics Grades –unfairness
23:48	*-So you think there is an issue with grades...* -I think so... (I would put myself) either 13 or 14 and I am not noisy at all in this class. Basically... I am in other subjects, where teachers don't shout and everyone is loud, I stand up, I in Physics, Arts and French.	Grades - Noisy
24:37	*-Do you find lessons hard?* -Yes, a bit...I don't understand very well the way they explain things	Mainstream lessons
24:58	*-Are there teachers that explain things well?* Yes, mister Spanoulis in Geography, and in Greek language	Mainstream teachers

25:24	(The best thing in school) is that there is the break, that...it's better than primary because you did 1 hour lesson there and here you have got 40 or 45minutes lesson, that we a very big space, we have got a football court and we can do many things here, that there is gymnastics, music etc.	Primary
26:19	*-The worst thing about school?* -There are some teachers that are...that I don't like them. And the inclusion class. Because sometimes they take me out of lessons that I don't want to leave, and they put pressure on me. I mean in one lesson I wanted to stay because I didn't have a good grade and I wanted to stay. *-Are you obliged to go to the inclusion class?* -Yes, by my mum and dad. Because I had resit exams in French and they put me in the inclusion class after this. I took resit exams and I passed...I don't do very well at French. (...) English are ok, I go to a cram school ('frontistirio'). I used to go swimming pool as well, but I stopped, my parents didn't want it.	Inclusion class – pressure/ resistance Resit exams - French Out of school activities
28:30	I have got three brothers, 2 younger and one older. The old one is in high school, sometimes we fight here	Siblings (micro-system)

APPENDIX XIV. Mani's personal story

Introducing Mani

Mani is in Y8 (13 years old) and has been a student in Oakland school since Y7. He has anger management issues and exhibits post trauma aggressive behaviour. According to his teachers, he is able cognitively, but has young emotional age (SENCO). In Y7 he had lessons in a small group of students who receive intensive teaching in the SEN Department, and he also attended mainstream classrooms in 'softer' subjects (SEN teacher). His transition to mainstream classes was gradual. In Y8 he has been taught in mainstream classes and has been getting support from a TA in some of the lessons. He continues to have one to one sessions in the SEN Department, where he also seeks help when he has significant tantrums during the school day. He has recently been moved to the SEN group, as he wasn't coping very well (SEN teacher). The SENCO or one of the SEN teachers are attending meetings on a regular basis with Mani's mother and the social services.

Mani's story

I walk to school, it takes me about 15 minutes, I live nearby (...) Sometimes I walk with my friends and sometimes I walk alone (...) Some lessons I have mainstream, which means normal lessons with my form and with set I mean, and sometimes I have lessons with HOPE, the special group.

I like basketball, it is my favourite sport, I am 13 now...so I have been playing for...6 years (...) I think I am ok (...) I really like PE [Physical Education] and I am really energetic (...) I like basketball and I like sometimes football or hockey (...) I used to play [basketball] in primary school and I just liked it (...) I like team games (...) sometimes I play at break and lunch. I play outside the school for a team (...) Sometimes I get a lift, sometimes I go with my mum in a taxi, only sometimes (...) I don't play for the school basketball team anymore, because most of the time I don't have my PE kit and then they get angry so I don't play for them.

I really like music and it's been one of my favourite subjects for a long time (...) I played the guitar when I was in primary, I just left it now (...) Sometimes we are on the pianos and we play pianos with the other class and I like it (...) just piano at the moment, but last year we were learning steel pans, drums and other stuff.

Drama is ok, I don't always like it, because some people in there annoy me, they make me angry (...) I don't like the places there...the English and Science corridors, I don't like the teachers, they just annoy me and when I get angry at them they get me in trouble...detention, to wherever they say to go, science room, English room, art room, anywhere (...) Sometimes I have problems with the teachers, only sometimes.

Some of them [teachers] are mean, like you'll have a note, and you are told to be in detention. (...) Sometimes [I ask for help], it depends on how I am feeling...I get along [with teachers], not all them, some of them annoy me and I want to punch them, but I don't punch them because I know not to (...) Staff [should] have manners, instead of shouting at me, I hate shouting...but when I shout sometimes, I scare myself.

I have support in Maths, Science, English, DT, RE, History (...) They [the TA's] help me... I don't have the TA with me all the time. Sometimes I have to go to the SEN Department, and she is not with me sometimes (...) the TA annoys me. She keeps annoying me (...) I am tired and sleeping and she is like 'get up! Get up now!' She is like my mum, but I don't want her to be my mum (...) The recent TA's that I used to have were better (...) They didn't nag me and they actually helped me properly and they were actually smart (...) [I would have] At least two TA's in a room. Everyone understands that when you have (TAs) back in the room and then if someone puts their hand up, they go to them. So he [the teacher] just carry on teaching.

I don't like it [school] (...) because I am tired and it's really bad for my health (...) because when I wake up, sometimes I wake up late and sometimes I wake up too early and when I am in school I am really tired. And sometimes when I wake up late I don't have any breakfast and this affects me all day and I get angry and then it just (slaps his hands) (...) [I wake up] late because I am tired! I have sleeping problems, they make me too tired (2nd Interview session, part 2: 08:39) (...) I should come to school like half the day or leave at half the day, so yeah...if I had three hours and then... no, if I don't come into school or leave school at 12 o clock (...) Other students have done it in the past so I would consider that... it's dead because I am not them, they have like special...

Sometimes I feel happy because I have all of my friends, but sometimes when none of my friends are there I just feel lonely and sad (...) because I can't find them, or just general are sick or off. I have some friends from primary school, some from high school, some friends

than I met. I don't have one [best friend]. Sometimes I go to their house, sometimes we go do something, like play football (…) Not that many [friends]… I've got like the whole of year 8 (…) When I am on early lunch with HOPE, cause I have a special timetable, so I go on an early lunch and I see them.

HOPE… you get extra help, like…I can't explain… you get help like in literacy and in most subjects as well and you get a teacher on each table so they can help you, to everyone (…) I would be in HOPE all the time, I would prefer that. And I still got to see my friends at break and lunch. Some students in mainstream they don't get as much help as others. That's why I couldn't take in mainstream either.

Miss Smith, she is a teacher in the SEN Department, every time that I am in the SEN Department she helps me a lot and I really appreciate it. [I do] work and they help me with my anger issues…trauma issues (…) they make me talk about it (…) I forgot her name… she works in the SEN Department (…) [we had sessions] last year and one this year and then it stopped (…) She stopped it. But I still have a session with Miss Jones, that lady there, she talks about stuff, checks my planner, makes me play games sometimes, mostly at the end, and we talk about school, we talk about like what has happened.

(…) because I have got angrier than I was in primary school. When I was finishing primary school, then it happened, something happened and I just got angrier, and then angrier and then angrier (…) Sometimes I take it out on my little brother, sometimes I take it out on my classmates, even sometimes I take it out on my little sister, or my mum. It depends who is there, I just get angrier and angrier and… (slaps his hands) (…) When I am angry I want to punch people, throw tables, smash doors and beat people up, and stab people. It's like ahhh (shouts)… you don't like it, it's like a monster and then you won't like it. And then teachers try to restrain me, like, at home when I am angry, I would get my mum to squeeze my hands (…) [in school] there is no one to squeeze my hands (…) [I want to] Go home! Go sleep…or play basketball, go to the park, or play basketball or…. just go.

Outside the school I go to the 'Walter' centre. They ask me about stuff and they can help me, why I get so angry, and (…) and what happened when everything went wrong (…) Since Y6, so that's two years now, no that's actually Y6, Y7, Y8 (…) I got dispatched and then I got reinstated to go back, like (…) just a few weeks ago, no… I was dispatched way before but I

came back 7 weeks ago. Sometimes [I go] every month, sometimes every three weeks, it depends on what schedule. Some girl called Sandy [helps me there].

[We need] Better computers, because all the software is too old, because we are still on Windows 7 where we could be on Windows 10 and we could get better computers with more hard drive and better data space and storage space (...) Oh yeah, and toilets. Broken doors...there is broken doors, and people can get in easily, they can kick your door when you have been in a toilet and they can see you, so we need better doors

[I want to be] Famous basketballer! There is LeBron James, and then there is going to be Mani James! (...) or accountant (...) It gets good pay and I am good at Maths. Sometimes I am fast [in calculating] (...) it might be like a lower job...I might have two jobs, cause then I get lots of money, like, I can be a part-time shopper, like scan, cause that's easy. Basketball is easy too, but it does take determination and skill.

APPENDIX XV. Jo's personal story

Introducing Jo

Jo is in Y10 and has been a student in Oakland school for 4 years. She has social and emotional needs. According to the SEN teacher, she tends to 'make tales', gossip and spread rumours which affects negatively her social interactions. In primary school, she had a TA supporting her during the lessons. When she first came to this school in Y7, she had complete lack of confidence and self-esteem (SENCO). She attended mainstream classes, but she also received intense support in the SEN Department. This included a holistic approach, with her participation in social circles, athletic activities and agriculture (SENCO). Her support has been gradually phased out and this year Jo is having individual sessions only once a week in the SEN Department. The SENCO is pleased with her progress, as she has become more independent (SENCO).

Jo's personal story

I live across the road from the stadium… sometimes it's hard to come to school. This morning, there was a block and all the buses stop running, so me and my brother had to walk from the stadium to the town (…) There wasn't a close school when I started (…) the teachers know me for ages because of my older brother (…) I have 2 brothers and 1 sister, I am in the middle (…). My sister is now 17, and my brother 21.

I was the only one who came from my primary school, so I found it hard to make friends. In the corner [of the school], we have like a playground. Y7s when they first join they don't know anyone and go there, it's like a park there and they will interact with other people. They are different students in different areas so if they need help we will show them around the school…people are from different years that we can talk to, teachers are there too. If a student asks me 'where is the lesson' I will show them the room (…) We have a fish tank [in the school], the head likes fish, and then he will come down and feed them. In Y7 we go on like a tour with the school, with the Geography teacher and this was one of the places where I first went, the first thing that I saw with the school.

We have assemblies either in the lecture theatre or the drama studio (…) I like the ones where teachers involve the students, sometimes in assemblies we play games and then we have readings. In the morning, we have form groups where we go to register and then we

sit there for half an hour and they read out the bulletin and they tell us everything that is going on in that day, all the activities that go on, like football after school, and they tell us where to meet. After school, on Tuesdays and Thursdays we go to the library and we watch a movie and then discuss, which helps us in English (...) I have been twice (...) We can go there, do our homework and read a book.

In DT [Design and Technology] I have chosen Food, where we cook and we can learn about carbohydrates, about the foods. We use computers to do like an evaluation we have just cooked (...) I find it [Maths] easy (...) doing lessons that I don't really like, English and PE [is the worst thing]. RE is my best subject and I don't really like English Literature (...) I like RE because I get to learn about different faiths and different cultures in the world. In the RE displays everyone has a different faith and we put different faiths around and we talk about Christianity, Islam and then we draw pictures that represent them (...) I like RE because we get to explore different faiths... we learn about it... people would talk about their faith and how it relates with our faith and then we talk about it (...) we get to interact with people from different faiths and then we can talk about it. And when we do ask teachers in class nobody tells you what to do, because we are people from different faiths. If somebody comes from Islamic background, you learn about their faith and understanding it more. We go on different trips, like in RE we go to the Buddhist Centre in Manchester, in the City Centre. And then we spend a few hours there studying and then come back and do like feedback and it will help us with our education. When we are learning about Buddhism, then we can go the place and they'll tell you different things and then in the test we can revise it.

When we have double lessons like when we have double RE, an RA lesson before lunch and after lunch, and I don't really like it that much... Or science...they have the biggest topics... History has just small parts, like practicing different parts. In history...every topic kind of ties into history, English, Science goes into History. We are learning how science goes to history. Sometimes in science when we do questions and I don't understand some of the questions, the teacher will come over and will explain.

We are studying for our GCSE's, but these tests start in Y11 (...) It makes me nervous because I don't know what grade I am going to get...We have to do tests every half term and nobody likes to do tests over half term. Some of them [are necessary], because only parts of them pop up on the test. We go on to the lesson and we get told, they tell us when we are tested

and we normally have it every half term. Sometimes they do like revision lessons in class, but then nobody does anything for that homework then. Miss Robinson, she makes us write down some facts and then she makes us read all that. When we do that revision class [you are losing time]… yeah [you are getting a bit bored] because you go over things you already know. They go back…so like in Maths, we are doing graphs now, we have learnt it all last year and then we got to go over it again.

[In the school corridors] you can see your own targets and ask other people too. Like in History, we put them [the results] on the board and then people can see the results and then we can ask other people for advice in lessons about how to improve…we do it in lessons. Students who have higher grades can explain it in different ways that make it easier…. they can explain it differently…just different people each time, who can get higher grades in some topics and low in others. If all [students] had the same abilities, then nobody can really help them… If somebody is better in one bit he can help others. I think it's a range of grades, so we can see where people are good at and where they are bad at, it's like an average in this school at the end of the year (…) every set does the same work, we are all doing the same course but we are split into foundation and higher. So that the higher would get a grade A and star work.

Sometimes it is hard to reach them all [classmates], and then they don't really get it, like, in history I have to explain to this student, who just moved here, every time she will ask for my help, but she doesn't really understand the topic. If I ask for somebody's help some people might say 'go ask somebody else because I don't really understand that topic either' and then I have to ask the teacher. Sometimes other students get more help than me, some people like to get the attention, they always want the attention on them. If I have people just talking around me [during lessons], I just like to go to my own world…like I blank out sometimes whatever they are saying, because it doesn't really involve me, so I won't listen to it.

In some lessons, they sometimes they give you the homework on a sheet and they ask you to fill the highest questions, not to go with the lowest questions, which is a bit hard. All of our coursework is done on computers as well [Doodle], so it's easier when everything is on one place. I like it [Doodle]… if I don't understand it, then it shows in the teachers screen with smile faces (…) if I have got activities after school, then I prefer to do work at home (…)

my parents understand the topics because my sister and my brother did it when they were here.

In primary, I used to have a teacher coming into my lessons with me and sit next to me, a TA...I didn't like somebody sat next to me. In this school I never had a TA. It's better in this school because then I interact with people in the class. And If I have a trouble I can go down [in the SEN Department] and see the teachers. I can talk to the teachers and then other people can go to the head of year (...) They sort out any problems, they will come into some lessons and they see how we are doing...any problem that you have, like if somebody is bullying you...any problem in general, so if you need anybody to talk to, you can go to your head of year.... they help you with subjects that you are struggling with, like Maths, English and Science. If you have a disability you can come down to the SEN Department and we then have a talk, when we have a problem, we tell our problems with each other. I have done that last year. I did agriculture, like planting, interact with others with different abilities...we sorted out my problems. You can talk about anything, so like when we had circle time, then you will sit down and you will talk in a group. We used to have people come in and then we would sit down and talk, so if there is any problems we would talk in that group, and then we go outside with the group (...) We are going on trips, like football trips and cycling, where we interact with different people from different groups. We got to play with different teams and we won medals at City. We all went with the SEN Department because there is a girls' tournament and we ended up winning the trophy.

I come here every Monday, I talk with Miss Peters about anything in general. If I am struggling in a topic, then they will go for it with me separately. I'll come down once in every two weeks and then I'll have sessions with teachers where I talk about my problems, one to one. The teacher will pass it on to Miss Wally (the SENCO). Sometimes I'll stay after school and I'll catch up on coursework and then after school they do coursework lessons and then if you need any help you just go to them. I would stay there until 16.30. [If something upsets me] I will go to the SEN Department and if they are all out on a trip I will go to my head of year, like when somebody tried to take my phone, they have took my sim card out of my phone. I don't know why. They put them in LSU [Learning Support Unit], the place that you go when you don't have the correct uniform on or if you misbehave... you are not allowed to go out on break or lunch, so it's like a punishment...You still have to do your work, like from your classes, there is a teacher there.

[The best thing in school is] seeing my friends. We get to play basketball on the court and football at break and lunch. I prefer to play football mixed with different years. Y7s will come and join us and we all play together. If you are in Y7 you can play with Y10s. I like football. Jo Hart is my favorite footballer. I used to play in primary school, but because the girls didn't want play, I used to go and play with the boys (...) I do it in City stadium every Tuesday (...) if there is a football match, me my brother would go to the football match, in City, and then after the match me and my brother we'll wait for the players to come out... the players know who I am.

[During breaks] me and my friends go to the receptionist to talk about football... He is a Barcelona fun, he is English, but he likes Barcelona... I go there with friends, just some friends, and we comfort each other, like if they are defeated in one match or we are defeated, and then we are laughing about it. We talk about football and girl things, about 5 girls... they were in my form, not the class. I like that we can talk about anything and they won't tell other people. At lunch time we can go in there [in the chapel] and pray...and then in RE we would come down and we'll sit in the chapel, for Christianity, and then we will learn in there, in this environment... we have teachers with us or a member of staff...Me and my friends we will go there and pray.

I would bring more TA's in, like have a TA in every classroom in case somebody needs help...not next to me, so that they can look over the whole class, if the teacher is busy helping one person they can go over and help another person. I would have a separate area for each year, so like in the canteen Y7s and Y10s don't really mix. So I would have one canteen for Y7s and one canteen for Y10s... because sometimes the Y10s are older they would push the Y7s. [Future aspirations] ...I don't know.

APPENDIX XVI. Debbie's personal story

Introducing Debbie

Debbie is 13 years old and attends Year 9 in Mapleland School. She is a wheelchair user with severe and complex needs which result from her degenerative condition. In the beginning of the year Debbie refused to go lessons and to engage with people in the school. She was also self-harming and refused to eat and drink (SENCO). Debbie has made considerable progress since then; she attends some mainstream lessons and leaves five minutes early, to enable her free movement in the school corridors. She usually spends most of her time with her friends in the SEN Department. When she is tired, she lies down on the physio bed in the SEN Department (SEN teacher). The school staff focuses on increasing her independence and raising her emotional health and wellbeing by involving her in different out-of-school activities. She has received counselling from an external agency, but she was not engaging in conversations (SENCO).

Debbie's Personal Story

I was born in 2002. I don't know, I can't remember any of the things that happened in my life. Only when my brother was born and my sister was older than me. [In primary] it was easier (...) we had like... I don't know. I didn't have my own key actually [i.e. for the school lift]. (...) I was with my brother in primary and it was funny, everybody thought we were twins. He hasn't changed, we both are in electric chairs, we are both wearing glasses and I have got a little higher voice than his (laughter), he is 11.

[I have got] two brothers and one sister. (...) They are nice, I've spend my whole life with them and I like my family. (...) My sister is older, my two brothers are younger. I spend time with my brothers and sometimes with my sister. She went to another school, she wanted a girls' school and I wanted to be with my friends. (...) I don't know, just like knowing my friends are here [made it easier]. (...) There is Karim, I don't know if the others are coming here. And he is my brother's friend as well. My brother plays playstation with him. They talk to each other through the mikes.

I am nearly three years in this school, this is my third year. (...) It was sort of hard because when I came here I have just got out of hospital. I had surgery. People here were sort of alright. (...) I move around only when there is not much people around. I go to class like the

normal time and leave five minutes early. (...) The tutor room is where I meet some of my friends who are not in any lessons with me and they don't go to the SEN Department. I met them in Y7 and I don't know, we then just changed. The tutor time is like...25 minutes. The teacher just reads stuff and we just talk. (...) Every Wednesday we have got assemblies in tutor time. Not the whole school, only the year. I just listen to the head of the year talk about stuff and I just sit there basically nearly going asleep. She is actually really boring.

The library is actually the worst place that I go to because it's like full of books and I don't like reading. [I go] only when I need to get a book for some lesson (...) Maths is like the first worse thing before the library and we just sit to boring lessons listening to teachers going on and on and I basically fall asleep. I don't like Maths (...) and I want to have lessons that I like often because I am like...I don't know because I just do. Maths is the most thing I hate, it's basically just boring.

The least boring is PE. Sometimes we go to the gym and sometimes we do other stuff. I like going to the gym. (...) In textiles we do different stuff...sometimes with food. In Y7 we made bags. I don't know, I didn't do all the work to make the bag, the support worker helped. It's kind of a sport bag, I left it at home. (...) I have got arts... I am not really good at arts... I don't know what else (...) I did languages last year, not this one.

There is only one lesson that I don't go in and which is humanities and I stay in here [i.e. the SEN Department]. I just sit here and do nothing. (...) [the SEN Department] it's a place where you can hang out and like sit with my friends (...) we can do work there, we can just like sit and... we can do other stuff. I just sit in there. All my friends come here...that's it. The TAs are kind and nice and weird when they act like they are young, but they are not (laughter). They are like fifty and they act twenty, to make people think they are younger when it's obvious that they are not! (...) TAs help me a lot, like sometimes they get me the answers.

Sometimes I just don't want to do any work and I don't feel like it and the teachers will come and start talking and they won't stop. (...) Homework... I don't understand it. (...) I have better things to do than just sit and do homework. I might go somewhere else or catching up with some videos that I have missed or play 'colour switch' [a mobile game with colour codes]. (...) [After school] I just go home and go on facebook or snapchat or u tube. I basically spend my whole life in that, unless I am in school but sometimes I sneak it into the lesson.

The best thing about school… (silence) I don't know, going home…maybe break time because I like spending time with my friends (…) we just talk and we play games with my phone. (…) [The worst thing] is going to lessons being told what to do and (…) when like I don't want to do something and they say I have to do it, just anyone. Like Maths, I know I have to do it but sometimes I don't like the teacher and I don't want to go in so…yeah. I actually don't like Maths either (…). I basically hate going to lessons and they are really boring. I don't know maybe PE and music…they are just more fun. [In music] I just play instruments and I mix songs with stuff on the laptop. The support worker [helps] and the teacher.

Music teacher is alright, PE teacher is alright, drama teacher is alright. All the ones I didn't say [are not] (…) I don't' think that the teachers are so fair… I can't think of an example. (…) I don't really tell teachers my ideas anyway (…) I never listen to them anyway.

Pupils are nice… not all of them, some of them. They are like helpful and stuff. (…) Sometimes I just ask them for the answers. (…) We are doing…some pupils in Y6 they are coming in next year, like my brother is coming next year and some other kids and… [the purpose is] to show them what the school is like. I don't know, I haven't decided what I am going to do yet. But I had to make this booklet but basically, I am not going to be good at it because me talking about the school is not going to be good (laughter)

I like animals, I like dogs. (…) I am nearly going to work on a dog's home. I don't know much because I haven't started yet. Just walk dogs, I don't know, like anywhere. My support worker from here is going to help. The school has talked with the dog's home and they have decided that I could go.

[If I could change something in school] I'd get rid of the people I don't like and take them to a different school. I would actually get rid of the uniforms. I don't like wearing a uniform. I wear a hoodie anywhere.

[Future plans…] I don't know yet (…) I don't know.

APPENDIX XVII. Rahman's personal story

Introducing Rahman

Rahman is in Y8, 13 years old and has been a student in Mapleland School for 2 years. He has speech and language difficulties along with social communication difficulties. He often struggles to read social situations and react appropriately on these. As a result, he tends to have emotional outbursts, such as crying and seeking help from adults (SENCO). His teachers characterise him as a 'nervous' child who lacks confidence and who wants to be under the constant supervision of an adult (SEN teacher). He attends mainstream classes and sometimes he gets support by a support worker. He has been to the SEN Department in the past but now since he is more independent, his specialist provision has changed, and interventions focus around his social communication. He used to have sessions with speech and language therapist in the Resource Centre of the school.

Rahman's personal story

I have got one sister, younger, 6. I am 12, almost 13 (...) In school I learn, I walk around also and after school I just watch TV or on laptop. I go football also, at home, at the back door of my house. I go to school by car with my dad. (...) High school is a bit...hard (...) To be honest, this is a very big school. I might get lost sometimes but I got used to it. (...) At the beginning of the year I was getting lost, but now I practiced it with the support worker, extra support. Even before that, before high school, when I was in primary school in Y6, the teachers would tour around. When I needed help now in Y7, I got lost because it's so big school, I practiced with someone else and I got used to it and now I know everything in this school.

It's good, it's very good, I like it [i.e. the school], every teacher is very good. (...) There is a lot of support workers, people in the SEN Department, they got lots of them. If they ask the teacher, the teacher will send them to the SEN Department. (...) People with special needs they go like...in the big room or the SEN Department (...) with the teachers who support them. Even they go by the bed also. They got a bed here, so people...they have kind of nursing here...kind of.

We have got the SEN Department and Learning Support. Learning Support is like... low set people go there. Those people with special needs and people who need lots of help. If they

are very very low set, like bottom set, not top bottom one, they go there. They do lessons but a little bit easier ones (...) my friend is going there, Sammy. He needs lots of help, Sammy.

The 'Resource centre'...I have been two or three times. It's like interviews, meeting and like that....this meeting, talking to a teacher. Similar like you but a little bit different. I talk about papers, papers like activities that they sent...the teacher. [I go there] because teacher wants me to speak on how I am doing. People go also to portrays also in resources. They...I don't know how to describe well... those people who use portrays they are kind of special needs. It's similar to Learning Support I think.

I have been to the 'Inclusion Centre' many times. I do resilience and meeting also. Resilience like 'don't give up', smiley face, sad face. There is a meeting room also. That's it. We are little people, like five or six people. (...) The 'Pastoral Room'... Naughty children go there, who misbehave, they go to that room. It is a little bit scary because you go and sit there and teachers are like copy text out and write (inaudible). I have never been there. You go detention like after school if people keep messing about, throwing pens, things, shout, talk. (...) In this school if there is very very very naughty people they have to take them, go somewhere else.

The best thing about school is when I have fun in lessons. Most of them are fun. I work hard, I have to work hard. I talk to my friends, I play with a group also. And in lessons I learn a lot. I learn. (...) I like all lessons. I like Maths, I prefer Maths, maybe DT. I am very good at maths, quite good at DT. And Drama I am good at. I think that's it....and PE. So Maths, DT, drama and PE. (...) I am very very good at sports. Football, athletics. Football... did it last year, after school. The PE teacher or the headteacher [organised it]. I am planning to go again, I think every week ago.

Lessons are ok, I am in most good at it. [In] music you can mix songs. Mostly we make songs, like pianos and drums. I play guitar also. (...) In RE we are doing revisions, at English we just do like normal stuff. I read books also. If one normal teacher is not here sometimes we read the books, like do normal one, sometimes we read books for the whole hour (...). Yesterday I started German. Last term I did French (...) this term I did German until the end of the year I think, now it's time to do German, I don't know...I think so. Some people do German, some people do French.

I prefer to go Maths. (...) It's so good, it's fun, sometimes it is hard, but I like it. It's hard maths, numeracy. I have got a lots of Maths. (...) I don't need help [i.e. in Maths]. When I have an answer miss [i.e. the support worker] will check. If I need lots of help I tell the teacher, and teacher tells the support worker and she will sit next to me. I like both, the teacher and the support worker. Sometimes it's ok work, a little bit hard, but ok, but everyone is messing about, a lot of noise. But work is good, is ok but other people are so many naughty, they mess about, I don't like that. Work is ok (...) I am happy, as long as the people don't mess about. In ICT...people are messing about a lot, I don't like it.

Last term I got out of lessons instead, to different rooms. Sometimes lessons if it is too noisy, once or twice I go to different rooms. I go to the SEN Department. I went like two or three weeks ago. (...). Once I need help, or when is too noisy I come here. [I talk] to the support worker. Sometimes I go to the SEN Department to get water, outside lessons. If I need help outside lessons I will come here.

I am not very good at.... I am not very good at art. (...) Art work [i.e. displays in corridors] is good, because if like people like inspectors they came here, see our work. Inspectors, like special person, an adult came to see the school, how is it and if they look at our work, that's good, they like it, they like the school. I think...someone was watching me and the whole class, I was just carry on with the lesson, to see how people do, once. (...) DT (is) also on Ofsted. [We] bake, we make things. And cooking also and textiles, making bags or making clothes, and last one make graphics, that kind of things. All of them are good. (...) We use a lot of computers, which is very good also. Sometimes in lessons mostly or one or twice we go to computers, on ICT rooms. We do computer stuff.

Worst thing ever in school is...I don't like if people are messing lots of times, very naughty children, if my classmates is very very naughty I don't like it. I don't want anyone to mess about to have a good lesson. Sometimes people don't listen, sometimes people talk over the teacher, that's very rude. Teachers are disappointed by other people and [I get] a little bit worried, a bit anxious. (...) Sometimes if it's too noisy and people are talking and I can't do work and we don't learn a lot. If people are messing about is not very fun, that's the worst. The teacher cannot teach and sometimes I might bring a textbook and copy if it's too noisy. The normal teacher or the support worker [help]. If it's too noisy and I ask them and they say 'it's ok, you didn't do anything wrong'. I don't mess about, I just do work.

Sometimes there is not a support worker in here and I need help. If the teacher are helping all the people and no support worker in my class I have to wait. I very very like once the support worker sits next to me. And the teacher helping other people and they come back to me, they sit next to me. I think most of the time support worker sit next to me. If they are out the teacher comes next to me and help me out. I like to have support worker in all my lessons and I prefer to sit next to me. [I prefer working] in groups, in case if I need help. Most of the times I don't need help but sometimes I need help. Sometimes I work with other students and sometimes with teachers, the support worker and other teachers. (...) Students [help] sometimes. Most of the times the teachers and the support workers.

Exams is ok, it's a little bit hard, a little bit easy, it's middle. (...) If I am given homework I usually need help (...) sometimes homework are very hard and I don't know what to do, I am stuck sometimes. If I need help I go the SEN Department or to the teacher, the normal teacher. Mostly I do my own but sometimes I go to teachers.

Teachers is good. The drama teacher, she is like...the teaching is really good. Also if the support workers go out, then even the teacher can help you also. I like every teacher. One thing I don't like is, I don't like teacher waste like...it's not teachers' fault, it's pupils' fault, unfortunately, when they kind of shout of them...I don't like teachers shouting. (...) If people are very good, the teachers will be nice. If people is not nice to teacher, if they don't respect teacher, then teachers can.... (....) Mostly if the students are good every teacher will be nice to me and that. If people are messing about, teachers will still be nice to me, but they are disappointed with other people. They are happy with me, but disappointed with other people.

[During breaks] when it's raining I am staying in the dining room (...) I go over there, sometimes I go there...with other people, all the people, Y8s. (...) I just talk to them, I talk to them outside. That's it (...) Friends they help me, they are nice to me. I walk alone, I find my other friends, I talk to them, then I go to my other friends and I walk around. I have got some friends who mess about. Mostly my friends don't mess about.

[In the future] I will be like doctor or in computering. I like science, it's good. And I like ICT. And school is very good. Sometimes time flies. (...) If I were the headteacher and have a lots of money, I would make it a little bit bigger, the school. The dining room would be very big and so many people be here and I can change the painting, kind of painting rooms. I would

make the school brand new. Also a special room, children who need lots of help go to that room, I didn't decide what the name is. I'll make few rooms that people who need lots of help, like face to face, just private rooms. Those people with hearing aims, hearing problems could go there. (...) If I were a lessons manager, I would like change it. First I would put, like beginning with the least preferred [i.e. subjects] and at the end of the day like the most preferred, to make a very happy ending, end of the day I mean.

APPENDIX XVIII. Iakovos' personal story

Introducing Iakovos

Iakovos is 16 years old and attends the mainstream classes of the second level of Gymnasio in Zante School. He is a developed teenager, slightly larger than his classmates. He has repeated the B' class twice and has got frequent absences from the lessons. He has been diagnosed as having ADHD (school archive) and he attends lessons in the inclusion class, but not consistently, as he often forgets his schedule. According to the SENCO, the mainstream teachers consider him a noisy and indifferent kid. In the inclusion class he has got a different profile; despite his distraction issues he seems more willing to learn (SENCO). The individualised support he gets has helped him to progress in some subjects and especially in physics (SEN physics teacher). He is very sociable and is generally well accepted by his peers (SENCO).

Iakovos' personal story

After primary I came straight to this school. We received a letter that was saying that where your brother goes school you go too, so my brother was here and I came here too. (...) We are five [siblings]. My brother George is 21, 20, I am 16, 14 my sister, 11 my brother. Until I adjust it was kind of...with the other students I feel welcome from my friends but not so much from the teachers (...) This has changed later, after a year...when I repeated the same year. Things between myself and the teachers have changed a bit. I mean I felt a bit uncomfortable, it was like they were telling me off in the class (silence) I can't explain it now (...) I would say something about what they [i.e. the teachers] think about my ideas but...anyway (ironic tone) (...) I have got a lot of absences, I am to the limit now and I can lose the year again. I go to an internet café, for LoL [i.e. League of Legends]... it's an online game. I pay, my mum gives me [i.e. the money].

They [my parents] don't like the school. They say that it hasn't got nice kids and stuff (...) Help with homework...my mum doesn't have time. My brother helps, he is 21, and my friend, Christos. He is in another class and we live close. (...) My friends are Christos, Alex, George, Panagiotis, Ahmed (...) These are from the third (grade of the SEN Department). And it is also Stefanos and Stefanos again, and one more, Christos from the A' lykeium (...) I hang

out with them because I know their siblings and generally [I know] the family and we hang out together (...). I was with them in the b' grade, I have repeated the class twice.

George, my brother, is closer [to me] from family, and mister Giannopoulos, the music teacher. Because he treats me very well, he is trying to help me (...) He doesn't just help me, he is very nice, he is willing to help every child and... that's all. I would put very close to me miss Athanasiou (name of language teacher). She used to teach us 'Iliad' and Greek language subjects. She used to help me pass the exams and she was on my side so that I can pass the grade...and she has tolerated me many times, after all these things I have done to her.

I wouldn't say I am being noisy, it's the laughter. I don't make fun of people, I laugh. The kids would say something and I will laugh, and then I say something too and we laugh even more and then I cannot stop, I get nervous laugh and then I cannot stop. This year I have only been expelled from the class once.

I haven't cooperated with any kid lately. In my old class we were [cooperating]...where Christos is, he is C' Gymnasio (...) During PE is the only time when we can cooperate with other children because in the classroom...how to say, it is as if they [i.e. the classmates] have got another character in the class and in the other lessons and they have got another character during PE. I mean during the class there is not cooperation in the lesson, while outside is ok, it's better. It's nicer to work in groups.

Worst subject.... I don't like French. It's not the teacher, I am the one who 'tortures' her (...) [Favourite subject...] Physics. Basically it has stuck in my mind because I want to be a car engineer, like my brother. I asked him which are the basic subjects and he told me physics, maths and I think a bit of chemistry is needed too. (...) You need to go to a professional Lykeium (EPAL), which is close to here. It is one year normal Gymnasio, another year of car engineering and then it is three years in I.E.K. (i.e. public or private Institute of Vocational Training). In the beginning I didn't like any subject. Then I was engaged with physics, I liked it a lot. I was engaged a bit with Maths, I liked it, but not so much and since then I like physics a lot. Mr Papadopoulos is doing physics, his lesson is very good and enjoyable.

I go to the inclusion class every Wednesday and Friday for Greek language lessons and every Tuesday for Physics. Sometimes I forget it, but they remind me, they come and take me. I like it because it helps me progress in lessons, to raise my mean score so that I can pass the

class. Because the main thing that I want is to leave Gymnasio and it [the inclusion class] helps me to learn better. I prefer physics. The other lessons… I don't like them, but I need to learn them so that I pass the class. I am doing much better this year. (…) I would prefer a separate space, because for example if I make a mistake I don't want any people to listen and make fun of me, and then they would tell other people and things here transfer easily and then they make fun of you and I don't like that. If they [other students] come we are in groups. Otherwise I do one-to one with the teacher (…) The teacher we have in Maths, explains things but I don't understand them. I mean… she doesn't explain them well? I don't know, but I don't understand. Whereas when we have got lessons with Miss Dimitriou [SEN physics teacher] and we do Maths, I always do. Sometimes we do Maths when this is necessary for physics.

This is the back yard. We go there to fight…for fun, not seriously, because it is fun, we hit one another. I hit one, they hit me…nobody sees us there, if you noticed that back space is not evident, there is the wall and the teachers…most of the teachers either talk to the phone or smoke (…) Something serious was about to happen between my two besties, one of my friend, George hit Jim and Jim took it seriously, it was a misunderstanding. Then Jim threw George on the ground and I wanted to stop them but I was laughing, anyway we sorted it out(…) If it is serious, I mean I am like that with my friends and they would say to me: 'here is the bully', but they are joking. But if I see anything, that a kid is hitting another one, seriously of course, I will be the first to stop him and others will follow for sure (…) the first thing to do is to take the kid that receives bullying and to talk to the other one, in a strict way, otherwise he won't listen, and to sit him down, even though he doesn't want to, and listen to what we have to say. After this we take him to the headteacher, the punishment comes, either change of school, or… I am four years in this school, it might have happened but I don't know about it… that's it (…) We clear things out and we leave it there.

In a fight with a kid, I called mister Arvanitis (music teacher) that I trust a lot, and he helped us to solve it. (…) Yesterday there was a fight. A serious one. I didn't really understand. As far as I understood it started from a joke, some kids said to another one that he swore at your mum and then there was a mess and hopefully they stopped it. If I saw them I would have stopped them of course.

We have kids from Egypt, Albania, Russia (…) Every child, no matter of religion, or if he is black or any colour for example, I believe that they have the right to school and every right that a white kid has got, or is Greek (…) It's good for them to talk to somebody or become friends with kids who are against racism, so that they can mediate with other kids (…) We have got a lot of kids that if something happens they will stop it, I mean they are against it, they know that if somebody is bullying a kid they will stop it, they won't hit him, they will shout at him. Now these things don't happen here, they have stopped.

What I would change in school? I would make a separate space so that every student would go without feeling embarrassed, go to a separate room, a small one, so that it would just be the two of them. For example, English would be in one room, physics in another room etc. I would try to bring new balls so that children can play, I would put more colour in the school. I would put…it's sounds weird, but I would put cameras in the classrooms because thefts are happening here, so we could take care of that. I would try to take them [i.e. students] to places that they want, how to say, to do their favours, if they are nice. I mean excursions, I would leave them choose and I would book with the other teachers.

The other thing, if someone couldn't attend the lessons I would pay the fees to study at home so that they can pass the grade, to anyone with a problem, I mean during exams. I would hire more teachers, so that we don't miss lessons when a teacher is absent. Of course it's the best thing for students when a teacher is absent but…we need to learn. Now [i.e. during gaps] we are partying (laughter). They don't let us leave earlier, because we are in the second grade. If we were in the third grade they would let us (…) I would buy new musical instruments for the talented students, because here we don't have instruments and we have kids who know how to play. I would put female and male toilets together, because now boys have the new ones and girls have got old ones.

APPENDIX XIX. Stathis' personal story

Introducing Stathis

Stathis is 14 years old and attends the second level of Gymnasio (B' Gymnasio) in Zante School. His official diagnosis states that he has severe emotional and behavioural disorder, specific language impairment and difficulties in language processing (school archive). Although he is registered as in need of parallel (i.e. special) support, he follows mainstream classes without support. He attends the inclusion class, but not consistently as he refuses to go to some lessons (i.e. physics). According to his teachers, he used to have frequent tantrums and exhibit aggressive behaviour in the past but he is calmer this year (SEN teacher; Chemistry teacher). Teachers characterise him as a 'difficult child', with a lot of problems in concentration. They also note that he needs psychological support, as he is 'making tales' and is being 'socially awkward' (SENCO). Although he usually spends his time in school with a group of three boys, he is not generally accepted by his peers (SENCO).

Stathis' personal story

Primary was a nice place (...) I went to the primary next to the police station in a narrow road. This is where a friend of mine went and when we left primary to go to Gymnasio we were apart, but I still go out with him all the time to recall the old times. I see him. (...) In primary school I liked it a lot, I was a bit upset to leave primary to come here to Gymnasio but when I came to Gymnasio I was a bit glad. And I met new kids, new teachers... I liked the space a lot, that it had a gym, the basketball court... in primary school there was a court but not a gym. It also has a canteen and has a door to enter, primary didn't have a door to enter (...) Luckily the primary headteacher sent the papers to this Gymnasio. He did well to send them here because if I had been to St. Peter's school... another friend from primary went there, to St. Peter's and he left primary school because he had a teacher who would beat the kids all the time. That's forbidden. And he is here now.

[When I first came to this school] It was ok....ok. My sister told me (to come), she was here but she left. She is 24 (...) I have met new friends, classmates, teachers, a lot of people. My school... it is big, it has a lot of things that I like (...) I wake up at 7 o clock, I get ready, I take my bag and I take the bus, I come here. At 8:10 the bell rings and we get into the class. And...the teacher comes, he enters the class, we have a lesson, then the bell rings for the

break. Then another teacher comes. On Monday we have seven hours, yesterday seven hours again, today six hours, on Thursday six hours, and Friday five hours. And then we sit Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Kids are coming here from other regions (...) if a kid lives close they have to come here or in St. Peter's school. It's the same, but it is not better than this school. This school has inclusion class but St. Peter's school doesn't have one. I am doing lessons there [in inclusion class]...Modern Greek, Physics, Chemistry, Maths, Ancient Greek. (...) Sometimes I go sometimes not. Inclusion class is there to learn things...for kids that are not...I mean....we do exercises, we do everything.

In primary I had too [inclusion class], a teacher would come and take me in the whole primary. Here there are three [teachers]. I like this in Gymnasio, it's better. I go there sometimes. Sometimes I don't. I go when I have got a programme, miss Galanou (SENCO) and miss Dimitriou (SEN Physics teacher) and the other Maths teacher, they give me a programme and they say 'Stathis, come in the third period, the fourth period...' Monday, Wednesday and Thursday when I have got Maths, I go. When I have got RE I go again, when I have got Maths on Thursday on the first period, I go. I don't go when I am bored, I am not bored...that's all. I cannot miss lessons from here. I shouldn't miss lessons when I am in the inclusion class. I go on my own there and I am on my own in the lessons.

I am fine [in lessons]. I read, I write, I listen to the teacher who is talking in the lesson...The teacher helps me. Teachers are polite, they are ok, they are nice. The History and French teacher is the best. She is teaching both (i.e. subjects). Because she doesn't shout, she is... when we enter the class she says 'kids open the books and the notebooks', and we say 'ok miss', we do that. And then she teaches the lesson, we write. (...) I ask for help from my friend, Johnny. He is my best friend... and Antonis, these are my true friends. He gives me his notebook and I write the homework. (...) If I haven't done my homework and the teacher asks me 'Stathis, why you didn't do it?' I tell her that I forgot because my grandmother is in the hospital. (...) When I take oral exams the teacher has to be with me... I cannot talk properly, I have got... (silence).

My favourite subjects are computer science, technology, geography, PE. The worst is Physics, Biology, Chemistry...Maths are ok. Maths teacher and Geography teacher are good. In PE

we do gymnastics, dances, they give us balls to play. [I do] Basketball, football, volleyball…running (…) Mostly I take part in basketball and football here in school.

My friends…my classmates are the ones who are with me in the school, it is good to sit with them. The best things about them is that they give me their notes, they let me sit with them. We have to be one team, all of us. We are, mostly the boys we provoke girls to run, and… this is what we do (…) Some kids are my friends, some aren't and…(silence). I have got some friends from here (i.e. the top floor) and some from the ground floor. I am in B1 (class), my friends are from here and from B2 (…) I prefer to do work in groups….so that I can 'tease' them a bit, my mates. I mean to tell them that I am away this Friday but when they see me here on Friday I will tell them 'you were fooled, did you think that you would escape from me?' [I tease] everyone, mostly girls, and boys. I prefer to be with boys, to talk about football, about girls… not our girls in class, outside school.

We have agreed with Antonis and Johnny to do a music event that all students would sing together. We have told this to the headteacher and she said yes. (…) and I don't know who is going to sing, he has to get on the stage and sing. And I told Johnny 'why don't you go to sing'?

(…) When a kid hits me during the break Johnny and Antonis come and some other kids and they take me to the headteacher and then Johnny says 'don't ever hit again my friend, my mate Stathis'. This has happened once, luckily all guys have gathered and they lifted me up and they brought me…but if I faint or something they have to take me to the hospital. One time I have fainted in primary school. I don't know why, I fainted like that, I was getting ready for school and I felt dizzy and they took me to the hospital, they took my blood, exams.

We don't argue, we don't hit each other, sometimes it happens but then we make out. Mostly the teachers help, sometimes we make out on our own. I have seen Antonis and Johnny arguing but then they make out, I make them friends again, I mean I ask Johnny to apologise to Antonis, Antonis to Johnny…

Outside school I go to work out…basketball, football (…) When we play basketball or football I call my friend Lefteris to come and play with us. I know him from primary school. (…) All boys we go and play football in the park, or we bike outside school (…) five o clock in the evening I start football. Then five thirty I have to go to basketball straight away. I don't have

time for homework because I have got other things…running, tae kwon do…and I don't have time. And on Sundays I go to the Christian club with Lefteris, five to six thirty. We learn there, we play, everything. Then we go out with our mums, our mums sit in a café and we go to the shopping mall.

When I grow up I want to be a bus driver. To sit on the wheel and never leave from there. To sit and put my legs on the wheel…and to smoke, like now (fake smoking with his pen) (…) I have to go to the driving school, to get the driving license.

Here in the school I would change mostly the walls, I would put an elevator…for the teachers. I would have more teachers, I would have a day off Monday, Saturday and Sunday. Leave the windows open, change the boards with primary school. And the whole class would have chairs that does massage. These ones here they break. Our bags would not be heavy with books. About lessons…not to have so many lessons, neither arts, nor physics, chemistry, nor biology, to change the whole programme of the day, and the kiosk to give free food as much food as they want to all children. And I would give them money to buy what they want.

And from now on I am not called Stathis, I will be the new mayor! And if someone is sick, I would put him an absence and I would let them leave, free. I would have three teachers in a class to have a quicker their lesson. And I would close the school for two days for kids to go on holidays. I would have inclusion class and I would have five inclusion teachers (…) more than now. I would change the four teachers that we have here. I would bring the teacher I had in primary who did all the subjects. The teachers we have now are good, but we need more, four are not enough.

The 'peace box' is about when kids hit other kids, it's called bullying, I don't remember, I don't know much. I am not sure what it is but it needs to stop this box. And all the teachers would be outside to check on kids and they would bring kids to me, and I will see what I will do with them. I would say to them 'kids, if you are not nice and be friends with each other, I will kick one of you out'. And when I am not around, Johnny will be in charge, he will be the assistant head. Because I will be on the bus too, I can't be in both all the time. And I will speed like a Ferrari. And I will have a house in Santorini.

APPENDIX XX. Yiorgos' personal story

Introducing Yiorgos

Yiorgos is a student in Ikarion secondary school and is 14 years old. He attends the mainstream classes of the third level of Gymnasio (C' Gymnasio). He also has lessons in the inclusion class for approximately 10 hours per week. According to his official diagnosis, Yiorgos has general learning difficulties which result from his complex cognitive and social-emotional deficits. The SENCO notes that he has borderline intellectual functioning and that he is emotionally immature, as his behaviour is not consistent with his chronological age. His teachers stress that he is a very cooperative, calm, and polite kid. He is good at computers but has low self-confidence. He is more sociable with the teachers than with his peers (SEN teacher interview).

Yiorgos' personal story

This school is good, it's not bad…my parents like it. When I was in primary school (…) they were anxious about which school to send me (…) but this is where I wanted to come. They have heard that this is a good school. In primary school I had a better time, because we didn't have exams so often. Not like Gymnasio, where you take exams all the time, in the first semester, the second, the third… in primary I had exams very rarely. But what to do? We need to take the exams, so that you get good grades and you to pass on to the next level.

It [school] has a big break and we go out of the class often. In primary school we used to go out ten to ten…and then at half eleven. In the first grade, because it was the first year and it was quite hard, I was afraid that I wasn't going to do well, but I did (sense of proudness). I had help at home, I had my cousin who was helping me, all day she would be on the top of my head to make me read all the time. She is a teacher, she is working on the primary school next door and she helps kids. And she comes home as well, and goes to other kids' homes, and she teaches English too. She teaches me all the lessons, except from history and RE that I do with dad (…) She comes every day at 15:00 and sometimes she stays until 16:30… It depends on the homework, if I have got a lot to do, she might stay until 17:00. (…) Sometimes I understand [homework], sometimes my dad helps too.

The inclusion class…they are good but, when I first came here in the first grade I couldn't understand why there was this washing basin outside the room. But later I learned that when your hands are dirty from watercolours you go there to wash your hands. I like it because they help you in lessons mostly when you have an exam. I had lessons with miss Kaliva (SENCO), miss Maniati (SEN physics teacher) and miss Fotiou (SEN arts teacher)… This new teacher who has come has taken kids from A' and B' Gymnasio. In the beginning I didn't even know what the inclusion class was, because I was going in primary school too [in the inclusion class] but a miss would take me to another class, one class. Here, when I came in the A' Gymnasio, there were so many teachers and I didn't understand what their role was. There was a technology teacher, two language teachers, one teacher for chemistry, physics, biology… This year we don't have so many. I don't know why, maybe they haven't come yet; I don't know.

I prefer [to have] a few [teachers], because you can have a lesson. Because when you have a lot of teachers and kids there is noise and you cannot have a lesson. And even when there are a few, there is still noise. The one thing I would like to comment is that they should have made it better. We shouldn't have curtains there; we should have walls. So that when you enter, and you cannot listen what the other kid is doing. All teachers are there, there is only one mister who is teaching physics and we go to another place. He used to be our teacher in the A' and B' Gymnasio, in the mainstream class, but only for this year he took us for inclusion classes. He is doing normal lesson too, but he is for me too, he takes me and some other kids from C3 class, I don't remember how many (…) I like that the arts teacher has hanged our paintings in the class. The arts lab (…) I like it the most because every time we go there and the teacher makes us do drawings, Christmas decorations… one time she made us write the arts lab with letters and paint the letters and I liked it. I prefer the lesson we have in the inclusion class, the arts in mainstream is every Tuesday but the teacher from the inclusion class takes us three times per week. Everytime they [teachers from inclusion class] come and take me. They can take me the first period, they might say, but not take me on Monday, but on Tuesday or Wednesday. They help me a lot, they cover the gaps that sometimes I have. Most of the times they help me when I have got an exam, I go there and tell them and they come and take me. (…) In the previous lesson we had an exam in ancient Greek and I believe that I did well, now I don't know, we will see.

I am moderate, I am not such a good student… There is one kid, the 'attendance keeper', he is very good. The one who gets the higher grade, 19 [out of 20], gets to note the attendance. I can't keep the classroom attendance book, I get an overall grade of 15. And even if I got 19 I still couldn't keep the book, because they say that it is hard…I don't know. One kid said to me that it is not so hard, they will show you how to do it until you learn. [Other students help me] always in computing, not so much in other lessons… if you ask the teacher and she is busy, a child comes (…) I don't want to work with girls. If you raise your hand and you say that you didn't understand something, the teachers explain…Sometimes I am embarrassed [to do this], sometimes I understand.

I like Maths and Modern Greek too. I don't really like RE and history but I study because you can get examined and if you haven't read the teacher notes this, that you don't know the lesson. I prefer Ancient Greek because I know grammar but sometimes I forget it, but sometimes if I sit and read it I remember the grammar again. I don't do very well, in this semester the teacher gave me 12 -13, but I like it. Arts…every time I go I get very bored all the time… arts with miss [name] in the inclusion class is ok… with the other miss where we are all together I get a bit bored. In the technology lab he [the technology teacher] just shows us something on the computer and gives us homework. The other time he showed us how to find products about nanotechnology. I prefer the computer lab than the technology lab. We go there and do 'Scratch'. It's like a game, it is a bit hard but I try to make it. The technology teacher is good, but he is making jokes and I don't like it so much. He makes jokes about grandparents and I don't like it.

[The perfect class] would be with calmness…because we have got a kid that the head has sent to us who is very noisy and we cannot have a proper lesson. We were 22 kids in total. One kid has moved to another school, another one has stopped, one has got married…he was 17 or 18 I am not sure, he probably have repeated years, he had a lot of absences. Now we are 19, but with the new kid we are 20. We cannot have a lesson, because…he came from another class (…) because he was causing trouble all the time, as far as I know. The head has sent him to us because we are a quiet class, maybe we could be able to calm him down, before Christmas (…) The lesson needs to be done with calmness. Sometimes I am being noisy too…probably because you get older and you get carried away by others.

I prefer most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays because we have six hours, until 13:20. Tuesday and Thursday I don't like because we stay for seven hours, we finish at 14:00 and I don't like it. [The best thing in school is] going out for a break. I like school excursions too.

I like it best when we have festive events. You sit, you observe, you see videos, you listen to the choir singing. And when it ends some kids are very hurry and they want to leave but the headteacher says that nobody leaves before we sing the national anthem. Always, in every school event, even Christmas, we sing the national anthem…it's ok to do that because we are Greeks. (…) The headteacher is nice, he accepts every child (…) I agree to have foreign kids [in the school] because even though they are foreign they can still be your friend, it doesn't matter if they are from another country or not. In our class for example there is a kid from Romania. I saw very recently a little girl who has a scarf in her head (surprised tone), now I don't know what this is…do they believe in Allah? She speaks a foreign language, how can I know? I don't speak English well.

Sometimes they [peers] would say to me to go away and then I understand that they might not want me…some kids. I don't have many [friends], because the ones I had in primary, some of them are here, some have gone to other schools. It is not possible to be with all children from primary, wherever you live you go to that school, unless you are able to move…there are three kids from primary. I hang out with one, Stavros, I sit next to him in the class. My friend Stavros, we are close. He sits close to me (…) so we are close. We are together since nursery school I think…Closer to me I have my grandpa and grandma. They are nice because sometimes when I have my name day or my birthday they give me money. I see them all the time because every weekend we visit them, they live close to the primary school. They are from my dad's part, my mothers' parents are very far away, and we go there at Christmas or Easter.

First of all these radiators are pretty old, they look old. (…) there are no paintings in the corridors. I would paint all school, inside out, I would put projectors, interactive boards, because they are better, I would make the yard bigger so that students have more space to run. I would put two basketball courts, we have only one now. I would keep the same teachers, if they were teaching well. If a student would make a complaint, I would change them [the teachers]. I don't like the stairs because you are up and down all the time. I would like to have electric stairs.

Future plans…to go to high school. Why are there children who finish Gymnasio and don't go to high school? I will go to mainstream. It is convenient because it's close to here. A cousin of mine used to go there, my dad will make the arrangements. I keep changing my mind, one time I want to be an ambulance worker, to carry patients…because a mum's friend is working there. You can carry the patients into the hospital or you can go into the patients' rooms or in the surgery rooms, or I can be in the ambulance. They can make me drive the ambulance or carry the patients. Because I have heard that this is a good job. This is what I am thinking, I don't know. If I go to high school and get a 15,16, they send you anywhere. You can choose but I don't know how good your grades should be to go there.

APPENDIX XXI. Ben's personal story

Introducing Ben

Ben is 14 years old and attends the second year of Ikarion secondary school (B' Gymnasio / Y9). He holds a formal diagnosis of autism and has been receiving medication for his 'obsessions' (Ben's TA). According to his teachers, he has low cognitive ability and faces problems in his social adaptation (SENCO). Ben has experienced loneliness, after been out of primary school for three years (TA). Since Y8 he has been attending mainstream classes in Ikarion secondary school. He gets support from a TA in all lessons, who has been working with him for four years. He also has one to one sessions in the 'inclusion class' and goes there where he needs help during the school day. The SENCO and the TA have close relationships with Ben's family.

Ben's personal story

I am in the second grade [of Gymnasio], I will be in the third grade next year. (...) One lady said that this school is very good, and it is very good indeed (...) my mum basically has chosen this school.

[The best thing about school is] the break. Basically I like PE, I play volleyball (...) the break, PE...and food (...) The teachers are good, and the headteacher is ok, but a bit old.

The worst thing is Maths. The teacher is really annoying. (...) I will never like Maths. They are not hard, it's just... I don't like the teacher. In primary school I was excellent in Maths. I was the best. I took A and A+. Now I have forgotten them. In the C' Gymnasio Maths are easier than A' and B' level. Only B' level is difficult. [In primary school] I had Gianna (the TA) [with me]. I don't remember... 2 or 3 years...not all years...no basically all of the years. [Gianna is] ok...(lowers voice)...ok (silence)

The teachers are distant [to me]. The inclusion teachers are a bit closer. [Inclusion class] It's ok. Nobody said that it is not good.... [I prefer] individual lessons, with miss Kaliva (the SENCO), she is good (...) The arts teacher [is not so good].

All classmates are close to me. [My best friend is] Andrian, from my class, he is Albanian. (...) I don't like Mary. Because she is... (silence) (...) Another one [girl] drives me crazy (...) I can't say her name now. I like, as a friend, not that I want to marry him, I like George (...) The other day he came to my home and we played 'nerd', this game with plastic guns and bullets (...)

three kids came, Yiannis, George and George's cousin, it was good fun. We haven't been out with my friends, we have been out once… no, not once.

[I have been going out alone] since I was nine…I used to run out of home without my mum noticing…and I went to the internet café, I had money then, the crisis hasn't come yet (…). I have got a psychologist who comes to my home, and do you know how much money his work owes him? Over 20.000 and they haven't paid him yet. He works and he is not getting anything, because they don't have money to pay him, they pay for other things. My parents pay him 120 euros per month, very little. I know how much money my mum pays for the rent, 305 euros no, 304 euros.

I would like to have [siblings] because I am bored at home all the time (…) [After school] I play with my computer (…) I go out to the gym 'Paradise'… I am forced to go (…) I go to the centre [a specialised centre] to pay them with my mum. (…) Everybody knows me there.

Now I see them [my parents]. My mum is working, she is not retired. Wednesday she is not working… she is a pediatrician. My dad used to work, now he is retired. He used to be a director and he earned 1200 euros. He worked in the Hellenic Aerospace Industry, it's at the north. Do you know what time he left home? 5am he took the bus to take him there! And ok, he came back afternoon, but he was going back gain. No, he wasn't going back again, he stayed there until late at night, until the time they closed down. You can visit if you want, you just need to call the director to ask for a visit. One day the school went there for a visit, but I think it was the third grade, a month ago.

[I get angry] Because they [people] won't listen to what I am saying (…) I shut my mouth, because I get mad. I don't talk to anybody, whoever talks to me.

I want to tell you that if I had 3 billion…I would give money to teachers, and to you. I would buy a Ferrari, I would buy two very beautiful girls, I would have bars, I would build a castle, I would make it very beautiful, I would put diamond glass and new computers. Everything would be made of gold! I would keep the same teachers and I would give them money, if they were sick I would give them money to get well, I would buy the best games for all my friends… what am I talking about… if police would listen to me now…

[I want to be a] Policeman (…) or a computer programmer. I won't go to lyceum. I don't like lyceum. I will go to lyceum when I will be old, when I will be 18. I will go to an afternoon school. Night schools are open all night and they finish at 12am. They are for two hours, it's

just when you are going to a night school you have to do four years. Because if you go to school and you sit only for two hours, what's the point of going to a night school, if this is the case you could go to have a coffee (...) people who go to night school usually work in the morning... I won't work. I don't want work (...) I am planning to work maybe in a coffee shop. (...) I will be earning money... [as a] bartender.

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APPENDIX XXII. Example of 'Person' analysis

JOHN (OAKLAND SCHOOL)			
Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Initial Codes**	**Extracts**
Demand	SEN status	Statement	He is diagnosed with ADHD but has a lot of autistic characteristics. His diagnosis must be wrong (SEN teacher, notes from research diary) John (...) displays a lot of autistic tendencies, but he doesn't have a statement for autism, sorry, diagnosis for autism, so I find that quite... interesting (SEN teacher) He has ADHD, but his statement is quite controversial (TA, notes from research diary)
Resource	Abilities - skills	Computers	*I am quite good in computers, it's easier than writing, my hand kind of types quickly* (John, Interview session 1) He does well on the computer (SENCO)
		Handwriting	*my handwriting is quite slow, so...it's a long going battle, trying to write fast... primary school especially...I wouldn't say [my writing] it's neat, it's just readable* (John, Interview session 1)
		Construction skill	*it's not the design aspect, it's kind of more the construction aspect. I started out just putting IKEA stuff together. I can make them, I just read from the booklet once and then I'll start from number one, and I am kind of very organised when I do it* (John, Interview session 1)
		Maths / Geometry	*In terms of subject wise I would say I am not so good at Maths, Maths has sort of been a weakness, I just have never been good at adding large sums of numbers, I don't know a lot about numbers... Geometry has never been my strong point either... It's the actual numbers behind it...it sounds easy but when I attempt to do it in class it is not as easy as it sounds'* (John, Interview session 1) I guess one of my weaknesses is getting the work done, but I do mind to get it done (John, Interview session 1) He is capable of getting C's. He is borderline C now, probably D (TA, notes from research diary) John struggles a lot with GCSEs. He has a lot of absences this year (SEN teacher, notes from research diary)
		Individual work	I am not very good in group work, I am more like an independent person (John, Interview session 2)

			And he gets on better with adults than children because obviously we accommodate his... his differences. And he is... in conversations he is quite... adult, you know very articulate (SEN teacher) He doesn't care, he just doesn't care. I don't think he cares about what people think of him that much... I think he is quite happy with his own company (SEN teacher) he is lovely, he's incredibly skillful (...) He's very charming, I think that has been difficult, I think he was born like...adult (laughing) you know he is very kind of... an eccentricity about him a quirkiness. He is quite likeable... well he is very likable and charming (SENCO)
		Tantrums- explosiveness (disruptive characteristic)	In the past he had tantrums, he was rude verbally, angry, became red, stubborn. He had these tantrums all the time in Y7.

APPENDIX XXIII. Example of case/school analysis

PROCESS: OAKLAND SCHOOL			
Proximal processes (Process): Interactions over time between the person and environment			
Operating definition: Students' typically occurring interactions with objects, materials, and people within the school context which affect their development			
Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Initial Codes**	**Extracts**
Interactions with people	Student-teacher interaction	Transition	*You get used to it in the first Year, Y7, you get treated more like an adult, and it's good because you kind of do what you like almost, but they are all very welcoming and stuff* (John, Interview session 2)
		Discipline	*They [the teachers] are always fair in what they say…They apply discipline when they need to, and not when it's not necessary. I am thinking 'she must me telling me off for a reason', I am kind of better now* (John, Interview session 2)
		Issues	*Sometimes I have problems with the teachers, only sometimes (…) some of them are mean, like you'll have a note, and you are told to be in detention. (…) I don't like the teacher, they just annoy me and when I get angry at them they get me in trouble…detention.* (Mani, Interview Session 1)
	Student – SEN staff	SEN teacher support	(….) *that was more in Y7, 8 and 9 [individual sessions in the SEN Department] and then it kind of stopped in Y10 and then completely stopped in Y11, but I still get teacher support in lessons. I think it is a good decision [that it stopped], I am not missing out as much work as someone else is, you know I am more up to date, because I still have a teacher in the class, I am not completely taken out* (John, Interview session 2)
			I have support in Maths, Science, English, DT, RE, History. I don't have the TA all the time. Sometimes I have to go to the SEN Department and she is not with me sometimes (Mani, Interview session 1)
			If I have a trouble I can go down [in the SEN Department] and see the teachers. I can talk to the teachers (…) They sort out any problems, they will come into some lessons and they see how we are doing…any problem that you have, like if somebody is bullying you…any problem in general…. they help you with subjects that you are struggling with, like Maths, English and Science (Jo, Interview session 2)
		TA – Student	*I do get along [with the TA], I have got to know her a bit more in these 5 years I have been here. That is kind of good because you know the teacher and the teacher knows you, she knows your strengths and weaknesses, what you are capable of, how much can you write down in a period of time etc, which is always good* (John, Interview session 2)
			He is an 'extremely needy kid'. There is attachment, but he can be ok without me, but he is not independent (John's TA, notes from research diary)
			'the TA annoys me (…) she keeps annoying me, I am tired and she says 'get up!' and it is just annoying. She is like my mum, but I don't want her to be my mum' (Mani, Interview session 2)

			In primary, I used to have a teacher coming into my lessons with me and sit next to me, a TA...I didn't like somebody sat next to me. In this school I never had a TA. It's better in this school because then I interact with people in the class (Jo, Interview Session 1)
	Peer interactions	Transition	*mainly the students like to get on their own thing and they don't like to help each other out* (...). *I would say the teachers have always been friendly, but the students not so much...I would say that the last two years it has kind of settled down. It's kind of people... a couple of students who come from the same primary school, to the same high school. Unlike me, who I was the only one from my primary school who came here, so you kind of come here and you don't know anyone, I didn't know any student when I came here in Y7, because I came from my primary school which nobody else came. But that kind of puts me in a disadvantage, because some people did come and they already had that kind of social groups* (...) (John, Interview session 2)
		Issues	We have tried many interventions for him to get more socialised. He faced social problems, issues that could be characterised closer to bullying that were dealt with. Some of the peers' comments upset him (John's TA, notes from research diary)
			Sometimes other students get more help than me, some people like to get the attention, they always want the attention on them. If I have people just talking around me [during lessons], I just like to go to my own world...like I blank out sometimes whatever they are saying, because it doesn't really involve me, so I won't listen to it. (Jo, Interview Session 2)
		Friendships	*I wouldn't go as far as saying they are all friends, because I don't know them enough, even though I have been with them for 5 years I don't know them well enough still. Just because I don't speak to them, going with that independence thing. I would have slight talks with them, you know friendly talks with them and then I would go along with it. I still wouldn't say they are friends, I would say that we have a good student relationship with them. I guess in the past there were some confrontations because we didn't know each other's personalities but apart from that I think it's just alright* (John, Interview session 2)
			I have some friends from primary school, some from high school, some friends than I met. I don't have one (best friend). Sometimes I go to their house, sometimes we go do something, like play football (Mani, Interview session 1)
			[The best thing in school is] seeing my friends. We get to play basketball on the court and football at break and lunch. I prefer to play football mixed with different years. Y7s will come and join us and we all play together (Jo, Interview Session 2)

APPENDIX XXIV. Example of integrated analysis

CONTEXT			CRITICAL FRAMEWORK
Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Extracts**	
Microsystem	School Ethos	*It's a multi-ethic school and we have the SEN department for different abilities, which it is also good because it kind of accepts everyone, instead of being a school which accepts a certain amount of people… it's a good diversity school. (John, Oakland School, UK)* *'The most special about school is people who understand me really. Because when they understand me, they understand my struggles and they just help me out'.* *(Liam, Mapleland School, Greece)* *'The headteacher is nice, he accepts every child'. (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)* *We have kids from Egypt, Albania, Russia (…) Every child, no matter of religion, or if he is black or any colour for example, I believe that they have the right to school (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)*	Openness – inclusivity: student perspectives agree in both contexts

	Supporting Structures / practices: Inclusion class	*I like that I get help but I don't like it when they shout at me (Marios, Zante school, Greece)* *I go there sometimes. Sometimes I don't. I go when I have got a programme, I don't go when I am bored…that's all. I cannot miss lessons from here (i.e. mainstream class). (Stathis, Zante School, Greece)* *I like it because it helps me progress in lessons, to raise my mean score so that I can pass the grade (Iakovos, Zante School, Greece)* *[Inclusion class] It's ok. Nobody said that it is not good. (Ben, Ikarion School, Greece)* *Inclusion is just fine. They always help me, they are very good teachers. (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)* *I like it because they help you in lessons mostly when you have an exam (…) They help me a lot, they cover the gaps that sometimes I have. (Yiorgos, Ikarion School)*	Zante school: differences in students' views Greek schools: inclusion class viewed as academic support Ikarion: neutral to positive views
	Inclusion class (layout)	*I would prefer a separate space, because for example if I make a mistake I don't want any people to listen and make fun of me, and then they would tell other people and things here transfer easily and then they make fun of you and I don't like that. (Iakovos, Zante school)* *They should have made it better, we shouldn't have curtains there (i.e. in the inclusion class), we should have walls. So that when you enter, you cannot listen what the other kid is doing. (Yiorgos, Ikarion School, Greece)* *…there is a clear issue with noise (…) but because I am a positive person, I want to stick to the positive. That in the inclusion class I think that we promote cooperation and collegiality (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece)*	Contradiction between students and teacher
	TA support	*Sometimes the TA it's not just for that one pupil, it's usually for the whole class as well… It's not for every class, they kind of put mix and match for all students (John, Oakland School)* *[Anna is] ok… (lowers voice) …ok (silence)* (Ben, Ikarion school, Greece)	TA support: differences between contexts Ben silence: avoidance? negative/neutral relations with TA?

Mesosystem	Family-school	He has a good relationship with me, very good. He lives very close to my home and until recently he was going to the same conservatory with my son. And sometimes when it was needed, when he was taking medication, I went to give it to him. (SENCO, Ikarion School, Greece) *'I believe there is an issue with the family too. I have never seen them, they have never come to say something'* (SEN teacher, Zante School, Greece). *they help me out a lot, there is a woman there who supports my mum* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)	Cultural difference? Family involvement: difference between contexts?
Exosystem	External Agencies	Mostly teachers help, in speech therapy, outside school (...) Only speech therapy and English. (Speech therapy) since I was in primary school, since...the first or the second grade, no from nursery school. (I go) two times per week, i.e. one hour on Wednesday, two hours on Friday. In the past I had different teachers, now I have only two. (Anna, Ikarion School) I am nearly going to work on a dog's home. I don't know much because I haven't started yet. Just walk dogs, I don't know, like anywhere. My support worker from here is going to help. The school has talked with the dog's home and they have decided that I could go. (Debbie, Mapleland School, UK)	Speech therapy – private support Contextual difference: school contact with external agencies
Macrosystem	Political landscape	*we have Syrians here; we have three Syrian kids. The only thing I know is that three Syrians came, refugees. Refugees because the war in Syria and Iraq is still going on. You didn't know? You don't watch the news? There are three kids, they are attending the A' gymnasium (...) Why there is a war in Syria, what is this disgusting thing that I hear?* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece)	Migration flux-> concerns: contextual difference
	Cultural articulation of SEN/D	*'Inclusion class is there to learn things...for kids that are not... [silence]...I mean.... we do exercises, we do everything'* (Stathis, Zante School, Greece) *'Because I still had dyslexia, this is why I came to the inclusion class. Because I have a bit...I have a bit of dyslexia'* (Anna, Ikarion School, Greece) *The main thing that I find about myself is that I can get angry very easily. I know why (...) and the reason for this is the fact that I have got a case of ADHD and autism. It affects me and basically it makes me angry. If I don't get medication, I can get angry very easily, I still can.* (Liam, Mapleland School, UK)	avoiding the use of labels cultural difference openness

APPENDIX XXV. Initial questions of the student voice critical framework

Critical framework for reflecting on student voice
1. Do I recognize the plurality of student voices?
2. Do I respect the individuality of each student?
3. Do I downplay the voices that seem too strident and foreground those that most readily make sense to me?
4. Am I genuinely attentive to student judgement and criticism?
5. Am I sensitive to the existing tensions regarding the construction of SEN and disability in both contexts?
6. Am I seeing beyond the student labels?
7. Do I emphasise equally to students' abilities and capabilities as to their deficits and vulnerabilities?
8. How does the staff's professional and adult status frame their perspectives?
9. Am I attentive to the differences between the staff and students' perspectives?
10. How does my own professional and adult status frame my interpretations?
11. Do I view the students as equal members of the institutions?
12. Do I recognise the power relations within the student stories?
13. How confident can I be that my interpretations do not perpetuate the status quo?
14. Do I connect the student views around inclusion and exclusion to wider social and political processes?
15. Are the concepts of inclusion and exclusion seen as universal by students in both contexts or as embedded within a social and cultural context that makes translation complex and hazardous?
16. Are student views on inclusion seen as common within the two countries?
17. Do I interpret the student responses ethically?
18. Do I respect and interpret student silences appropriately?

APPENDIX XXVI. A framework for local understanding inclusion

Recognising differences of perspective
-Are inclusion and exclusion in school connected to wider social and political processes?
-Are the concepts used to discuss inclusion and exclusion seen as universal or as embedded within a social and cultural context that makes translation complex and hazardous?
-Are approaches to inclusion and exclusion seen as common within the countries amounting to a national perspective or as reflecting particular perspectives, voices and interests?
-Are differences in perspective on inclusion and exclusion among and between staff and students explored or ignored?
-Are forms of presentation and research method seen as part of the approach to inclusion and exclusion or as distinct from it?
(Source: Booth & Ainscow, 2005, p. 234)