

**Exploration of Special and Inclusive Education Practice in Cyprus:**

**On the road to Ithacas - moving towards inclusion**

*A thesis submitted in part fulfillment*

*of the requirements for the*

*Degree of Ph.D.*

*School of Education*

*University of Sheffield*

2006

***Anastasia Hadjiyiannakou***

*University of Sheffield, United Kingdom*

# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgments	-9-
Abstract	-12-
Glossary	-14-
 <b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<i>1. Part One-Issues and Terminology</i>	
1.1.1. Introduction	-18-
1.1.2. Disability, inclusion and human rights	-19-
1.1.3. Explaining the terminology that is being used in the thesis	-20-
1.1.4. Integration	-21-
1.1.5. Understanding inclusion	-22-
1.1.6. Medical Model of Disability	-23-
1.1.7. Social Model of Disability	-25-
1.1.8. Describing people	-27-
1.1.9. Describing schools	-29-
1.1.10. Describing teachers	-31-
 <i>Part Two-Evolving Understanding</i>	
1.2.1. Understanding of Inclusion	-32-
1.2.2. My journey to “special” education	-33-
1.2.3. The beginning of my career as an active member of the educational system in Cyprus	-35-
1.2.4. The origins of my research journey	-36-
 <i>Part Three-Policy, contemporary debates and context</i>	
1.3.1. A historical moment: The Salamanca Statement	-38-
1.3.2. Policy definitions of Inclusion	-39-
1.3.3. Understanding exclusion	-41-

1.3.4. Different ways of understanding key issues	-42-
1.3.5. Historical Context	-46-
1.3.6. Prospects for inclusion in Cyprus today	-48-
1.3.7. Policy of Cyprus Ministry of Education ad Culture Concerning disabled children and young people	-49-
1.3.8. Policy gaps	-53-
1.3.9. Special Education Law in Cyprus	-54-
1.3.10. Identification, evaluation of disabled children and young people	-58-

*Part Four- Key questions of interest for researchers*

1.4.1. Refining research questions	-64-
------------------------------------	------

**CHAPTER 2**

2.1. Introduction	-68-
2.2. Advantages of inclusive education	-68-
2.3. Prospects for inclusive education in Cyprus	-73-
2.4. The importance of changing curriculum	-80-
2.5. Changing “special” education professionals	-86-
2.6. Change issues for Support teachers	-93-
2.7. Change issues for Primary Teachers	-95-
2.8. Change issues for Administrators	-100-
2.9. Perspectives of parents of disabled children and young people	-103-
2.10. Research in Cyprus concerning “special” and inclusive education	-110-
2.11. Concluding remarks	-117-

**CHAPTER 3**

3.1. Introduction	-119-
3.2. Anxieties about research	-119-
3.3. Understanding research	-121-

3.4. Research approaches	-121-
3.5. Choosing Qualitative Methods	-122-
3.6. Researching stories of special and inclusive education	-124-
3.7. Validity versus reliability	-129-
3.8. Research Strategy	-132-
3.8.1. Interviews	-132-
3.8.2. Observations	-135-
3.9. Researcher Presence	-137-
3.10. Triangulation	-141-
3.11. Participants	-143-
3.11.1. Participants from the Primary School	-143-
3.11.1.1. Primary Head Teacher	-144-
3.11.1.2.. Primary classes	-144-
3.11.2. Participants from the “Special” School	-145-
3.11.2.1. “Special” School Head Teacher	-146-
3.11.2.2. “Special” school classes	-146-
3.11.3. “Special” Education Inspector	-147-
3.12. General information about the participating schools	-149-
3.12.1. Primary School	-149-
3.12.2. “Special” School	-151-
3.13. Research procedures	-154-
3.14. Research tools	-156-
3.15. Limitations	-156-
3.16. Ethical issues	-160-
3.16.1 Feelings and ethics	-161-
3.16.2. Ethics and telling stories	-164-
3.16.3. Ethical enquiries	-165-
3.15. Concluding remarks	-166-

## **CHAPTER 4**

4.1. Introduction	-169-
4.2. Exploring inclusive education with the Special Education Inspector (representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture)	-171-
4.2.1. The perspective of Antreas	-171-
4.2.2. My perspective on what Antreas revealed and summary of key findings	-180-
4.3. Exploring inclusive education with the “Special” School Head Teacher	-183-
4.3.1. The perspectives of Nicos	-183-
4.3.2. My perspective on what Nicos revealed and summary of key findings	-190-
4.4. Exploring inclusive education with the Primary Head Teacher	-193-
4.4.1. The perspective of Panos	-193-
4.4.2. My perspective on what Panos revealed and summary of key findings	-198-
4.5. The perspective of Primary Teacher Andri (“Thank God there are some teachers like this one!”)	-200-
4.5.1. The perspective of Andri	-201-
4.5.2. My perspective on what Andri revealed and key findings	-203-
4.6. Exploring inclusive education with the second year primary teachers	-204-
4.6.1. The perspective of Kostas	-205-
4.6.2. My perspective on what Kostas revealed and summary of key findings	-207-
4.7. Exploring the perspective of the “special” teacher who work at the primary school	-208-
4.7.1. The perspective of Primary Teacher Maria	-208-
4.7.2. My perspective on what Maria revealed and summary of key findings	-213-
4.8. Exploring inclusive education with teachers who work at a “segregated” “special” school	-214-
4.8.1. Perspectives of the teachers who work at a segregated “special” school	-215-
4.8.2. My perspective on what the two “special” school teachers said and summary of key findings	-219-
4.9. Exploring the voices of the primary school students	-221-
4.9.1. Perspectives of the primary class children	-221-

4.9.2. My perspective on what the primary children revealed and summary of key findings	-224-
4.10. Exploring perspectives with the “special” school children and young people	-226-
4.10.1.1. GEORGE’S STORY	-227-
4.10.1.2. Headline Findings	-236-
4.10.2.1. JEAN’S STORY ( <i>My Challenging Student</i> )	-237-
4.10.2.2. Headline Findings	-243-
4.10.3.1. ANGELOS’S STORY	-243-
4.10.3.2. Headline findings	-246-
4.11.1. Exploring perspectives with the parents of the primary school children	-247-
4.11.2. Headline Findings	-250-
4.12.1. Exploring the views of parents of the “special” school children and young people	-251-
4.12.2. Headline Findings	-257-
4.13. Concluding remarks	-258-
 <b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
5.1. Conclusion	-260-
5.1.1. Introduction	-260-
5.1.2. Reflections on findings	-260-
5.1.3. Personal reflection	-263-
5.1.4. Finding ways forward	-265-
5.2. Suggestions	-268-
5.2.1 Lets change the way the educational system is working ...	-269-
5.2.2 Let’s change the evaluation procedure	-276-
5.2.3 Let’s work with parents of disabled children and young people	-277-
5.2.4 Let’s change the Social Welfare Department	-278-
5.2.5 Let’s change the “Special” Education Law	-279-
5.2.6. Let’s have more research	-282-
5.3 Conclusions	-283-

## REFERENCES

-286-

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Semi-structured interview schedule for Head Teachers	-309-
Appendix 2	Semi-structured interview schedule used for class teachers	-310-
Appendix 3	Semi-structured interview schedule for children and young people	-311-
Appendix 4	Semi-structured interview schedule for parents at the primary school	-312-
Appendix 5	Semi-structured interview schedule for parents at the "special" school	-313-

**PAGE**

**NUMBERING**

**AS ORIGINAL**



## Acknowledgements

This thesis grew out of a series of dialogues with my supervisor, Dr. Michele Moore. Through her questions Dr. Moore brought me closer to the reality I had initially perceived, eventually enabling me to understand the complex issue of inclusion. Her comments on chapter's drafts are themselves a course in critical thought upon which I will always draw. Her attitude towards me helped me understand deeper what inclusion is. Her encouragement and her continual support showed me in practice what inclusion really means.

I am indebted to Dr. Helen Phtiaka, at the University of Cyprus, since she was the first person who really conveyed passion to me regarding the field of the education of disabled children and young people. Her continuous support, energy and encouragement during my Master and Bachelor degree helped me a lot.

To all my colleagues at Intercollege, and at the Ministry of Education and Culture I would like to express my warmest and sincere thanks.

To my dearest friend and colleague Marian who provided me with energy at each turn of the road in this thesis. Her comments helped me to have a more critical and insight view in the field. There were days that I was only thinking of the rights of the disabled children and young people and I could not think about the rights of the other students of the schools. Marian was there to help me not forget that inclusion is not only about disabled students, is about the equal chances that each student must have in education. Her clarity

and her experience helped me understand clearer this issue. Also to my favorite Michael Alexantros who offered me great support with his kindness.

Many thanks to my family for the financial support and also for the emotional support they provided me through all the years. To my parents Christos and Euaggelia Hadjiyiannakou, who gently offer counsel and unconditional support at each turn of the road. Without their loving support, this work would have never been accomplished. Also to my sister Andri, and to my brother Philipos who were there for me.

To my disabled students who showed me clearly the reason why I have to fight for better days for inclusion in Cyprus. I hope that their stories will provide us with the insider voices we need to take into consideration. Finally I have to express my sincere thanks to all the participants of this research. I would like to express them my thanks for sharing their views and beliefs with me.

**Dedicated to my parents,  
Christos and Euaggelia Hadjiyiannakou,  
for the wonderful part they have played in  
my life....**

## Abstract

This thesis is about the everyday practice of inclusion in Cyprus. When I started this work I believed that my work must have a practical application, in the educational life of Cyprus. Being a fan and a practitioner of inclusion, I have the chance to be a member of the education community trying to apply inclusion in the everyday life of school in primary education in Cyprus. My working experience, together with academic knowledge, helped me to understand more deeply the importance of creating change.

I wanted to evaluate the application of inclusion, and I wanted this investigation to come from real findings, from everyday life of schools. This is why I have chosen to investigate two different types of schools. The first school is what we name in Cyprus “special” school and the second one is a primary school which is trying to apply inclusion. The research data that I gathered came from various perspectives, since I wanted to have a clear view of the issue.

I decided to use qualitative methods of gathering the data and the way I have decided to present the results was through writing different stories. This way of presenting the data of the research, provided me with more freedom in order to write everything that I wanted to. Since I wanted my work to have practical implications I am concluding this thesis by suggesting several changes that have to take place in order to implement real inclusion in Cyprus.

The main finding from my research is that inclusion involves complex feelings and attitudes and thus it cannot be applied in a simplistic way. Inclusion is a social

phenomenon and it concerns change not only in the field of education, but also in the whole society.

## GLOSSARY

The reason why I have decided to start this piece of work with the glossary is because I want to offer to the reader clarity. In my country Cyprus, some terms are being used in a variety of meanings, thus I thought it would be very important to refer to the exact meaning of the used terms in this context.

Throughout this thesis I have put the word “special” in inverted commas where I feel that an assumption of “special” qualities must be viewed critically.

I am using the term “*Special*” *needs teacher* to refer to those teachers who work in educational provision which is defined as “special” in Cyprus. They might work in “special” units (see below). Also some of these teachers are working in segregated settings such as in schools which are labeled “special” schools. The qualifications of these professionals, for the vast majority, are either a Bachelor or Masters Degree in “Special” Education. Some of them might have a Bachelor degree in Education *and* a Masters degree in “special” education as well. As it can be concluded, the professionals who are named as “special” needs teachers can be regarded as highly qualified professionals, in terms of academic knowledge. “Special” needs teachers do not take a bonus in terms of money in Cyprus as in Greece (Boutskou, 2005).

*Support teacher* in Cyprus is the term used to refer to those educators who usually work in primary schools in a mainstreaming setting. The support teachers works with disabled students who are included in the mainstreaming classrooms for the biggest part of the

day. They usually have tutorials with disabled students, where they offer them help in order to improve their academic skills mainly. The vast majority of these professionals have a Masters degree in “Special” Education and a Bachelor degree in Education.

The “*special*” *unit* is situated in a primary school. It is a “special” class which usually has between 5-7 disabled students. Those children and young people have their individual education program in the “special” unit which may vary according to their differences. Disabled students may stay from three to six periods per day in the “special” unit. For all the other periods disabled children and young people and young people are usually included in a mainstreaming class. This segregated class works mainly as any other class of the school, apart from its student population which differs.

*Connecting Official* is usually a ““special” teacher” or a Speech Therapist who works to make links between the family of the disabled child and the school, i.e., as *a connector*. The Connecting Official is responsible on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture for evaluating the individual educational program of each disabled student.

A “*Special*” *Education Inspector* is the person who works for the Ministry of Education and Culture and they are responsible for the well-being of “special” education in the geographical area they are responsible for. This person is the administrator of the “Special” Education Department. They are responsible for evaluation of professionals in the field and for assessment of their practice.

A *“Special” Education Counselor* is the person who is working along with a “Special” Education Inspector (see above). The main duties of this person are to inform “special” education staff about new policies, to assist with the provision of working material and to resolve any problems and difficulties between staff. This person is also responsible for organizing seminars and workshops according to the needs of the professionals they support.



# *CHAPTER 1*

*The beginning of the  
research journey*

# **PART ONE – ISSUES AND TERMINOLOGY**

## **1.1.1. Introduction**

This is a thesis about the everyday practice of inclusion in schools in Cyprus. In Cyprus, the majority of academics and professionals in the field of “special” education do not appear to be widely concerned with the question of whether inclusion is beneficial for disabled children and young people. From my personal experience however, it is my belief that inclusion of disabled children and young people is desirable, achievable and beneficial.

This work has been divided into five main chapters. In the first chapter the reader will have the chance to have a deep insight into the various terms that have been used in the past and the terms that I decided would be used in this work. Also my personal journey to the field of inclusion will be mentioned in order to provide the reader with the various parameters of inclusion I have encountered. I will also refer to the various policies connecting to inclusion and how those policies affect the development of inclusion.

In the second chapter the main benefits of the application of inclusion will be discussed. Having in mind all the parameters, we will move to the discussion of how Cyprus understands inclusion, based on research data. Parameters that are highly connected with inclusion such as professionals, administrators, curriculum and parents of disabled children and young people will be presented.

The third chapter in this work will be about the methodology that has been used for the needs of this research. Issues like how data has been collected, information about the participants, ethics and limitations of the present work, will provide the reader with more information concerning the research and help the reader on the other hand participate, in a way, with the whole process that this work had been based on.

The fourth chapter will be probably the most easy to read, since all the collected data will be presented in a story form. The richness of the data presented will hopefully help anyone who is interested in this work feel a real participant.

The final chapter of the work will conclude what has been found and how the research knowledge will help Cyprus to move forward to real and deep understanding of inclusion first, and second, give ideas on how it will implement inclusion. Suggestions concerning the ways that inclusion can be developed will be discussed; since this work aimed not only to provide the necessary requirements for a Ph.D. work, but also to have some practical application to the educational system of Cyprus.

### **1.1.2 Disability, inclusion and human rights**

Like other writers (Barton 1997, 2000, 2003; Armstrong 1998, 1999, 2004; Slee, 1996, 2001). I do believe that inclusion is a human rights issue. I believe that all children and young people, whether they have the label of disability or not, must have the right for inclusion (Barton, 1997).

The definition that each professional or academic gives to the way they view inclusion is something very personal and unique (Barton, 2003). Personal definitions of inclusion are to be expected, since the way we view inclusion, is strongly rooted within our personal lives and with the experiences we have. Experiences that each one of us has, or are currently having or will have in the near future, influence our definition of inclusion (Dyson, 1999). From my experience, I realized that a disabled person will define inclusion in a much different way than a person with no experience of disability as Oliver (1996), mentioned. This is why a critique of the established definitions and the language that has been used concerning disabled people seems to be an understandable obsession (Oliver, 1996). Also someone who used to work with disabled people will envisage inclusion from a different perspective than others professionals who do not work with disabled people (Oliver, 1996). My personal experience has taught me that definitions of inclusion are deeply personal, influenced by a myriad of factors and constantly changing – as will be discussed further in this thesis.

### **1.1.3 Explaining the terminology that is being used in the thesis**

The production of this thesis has involved struggles over how to describe and understand the Cyprus educational system and society. I therefore wish to make some preliminary remarks about the meanings that will be used in this piece of work.

Terms such as: *inclusion*, *integration*, *“special” needs*, *“special” needs education*, *people with difficulties*, *“special” needs children and young people*, *disabled children*, *children and young people with disabilities* are terms that have been used in the history of

“special” education. It is very important though, to refer to the terminology that I will use, since the language that will be used in this work, reflects my thoughts, ideas and beliefs. This will be discussed next.

#### **1.1.4 Integration**

*Integration* is a term that for a time seemed to be synonymous with inclusion, yet it is no longer regarded in this way (Chenoweth and Stehlik, 2004). Before the use of the term inclusion (which will be expanded below) the term ‘integration’ had been used with quite a different meaning. Integration was the term first applied in England and Wales in the 1990s to refer to educational provision for disabled children and young people. Integration involves strategies whereby disabled people are made to fit into the mainstream (Norway, 2001). Inclusion, on the other hand, assumes a society which embraces diversity (Norway, 2001). Therefore inclusion has well-articulated principles and values and represents a policy agenda based on the social model of disability rather than the individual model (Chenoweth and Stehlik, 2004). Integration implies that although disabled students should find themselves in mainstream settings, it is their responsibility to adapt to their surroundings and learn to fit in: as Corbett (1996) stated integration has come to mean the following in all but the most exceptional of situations: ‘adapt to the existing situation and learn how to fit in’ (Corbett, 1996).

While integration may be construed as something ‘done to’ disabled people by non-disabled people who control their living standards and conditions, inclusion better

conveys the right to belong to the mainstream and thus the project of inclusion requires a joint undertaking to end discrimination (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/studnts.htm>).

### 1.1.5 Understanding 'inclusion'

*Inclusion* is the most common term mentioned in this work. In the literature review, the reader will have the chance to see the various definitions that this term has. Inclusion is a social phenomenon, which demands from everybody to 'think otherwise' (Ainscow, 2001). The *project* of inclusion, in my view, requires people to be ready for social changes which will not take place only at schools but within society in general. Inclusion is not a matter relating specifically to people diagnosed as being disabled as indeed many determinants of identity – including race, gender and social class for example, can lead to social exclusion (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). Yet people, who are different as a result of impairment, frequently find that they are particularly disadvantaged and oppressed by a society which is obsessed by "normality" (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). The notion of inclusion I will advocate in this thesis refers centrally to the importance of *inclusive education* and my chief argument is that everybody is entitled to education, irrespective of impairment.

In the Glossary which precedes this discussion, the discourse of 'special' education can be seen as dominant in thinking around education for disabled children and young people in Cyprus. Yet there is no appropriate place for the word "special" in my view, since no "special" provision would be needed if the educational system in Cyprus ordinarily put in place all that was required to facilitate inclusion of disabled children and young people.

In my view, which has been shaped by the work of many writers, including Barton, 1997; Ainscow and Booth 1998; Moore, 2000; Slee 1996, every child is “special” and unique. Each child is a different personality with different characteristics, qualities and abilities. Every one can contribute to society in a different way. These differences must be celebrated, and included. It is possible to argue that no discourse of “special” provision is needed in if difference is regarded as ordinary.

An inclusive approach to teaching and learning does not mean glossing over disability or learning difficulty or pretending impairment is not significant or that difficulties do not matter provided teaching methods are changed. Rather inclusive teaching and learning means teachers focus less on impairment itself and more on what it means for the way children and young people learn or are helped to learn more effectively. The main concern is the way individuals learn and how they can be accommodated (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/tmlnsn.htm>). Working from this stance, it is possible to argue, *creates* inclusion. Inclusion is not an easy thing to achieve however; it needs time and belief in order to be accomplished. Theoretical models which help amplify understanding of these ideas are expanded below.

#### **1.1.6 Medical Model of Disability**

The dominant model of disability across the world to date has been ‘the medical model of disability’ which has received legitimacy from the World Health Organization. The organization debated the value of terms such as “disabled”, “impairment”, “handicap”. The World Health Organization defined disability as:

“the effects of the impairment in everyday activities”

(Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000, p.158).

The major characteristic of medical model was that it highlights the supremacy of professional opinion and decision-making over the needs and wishes of disabled people. The identity of a disabled person is viewed as a result in terms of sickness, thus following that medical intervention is needed. Disability is defined primarily as a disease state and purely in medical terms. Disability is essentially a “problem”, focusing in the individual; it is perceived as a deviation from the norm (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000).

It is not being argued that the medical approach to illness or impairment is inappropriate. The main problem is that medical people tend to see all difficulties solely from the perspective of proposed treatments for a “patient”, whether or not this treatment orientation fits into the overall picture of their life (Brisendem, 1986). Hence this medical model of disability is partial and limited and fails to take into account wider aspects of disability.

What Wendell (1997), stated below seemed to provide the political meaning of disability:

I assume the point o using this term is to suggest that there is nothing wrong with being the way we are, just different. Yet to call someone differently able is much like calling her differently colored or differently gendered... If anything, it increases the otherness of disabled people, because it reinforces the paradigm of young, strong and healthy with all body parts working perfectly” (p. 271-272)

The two solutions that arise from the medical model of disability are either to cure or prevent impairment. Notions of what is “normal” impact on what is considered socially



acceptable. In recent decades disabled people have increasingly realized that they have a right to define as they want to their disability. Social factors seemed to be primordial in the issue of disability (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). In doing this, they have constructed the social model of disability (Oliver, 1997, Barnes et al, 2003, Barton 2003).

### **1.1.7. Social Model of Disability**

By way of resistance to the medical model of disability, a new theory of disability began to emerge which has become known as ‘the social model of disability’ (Oliver, 1997, Barnes, 2003, Barton 2003). This model is based on the view that disability is a social creation. Social model theorists take disability out of the body and mind of the individual and transform it into a societal problem (Oliver, 1997). People who are different as a result of impairment find that they are disadvantaged and oppressed by a society obsessed by “normality” (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000) and thus social model thinking accords with their experience.

Social model theory rests on the distinction between disability, which is socially created and impairment which is referred to as a physical attribute of the body (Corker and French 2000). The organization Disabled People’s International set the separation of impairment and disability:

**Impairment:** the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment.

**Disability:** the loss or limitations of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers (DPI, 1982).

From a sociological viewpoint impairment, like illness, is analyzed as a social construction in that its meaning and the responses to it are historically and culturally specific. Attention has been devoted to pressing forward with the analysis of disability as a social construction (Barnes and Mercer, 2003).

Thomas (1999) mentioned:

“Disability is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions if activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being” (p. 60).

The social model of disability gained strength through the publication of a document called “The Fundamental Principles of Disability”, which was published by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation in 1976. The main argument against the medical model made by social model theorists is that too much is invested in individually based interventions (Oliver, 1990). As a consequence modifications to environments tend to be neglected or under resourced when the potential benefits of such investments are much greater. Hart (1986) stated that disablement has no connection with the body as it is mainly the result of social oppression.

The social model of disability serves important purposes in the lives of disabled people and is key to the arguments I wish to make in this thesis. Through the lens of the social model disabled people can view and express their experiences in a way which means through which the question of disability can be explained in terms of socio-economic conditions. The social model acts as the basis for support and collective engagement of relations (Barton, 2003). Disability can be seen in a positive way, through this model (Barton, 2003).

In recent decades, as a result of the theoretical debate outlined above, the view of “special” education has changed a lot in Europe and this can be easily seen from the large proportion of research work that had been done from 1990-today (Oliver (1996, 1998, 2000); Barton (1997, 2000, 2003); Dyson (1999, 2000); Ainscow (1998, 2001); Booth (1996, 2000) and many others. Inclusion has emerged as a social model agenda concerned as it is with fitting schools to meet the needs of all students (Ainscow, 2001). This means that the educational system, including in Cyprus, now is responsible for including a large diversity of pupils and for providing an appropriate education for everyone. Nonetheless the transformation of the ideology of inclusion into practice appears to be a major challenge in many countries (Clark et al. 1998, Flem and Keller 2000).

#### **1.1.8. Describing people**

I have to admit that at the beginning of this work I found it extremely difficult to decide how to describe disabled people. I could not imagine how stressful this definition would have been for me. I wanted to use inclusive terms for my explanations. The only way to decide this was through literature review and the most appropriate literature for this purpose was what disabled researchers said about this issue.

As has already been discussed, disability can be regarded as concerned with restrictions of activity and experience which is socially caused (Oliver, 1997) According to Oliver (1997) therefore, disability is caused by society. Clearly some restrictions of activity and experience are caused by illness and impairment and therefore some aspects of illness

and impairment might be regarded as disabling. Yet I will take the view that disability has little to do with impairment and everything to do with experience (Thomas, 1999). Arguably, the conceptual link often assumed between impairment and disability oppression is broken if, as has been discussed, disability and impairment are not regarded as inevitably related (Corker and French, 2000).

What a girl 14 years old said describes in a very good way the difference between “disability” and “impairment”:

It is not our impairments which are what we have that make us disabled children and young people. For me my impairment will always be with me and is a part of me and I can live with that. It is society which makes me disabled by not letting me join in. Playgrounds are sometimes impossible, there are steps down in to the sand pit and I can't get on the slide. Sometimes I get teased there. It's those things that stop me going out to play and give me disability not my impairment  
(Dunn et al, 2003).

From a social model viewpoint, impairment like illness is analyzed as a social construction, in that its meaning and the responses to it are historically and culturally specific. Attention has been devoted to pressing forward with the analysis of disability as a social construction of creation (Barnes and Mercer, 2003).

Throughout this thesis the phrase disabled people, rather than “people with disabilities” is used because it shows the emphasis on the ways in which social barriers affect life changes (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). Throughout the thesis the term “disabled people” is used in preference to ‘people with disabilities’. It is frequently said by able-bodied professionals that ‘people with disabilities’ is the preferred term because it asserts the value of the person first and the disability becomes merely an appendage (Barnes and

Mercer, 2003). However, disabled people believe that far from being an appendage, disability is essential for the self; in this sense, it is nonsensical to talk about the person and the disability separately and consequently disabled people are demanding acceptance as they are (Oliver, 1990). Thus in this thesis, I use the term “disabled children and young people”, because I do not talk about the person and the disability separately. Also I believe in a central tenet of the social theory of disability which regards language as a vehicle for social restriction and consequently requires that we must reject the use of categories based upon medical construction and divorced from the direct experience of disabled people. All disabled people experience disability as social restriction (Brisendem, 1986) and this is the way I want to view disabled people in this thesis.

#### **1.1.9. Describing schools**

Another very serious part of the debate on terminology that will be used in this work concerns the way schools will be labeled. Two different types of schools will be described in order to provide the reader with the knowledge to understand the way the educational system in Cyprus is working.

In Cyprus today we have two different types of schools. Firstly, we have so-called “special” schools where “special” provision is given to disabled children and young people. Those schools are public schools. Secondly there are the mainstreaming schools where disabled students can attend and stay in their classes for almost the whole day, except from the time, when they will attend the tutorial with the “special” teacher. Mainstreaming schools are not named like that in Cyprus, since they use to name them,

“primary schools”, where the majority of students are non-disabled and where also disabled students seemed to be tried to be included. On the other hand we have ““special” schools that represent the segregated setting in our system.

Even though I personally disagree about the use of the present terminology in the educational system of Cyprus, I do believe it is very important to mention them, because they shape the way society regards disability (Corker and French, 1999). In my view, disabled children and young people have an equal right to membership of the same groups as everybody else. A segregated education restricts that human right and limits opportunities for self-fulfillment. Disabled people do not need to be separated or protected (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiefaqs.htm>) and are entitled to be included as a matter of human right. This cannot be taken for granted. What Mary Warnock said in her article (Warnock, 2005) was that “the idea of inclusiveness springs from hearts in the right place”. Yet she describes the implementation and the consequent moving of pupils out of “special” schools as a “disastrous legacy”. Therefore, she said:

“Governments must come to recognize that even if inclusion is an ideal for society in general, it may not always be an ideal for school. Instead of putting disabled students into mainstream schools, we need a change in the status and purpose of “special” schools” (BBC News, 2005).

Attitudes like those of Mary Warnock are not accepted in this piece of work. It is very clear to all who have a connection with disabled people, that even though inclusion is not an easy task to be made, it is very beneficial when it manages to be a reality. The National Autistic Association in England after reading the views of Warnock did not support to abandon the policy of inclusion, but calls on Government to back up the policy of inclusion (teacher training and school recourses) (<http://www.NationalAutistic>

Association). Further, the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) has dismissed comments made by Lady Warnock in a pamphlet, which states that “special” schools were seen as places of containment, hospitals or day centers (Bawden, 2005).

#### **1.1.10 Describing teachers**

As explained in the Glossary, the term “special” needs teacher refers to the educators who work in “special” education in Cyprus. Those “special” teachers are university graduates who work either at “special” schools, or at “special” units, or at primary schools, offering tutorials to disabled students. The term “support teacher” in Cyprus refers to the educator who works at primary schools offering tutorials to disabled students, where they offer them help in order to improve their academic skills. The “support” educators sometimes do not have any academic qualification in the field of “special” education; they only work in primary school settings.

Another way in which I can divide the different kinds of teachers, having in mind the place of their work, will be ‘teachers in segregated settings’ and ‘teachers in mainstream settings’. I will use Greek terminology though, translating directly from Greek in order to provide the reader with clearer meaning regarding the local situation to which this thesis relates. I will use the term “special” school and “special” unit, placing both of them in quotation since I do not agree with the term “special”. I am using it in order to show to the reader the way society names the schools that disabled students are attending.

## **PART TWO – EVOLVING UNDERSTANDING**

### **1.2.1 Understanding of Inclusion**

Understandings of inclusion differ. This is the reason why Dyson (1999) said that it may be appropriate to talk about 'different kinds of inclusions'. According to Dyson (1999) differences may arise from alternative discourses at work in the field through which different theoretical definitions of inclusion are contested. On the other hand though, it is my belief that the main ingredients of inclusion are the same, wherever in the world, whenever inclusion is the goal. In my personal view, some of the essential ingredients of inclusion include understanding and respecting the different voices of others, whether those other persons are labeled as disabled people or not. An agenda for inclusion requires readiness for social change which can be steered through the seldom heard voices of disabled people. Inclusion of disabled people's own perspectives is an important way to show your respect towards the different entitlements of others (Barton, 1997; Oliver, 1996).

According to Booth (2003) inclusion is a process which never ends. It is not relevant only to the field of schools and educational policy. Inclusion means that people must have a different perspective of the way they view and understand their lives. In my view, academics and professionals must stop viewing inclusion in the sense of responses to "special" needs, since inclusion is not a matter simply concerned with disablement. Disability, as we have seen, is socially constructed (Barnes and Mercer 2003). We need a policy for the whole society, since inclusion is a social phenomenon, related to human rights (Barton, 1998).



Working in the field of “special” education in Cyprus I have faced various difficulties especially with the exact meaning of the term “inclusion”. I did not know how to define inclusion and I have to admit that I had believed in various definitions, before I ended with confidence in the belief that the journey towards understanding inclusion is something personal and unique. No-one, no matter how good their work is as an academic or professional, can tell you the exact meaning of inclusion, since the meaning of inclusion is personal. I have found myself wondering whether what I have heard in seminars or conferences has helped further my understanding of inclusion, or conversely simply added multiple layers of confusion. It took me lot of time to understand inclusion as a personally constructed concept. Some days, confusion over how best to understand the concept of inclusion led me to feel I was not a good professional or not a good researcher.

Today I believe that I am almost sure about my own beliefs of inclusion. I am sure that my journey towards a personal understanding of inclusion will lead me to many questions and misunderstandings but for me, this is the inclusive way that this issue must be seen. Inclusion has to do with people and their constantly changing lives, so it can not be thought of as something stable of easy and fixed definition.

### **1.2.2 My journey to “special” education**

My interest in the field of “special needs” started when I was a student at the University of Cyprus.. It was through one specific module, titled “*Special Education*” that I started

thinking that all human beings have the right to be educated, irrespective of impairment. The academic teaching staffs who were teaching this module, made me find this field extremely interesting. Helen Phtiaka a lecturer in the University of Cyprus managed with her own personal way to make us think through new and different perspectives. She tried to convince us that inclusion of disabled students was beneficial. She had also tried to say to us that by using the right methodology in our teaching we could teach disabled and non-disabled students together. The subject of “special needs” (this was the terminology we used in that time) started becoming more and more popular to me after some visits we had in “special” schools and after a case study I carried out about a child who was having multiple difficulties (Hadjiyiannakou, 1995). The “subject” of “special needs” inspired me. This is why I decided after the completion of my Bachelor degree to go to the University of Manchester and do a Masters degree in “Special Needs and Development”. At this stage of my life I started becoming a big fan of work in this field. I believed that this was the right field for me to work in.

After completing my Masters degree at the University of Manchester I decided to return to my country Cyprus, and started working at the field of “Special Education”, a field that I must admit I love very much. In the beginning of my career I worked as a lecturer at a private college in Cyprus, named Intercollege. There, I had the chance to work in a more theoretical way, because I used to teach two modules of “Special Needs”, the one was “Learning Difficulties” and the other one was a more general course named “Special Needs”. During those three years I must admit, that I thought that “special” education was something easy to be accessible, even in small societies, like Cyprus. In the fourth year of

my career I decided to change work and become a practitioner. When I think about this move today, I believe that it was the right one. I desperately needed to have a practical view of the education for disabled students. I believed, and I still believe, that in order to deeply understand education for disabled students you have to work in the everyday field of a school, sometimes in your life.

### **1.2.3 The beginning of my career as an active member of the educational system in Cyprus**

I took a position in a “special” school as a “special” teacher. During the first days in this “special” school I found my self grappling with feelings I have never experienced before. The disabled students that attended this school had the most complex entitlements I had ever witnessed. I did not know what to do or how to handle those students. I kept thinking that all the theory, I was teaching while I was in the college, was not really useful for me. I must admit, that it was the first time I realized that theory can be articulated in a way that has almost nothing to do with practice. I was so angry with my self and I was so angry with all those philosophers in the field of inclusion who appear to have written about the project of inclusion without first-hand experience of the difficulties embedded in making inclusion happen. After some months, I started realizing that theory must be entwined with practice. Theoretical understandings of inclusion can, at their best, provide practitioners with the purpose, the dream, and the philosophical path in order to move forward. It became clear to me that I needed to interrogate the distance between a theory of inclusion and the practical reality of inclusion of disabled children and young people in Cyprus.

I started my career as a “special” teacher full of dreams, about the change that we have to bring to the field of the education for disabled students, but I soon realized that reality in the everyday of the specific education system, was much different than dreams. Sometimes during my own small journey to “special” education in Cyprus, I was so sad and depressed because I realized that changes couldn’t happen. Also I realized that changes in the whole system of “special” education were very difficult to bring about and this made me decide to begin the project of seeking to advance an agenda for inclusion in my own class first. I believed that carrying out focal research for a PhD in my own classroom, would provide me with more knowledge, in order to manage one day to change the existing provision and policy in the educational system. At that time I believed that I was ready to start engaging with the required process of change.

#### **1.2.4 The origins of my research journey**

I decided that the broad focus of my research would be on how a small country such as Cyprus understands and applies principles of inclusion in the everyday life of its educational system. The teaching experience I had, made me think that I wanted to describe the way inclusion is practiced in Cyprus, in order to then suggest various strategies for improving the prospect of inclusion. I wanted to understand very clearly the beliefs, feelings of the people that work for inclusion dream in Cyprus and also for disabled children and young people and their parents.

The road of inclusion is so hard to establish, especially in small countries like Cyprus, where traditionally society, I believe, is perhaps “narrow-minded”. It is my belief though that thing may change if we believe in the need for change. The wind of change may

occur and be a reality if all the relevant stakeholders understand the value that such change may have.

Some days when I was working in the “special” school as a “special” teacher I felt that I was alone and hopeless. I felt that inclusion was looking like a chimera and that no matter how hard we try things will not become better. Today with the completion of this piece of work I know that change can be a reality. Inclusion can really be applied in Cyprus as can be seen at the last chapter of this thesis; inclusion *can* become reality. I have learned in my life that when you believe in something you finally manage to succeed with it. This has been an important motivating belief and influenced my wish to conduct a PhD. which in my mind will have practical applications. After the completing of this work my plan will be to try through my position as a “Special Educator Counselor” to change the existing beliefs, policy and provisions for disabled students in the educational system in Cyprus. I believe in inclusion and I will definitely try to work for inclusion given the lessons I have learned through the work reported in this thesis.

Before I move on to discuss my research practice and findings, it is essential to present the existing literature on this theme. I could not believe that there was such a huge amount of knowledge in this theme. I collected as many articles and books as I could and in due course these are critically reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. First, however, in the third part of this introductory chapter, I will outline the legislative context and contemporary debates within which inclusive education is located within Cyprus today and discuss more of the context in which the focal project is situated.

## **PART THREE**

### **POLICY, CONTEMPORARY DEBATES AND CONTEXT**

#### **1.3.1 A historical moment: The Salamanca Statement**

The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (1994) is widely viewed as marking the beginning of a world-wide movement for inclusive education (Oliver, 1996)). The specific statement proclaims five principles that are held to issues from these rights:

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs.
3. Educational systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
4. Those with “special” educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
5. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and young people and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system.

(Unesco, 1994, par. 2)

The Salamanca Statement (1994) has proved extremely powerful as a means of stimulating educational change (Dyson, 2000). It remains though a deeply ambitious document, constituting a somewhat shaky platform on which to base policy (Dyson, 2000) since it is very easy to describe inclusion in a theoretical form. The difficulties though arise in the everyday practice of inclusion.

### **1.3.2 Policy Definitions of Inclusion**

As has already been discussed, one of the most difficult tasks a researcher in “special” education will face is to determine the exact meaning of the word inclusion. What do we mean by that? What do we expect from it? How are we going to apply inclusion? Does inclusion offers us only good results? It is very difficult to describe exactly what inclusion is and I have put forward the idea of inclusion as something very personally defined. Inclusion can be understood in two major dimensions; reality, and philosophy in my point of view. We must try to have in our minds both dimensions in order to find the real meaning of inclusion. As Stangvik (1997) stated the actual policy definition is a result of negotiation between ideology and reality.

Alan Dyson (2000) described inclusive education as central to the education policies in either the developed or the developing countries. It also been baptized as a “global agenda” (Pijl et al, 1997). Probably this is the reason why policy definitions of inclusion are so difficult to pin down. Dyson (1999) expressed the view that it may be appropriate to talk about ‘different inclusions’.

Another indicator that shows us that a policy-led definition of inclusion is something really difficult to pin down can be found in the statistical indicators of registered disabled students across countries. Meijer and De Jager (2001) found that some countries register less than one per cent of the children and young people population as disabled students. Those countries are Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden. On the other hand there are countries like England, Denmark, Finland, which register more than 19 per cent of the

student population (Meijer and De Jager, 2001). The above results reflect differences in the definition of “special needs”, assessment procedures, funding arrangements and provision – all social determinants of disability.

Gibson (2004) referred to various variables to explain why the number of disabled students in mainstream education has been increased:

- Development in teacher professional knowledge
- Changes in teacher perceptions
- Changes in pedagogy and learning.
- Changes to curriculum
- Real changes in the educational needs of children and young people
- Changes in identifying disabled children and young people
- Changes in school management structure.
- Successful placement of pupils in the mainstream as opposed to “special” schools sector.

(Gibson, 2004).

There are lots of researchers who believe, that the difficulties and controversies that exist in relation to inclusive education are results of the unspecified meaning of inclusion (Wilson, 2000; Croll and Moses, 2000). Further, Wilson (2000) mentioned that the literature fails to tell us what the words inclusion, disability and “special” needs mean. He continued his views by saying, that those researchers and professionals who may wish to promote inclusion, and who feel obliged to make it work as well as they can, must - if they are going to do this with justice – ensure the term inclusion can be clarified and evaluated (Wilson, 2000). In the same mood Croll and Moses (2000) mentioned that even



though inclusion is educationally and socially desirable, precisely what this means is unspecified. Farrell (2001) indicated that the issue of inclusion remains extremely contentious and there is a whole range of contradictory views and practices. A very important and relevant observation of Calvert et al. (2001) is that even within a single institution there may be different understandings between the staff of the school as to the nature of inclusive education. In line with Cole's view (2001) that there needs to be a 'common language for inclusion' Feiler and Gibson (1999) propose that inclusion in practice is a complicated area that needs a detailed and precise definition, because otherwise each school may have its own provision of inclusion.

### **1.3.3 Understanding exclusion**

I will start by saying that understanding exclusion can help us to provide the foundation for inclusion on disabled people's terms (Moore et al, 2000). What Moore et al (2000) meant by this argument is that when we know who is excluded we definitely know who is, or conversely is not, included. This links to the idea of inclusion as a political and social struggle, through which to enable the valuing of difference and identity (Slee, 1996). Inclusion seeks to facilitate diversity, variety and to celebrate difference not as a social construct but as a spectrum upon which all pupils are viewed equitably (Ainscow, 1991, 1994, 1995, Thomas et al 1988). Giddens (1999) has suggested that exclusion has become synonymous with inequality.

In relating inclusion and exclusion to issues of equality I prefer to give them more active meanings, as the reduction of inequality and the increase of inequality respectively.

Booth and Ainscow (1998) state that inclusion is a process connected to exclusion, which applies to all kinds of exclusion. Exclusion is not limited to disabled students. Having in mind all the definitions that have been mentioned above what Barton (1997) said, seems to be a good summary: inclusive education is about how, where, why and with what consequences, we educate all pupils. Also Barton (1997) mentioned that inclusion is defined not by using specific pedagogical practices and organizational forms, but by the absence of injustice, discrimination and exclusionary barriers. Barton (1997) makes an explicit link between educational inclusion and wider notions of social justice. This is why an inclusive school is the first step towards an inclusive society (Barton, 1997).

#### **1.3.4 Different ways of understanding key issues**

If we understand disability as socially constructed and having meant different things in different historical periods and cultural contexts, then inclusive education can also be seen in this way. This is reflected according to Barton (2003) in the shift of official categories and their meaning including “moron”, “idiot” These categories reflects a particular socio-economic and cultural developments and the differential ways in which policy and service provision are associated with particular conceptions (Barton, 2003).

For Barton, inclusive education is about:

“confronting all forms of discrimination as part of a concern to develop an inclusive society, based on social justice, equity and demographic participation”  
(Barton, 1997, p. 233).

Inclusion demands from the system to “think otherwise”, as Ball (1994) mentioned, which demands disengagement from the investment in traditional “special” educational culture. The more inclusive a setting is, the more it is challenged by diversity and

difference. Inclusion must be seen as “value to be followed rather, than as an experiment to be tested” (Ferguson and Asch, 1989, p. 137). Inclusion must be the main issue of a society which cherishes a liberal political system and a pluralistic culture. This culture must celebrate diversity and promotes equality of opportunity (Thomas, 1997).

Booth (1996) defined inclusive education as the process of increasing the participation of learners within and reducing their exclusion from the cultures and curricula. In the same mood Allan (2003) said that inclusive education is an approach which requires both increasing participation on the one hand and on the other had removing the barriers to reform the schools. Corbett (1996) stated that inclusion can be shaped as a circle. In the circle there are different shapes and sizes, all interrelating with the whole. In order to be inclusive all barriers to learning children and young people must be removed. Inclusion talks about the participation and the learning of all students, not only the students with impairments (Slee, 2001).

Inclusion is about cultural synergies. Inclusive education is a public and political declaration and celebration of difference. Difference is not represented as a problem to be worked out through education policies (Branson and Miller, 1989). It is important to accept that inclusion involves feelings, values and prejudices. It is not just about who should be included in the classroom and playground but who is inside or outside the dominant discourse arenas within any specific cultural group. Booth (1996) does not see educational inclusion as concerned primarily with disabled children and young people and young people or with learner’s categorization as having “special” educational needs.

I do not think we can take an inclusion project, very far if it is framed in such exclusive terms.

In its National Study of Inclusive Education (1995) the National Center on Inclusive Education and Restructuring (NCERRI) defined inclusive education as:

“providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplemental aids and support services in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society (p.6).

It is very interesting to mention the way that a New York City school administrator described inclusive education as “full membership”, meaning that a disabled child may do whatever all other non disabled children and young people do (Lipsky and Gartner, 2000).

One of the least prescriptive definitions is provided by the Center for Studies on Inclusive Education. This suggests that an inclusive school contains the following elements:

- ❖ It is community based
- ❖ It is barrier free; it is accessible to all who become members.
- ❖ It promotes collaboration and it works cooperatively than competitively with other schools.
- ❖ It promotes equality because an inclusive school is a democracy (Wilson, 2000).

From all the definitions of inclusion that have been mentioned above, it is quite obvious that there is no ready agreement about what inclusion is, but it is clear that it represents

what lot of people desire. For some, inclusion is regarded as a far distant aspiration (Croll and Moses, 2000; Warnock, 2005). At the same time there are observable trends in a positive direction as the overall proportion of pupils in segregated provision declines albeit slowly and unevenly (Croll and Moses, 2000).

According to Kerzner and Gartner, (1996) inclusion means providing to all students, to receive effective educational services, with the appropriate supplementary aids and support services. Those education services will be offered in age appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools. The reason for this is that we have to think about the future of disable students, since our aim is to prepare students for contributing lives as full members of society.

Inclusion represents a more extended reform of the entire educational system that includes a large diversity of pupils and which differentiates education for this diversity (Meijer et al, 1997). All of the participants in this inclusion project must work collaboratively, in order to make that project a reality and not a reality in some cases with philosophical implications. Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for the students (Booth et al, 2000). Inclusion is like a vision, like a road to be traveled. This road though is without ending and it is full of obstacles. Some of those obstacles are invisible but some of them are situated in our own heads and hearts (Mittler, 2000).

Clark et al. (1998) have shown that we should begin to see inclusion as a resolution of dilemmas which extend beyond the boundaries of traditional “special” education and are endemic within mass education as a whole. The dilemmas generated by diversity do not arise simply in respect to disabled students. They point rather to fundamental issues of values, purposes and practices in mass education systems (Clark et al. 1998).

All the definitions that have been mentioned above have some common characteristics which is very important to refer to. Firstly almost all of the definitions connect the issue of inclusion to an issue of social justice and human right. Inclusive education is a political activity which involves political critique of social values and priorities (Corbett and Slee, 2000). Also they suggest that if we want to apply inclusion we have to begin with the full and effective participation of all students and then come up with a school reform in the end of which there will be inclusion. Inclusion is not only about schools though. It is about naming and celebrating difference (Ball, 1994).

### **1.3.5 Historical Context**

The purpose of the historical review with regards to “special” education in Cyprus is to indicate to the reader that “special” education in Cyprus is a new area of inquiry, and probably this is one of the major factors why a critique of “*special*” education in Cyprus is not so well developed.

Provision for disabled students started in 1929 with the establishment of the School for the Blind followed by the school for the Deaf in 1953. Both schools however remained under philanthropic auspices until 1957 and 1956, respectively, when they came under government support (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996).

The first attempt to meet the needs of children and young people with “intellectual disabilities” (this is exactly the term that had been used (Kostantinides Report, 1993) did not start until 1962, when a class of “educable mentally handicapped children and young people” (this is exactly the term that had been used (Kostantinides Report, 1993) was attached to the Lycavitos Primary School in Nicosia one of the oldest, and locally regarded as the most reputable, public schools in Nicosia). The establishment of a home for “severely mentally handicapped youngsters”, in 1964 in Limasol (the second biggest town in Cyprus) under a philanthropic initiative, followed this. The provision for disabled children and young people was expanded between the 1960s and 1970s by establishing “special” schools for children and young people with “moderate” to “severe learning difficulties”. All schools were funded by philanthropic organizations with the exception of the teaching staff that was provided by the government and specifically by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Government funds for the other needs of the school started to be provided from 1979 onwards after the introduction of the 47-1979 Law for “Special” Education, which gave the government the legislative authority to spend public money for running the above schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996).

Thus Cyprus lags behind in provision of “special” education in contrast with some other countries (Makri, 2005). In Cyprus, as in England, the terminology that had been used in order to describe the different needs of some persons reflect the socio-economic and cultural developments and the differential ways in which policy and service provision are associated with particular conceptions (Barton, 2003).

Even though Barnard (1997) mentioned that Cyprus developed a dual system of education, which means that children and young people’s education takes place in both “special” and mainstream schools, there are various types of “special” Education provision offered today at public primary schools in Cyprus:

- ❖ “special” schools
- ❖ “special” Schools and “special” unit in primary school
- ❖ “special” unit in primary school
- ❖ “special” unit in primary school and mainstream class
- ❖ mainstream class and individual help from the “special” teacher.

### **1.3.6 Prospects for inclusion in Cyprus today**

The majority of disabled children and young people in Cyprus nowadays, are attending “special” units or mainstreaming settings in primary schools. The support teacher in Cyprus has a traditional role to play, supporting children and young people according to the principles of the individual pupil view (Symeonidou, 2002). After the new “special” Education Law that had been published in 1999 (to be analyzed later) almost all parents do not want their disabled children and young people to attend “special” schools and they



prefer “special” units or mainstream classes for children and young people with more abilities (Makri, 2005). This practice is going to be analyzed later.

### **1.3.7 Policy of Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture concerning disabled children and young people**

It is very important to describe the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, with regard to “special” education in Cyprus, since this policy reveals the intentions of the Ministry. One of the major characteristics of the educational system in Cyprus is that its administration is centralized and that the primary schools are considered as part of government and not as community institutions. The maintenance of the centralized system has historical and political origins (Kyriakides, 1994). A decentralized system in a small country like Cyprus would be very demanding in person-power. With 367 schools and 2900 teachers in the primary school system, Cyprus has the same administrative range as a large English Local Educational Authority (Kyriakides, 1996). Primary education is therefore, under the authority of Ministry of Education and Culture, which is responsible for educational policy making, the administration of education and the enforcement of educational laws. Curricula for pre-primary, primary and secondary education are prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kyriakides, 1996).

During the last ten years the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus has tried to implement in its educational policy new pedagogical and sociological perceptions about the education of disabled children and young people [through, for examples, the new Inclusive Law, seminars about the implications of this new law to all the Head teachers of

primary and secondary schools). In order to do this, the Ministry of Education and Culture has set up a different curriculum for disabled children and young people. This curriculum is part of the National Curriculum in Cyprus. It must be mentioned that this curriculum is not as detailed as the curriculum of the *non-disabled* children and young people and finally at the end of the day it does not provide any great help or guidance to either “special” needs teachers, support teachers, etc (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994). It is my belief though, that following the new law, the national curriculum is something to be addressed soon, because it will reflect the new era in the field of the education of disabled children and young people in Cyprus

The Ministry of Education and Culture believes that the Individual Education Program (IEP) is the basis for good organization and good assessment for a disabled child (National Curriculum, 1996). The IEP operates as a tool for finding out the strengths and the weaknesses of a disabled child. The IEP has been implemented since 1994 in Cyprus and includes the following information:

- ❖ Personal information about the student
- ❖ Results for the assessment
- ❖ The present situation of the child
- ❖ The current support
- ❖ The main aims of the IEP

(Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996)

Responsible for the IEP is the Connecting Official. According to the law, this person may visit the school and with the help of the “special” teacher, and also with the presence of the parents of the disabled child, will construct the IEP program.

Based on the Ministry of Education statistics, it is known that in 1996 there were 2000 disabled students in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994). Of these 2000, about 125 students were in five “special” schools that are situated in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996). The number of students that are attending “special” schools is very small (125 students). In May 2005 according to the Ministry of Education and Culture there were about 3050 disabled students and 500 cases of students that are waiting to be examined in order to find out if they are disabled students or not (Makri, 2005).

Thus in reality the majority of disabled students in Cyprus are found in primary schools. The fact that there was a huge increase at the number of disabled students in school is not surprising. The reason for this is that since the application of the new law, parents and teachers know what procedures they must follow in order to help disabled children and young people. The huge increase in the number of disabled students obliges the Ministry of Education and Culture to employ more “special” educators. The biggest percentage of “special” education teachers are being employed not at “special” schools but in primary schools, since there the establishment of the new inclusive law (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994). Those “special” teachers inform primary teachers and they help them in order to detect disabled children and young people who need help. Even though this is not something that “special” teachers are responsible for doing, in most cases they are willing to do it since they help their colleagues, the students and the school they are working at.

Often, disabled students in Cyprus are included in a classroom without enough provision, except from the help of a “special” teacher that comes to the school twice a week for one-two hours in most cases. In my view this is not sufficient support to talk about inclusion as a policy to improve education for all.

According to the latest results concerning the number of disabled children and young people that attend “special” schools, in the only conference about “special” education that had been held in the University of Cyprus at 10th of May 2005, one of the inspectors of “special” education mentioned that there are 2693 disabled students that are in primary mainstream class (Makri, 2005). Also there are 200 disabled students who are attending “special” units, which are situated in the area of the primary schools, and finally there are 355 disabled students who are attending “special” schools.

Also it is very important to mention the numbers of teachers who are responsible for the provision of “special” education Cyprus. There were 120 students at 1990-91, 353 at 2001-2002 and 403 during 2002-2003 [Makri, 2005]. It is obvious that the number of “special” needs teachers is increasing a lot and according to the inspector of “special” education the number is going to increase up to 466 “special” needs teachers at the next school year. The number of disabled students has increased and as a result the number of “special” needs teachers who are working for the Ministry of Education and Culture had increased. As it will be presented later this does not mean that the number of the existing professionals is enough. I will argue that more professionals in this field need to be employed.

### **1.3.8 Policy Gaps**

What is obvious from the above-mentioned factors is the absence of a tangible policy for inclusive education. There is a policy concerning the issues of “special” education in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994]. This policy though is not completed in my opinion. The reason why I argue this is because today, there is a great need for the immediate employment of professionals in the field. My role as “Special” Education Counselor helps me to have a clear opinion about this issue of the employment of more staff for the needs of the “special” education. During the last two years we had a lot of meetings with the Director of Primary Education in Cyprus, in order to ask him some more places for “special” education professionals such as “special” needs teachers, speech-therapists, occupational therapists. The conclusion from all those meetings was negative. The Ministry of Education and Culture can not approve this employment because it said that it can not provide any more money to “special” education. “Special” education in Cyprus is not for all students, but only from a small percentage of the student population according to the Director of Primary Education, who was a “special” Education Inspector in the past! The Ministry of Education and Culture though, continues by saying that there is the solution of ‘grouping disabled students’ (Director of Primary Education). The result of this informal policy is that each “special” needs teacher is responsible for 15-18 disabled students and young people and that each speech therapist is responsible for at least 20 disabled students and young people. I have serious doubts whether this system is effective for our students.

Parents of disabled children and young people have the right, according to the law, to gain the best for their disabled children and young people (Makri, 2005). Unfortunately though, not all parents know their rights and therefore do not extract as much support from the system as they might. Some of them “use” the system and the law as they want to, in order to gain what it is best in their opinion for their disabled child (examples will be mentioned later in this work).

### **1.3.9 Special Education Law in Cyprus.**

The Special Education Law in Cyprus had been published in the Official Newspaper of the Cyprus Government at 1999, and it has been activated since September 2001. The title of the new law is: *“For The Education of “Special” Needs Students”*. The new law starts by describing who is the parent of a disabled child, what is “special” education in general, what is the Provincial Committee, who is involved in it and what are the duties of it, what is the “special” unit, the Central Committee, who is the disabled child, who is the Connecting Official (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999).

What must be mentioned first is the definition of disabled children according to inclusive Law. According to the law a ‘disabled child is the child’ who has “severe” learning or any other functional or adaptation difficulty, which is responsible for the mentally or for the cognitive difficulty of the child. According to the law this child needs “special” education. Also a child may have learning difficulties if they have great difficulty in contrast to their classmates. Also a child, who is not capable to use the educational

supplies of the school, may have learning difficulties (For the Education of "Special" Needs Students, 1999).

Also it is important to define what the "special" units are, according to this law. "Special" units according to the law are the units, are situated in primary schools, and they provide disabled students with individualized help. The law in this point is too general and it does not state the maximum or the minimum number of disabled students that may attend each "special" unit. Also the law does not refer anything about the homogeneity that each "special" unit must or must not have (For the Education of "Special" Needs Students, 1999).

The law assumes that disabled children and young people are usually educated in a mainstreaming classroom, which it has been provided with all necessary equipment. Usually "special" schools are the places where students from "special" units used to attend after leaving the "special" unit in the age of 13-14 (For the Education of "Special" Needs Students, 1999 ). Children and young people who attend "special" schools earlier, used to have different needs and they acquire "specialized treatments and therapies from "specialized staff (physiotherapist, occupational therapist, music therapist).

According to the 1999 law, there are several committees, which are working in order to implement the law in Cyprus. The two most important committees are the Central Committee of "special" Education and the Provincials Committees (one in each

province). The following persons are constituted the Central Committee of “special” Education:

- ❖ The General Director of the Ministry of Education and Culture
- ❖ The Director of Primary, secondary, technical, education
- ❖ The Director of the Educational Psychology Services
- ❖ The Director of the Social Welfare Department.

(For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999)

The above persons can stay in this committee for three years and the government names them. The Central Committee of “Special” Education is responsible to evaluate the Provincials Committees, and also to examine all the objections that may present. The objections are related with the decision of the provincial Committee about the place that the disabled child will attend (“special” school, “special” unit, and mainstream class).

The history of the Central Committee (until today) showed us very clearly that lot of times the decision it had been taken created some problems to the way primary schools used to work. Some parents for example objected to the Central Committee the decision of the Provincial Committee about the place that their child will attend. Those parents believed that the best place for their disabled child was not the “special” unit of a primary school, but a mainstream class. The needs though of that child could not be met in this setting, with the existing policy we have now in Cyprus. The Central Committee, because of the great power that some parents of disabled children and young people may have, or also because of their beliefs that those persons have a lot of problems in their lives,



decided to fulfill what parents want. This decision on the other hand, makes all the professionals who evaluate or work with the disabled child feel very uncomfortable and sometimes very angry, since their professional view had not been listened. Those feelings are not feelings that a small number of the colleagues feel. From my role as a “Special” Education Counselor I have experienced lot of colleagues saying that they came across such feelings.

According to the law, there are also four Provincials Committees, one in each province in Cyprus. The following persons constitute this committee:

- ❖ First official of Education
- ❖ A person who will represent the primary/secondary/tertiary/technical education
- ❖ An educational psychologist
- ❖ A “special” educator who is represented by the “special” Education Inspector
- ❖ A clinical psychologist
- ❖ A social welfare officer
- ❖ A speech-therapist

(For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999)

All the above persons must work for the Government of Cyprus and they can be members of those committees for three years. In every meeting of the Provincial Committee the Connecting Official is responsible to present all the cases to the Committee, in order for the Committee to decide about each child. A very serious problem that arises from this law relates to the role of the Connecting Official who is responsible for the IEP of each

child and also for finding the solutions if any problem appear. In Cyprus today each Connecting Official is responsible for approximately about 400 disabled children and young people. Clearly, the amount of work is huge and the Connecting Officials can not respond to all the cases. All those problems have been mentioned to the Director of the Primary Education and also to the Minister of Education but no solution had been found yet.

#### **1.3.10 Identification, Evaluation of disabled children and young people**

According to the law in Cyprus, every person including parents, directors of kindergarten, directors of primary schools, doctors, educators, psychologists, etc are responsible to refer to the Provincial Committee the possibility that a child may be disabled (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999)

Thereafter, evaluation of children and young people is a responsibility of the Provincial Committee. The Provincial Committee will set up an evaluation team with all the professionals who will evaluate the child (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999).

It depends from each case which professionals they will evaluate each child. In most cases there will be an evaluation from a speech therapist, a “special” teacher, a psychologist and the teacher who is responsible for the mainstreaming class, if the child is included in a mainstreaming class. In some cases an evaluation from the Social Welfare Department has been asked and also evaluations from medical staff. All of those

professionals must work for the Government of Cyprus, otherwise their evaluation can not be accepted from the Provincial Committee. Each professional (“special” teacher, speech-therapist, occupational therapist) will visit the school and evaluate the child after they will receive a letter from the Provincial Committee (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999)

In order for a child to be examined from the professionals who name the Provincial Committee, the child must be at least three years old, otherwise the child can not be evaluated (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999). A serious problem that has been created because of this practice, since “special” teachers and speech-therapists are those professionals who are named by the Provincial Committee to evaluate the children and young people, has to do with availability for the evaluations of the children and young people (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999).

No free time had been given to colleagues and they have to find the time, in most cases at their free time at school to assess the children and young people. In some cases some professionals have to evaluate twenty children and young people during the year. This creates several difficulties especially in cases where the evaluation place is not near to the working place of the evaluator. (In order to solve or minimize this difficulty I have suggested to the Ministry of Education and Culture to create an Evaluation Center in order to do the various evaluations. My suggestion stayed in the drawer though since in order to create an Evaluation Centre more professionals would have to be employed and the Ministry of Finance says it cannot allow this.)

At present, the Provincial Committee will inform the parents of the child about the date and time of the evaluations and the parents are allowed to present in the evaluation procedure. Also the parents can take their own professional along too if they want to during the evaluation procedure. In the case of the educational psychologist evaluations, another problem seemed to come to surface. The Department of Educational Psychologists in the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for evaluating every case of children and young people who may be named as disabled student. The educational psychologists who work in this department are not enough and the amount of work that they have is huge. I know from professional experience that this creates serious delays in the completion of each evaluation.

After the completion of the several evaluations, the Provincial Committee will decide according to the evaluation, what provision will best fit to the needs of each child (For the Education of "Special" Needs Students, 1999). Parents may be present the day of the discussion of their child case in the Provincial Committee in order to express their opinion. Parents will be informed about the decision of the Provincial Committee and the reasons for that decision. In case the decision consists, that the school will attend "special" school, then the Provincial Committee is responsible for finding ways for transferring the disabled student to the "special" school without any financial cost (For the Education of "Special" Needs Students, 1999).

In the case that a disabled child will attend primary school the Provincial Committee is responsible to provide the child with all the support they will need, even though this

policy has run into a lot of difficulties in its implementation, because of the number of the “specialized professionals (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999)

The total number of the students in a primary class in which there will be disabled children and young people will be reduced, according to the “severity” of children’s impairments. Also the school building must be organized in a way that will help disabled children and young people. The responsibility for the wellbeing of disabled children and young people in the case of mainstreaming, “special” units, or “special” schools, on behalf of the Provincial Committee, belongs to the Connecting Official (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999).

The Connecting Officials are responsible, along with the mainstreaming teacher or the “special” educator, to organize the IEP (Individual Education Program) of each child. Also the Connecting Official is responsible for support of the parents of disabled children and young people (For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999). Finally they are responsible for composing a report every six months, in which they will refer to the progress of the child, the changes if there are any that must be done etc. In case of any parents of disabled children and young people who object to the decision of the Provincial Committee, they have to inform the Central Committee of “Special” Education about their objection (within 30 days) and the Central Committee will consider their opinion.

The Provincial Committee is responsible for re-evaluating the needs of a disabled child every two years according to the law. In the case of disabled young people who are above the age of 18, the Provincial Committee may decide to extend the provision of “special” education, until the age of 21. This practice only happens in cases that the disabled students attend “special” schools. After the age of 21 disabled people are not under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture, but under the authority of the Department of Social Welfare.

All the above are the major features of the new law “(For the Education of “Special” Needs Students, 1999) which are relevant to this thesis. It is obvious that there are lots of gaps in this law and that it requires change. The most important point though, is that this law acts as the beginning of a new era in the field of “special” education in Cyprus, and that with all the knowledge from the practice and from the theory, we will move forward to the new law, that hopefully will be more inclusive than this one.

The main problems that have arisen from the application of this new law are the following:

- The definition of the disabled child
- The absence of an evaluation centre-the delay in the evaluation
- The way the Central Committee used to work
- The persons who constitute Central Committee are not relevant to “special” education.

- The great power that the law used to provide to parents of disabled children and young people
- The duties of the Connecting Officials that can not be made.
- There are no evaluations before the age of three
- The Provincial Committee cannot accept the evaluation of professionals in the private sector, even though some of them are very good.

The above problems are my based on my own professional judgments which is based on my everyday experience as a “special” teacher and also as a “special” needs counselor.

All these thoughts must be taken into consideration and a new revised law must be released. I am sure though, that this law was originally a beginning for better days. We must not watch this law as something that cannot be changed; since the application of the law problems have been revealed which clearly indicate an imperative for further change.

Having all these issues in my mind I was asked to define the key questions for this research. It was not an easy task to be making, since I wanted to ask so much, but I had to refine my questions, in order to make this research a reality. My professional experience in the field created so many questions to my mind who desperately wanted some answers. The following part of the chapter will present the key questions for this piece of work.

## **PART FOUR - KEY QUESTIONS OF INTEREST FOR RESEARCHERS**

### **1.4.1 Refining research questions**

Before I started this piece of work I had to make some thoughts about what I wanted to examine and in what way my research questions could be explored. Even though I started with some questions in my mind, during the early stages of thinking about this research those questions became more and more. My purpose was two-fold; to conduct an enquiry of a standard for the award of PhD, and also to offer through the process of this enquiry, tangible suggestions for advancing the agenda for inclusion in Cyprus.

A great number of questions interested me, for example:

- How do Head Teachers view and evaluate the application of inclusion in the Cypriot Educational System?
- How do teachers/ “special” teachers view and criticize the application of inclusion in the Cypriot Educational System?
- How do teachers/ “special” teachers work to advance an agenda for inclusion?
- How do parents of disabled and non-disabled evaluate efforts to apply inclusive settings in the education system?
- How do the existing “special” education laws help, or conversely hinder, the application of inclusion?
- How do non-disabled children and young people feel about inclusion of disabled children and young people in their classes?



- What changes can be recommended to help make inclusion a reality in the educational system of Cyprus?

Apart from those questions that have practical applications, more theoretical and / or general questions came to my mind. Questions like:

- What *is* inclusion and what do we mean by the term?
- Is inclusion something accessible?
- Is inclusion culturally orientated?
- How can we build inclusive techniques into the research process?
- How can we evaluate those research techniques?
- What are the ethical dilemmas when we are trying to apply inclusion?
- Where are the rights of the non-disabled children and young people and where are the rights of disabled students?

All of these questions came to my mind. At the beginning of this research trip, I thought these questions would be straightforward to explore. Today, after finishing this piece of work I am not sure about the answers to any of the questions mentioned above but I hope that the issues explored within this thesis will go someway towards raising awareness of the significance of outstanding questions, and I must accept that research in this field invariably raises more questions than it answers (Amstrong and Moore, 2004). As I realized the enormous number of questions that needed to be asked in this field, I decided upon a wide ranging exploratory study that would aim to describe the way inclusion is

practiced in Cyprus, in order to then suggest various strategies for improving the prospect of inclusion.

The complexity of matters relating to the inclusion of children and young people labeled as having “special” educational needs became clear to me when I began to immerse myself in relevant literature in the field. In the next chapter I review this literature.

*CHAPTER 2*

*LITERATURE*

*REVIEW*

## **2.1. Introduction**

Chapter 2 is a critical chapter in this work, since it is the chapter that will present to the reader how the literature review helps us understand the complex issue of inclusion. Having in mind the key questions that had been mentioned above, with the help of the literature we will investigate in a deep way inclusion. Firstly the advantages of inclusive education will be mentioned in order to understand why we are fans of inclusion. Secondly we will investigate the prospects of inclusion in Cyprus. Thirdly all those that are strongly connected with inclusion such as the professionals, the administrators and the parents will be mentioned. Last but not the least the literature concerning the research about “special” and inclusive education in Cyprus will be presented.

## **2.2 Advantages of inclusive education**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are professionals and academics who believe inclusion is something that can be done in practice and on the other hand, there are some others that believe that inclusion is a kind of chimera, and it is much better if we retain the traditional way of segregation and “special” schools.

From a sociopolitical perspective, “special” education can be understood as an outgrowth of the human rights movement. The mission of this movement is to end the segregated placements in school, work, and community and also ensure equal access to educational support and services (Heward, 2003). Some writers argue that students who have been diagnosed as disabled students have the legal right to be educated with typical peers in age appropriate settings and suggested that two separate educational systems have

resulted in fragmented artificial programs (Waltcher-Thomas et al. 2000). In the same mood Barton (1997), Mittler (2000) said that is the basic right of every child and young person to attend their local mainstream school and take part in all its social and academic activities. According to Sultana (1997):

“schooling cannot be divorced from the wider social order, and schools and educators are not and cannot be neutral and apolitical channels for equally neutral and apolitical knowledge. Whatever we make happen in schools - constantly and inevitably - gives messages defining what it means to be human good and normal in particular social contexts (p.26-27).

Peck et al. (1990) in a very interesting research project found out that the non-disabled adolescents perceive a lot from their interaction with disabled peers. They found out that the non-disabled students improved self-concept, they had a social and cognitive growth and they reduced fear about human differences. In addition to that they increased tolerance of other people, they developed principles of personal conduct and finally they relaxed and accepted friendships more easily.

Carlson (1997) mentioned that poor social academic and employment outcomes for disabled students are reflective of restricted experiences available outside general education. Therefore if those children and young people were part of general education, then their future will correspondingly be much different. In the same mood Markussen, (2004) found out from research that he carried in Norwegian schools that disabled students in segregated settings appear to achieve a lower level of success, measured by achievement of formal competence, than disabled students in mainstream primary classes. Also the use of segregated arrangements for personal tuition and group education

for disabled students in primary classes does not have a positive effect on the achievement of formal competence (Markussen, 2004)

It is very interesting for a researcher in the field of inclusion to read the article of Lebeer, et al (2000) in order to see various examples, from different European countries, of disabled students who had been included in primary school settings:

“Thanks to their presence in the class, their schoolmates in turn, have had the valuable experience of belonging to a whole; in that whole, differences find a class and a human and physical environment is conceptualized in terms of integrating background. Thanks to the options provided by inclusion the disabled pupil has been included, understood and made part of the class, or the broader whole. By the same token his or her classmates have experienced first hand in their relationship with him or her that it is indeed possible to comprehend, understand and include differences, that learning in this very broad and enriched sense can be shared, regardless of the level of performance” (p. 265).

Research shows that a child who will be included in a classroom with higher expectations, appropriate role and true opportunities for generalization of skills, disabled students will experience improved outcomes (Walther-Thomas et al. 2000). Parents who support inclusion have mentioned that their child would learn more due to higher expectations or a more stimulating or challenging environment and have cited the benefits to general education students of being exposed to disabled students (Palmer et al 2001). Further, it was found from research that disabled students who have been diagnosed as having learning “difficulties” achieved higher course grades in language, arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in inclusive classrooms than students in pullout programs (Palmer et al, 2001). This shows, that with appropriate support, students can maintain acceptable achievement standards established by schools grading practices while in inclusive classrooms (Rea et al. 2002).

It is very interesting to mention the case of Amy (a student with hearing problems) and how the researcher (Minow, 1990) used this case:

“After all, if Amy cannot communicate with her classmates, they cannot communicate with her and all lose the benefit of exchange. Moreover, conducting the class in both spoken and sign language would engage all the students in the difficult and instructive experience of communicating across traditional lines of difference. All the students could learn to struggle with problems of translation and learn to empathize by experiencing first-hand discomfort with unfamiliar mode of expression. It would be educational for all of them to discover that all languages are arrangements of signs and to use group action to improve the situation of the individual (Minow, 1990, p. 84).

This is extremely important. Those students will learn to communicate in a different way, so finally a different perspective of the term disabled student will be gained in their mind.

Another indicator that inclusion is something really good is the attendance data from several schools which revealed that students in inclusive classrooms have attended significantly more days of schools than did students in pullout “special” education programs (Rea et al 2002).

Similarly, two researchers from the United States of America (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997) reported five very serious problems to the government, about the problems that disabled people who experienced segregated education have, in order to make them believe in inclusion:

1. In segregated settings disabled students have high drop-out rates, often double than of other non disabled students;
2. They also have low graduation rates, only 4.5 %of the students with disabilities leave school with a diploma (a figure that must be understood in the context that

- more than half of the “special” education student population is classified as learning disabled, the least “severely impaired” students);
3. Limited access in post-secondary education means “special” education graduates go on to post-secondary education at less than half of the rate of general education graduates;
  4. High rates of unemployment mean disabled persons have the highest unemployment rate of any population subgroup;
  5. Lack of success in community living - too many parents report their children and young people continuing to live at home.

The findings from this research concerning the most effective setting for the education of disabled students reports that disabled students educated in inclusive primary classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997).

A very interesting subject relevant to the above is the national data from England and the information that can provide us with concerning inclusion and pupil achievement (Ainscow, et al, 2004). The debate about inclusion of disabled students in a mainstream setting has begun to consider the extent to which inclusion and high standards are compatible or mutually exclusive concepts (Lunt and Norwich, 1999; Ainscow et al 2004). Florian et al (2004) found out that even though these concepts seemed to be incompatible, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive; there are some schools that have been able both to be inclusive and to achieve high academic standards. Those



schools though seemed to be exceptions (Florian et al. 2004) and many schools continue to resist the idea to be more inclusive schools, because they believe that this will have a negative effect on the academic progress of their students. Since though there is the example of those schools who managed to be both inclusive and have high academic standards, I feel there can be no excuses. As Florian et al. (2004) mentioned, researchers need to investigate beyond the numbers and carry out studies of the everyday practice in the school life, in order to interpret these data.

Logan et al. (1998) provided evidence of increased happiness in students described as “with profound disabilities” in the company of non-disabled peers as opposed to peers who had been evaluated as having “special” needs. Also in the Green Paper (1997), strong educational as well as social and moral grounds are proposed for educating children and young people with “special” educational needs with their peers (Green Paper, 1997). Oliver (1996) mentioned that he is expecting the day when disabled people will win the fight for full inclusion (cited in Hornby et al., 1995).

However Wilson (2000) believed that the human rights view of inclusive education is based purely on ideology rather than logic and warns that:

“if inclusion is based on ideological feeling, it may suffer the fate of most ideologies by running out of steam when social and political conditions and fashions change” (2000, p. 304).

### **2.3 Prospects for inclusive education in Cyprus**

Personally I would argue that what Wilson believes has some connection with the reality in the everyday practice of inclusion in Cyprus. My own experience, in Cyprus, brings

familiarity with an educational system not supportive to inclusion and so I judge there to be a great need *at present* for “special” schools in this respect. There are disabled children and young people who cannot attend primary schools now, since the schools cannot provide for all that they can do, since it is not prepared for such great change. This is why what Wilson said (2000) seemed to have a connection with reality in the case of Cyprus, as it practices inclusion nowadays.

I personally though do not believe that we can remain at this position of segregation, but wish to argue there is a case to be made for moving forward in order to find ways to include all children and young people to inclusive settings. Even though this will be very difficult we need to have an inclusive philosophy. This philosophy will work as a guideline of the best practice and of course the best practice cannot be a reality in all cases. Disable children and young people must firstly have the right for appropriate education and secondly must be integrated into the community when they will become adults (Hornby (2001). As education is being applied nowadays, almost in the entire world, it is about academic schooling and it does not include skills for life as McConkey (1998) mentioned.

Sainsbury, (2001) suggested that for students with “specific difficulties” inclusion in a mainstream classroom can be an unwelcome experience. This is why Hornby (2001) felt that implementing a policy of inclusion of all disabled students into their local schools could be as problematic as returning to the days of segregation. What is needed is a

policy that can balance the knowledge that it had been taken from segregated and inclusive provision and make the best policy (Hornby, 2001).

Coming now to the disadvantages, worries and problems that inclusion may give rise to, I must admit that when I was reading around in order to be informed about inclusion during the last two years, I found out that lot of researchers are reporting problems that arise from inclusion through their research (Wilson, 2000; Croll and Moses, 2000). Before I started working in a “special” school as a “special” teacher, I was one of the persons who believed in inclusion in a theoretical perspective, since I had never tried to practice inclusion in the everyday life of a school. After three years in practice, at a “special” school and three years practice at a “special” unit in Cyprus, I still believe in the philosophy of inclusion, but I consider that this philosophy cannot be put into practice in all schools at once.

In small societies like Cyprus, we may have no immediate prospect of ending “special” provision but there could be inclusive practice in such settings. Inclusion can be found at the social level in “special” schools but there is scope for more inclusive teaching and learning. “Special” schools cannot be closed immediately in Cyprus. What we must do is try to strengthen segregated settings and change the way they are working. The colleagues who are working in “special” schools must be trained in order first to believe in inclusion and then to try to apply inclusion. “Special” schools must be transformed to inclusive schools which will be celebrating the acceptance of difference.

Wilson (2000) argued that we can include every disabled child and young students in everything. Croll and Moses (2000) contend that children and young people with moderate learning difficulties and children and young people with severe and complex difficulties and children and young people with emotional and behavioral problems were generally those most frequently regarded as exceptions to the principle of inclusion:

“I can teach them all, I have taught them all: kiddies with Downs, blind kids all of them and I tell you what we should all be doing that we should all, I mean all be doing that in ordinary schools like (this). But and this is my big but, there’s no place for behavior problem kids in ordinary schools, none at all. And I’m integrationist or an inclusionist or what you will, but not for kids who are just frankly too... too bad-there’s no other word” (Clough, 2000, p. 49).

The view that children and young people whose behavior challenged the mainstream should be in separate provision was a widespread one in the research of Croll and Moses (op cit.). It is frequently argued that children and young people with autism and severe learning difficulties seem to be ‘inappropriate cases’ for inclusion (Tornillo, 1994; Leo, 1994). So even though we may have inclusive policies, some writers argue that these policies cannot be applied for all the cases of children and young people according to what had been mentioned above.

My opinion though is much different than this. I wish to argue that any child, with all the evaluated needs that they might have, can be included in a setting in which they can both offer and take things. Inclusion is not a movement only for children and young people who had been evaluated as having learning difficulties. It is about inclusion for all the children and young people and all the adults who feel they differ in a way. This is possibly the reason why some researchers (e.g., Dyson, 1999) mentioned the term “inclusions” (plural) and not inclusion (singular). Also I do not believe that specific

impairment-led categories of disabled students cannot benefit from inclusion or they cannot attend inclusive schools. If we accept the idea that pupils with certain impairments cannot benefit from inclusive education then we promote segregation.

Yet in the work conducted by Croll and Moses (2000) only a minority of the education officers interviewed expressed support for the ideal of inclusion in terms which demonstrated commitment to the strong inclusive program. Parents of disabled children and young people were found to strongly disagree with the Inclusion Program in research conducted by Palmer et al, (2001) concerning parent's views about the issue of inclusion. It had been found that 27.9% of the parents were positive about full inclusion program, in contrast to 38.7% of the parents who strongly disagreed with the program of full inclusion. More specifically a parent in this research mentioned that classrooms are full of students already that are struggling to learn, that neither the students, nor the teacher needs the additional problem of the diversion of a "severely" disabled child" (Palmer et al, 2001). Also another parent said that he was against inclusion because this situation is not representative of the society that their children and young people will grow up and eventually work in (Palmer et al, 2001). After reading the results of this research I kept thinking that those parents may be like many parents in Cyprus who may not have experienced the best face of inclusion. Also inclusion needs time in order for its benefits to take place. It is quite easy for anyone to understand that inclusion is not something easily achievable from one day to another, but when you start out on the road of inclusion, and then you are on an inclusion "highway" and not on the segregation "highway".

Having reflected on the literature, to me it seems that inclusion is like a utopian view. The desire for a better way of being is widely shared in the sense that many people consider the best sort of education system in the best sort of society is inclusive, but questions remain about ‘what is the reality of inclusive education?’ Inclusive aims are not easy to realize (Croll and Moses, 2000). But I regard these thoughts as pessimistic and feel they do not offer us the incentive for re-evaluation in order to move forward – a view which is shared by the National Autistic Association (2005).

Vlachou (1997) mentioned that a strong advantage that “special” schools have is the possibility for pupils of meeting peers with similar interests, difficulties and needs, through which all friendships could develop and self-esteem be raised. It is the belief of many educators that disabled students must feel good about themselves in order to learn. The notion is that, if we build-up students self-esteem they will become excited and open to learning and their abilities to read and write will blossom. Nutbrown (1996) talks about the importance of a child’s self esteem, commenting:

The way children feel about themselves is learned and every child should have the right to feel good about herself.

(Nutbrown 1996, pg 24)

No one can ever minimize what Vlachou (1997) mentioned. On the other hand though, those persons who it has been decided should attend “special” schools are forced to be alone and away from the society. Is this the right thing to do? Loneliness is frequently a guaranteed future for a segregated child and not conducive to feeling good about oneself.

The biggest challenge to the realization of Norway's inclusion ideology appears not to concern the academic inclusion of disabled students, but rather their social inclusion.

Many disabled children and young people reported that they became lonely and isolated in segregated schools by the fifth and sixth classes (Flem and Keller, 2000). Many disabled students demonstrated difficulties in developing social relationships with adults and peers in their environment (Vaughn, Elbaum and Schumm, 1996). Loneliness has been viewed as an index of the need for social support (Murphy and Kupshik, 1992). Even so, some Head Teachers have suggested that the longer-term aim of children and young people being included in the wider society could be best achieved by preparation in a "special" and protected environment. Some academics persist with the view that "special" schools prepare students for the wider world (Croll and Moses, 2000). These views are deeply contentious. They are not frequently expressed by those who have been to such schools (French, 2004; French et al 2006) and we need to be mindful of this in the context of Cyprus.

Pivik et al (2002) found out from schools they investigated about barriers to inclusion which they categorized into four categories:

- ❖ Environmental barriers (inaccessible doors, elevators, washrooms)
- ❖ Intentional attitudinal barriers (all of the students in the focus group reported instances in isolation, physical pulling or emotional distress)
- ❖ Unintentional attitudinal barriers (related to a lack of knowledge, education, understanding, or effort on the part of the educational system or staff)

From all that has been mentioned above if we want to generalize, we can divide the researchers into two groups. The first group is consisted by the “inclusionists”, the people who believe that inclusion can be done in practice and that there is nothing better for “special” needs children and young people than inclusion (for example, Barton1997, 2003; Ainscow, 1998, 2004, 2001; Booth 1998, 1996, 2000; Dyson, 1999, 2000, French, 2004; Moore, 2000). The second group is the persons who do not wholeheartedly believe in inclusion (Croll and Moses 2000; Wilson, 2000; Warnock, 2005). Personally I think that after this reading “journey” I am now convinced that I can apply for registration to the first group: I do believe in inclusion. The starting point for my research and practice is that inclusion is the best setting for ALL disabled students: my research objective needed to explore the possibilities for this in Cyprus.

#### **2.4. The importance of changing curriculum**

It is very important to hear to the voices of disabled persons, in order to decide what is best with them. Also it is vital to continue our research in order to find out what the benefits of inclusion are and what must be done in order to improve inclusion settings. Armstrong et al (2000) argue that the move towards educational inclusion involves a “desire for and engagement with the issues of change”. This change needs to be made in areas such as curriculum, culture, values and language. Conwall (2001) in the same frame of mind suggested that inclusion is about changing the values and the meanings that exist in the educational systems.



We have seen that inclusion as it has been described by various researchers (Barton, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2003; Ainscow, 1998, 2001, 2004; Booth 2000; Moore 2000, 2004; Dyson 2004, Armstrong 2004) is seen as the ideal setting for all children and young people whether or not they have “special” educational needs. In order though to make this reality, academics have to think various educational changes in order to be in a position to apply inclusion successfully. I reflect on some of this thinking next.

The first major questions are why do we need an inclusive curriculum? According to D’ Cruz and Ayre (2003) we need an inclusive curriculum because:

- “Of the equity and social justice priority
- Of the internationalization priority
- Of celebrating diversity with the aim of fostering recognition and respect of differences associated with race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation and ensuring that difference is valued and celebrated rather than marginalized”. (p. 124-125)

A part of an inclusion project involves the learning curriculum - this must be inclusive as well. In the case of Cyprus the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for this curriculum and schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. The National Curriculum in England and Wales is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils ([http://www.nc.uk.net/nc\\_resources/html/inclusion.shtml](http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/inclusion.shtml)). This statutory inclusion statement on providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils outlines how teachers can modify, as necessary, the National Curriculum program of study to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage. It sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs.
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils ([http://www.nc.uk.net/nc\\_resources/html/inclusion.shtml](http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/inclusion.shtml))

Willis (1996) proposes that there are four perspectives of the inclusive curriculum:

- “the remedial (provision to ensure all students have equal access to particular learning opportunities)
- The non-discriminatory (ensuring fair learning opportunities and assessment practices)
- The inclusive (redesigning what is learned, how and when, in order to include diversity amongst students)
- The socially critical (using the subject explicitly in the service of social justice)” (cited in Cruz and Ayre, 2003, p. 4).

The Index for Inclusion (Index for Inclusion, 2000) expresses a need for lessons to be made accessible to all students and certainly in England and Wales the intention of the National Curriculum was that all disabled students should have access to the same curriculum as everybody else; the intention was that only under certain conditions should the National Curriculum or aspects of it, be misapplied (Oliver, 1996). Applying the above-mentioned three principles should keep to a minimum the need for aspects of the National Curriculum to be misapplied for a pupil. In addition, schools are able to provide other curricular opportunities outside the National Curriculum to meet the needs of individuals or groups of pupils such as speech and language therapy and mobility training ([http://www.nc.uk.net/nc\\_resources/html/inclusion.shtml](http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/inclusion.shtml)).

In other European countries the curriculum has been adapted to take a more inclusive form. Unfortunately in small countries like Cyprus there is nothing that has been done to change the existing curriculum as far as I can tell from my experience and reading.

Bigger questions include 'what do we mean by curriculum?' According to Vlachou (2004) from a broad perspective, 'curriculum' can include the ways of planning, selecting, organizing, developing and promoting certain types of knowledge at the expense of others, certain types of experiences of learning, certain types of activities, feelings, attitudes and values.

Teacher success in developing effective, inclusive learning experiences for all students emanates from their beliefs and philosophy about teaching and learning, from the curriculum content guidelines adopted by their state and school district, and from their utilization of a particular set of unit and lesson design principles: Jenkinson (1997).

Differentiation should take place as a matter of routine in the classroom. It is important however to consider that this may not just involve the provision of different levels of activity, but also various forms of presentation; aural, written, etc. To accept as appropriate a uniform approach to the delivery of material, may provide integration, but it fails to promote curricular inclusion. Inclusion is more than 'being present' in the classroom, it is about participating in classroom activities (Mordal and Stromstad, 1998).

In my view adapting the curriculum is not just about getting the academic provision right, it is also about responding to the social development of the individual.

Determining what to teach all students - the content of "the curriculum" - requires that we examine more than just the body of knowledge that currently exists in particular academic disciplines. It has been suggested that all students, including disabled students, need to learn three "types" of skills:

(1) dispositions and habits of mind (such as inquisitiveness, diligence, collaboration, work habits, tolerance, and critical thinking);

(2) content area knowledge (in science, social studies, language arts, computers, the arts, etc.); and

(3) basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics

(Sizer, 1992)

Educators concerned primarily with teaching disabled students, might wish that all schools would develop their curriculum – in respect of the content of what they teach - to address all three of these skill areas. If they did, it would be possible for any school to address any student's priority learning goals. No school would be "too academic," "too vocational," or "too devoted to the basics" for students who had been evaluated as students with "special" needs. And this could be accomplished by setting high standards for all.

The provision of such educational programs for disabled students who attend "special" schools is an area, in which much curriculum development work remains to be done, in the case of Cyprus. There is currently too much reference made to medical conditions as well as dependence on others, sensory and physical disabilities and a perceived lack of involvement with the curriculum. The Cyprus approach is obviously connected to the medical model approach previously discussed and has nothing to do with inclusion.

Approaches like this are in my opinion unacceptable since they do not promote inclusion at all. If we persist with a medical model approach then definitely the curriculum we will make will have nothing to do with developing inclusive policy.

Some of the major factors that have been identified through research as barriers to student success are lower expectation and an uninspiring and restricted curriculum. Those factors create negative students attitudes consequence to school failure and segregation. (Andrews et al. 2000). So curriculum is one of the major parameters that can be a barrier to inclusion. Arguably, the curriculum must be personalized to the needs of each disabled student.

A curriculum according to Jenkinson (1997) must take in mind the following parameters in order to be an accessible curriculum for disabled children and young people:

1. All students can think and learn.
2. All students have value and unique gifts to offer their school.
3. Diversity within a school community should be embraced and celebrated.
4. All students differ in the ways they most effectively learn and express their understandings.
5. All students learn best when they are actively and collaboratively building knowledge with their classmates and their teacher.
6. All students learn best when studying interesting and challenging topics that they find personally meaningful.
7. Effective teaching for students with disabilities is substantively the same as effective teaching for all students.

(Jenkinson, 1997)

A very interesting approach towards learning curriculum in the case of disabled students is the use of the Social Development Curriculum. According to Doyle (2004) the Social Development Curriculum is an objectives-led document. It sets out to suggest ways to use activities within mainstream primary school teaching in order to address a number of social objectives developmentally sequenced towards specific outcomes. The Social Development Curriculum covers the following areas:

- Social skills
- Self awareness and confidence
- Skills for learning
- Self control and management of behavior.

If I did not have the chance to gain experience in the everyday life of working with disabled students I am sure that I would not be in a position to understand the value of such a program. My experience though has provided me with the belief that this program has a great value, sometimes much more valuable than a curriculum for reading and writing skills. It is my belief that a curriculum for disabled children and young people and not only for them, must take into consideration all the areas that had been mentioned above.

Vlachou (2004) has provided us with lot of thinking. She said that inclusion is about the curriculum and an exploration of the reasons that the educational apparatus has failed to create opportunities for meaningful participation of its learners. Inclusion is closely connected with the issues of power, control discipline and priorities.

What we need then is an inclusive curriculum not only for the average student of each class, but for all students. As mentioned before, we need advice from all interested parties. We need help from the academics, from the professionals and from the children and young people themselves, because we must not forget to listen to their voices. Academics can inform us about the worldwide research of this theme and the experience of other countries will enrich our efforts. Also practitioners will provide us with their everyday experience and finally persons who have been evaluated as having “special” needs, should be encouraged to offer their years of personal experiences in the field.

## **2.5 Changing “Special” Education professionals**

Inclusive education, according to Slee (2001), has been adopted enthusiastically by “special” educators because it enabled them to continue their practices from a publicly acceptable base and to convert themselves as “Special” Education Teachers into a “card carrying designator of disability” (Allan, 2003). This is a deeply critical viewpoint. According to Allan (2003) the role of the practitioner is to promote the understanding of inclusive thinking and make inclusion reality in the everyday practice of the school. In doing so it is fundamentally important that practitioners should start from a place of deep understanding regarding the opinions, attitudes and experiences of pupils, parents and colleagues. Research has argued for, and shown the benefits of, accessing and maintaining input from these aforementioned groups (Moore et al, 1998; Dunn and Moore, 2005). Zoller et al, (1999) found out that a successful inclusive school climate depends on the attitudes and the actions of the principal of the school, of the school

community and of the shared values and languages that all those involved in the puzzle we name inclusion may have.

Boutskou (2005) classified “special” needs teacher into three categories, according to their research findings:

- “the enthusiast-novices
- the mid-career fighters
- the burned-out” (p.5)

According to Gersten et al (2001) the issue of the transformation of “special” educators to a position of “general” educators is also critical. This is happening in Cyprus as can be seen in the example of two Heads of Department I know of in the Primary Education in Cyprus who both previously worked for several years in “special” education. Such a move is not surprising perhaps, because in “special” education, stress due to poor job design is found in the discrepancy between what teachers believe about their jobs (i.e. burdensome paperwork loads, extensive time spent in meetings, limited opportunities for individualization) and huge ranges in student performance levels (Gersten, et al 2001). This is something very common in the “special” educational system in Cyprus and something expected as well. Moreover, “special” educators in Cyprus do not have a proper job design and they cannot apply for promotion, since there are not spaces in the educational system for their promotions. Yet they deal with huge diversity of pupils and problems that they have to come through every day give them serious problems in their self esteem, because they cannot work with each child as they would like.



In some educational systems “special” education teachers are called to support and consult general educators in their teaching of disabled students (Sugai and Tindal, 1993). In Cyprus this is something very common but it remains informal. “Special” needs teachers, very often used to help their colleagues. The Ministry of Education and Culture though did not accept that this practice should be formalized, since they thought this would create problems between the relationships of “special” educators and primary teachers. Several studies have suggested that “special” teachers have amassed useful knowledge that would assist their mainstream peers (Armstrong and Moore, 2004).

In Cyprus, the “special” needs teacher responsibilities are to design, implement and evaluate programs of instruction that help disabled students. They have to maintain knowledge and skills to improve the quality of children’s lives in school, home, community and workplace settings. “Special” needs teachers are instructing classrooms of students of wide ranges of behavioral and academics needs in varied instructional arrangements (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). Ideally, the “special” needs teacher’s role will also require the capacity to analyze schools in order to make them feel more inclusive (Bines, 1999). What Lewis and Norwich (2005) mentioned seems to be really interesting: in order to understand what a “special” needs teacher achieves, one must be aware of three things: oneself, the child and the task at hand.

What Tomlinson (1982) mentioned is straightforward: it would be wrong to assume that “special” needs teachers can exert unconstrained influence over parents and disabled children and young people. The autonomy professionals appear to have is more often

myth than reality as they are constrained in a variety of ways and their day to day actions are often the product of pragmatic necessary strategies for survival in what are often very difficult situations (Tomlinson, 1982). As it will be mentioned later, “special” needs teachers in Cyprus are often forced by the parents of disabled children and young people to work with the way that *they* (parents of disabled children and young people) believe is correct. This influence can make lot of harm in the field of “special” education. According to Skrtic 1995, professional autonomy is very important. It implies that professionals know best what is good for their clients because of access to the “specialized knowledge and skills of their profession. A key point to grasp about professional autonomy is its relationship to professional knowledge. Society allows the professions greater autonomy, because they control a body of “specialized knowledge that society needs but this can not be the rule.

The way “special” needs teachers are trained is one of the key factors influencing their future commitment to apply of inclusion or not (Fullan 1993). However teacher training, like regular education in schools, is burdened by traditions, conflicts and loyalties that hamper innovation and confirm yesterday’s courses of action. The training of “special” needs teachers is one of the most important factors for maintaining development of a “special” education field. The crucial point is whether disabled children will or will not be transferred to “special” settings or treated by educational “specialists”. If we accept that the inclusive primary classroom is the best place for all children and young people, then we also accept that the role of the “special” needs teacher has to change.

In “special” education the ideology of benevolent expertise is very strong (Tomlinson, 1982). Within this ideology the notion that a child’s welfare should rightly be a matter for capable experts has become such a natural assumption that questioning it becomes very difficult (Tomlinson, 1982). In the past, “special” needs teachers were felt to have left the main field of education and were looked on as missionaries going into an unknown field (Lindsey, 1957). Today this notion in my belief has changed even in small societies like Cyprus. Through inclusion, “special” educators and educators in general are trying to apply inclusion. The mission now is to broaden the task to the inclusion of everyone.

The relationships between “special” needs teachers, often regarded as ‘the experts’ by mainstream teachers and their mainstream colleagues seems to be a very interesting parameter of the general issue of “special” education. In Cyprus an ideology has developed that envisages a process of smooth teamwork operates between all the professionals, which allows of the needs of the child to be assessed (Hadjiyiannakou, 2005). Any notion of conflict in the process has always been played down and the development of extended multi-professional assessment certainly assumes a deep degree of co-operation, communication and absence of professional jealousies and anxieties. According to the “Every Child Matters Policy (2003) the UK government will move forward to a common assessment framework across services for all children in order to remove the duplication.

Lantier et al. (1994) and Hastings (2003) reported that teachers who have disabled children and young people in their classrooms are not always satisfied with their relations

with the specialist professionals, but they rarely place emphasis on collaborating with them. However they would prefer more meetings and more discussion on classroom practice with “specialists (Hastings, 2003). Also they mentioned that they are not always satisfied with the quality of their relationships with the “specialists and that they expect much more assistance from them. This is the reason why their assistance is less frequently mentioned in the specific research (Belmont and Verilon, 1999; Hastings, 2003).

Belmont and Verilon (1999) reported that in their research the majority of primary teachers express satisfaction with the teacher/specialist meetings, because they provide them with deeper understanding of the children they seek to include. Even though the impressions of the primary teachers sometimes seems to be negative about their relations with “special” needs teachers, teachers in nursery schools tend to have slightly more discussion concerning practice with their specialist partners, than those working in primary schools. Also research has showed that the “special” educator is the favored partner most often cited in the nursery school (Belmont & Verilon, 1999).

From what has been mentioned above the role of “special” needs teachers to be clarified immediately in order to facilitate the application of inclusion and the role that each one of the professionals have in this. Arguably, a “special” needs teacher has a crucial role to play in the development of “special” needs teacher yet they can not do all the change by themselves; they need other teachers to help them. As I read more, and gained more experience in the field, I was drawn to the conclusion that what must be done then

immediately is not to try to educate “special” need teachers, since they are “specialized” staff, but rather to educate all the other teachers, in order to accept each student with his/her strengths and differences.

Phenomena like the following what Boutskou (2005) mentioned must not be maintained.

Boutskou (2005) found out that:

“when “special” needs teachers enter the field they are quite passionate with their work and much concerned about the micro level of their school. As years go by, they view educational issues at a macro level and either they try to go up the hierarchy ladder or they go on teaching at the same or different school. “Special” education teaching seems to be quite difficult job which affects teachers emotionally and make them quite vulnerable. The fact that “special” needs teachers used to be mainstream teachers and have the option to return back in mainstream teaching is an alternative for the ones that feel burned out”.

Unfortunately what Boutskou (2005) stated seemed to be a reality in the case of Cyprus as well (Hadjiyiannakou, 2004). The new role of the “Special” Education Professionals seemed to be a great need.

## **2.6. Change issues for Support teachers**

As is by now clear, the meaning of the term support teacher in the educational system of Cyprus seems to be different from the meaning that the term has in other educational systems. In Cyprus a support teacher is the person who is working in a primary school and is responsible to provide disabled students with tutorial help, in order to come across their problems. The current trend promoted by most systems is for a more collaborative approach between the support teacher and the class teacher (Forlin, 2001).

Dyson (1991) provides evidence to suggest that traditional support teachers are strongly committed to the notion of “special” ness and therefore see themselves as people who have distinctive skills to educate “special” children and young people in “special” settings. The problem though here is that if a teacher has such beliefs, they cannot provide disabled children and young people with inclusion. Oliver (1990) has argued that new research must take into consideration not only the views of persons who have been evaluated as having “special” needs, but also the views of the professionals and the academics to help untangle some of these complex issues.

Margerison, (1997) stated some ten years ago, that the practice that was used in the past, which allowed the teacher to take out of their classes the disabled students, to a different place are gone. Hart (1986) mentioned that in its original sense support teaching refers to providing support in the classroom rather than withdrawing children and young people. This is one view. On the other hand there are researchers like Steele, (1998) who acknowledge that experience shows that the support teacher who is sitting next to the pupil may act as a barrier to the children and young people’s development of independent academic skills and interaction. And last but not least, we must mention that the support teacher is often expected to work in co-operation with the classroom teacher for the benefit not only of the disabled student, but also for the benefit of all the students (Salent et al. 1997).

In Cyprus, as it had been mentioned above, the role of the support teacher is much different. We do not have a support teacher who enters the class with the disabled student

and tries to help the disabled student in his class without taking him/her out of the class. This practice has just started appearing during the last two years, where in the cases when two or more disabled students attend a class, we suggest to “special” teachers to try to support disabled students in the class. We also suggest to them that they can help any student who faces difficulties, in order to show to the rest of the students of the class that they are not there only for the disabled students. This practice though has happened only in a few cases, since the small number of the professionals in the field and the big number of the disabled students does not allow us to do it often.

## **2.7. Change issues for Primary Teachers**

A major part of the “special” education system involves mainstream primary teachers who include in their classrooms disabled students. According to O’ Brien (2001, p. 183) “the key to enabling inclusion lies within the teacher”. We must not forget that teachers act as a model to their classes. So if the teacher has an inclusive attitude towards disabled children and young people, then the students will act in the same mode. Hornby (1999) stated that the beliefs and the attitudes of teachers are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices since teacher’s acceptance of the inclusion policy will affect their commitment to implementing it.

According to Flem et al (2004) when teaching in a school practicing inclusive education, teachers will encounter challenges and new opportunities. The class teacher according to Flem et al (2004.) has the main responsibility for facilitating differentiated education in the class. To deal with the diversity among children and young people in the schools,

teacher's education and systematic teacher development are critical and it is therefore likely that teacher education is one of the first steps in the achievement of inclusive education (Meijer et al. 1997). A fundamental rethinking of school development and teacher education is called for, because teachers may have limited insight into how to work with the diverse student population (Haug, 1999). It is very interesting to refer to a comment that a teacher made when he evaluated his experience of a school based staff support group:

“I have found that to the extent to which one becomes effective with one's most difficult children and young people, so to that extent one is also a better teacher with the whole class”

(Hanko, 1985, p.54).

Mittler (2000) highlights a twofold obligation as essential arguing that teachers need to be prepared to teach all children and young people and this should be understood as both a *personal* and an *institutional* commitment. Mittler suggests most teachers already have much of the knowledge and skills they need to teach inclusively but what they lack is confidence (Mittler, 2000). He suggests it is a widespread myth that only a “specially trained expert can deal with pupils who have “special” emotional and social difficulties but unfortunately notions like these still exist in schools as it can be seen from the research findings under review.

I feel teachers must learn how to provide disabled children and young people with meaningful personal experiences. In doing so, they have to teach them the meaning of belonging and involvement, personal satisfaction and achievement. Also they must teach them the ways that they can be accepted and listened to and finally the meaning of being valued as a person (Hanko, 2004). The encouragement of a more imaginative curriculum



that enables teachers to provide all children and young people with meaningful personal experiences would clearly help to reconsider the currently conflicting curricular priorities (Hanko, 2004).

Croll (2001) reported that class teachers needed “special” support in order to fulfill the needs of each disabled child that they have in their class. The question that arises here is whether those teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of inclusive education. Rose (2001) believed that this is a very critical factor in the move towards inclusion. Garner (2001) felt that because of the high development of inclusion in recent times, the time is right for a vociferous campaign to secure a more equitable portion of time and resources for discrete SEN inclusion provision on ITT courses. Barton (1997) acknowledged that inclusive education needs a very serious staff development which must be carefully planned, resourced, monitored and evaluated.

In practice the quality of children and young people’s education has been overly dependent on the nature and degree of teacher’s commitment and goodwill (Vlachou and Barton, 1994). The nature and degree of teacher’s commitment though is greatly influenced by the context within which they have to work (Vlachou and Barton, 1994). This is the main reason why “special” education teachers must try hard in order to manage the co-operation between them and the primary teachers. If we want to make a change to promote inclusion of disabled students we must involve in this process the mainstream primary teachers.

Tod (2000) refers to the challenges faced by the teachers in balancing the promotion of educational inclusion and meeting national attainment targets. Wedell (2000) acknowledged that when a school is perceived as practicing successful inclusion, then an increasing number of disabled students would appear in the school. This potentially exposes the school's performances in attainment league tables to an element of risk and could decrease the reputation of the school as effective. What Wedell (2000) mentioned though seemed to be a very limited opinion. It ignores the achievement of numerous schools who gain a reputation for excellence in academic attainment *and* inclusion.

The attitude of many teachers to the inclusion of disabled students in their classrooms is often directly linked to the resources available to the child, usually in terms of individual support from the "special" teacher or other learning support assistance. Croll (2001) in a study about inclusion of pupils with statements found out, that the children and young people whom teachers thought should not be educated in mainstream schools were those who had a low level of individual support.

Some research has shown that that a primary teacher who works with disabled children and young people may experience stress (Chen and Miller, 1997). Organizational stressors, such as time constraints, workload, role conflict, role ambiguity and administrative bureaucracy are cited as stressful. Also it was found that disruptive behavior within the classroom has been rated as one of the most stressful classroom issues for teachers (Forlin, 1995). Disruptive behavior of children and young people is linked with lower acceptance by teachers (Conway and Foreman, 1988). Wilczenski

(1992) reported that teachers are more positive regarding students who had been evaluated as having physical impairments, rather than those needing academic support, however they preferred those with academic needs, to those with behavioral problems.

Forlin (2001) in research on the stressors for regular class teachers found the following issues identified as the most stressful for teachers during the application of inclusion in the every day life of a school:

- Reduced ability to teach other students as effectively
- Being held accountable for the child's educational outcomes
- The child physically attacks others
- Difficulty in monitoring other students when attending to the child
- Disturbs others
- Time available for other students.

The specific research revealed also the least significant stressors for teachers during inclusion:

- Parent in the classroom
- Obtaining relevant information about the child
- Empathizing with parents
- Parent/teacher tension
- Limited contact with parents
- Administering medication

(Forlin, 2001 239)

From all that has been mentioned above it is clear that “special” education teachers, need the mainstream primary teachers to be on their side. This is the reason why the system of “special” education must take into consideration the opinions and the views of the teachers as the co-operators of the “special” needs teachers.

In attempting to build on positive attitude and experience of inclusive education and to challenge the attitude that disabled students are “*not in my subject area*” (as told to me

by a primary teacher in a school in Cyprus) school communities need to allow space and time for teachers to share views, feelings and experiences and to do so in an open and supportive climate. Specifically, teachers need to be given time and space to collaborate, to develop practical experiences and attitudes towards including all learners, to share tips and insights, thus benefiting each other and in so doing building an inclusive school culture. In order to do this, teachers must feel secure enough to be able to respond and work with questions being asked of their practices, beliefs and professional knowledge (Garner, 2000). Thus the importance of school culture cannot be understated; there is a need for the school community to promote the values of a learning organization (Ainscow, 2001) where all members are willing and able to admit their shortcomings, to ask each other for assistance, to learn from one another strengths and to assist in building their school community in an inclusive and effective way. What we name as inclusion and as inclusive schools needs not only to include all students, but also to include all teachers, through the same policy.

## **2.8. Change issues for Administrators**

Calvert et al. (2001) indicates that inclusion raises difficult issues for managers in balancing the views of staff against outside pressures and proposes:

“purposeful management can make a considerable difference to the inclusivity of educational institutions” (p. 99).

The practices advocated suggest a move towards more collegiate leadership. The collegiate school culture in many ways reflects the values of inclusion. Thus if effective inclusive school communities are the goal then the traditional hierarchical approach to school leadership and management needs must be challenged and revised (Gibson, 1999,

Ainscow, 2001). Leadership will be shared, voices from all levels and parts of the school and community listened to, and representatives will work together in evaluating current school practices in light of their aim of inclusion. This arrangement for providing services poses challenges for many education professionals including the school principal (Praisner, 2003).

Head teachers of primary schools are a crucial element in the ascertainment process for “special” education, particularly for those disabled children and young people who have not formally been assessed. It is their judgment that sets in train the whole procedure. Unfortunately my everyday experience showed me that very clearly, that only some administrators care about disabled children and young people. The thought that those children and young people are ‘*someone else responsibility*’ is widespread.

If inclusion is to be a feasible alternative to more segregated placements its success will depend heavily upon the readiness and willingness of general education administrators to make the decision that they will provide appropriate opportunities for students with “special” needs to remain in general education (Ayres and Meyer, 1992). This is the reason for which we as researchers must take into consideration the opinions and the views of the administrators and especially the views of the head teachers.

Praisner (2003) found that most principals agree with the idea of inclusion when it is phased in, in a generic and unregulated manner. However less favorable attitudes arise when the policy wording becomes specific and implies mandatory rather than voluntary

participation. In my opinion the main reason for this is the feeling of fear that administrators in Cyprus often have because they worry about the possibility of reducing standards at school.

From all the above, it is clear that Head Teachers are amongst the most important players in the puzzle which we name inclusion. If we do not have the Head Teachers and the administrators in general by our side, then we cannot promote change. This is the reason for which we must try to persuade them for the need of an inclusion policy which will take into consideration the needs of all the children and young people and not only the children and young people who are labeled as disabled students.

Yet there is a real problem due to way the promotion system used to work in Cyprus which has stood in the way of change. If someone wanted to apply to the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to gain promotion they firstly had to have at least 15 years of teaching experience. No matter how much academic qualifications a teacher may have, or how good they were in their work, they must have that teaching experience. As a result Head Teachers until recently were the oldest professionals, in terms of chronological age, in the Cypriot Education system. This system helps all the teachers to retire as Head Teachers and take larger amount of money as bonus, from the government. On the one hand this policy is good for the larger amount of teachers, but on the other hand it is a system that does not allow to their younger employees to work in order to gain a position, or better salaries. The system does not allow to teachers to have ambitions for future promotion based on innovation; essentially you do no need to be good to your work in

order to gain a promotion - you will take this promotion anyway, no matter how many qualifications you will have. I feel this situation has not helped to develop the project of inclusive education.

## **2.9. Perspectives of parents of disabled children and young people**

The father of a baby with Down's syndrome said:

“When you are told that your child is abnormal in some way, you are assailed by the most extraordinary feeling of bleakness and complete despair. When it happened to me, I felt a sort of detached and outside myself in a way I have not experienced before or since. There is the feeling that the world and all the people in it have changed and that things will never be the same again. You find yourself grappling with feelings which you don't understand, and with thoughts that you dare not mention to anyone”

(Newson and Hipgrave, 1983, p. 114).

In Cyprus many parents of disabled children and young people would share these views.

The work though of some writers like Mason (1992) and Moore (1995), shows that there are more positive ways to view difference. Yet often parents are overwhelmed with emotions to hear that their child will not be the “perfect baby” that they were expecting, that the child will have some “special” needs and that they will be a continuing challenge to be met through out their lives (Casswell, 1995). Emotionally many parents of disabled children and young people will need support to adjust to their new found situation and they continued care of their child. They may need to learn and understand a new body of knowledge relating to their child diagnosis and the systems designed to support them (Russell, 2004).

All parents develop expectations about their child's education based on their own experience and informal networks for parents (Russell, 2004). Parents typically expect high quality of teaching, their child's academic progress and happiness, homework, fair discipline and information (Crozier, 1999). Goodnow and Collins (1990) suggest that parents' ideas will not automatically change as a result of receiving information about their child's "special" educational needs. If parents disagree with professional opinion about their child this may mean they change their expectations, ignore the information or change their reference group. The parents of a disabled child will react in a similar way as a result of their expectations not being confirmed (Russell 2004).

Lake and Billingsley (2000) believed that the main causes of conflict between school and the parents of a disabled child is the discrepancy between the respective views of the child and their needs. When the school describes the child it is often from a deficit perspective: children's needs are connected to their "disability" and not to their "ability". The approach of the social model of disability (see Chapter 1) provides a better way forward. According to this approach focus is put on the child's strengths, the parent's aspirations and opportunities to achieve. This would involve parents and professionals having ongoing opportunities to share information about what they need and expect. As a result more equal relationships can be developed between the family of the disabled child and the professionals.

This is why we as teachers must help parents. We can provide parents with real opportunities to influence and contribute to their child's education, working in



partnership with schools and other statutory and voluntary agencies (Department of Education and Development, 1997). High achieving well-ordered schools are characterized by good home-school relationship (Kelly-Laine, 1998). Inclusion gives us the chance to work in co-operation with the parents in different settings, which we have to continue improving by hearing the voices of parents of disabled children and young people, who can provide us with very useful information. In the past as Solity (1992) mentioned parents of disabled children and young people had been seen as 'consumers' within the education system, even though it was important that parents and teachers establish an effective rapport with each other. Following this model Hornby (1995) came up with a new model 'the partnership model' in which teachers are viewed as being experts on education and parents are viewed as being experts on their children and young people.

When I was a student I thought that Hornby's 'partnership model' was the ideal model for the form of relationship between the parents of a disabled child and the professionals. Unfortunately my experience in Cyprus showed me clearly that this model cannot be applied in all cases. Sometimes parents need so much support that they forget that you are a professional and they can behave to you as a member of their family, with all the problems that may consequently arise. I will mention an example from my career to show exactly the meaning of what I am trying to say. A mother of a student of mine, used to come to school almost everyday and she kept asking me questions about her daughter and the improvement she made. I tried to be polite. One day she came to school and said that she wanted to talk me alone. I answered her that I could not do that at that specific time,

since I was responsible for my students. She insisted very much and she said to me that it was very important. I managed to find another teacher to come to my class and I went to talk to her. What she wanted to tell me has nothing to do with my professional role. She started saying to me about the problems she had with her husband and the problems they have with their relationship in general. When I heard her saying this, in the beginning I became very angry. I did not know what to tell her. She took me out of my class to say to me that she had problems with her husband. The reason I mention this is because in such societies like Cyprus, where the story of inclusion and “special” education in general is something extremely new, there are no supportive services for parents of those children and young people. The absence of support services makes some parents transform the teachers of their children and young people to generalized support roles and we need to pay attention to this issue through research.

The work of Wolfendale (1999) helps to move forward the discussion surrounding parental involvement. Wolfendale (1999) sets out a methodological framework that places parents in a central and powerful role as research partners. Listening to parents and considering the perspective of parents, are ways in which professionals can support the development of educational provision that are sensitive and effective and that meet the needs of a diverse groups of people. Duckorth and Kostell, (1999) state that one method for acquiring specific disability awareness information is through the use of Parent Panels to organize meetings between parents and educational staff in order to share information and discuss associated issues and concerns. Ward et al. (2004) found parents valued being listened to, feeling that their views had been heard, participating in discussions

about future opportunities for their son or daughter, being kept informed or even feeling that they were driving the process. Other parents mentioned that they appreciated being backed up by the school in helping to secure the future provision of their choice.

Levy and Allen (1988) reported that mothers and fathers of disabled children and young people they involved in research used to blame everyone and everything for what is happening to their disabled child. A teacher admitted that sometimes they thought that teachers are bringing up their children instead of them. A mother of a disabled child though added by saying that “we cannot do anything with them and this is the reason why we rely on the school to do it and they let us down” (Levy and Allen, 1988). Some parents of disabled children and young people believe that since professionals are ‘experts’ they can make the difference to their children and young people. Sometimes though, the difference is not an easy task to be made. Also the difference and the progress in professional terms can be different than in terms important for a parent of a disabled child.

In Cyprus, according to my experience, as in other countries a gradually increasing number of parents want their disabled child to attend a mainstream primary school that it is in the same neighborhood school as his or her siblings: they want their child to receive schooling as ‘normally’ as possible (Meijer, 1994).

Hanson et al. (2001) interviewed parents to determine their perspective on their children and young people’s school experiences in order to identify those factors that influenced

inclusive placement decisions. Although the majority of parent's valued inclusive placement, concerns about class size, availability of therapeutic services, acceptance of other children and young people, attitudes about the child disabilities, as well as teachers' level of training and experience were expressed.

Some research suggests parents believe that the most important educational area for parents is the communication, the independent living and the various types of therapies (Coffey, 1997). Coming now to the concerns that parents have for their disabled children and young people, it was found from research that the most common concern expressed by parents was the need for more staff and also for staying in school after the age of 18 (Coffey, 1997). Also in another related research the main concern of parents of the elementary school children and young people was related to social difficulties, isolation and their child's self esteem (Pivik et al. 2002).

From all the above it is clear in the writer's opinion that parents need for sure the support of professionals. Professionals will offer the path that parents will follow, in order to understand what it is best for their disabled children and young people. Wolfendale (1983) believes that in a partnership relation between parents and professionals the following behaviors must be present:

- ❖ Parents are active and central in decision-making and its implementation
- ❖ Parents are perceived as having equal strength and equivalent expertise
- ❖ Parents are able to contribute to as well as receive services
- ❖ Parents share responsibilities thus are professionals

(Wolfendale, 1983).

In the same vein Gibson (2004) described the importance of good communication between parents and teachers. The key to the relationship with parents of disabled children and young people is again said to be 'communication'. In order though to have effective communication the following elements are very important:

- ❖ Acknowledge and draw on parental knowledge and expertise in relation to their child.
- ❖ Focus on the children and young people's strengths as well as areas of additional need.
- ❖ Recognize the personal and emotional investment of parents and be aware of their feelings.
- ❖ Ensure parents understand procedures, are aware of how to access support in the preparing their contributions and are given documents to be discussed well before meetings.
- ❖ Respect the validity of different perspectives and seek constructive ways of reconciling different viewpoints.
- ❖ Respect the different needs parents themselves may have such as a disability, or communication and linguistic barriers.
- ❖ Recognize the need for flexibility in the timing and structure of meetings.

(Gibson, 2004)

Parents of disabled children and young people have a particularly great desire for working relationships with teachers based on understanding and trust (Mittler, 2000).

What Mittler suggested above seemed to be important, since the two most valuable ingredients in the relationship between a professional and a parent must be the understanding and the trust that both of them share. Unfortunately the everyday experience of working with parents shows us that professionals need to be very careful in this relationship. Some parents need professionals to be by their side, but they cannot

understand that there are barriers and limits in this relationship as there are barriers in every relationship (like the example I have mentioned before from my experience). We need to get this relationship right because ending segregation of children and young people depends on achieving a consensus, shared conviction between young people, parents, survivors of segregation, educationalists and policy makers (Kenworthy and Whittaker, 2000). Each school needs its own home-school policy to go beyond fine words and include concrete proposals for achieving better working relationships with its parents and the local community (Mittler, 2000).

Inclusion is not only about disabled children and young people. It is also about their parents and families, the professionals who work with them, the academy, the policy makers and lot of others.

#### **2.10. Research in Cyprus concerning “special” and inclusive education**

As has become clear, there is not so much research in Cyprus concerning the issue of “special” needs and thus it is quite important to mention to the reader all the information that can be found in Cyprus according “special” needs.

The latest information mentioned as I said before in the conference of “special” Education in May 2003. One of the most interesting presentations had been held by Dr. Helen Phtiaka, the leading academic who is interested in the field of “special” education in Cyprus. She referred to the results of research to identify the views of primary children and young people about disabled children and young people. The children and young

people that have been taken part in this research mentioned that the disabled children and young people are happy, “they need our love and support, they can not do whatever we can do, and their children and young people like us”. Phtiaka (2003) said that most of the views of the children and young people are based on a philanthropic model. But there are views of children and young people that are based more on the human rights model in which there is respect, cooperation, and equality.

Concerning the question ‘what can be done in order to help the children and young people realize the issue of equality and respect of disabled children and young people?’ the researcher said that there must be specialized training for primary school teachers. The training must start with them, then the administrators must be trained, the paraeducators, the parents, the students and finally the “special” education teachers, who are seemed to be the persons who know best about their disabled students and the way we must behave to them. (Phtiaka, 2003)

‘What must be done?’ was the next question and Dr. Phtiaka said that we must do the following:

- ❖ Make teachers more sensitive
- ❖ Help teachers learn the basics about “special” education
- ❖ Help teachers learn the new law
- ❖ Help teachers learn the several types of procedures
- ❖ Help teachers learn the most common problems
- ❖ Inform teachers about the support system

❖ Train teachers in order to learn the way they can be informed, through references.

(Phtiaka, 2003)

Another area of relevant information about “special” education in Cyprus that can be useful for this work is the area of parental involvement and especially parental involvement in the case of disabled children and young people. According to Georgiou (1997) the Cypriot family as an institution is still quite strong despite the changes that occurred during the last 4-5 decades, which have appeared to turn the more collective approaches of society into more individualistic ones (Georgiou, 1997).

After being a British colony for almost a century, Cyprus gained its independence in 1960. Since then it has established a centrally administered educational system. As the society becomes more and more complex parents are starting to question the authority of the professional educators and want to voice their own concerns. Thus the end of the twentieth century is a period of social and educational change for Cyprus and parental involvement is one of the current issues being debated.

Georgiou (1995) in one of his studies found that formal home-school relations in Cyprus varied a great deal. In every school a Parents Association exists. The role of this association is to raise money through the organization of various events and to use it to help the school’s everyday life. The Parents Associations can also mean certain complications. For example in the Parents Associations elections of most central schools there is often involvement of the local political parties. Also members of the Parents



Association sometimes use their position as a stepping stone in order to achieve more powerful political positions.

According to Phtiaka (1995) Cypriot parents can be divided into three groups:

1. “the insiders”
2. the “outsiders”
3. the “so and so”.

‘Insiders’ feel closer to the school. They are characterized by having a sense of identification with the school’s ideas and they usually have better skills for receiving and controlling relevant information. Parents who belong to the second group express feelings of neglect and guilt mixed with unjustified expectations for ready-made solutions to their problems. These parents feel they are marginalized and ignored by the system. Finally members of the third group demand more information and more opportunities for involvement but at the same time they are overwhelmed by the anxiety associated with their role as parents.

Georgiou (1996) has found out that both parents and teachers theoretically accept the idea that family and school should co-operate, but when the plans for this co-operation become more specific they realize that the agenda for the family is different to the agenda of the school. Educators are concerned about possible threats to their professionalism if parents are involved in schooling. The parents have their own insecurities and confusion about their role in this process. They might want to get involved but resent the fact that

teachers seem to have the upper hand in the home-school relationship. Factors such as socio-economic status, place of residence and level of their actual involvement produce interesting intra-group differences among parents, whereas the attitudes of the teachers regarding parental involvement seem to be directly related variables (Georgiou, 1996).

Further Georgiou (1996) found out that in small rural communities the few individuals who belong to high socio-economic status families were much more likely to get involved one way or another in school matters than their urban counterparts. School and church are often the only institutions in these communities which may explain this.

Phtiaka (1997a) carried out a study about parental involvement in the education process of disabled children and young people in Cyprus. The main findings of this research were as follows:

- the vast majority of parents accept and love their children and young people as they are
- nevertheless, parents of disabled children and young people seem to be troubled and they ask for help
- parents often appear sceptical about the quality of education that their disabled children and young people receive
- parents believe that there is a need for change and improvement in their disabled children and young people's education. This usually relates to staff experience and expertise and is a constant struggle for them as they feel they need to initiate improvement themselves.

- In the majority of cases efficient communication between home and school seems to be lacking
- Despite the problems reported there seems to be an apparently good general climate of home and school relations.

(Phtiaka, 1997a)

It is seems that parents are largely unsatisfied with the existing provision. As Phtiaka (1997, b) suggested, teachers and generally the educational system in Cyprus, need to keep parents informed in what the needs of their child are, their child's progress and they need to show parents ways in which they can help their child. Parents in the other hand need to insist on being informed about all the issues surrounding their child and to be supportive of their child's school and education.

Today there is no research evidence from Cyprus specifically on the involvement of parents with a disabled child. I can comment through my personal experience as a "special" teacher who work in this system for several years and the experiences of other colleagues and parents that I know. When a child had been diagnosed as a disabled child, there are no social services in order to provide professional guidance to this group of parents. Those parents are left alone in a society in which having a disabled child is not typically viewed as a blessing; it is rather seen as a curse even today. Even the medical staff, the doctors (psychiatrists, neurologists, pediatricians) that are responsible for the medical therapy of those children and young people are not supportive enough. The system only provides for disabled children and young people to attend once a year and

sometimes once every two years to see the doctors and discuss with them the improvement of their child. Some parents have started nowadays to complain about this, but no change takes place yet.

The Social Welfare Department of Cyprus only becomes involved in cases where there is a financial problem in the family. All parents with a disabled child have the right to apply for financial help, which is estimated in the amount of 350 Cypriot pounds (at the time of writing). With that amount of money parents of disabled children and young people can provide their children and young people with extra curricular activities, or for “specialized” therapies. Unfortunately no control exists from the Social Welfare in order to examine whether or not this amount of money is being used for their disabled child. Apart from this governmental financial help, parents of a disabled child can apply to a philanthropic association called “*Radiomarathonions*” in order to take some extra moneys for their child.

As a conclusion what can be stated is that unfortunately there are not adequate support services for parents who have a disabled child. Those parents have much to do by themselves. First of all they have to accept that they have a child who is disabled and who sometimes will need help from an adult in order to live. Secondly they have to fight in order to provide for their child a better future, even though there is an inclusive law. Support services must be organized immediately for these parents, because until their disabled child attends school, they feel tired and distressed. We must have in mind that

those parents have to raise a disabled child in a society which cannot accept and easily appreciate the term “different”.

## **2.11 Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I set out to review literature that influenced my thinking on issues concerning special and inclusive education in Cyprus. I have demonstrated that much of what I read and learned challenged my thinking about current policy and practice in this field. With this chapter I believe that I have made clear for the reader of this piece of work the way I came to think and also feel about the different aspects of inclusion. The reflections presented in this chapter added depth and complexity to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 which I hoped to investigate.

In the following chapter, Chapter 3, I go on next to describe the methodology that has been used in this piece of work. A discussion of the range of possible research approaches and tools available to me, and the way that I had reached my decision to adopt a particular strategy, will be provided. Also my research practice will be explained.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

### **3.1. Introduction**

This is a crucial part in such a work, since it will present the methodology that has been used. The importance of the methodology part is great, since methodology provides the researcher with answers on how, and in what way, I am going to make this research a reality. Firstly in the chapter I will refer to the anxieties that I faced, while I was planning and doing the research. Then I will define the term research and I will mention the different approaches to research. My research demands from me to use qualitative methods and I will describe how and why I have chosen qualitative methods and specifically story telling. Also information concerning the validity and the reliability will be present.

The main research strategies that had been used in this research were interviews and observations. The reason why I have chosen those strategies will be analyzed. Also the participants of this piece of work will be presented. Useful information concerning the two different schools will also be mentioned.

Having all that in mind the research procedures will provide more information to the reader. Two very important parts of this chapter concern the limitations and the ethics that had arisen from this research.

### **3.2 Anxieties about research**

The first time I heard about research and research techniques was when I was a student at the University of Cyprus I have to admit that I was terrified because I thought research was a quantitative business. After some weeks the opinion I had in the beginning started

changing. I discovered that there are various types of research, including qualitative research.

At first I did not realize the importance of detailed research planning though now, after trying to apply research in depth, I must admit that if you do not have a detailed plan, then you are not able to satisfy the needs of a research. This is why for the purpose of this research the first thing that I took into deep consideration was the decision about the research plan and the time table for this as well. After my experience in this research I can say for sure that doing research is not something simple as it sometimes looks. Research, especially in areas like the area of humanities and education, where human beings and their experience and feelings are involved, demands for the researcher to be very careful and deeply concerned about the needs, worries and feelings of their participants. I tried not to get emotionally involved in the various research relationships I entered into and I tried to distinguish between my feelings and the participants feelings yet these things are not easy to do. All those difficulties make me understand that this type of research is not easy work. It is stressful and full of ambiguities since sometimes you may fight with your own feelings and beliefs. As you can see from the stories that are in the following chapter there were moments where I was so nervous or moved or even disappointed by the participants that I tried very hard not to reveal my true feelings and at the end of the day I can not say for sure that I managed to do this. I came to think that in the same way as I have argued that understanding 'inclusive education' is a very personal business, so too, is the business of understanding research deeply personal.



### **3.3 Understanding research**

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) stated that research is carried out in order to obtain information. For them, research refers to a:

“careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to discover or establish facts and principles”

(Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p.7)

Verna and Mallick (1999) referred to research as the technique or the method that researchers used to employ, in order to do their research. Wilson (1999) however, believed that research methodology and research method is not the same, since, research methodology is the philosophical study of methods and research method is a specific technique for which data is collected. What Wilson (1999) mentioned is more in line with my personal opinion. In the beginning I have tried to understand the various ways of doing research and the philosophy that was behind each one of them. I have continued then to find the research methods that I will use. The results of this journey to the field of research can be found in this chapter.

### **3.4 Research approaches**

There are two main methodological positions in research; the quantitative, which is usually related with positivism, and the qualitative methods which are associated with anti-positivism (Wilson, 1999; Bryne et al 1988). ‘Positivists’ believe in objective knowledge of an external reality. This knowledge is rational and independent to the observer. Positivism is often synonymous to “scientific” in lay terms (Wellington, 2000).

According to Wilson, (1999) logical positivism contains the philosophical assumptions of research and it can be met especially in fields like chemistry, physics, and engineering. The best contrasted with this approach is the naturalistic approach. According to this approach the research is conducted in the natural setting or context (Wellington, 2000).

In more 'interpretative' research (Flick, 1998) believes that social reality can only be understood through social constructions such as language, consciousness.. Further, there are other types of research, including 'practitioner research' and 'action research' (Armstrong and Moore, 2004). Practitioner research is a research that can be conducted by the practitioner in the everyday life setting. This type of research can provide to the researcher a lot food for understanding the various needs of a student for example. Action research is now well-established as:

*“a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of: their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations and institutions in which these practices are carried out”*

*(Carr and Kemmis, 1986).*

The main procedures that action researchers use are: planning-acting-observing/evaluating-reflecting-re-planning.

For any researcher, the decision on the most appropriate methods, and whether to use a quantitative or qualitative methodology, is very important. Sometimes according to Pressley and McCormick (1995) the researcher's personal preferences and beliefs can affect the methods the researcher is using in a study. In my research I believe that in a way I did Action Research since I am working in the specific educational system with the

specific inclusion policy and law and wanting to change it. My experience as a practitioner, who is working for this system helped me to plan, act, observe, evaluate, reflect and re-plan as Carr and Kemmis (1986) said.

Innovative approaches to research in the field of “special” education are necessary. In order to understand the way schools can respond to diversity and support the learning of all their students Flem et al (2004) suggested research be turned to detailed classroom research. This can be done to investigate how schools cope in practice with the diversity of students, since as Ainscow (1998) mentioned, schools and classrooms are complex places and the contexts and the people within them are unique.

### **3.5 Choosing Qualitative Methods**

In this research I decided that the needs of the research would be best fitted, through qualitative methods of data collection. Qualitative research is anything but uni-dimensional: perusal of the Handbook for Qualitative Research attests to its varied dimensions (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Also according to Van Maanen, (1988) qualitative research is strongly connected with the reality. Its main purpose is to hear the voices of those who have not been heard in the past. Qualitative approach is an approach to the study of the social world, which describe and analyze the culture and behavior of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (Bryman, 1988). Mason (1996) defined qualitative research as an approach that is concerned with how the social world is interpreted. Also he added that is based on methods of analysis and explanation building which involve understandings of complexity. The main intellectual

undercurrents which tend to be viewed as providing qualitative research with its distinct epistemology are: phenomenology, symbolic, interactionism, naturalism and estrogenic (Bryman, 1990).

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) qualitative research requires that:

- The researchers go directly to the specific setting they are interested in and they collect data through observations, or interviewing.
- The data is collected right at the scene and personal views of the researcher are added.
- Data is collected in the forms of words rather than numbers.
- The main concern of the researcher is people's perceptions.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc, from the perspective of the people who are being studied (Bryman, 1990).

### **3.6 Researching stories of special and inclusive education**

Story telling constitutes one type of qualitative research based on narrative. A 'life story', for example, can be gathered for research purposes. Life stories can be written alone or told to others who collaborate in writing (Goodley et al, 2004).

As Noddings and Witherell (1991) mentioned through working story by story, impressive arguments can be built to show that something is wrong or that something works or that something comes in infinite varieties and in so doing move people to action:

“Life story research is not a methodological strategy of last resort but frequently the methodological strategy of a choice”

(Goodley et al, 2004, p. 173).

Story based research in the field of special and inclusive education is helpful because stories can identify something of the full context and experience of the lives of individuals taking part. Skrtic (1995) believed that theoretical knowledge which grounds “special” education practices and discourses is not objective knowledge about reality. It is subjective knowledge, a social construction based on a particular, historically situated frame of reference. Thus, the field of “special” education must confront the fact that there is nothing inherently true or correct about its professional knowledge, practices and discourses and so *stories* of special and inclusive education become important. Today within “special” education the qualitative paradigm is increasingly viewed as worthy and there is increasingly willingness for researchers to provide story based data (e.g., Clough, 1998). This is a complex task:

“Life story research can be seen as an arena in which struggles take place over values, applications and change. Our own habits and patterns of thinking and behaving as life story researchers need to be examined all the time”

( Goodley et al, 2004, p. 107).

By choosing to use story based research the danger of leaving out the voices of disabled children and young people will be minimized. According to French and Swain (2000):

“much of the research on disability, including disabled children, has ignored the views and experiences of disabled people themselves (p.18).

In relation to this Robinson and Stalker (1998), mentioned also:

“while there is a well established body of knowledge about the way parents experience life with a disabled child, children’s own accounts of their lives are largely missing, their voices have not been heard” (p.7.)

I hope that the research I have made was also ‘participatory research’ (Bricher, 2000), since I wanted those who had been involved in this research to feel some ownership of the process. In recent years the use of participatory research in the fields of disability studies and inclusive education is very popular, since it provide the chance for the insider perspectives to be heard (French and Swain, 2000). This is important:

“for disabled researchers the insider perspective often represents an antidote (Oliver, 2000) to a power structure that guarantees the silence of a particular group of people”

( Gwynn, 2004, p. 106).

Participatory research has developed particularly with qualitative methodologies and involves all research participants in various stages of the research process, including dissemination of findings. Participatory research is a move away from the perceptions of researcher as expert and the researched as passive subject (Bricher, 2000). I have taken this idea further in this thesis and in order to provide the reader the chance to participate as an active constructor of understanding in my work, I have decided not only to *collect*, but also to *present* all data in story form (see Chapter 4).

In the preface of the book “Researching Life Stories” Goodley et al (2004) mentioned that they believe that life stories tell us much about individual and collective, private and public worlds. According to them:

“narratives may be our best hope of capturing structures that continue to shape, divide and separate human beings”

(Goodley et al, 2004)

Narrative research is at present distinctly interdisciplinary including elements of literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological and cultural studies (Casey, 2000). It belongs in a relatively new field of enquiry, made up of diverse elements from a number of philosophical and practical sources. Theories, methodologies and politics of narrative research are in a process of being defined and redefined as particular researchers struggle to make the various aspects of their work coherent and consistent (Casey, 2000). According to Clough, (2002) this practice are valuable to researchers, since it provides them the opportunity to collect real data.

It could be mentioned that participatory research acts as a prerequisite of emancipatory research as it is a process whereby researchers and those who are 'the researched' – such as disabled people frequently are - are learning from one another. Oliver (1992) used the term 'emancipatory disability research' in order to enter a new approach of researching disability issues. According to Barnes (2003) the emancipatory research model has made a very important contribution to the disability research agenda. Oliver (1997) argued that participatory research challenges existing structures of power but that is all. It seeks to improve existing social and material relations of research production without ultimately eradicating them. According to Barnes (2003) emancipatory disability research goes further than this because it is about "empowerment of disabled people, through the transformation of the material and social relations of research production" (p.6). Even though this approach seemed to be advantageous, it has some problems as such the problem of accountability. Researchers must be accountable to disabled people and their

organizations (Barnes, 2003). According to the philosophy of emancipatory research it is not research methods themselves that are the problem, it is the uses to which they are put (Barnes, 2003). After some reflection, I decided that the emancipatory approach would be difficult to achieve in my research. While I had the chance through my work to be an active member of the everyday life of an educational system, I was not in a strong position to work in an emancipatory way with organizations of disabled people in Cyprus. I felt I was more able to work with the principles of ethnography, rather than the principles of emancipatory research.

Ethnography is an approach that involves, immersion and also investigation of a social world references (Goodley, 2004). Researchers who chose this type of research enter a given culture and draw a variety of methods in order to make sense of the different meanings (Goodley et al, 2004). As Vidich and Lyman (2000) say, ethnography is strongly connected with the try to explain, not only describe. Ethnographic research is sometimes described as to come across various data which look strange (Goodley et al, 2004). The researcher tries to capture the every day experience of people at first hand. Ethnography is about turning a critical eye onto practices, dynamics, and policies, within familiar cultures. Turning social contexts into research contexts raises more general considerations about the truth in research (Goodley at al, op cit).

Ethnographic research can involve the process of documenting changes from the position of the participant (Brewer, 2002; Willis, 2002; Foley, 2002 and Willis and Trondman, 2002). Typically the researcher documents information through interviews and



observation of the thoughts, feelings and actions of the research subjects. These documentations are then composed into a description of the process and product which interested colleagues can experience by word and imagination (Foley, 2002).

My project seemed to have features of an ethnographic research approach, since I was interested in the thoughts, feelings and actions of participants in the context of their daily lives. Apart from the feelings of the participants, I considered myself as a participant as well, because I was working in the specific educational system, which I wanted to study. I believe that the everyday experience and the feelings of those in the field are precious in understanding in depth special and inclusive education matters. I wanted my research to have a critical eye on the system in which I was working, and also to enable a glimpse in to the cultural synergies which are responsible for the application of the specific system.

### **3.7. Validity versus Reliability**

Two contentious terms that have often been used in educational research are the terms: *validity* and *reliability* (Wilson, 1999). Both terms are very hard and difficult to define and also to be understood. Validity refers to the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Wellington, 2000). According to Wellington (2000) any discussion of validity rests squarely on the foundation of how the characteristic being measured is defined. To a point we can try as researchers to establish validity; we can not be sure though in social sciences like education, that we have established validity in our research, particularly where we seek to *describe* rather than to *measure*.

In my research it was hard to establish validity although some steps could be taken in this direction. For example, I have tried through the pilot study I have made to check if my research tools were the right ones for the purpose I needed them. Perhaps the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias in research tools and practices as much as possible. Sources of bias are, for example, characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent or the content of the questions (Cohen and Manion, 2000, 1980). However, this piece of work in my mind, is not trying to convince the reader that it celebrates validity. I wish to argue that the strength of the research I present can be seen in its celebration of subjectivity, since this work is so personal, because – as I have described in earlier chapters - it is based strongly on my personal views, experiences and feelings about inclusion.

To address the issue of bias however, I have done some interviews with other colleagues, before I have started the specific research, in order to have an opportunity to reflect on the questions I was interested in. I chose semi-structured interviewing, because I wanted to be ready to ask any new questions which seemed to be important in any interview that I may not have thought to write as one of my questions. This on the other hand though was risky because I knew I may get too excited and ask so many questions. I tried though to solve this by choosing general questions and various sub-categories of questions before I started doing the research. Now I can say for sure that the pilot interviews were very helpful for me. I was able to decide the main issues I would have in my mind before I

started doing observations. I also did some preliminary observations in my free time in school in order to be as ready as possible for my research.

The part of my research that is the most “dangerous” in terms of the validity is the part involving the construction of stories I made of the disabled students. I knew from the beginning that it would be very tricky to claim any conventional ‘validity’ for these stories and that I needed to have a lot of courage to use such a technique in my work. On the other hand though I knew those students very well and I have such a close relationship with them and their families that I was sure that if they wanted their stories to be learned by others, I should find a way to tell them in order to inform the field and try to do our best for the future of it. When I have presented the stories of disabled students they are wholly stories constructed through my eyes – and so they are *composite* stories based on amalgamated impressions intertwining the young person’s story and mine too.

Without doubt, the term *reliability* is also contentious. Reliability is a judgment of the extent to which a test, a method or a tool gives consistent results across a range of settings, and if used by a range of researchers. According to Wellington (2000) linked to the idea of reliability, is the extent to which a piece of research can be copied or replicated in order to give the same results in a different context with different researchers. In this case, as with validity as well, researchers in such a personally determined enquiry as mine, are bound to be ‘unreliable’, since we cannot be relied upon to hold the ruler at exactly the same tension. As Armstrong and Moore (2004), stated when the discussed life story research:

“I have said elsewhere that my work is fundamentally antithetical to the possibility of objectivity in respect of this commitment”

cited in Goodley et al, 2004, p.106

In my research I have tried to have in my mind the importance of reliability from the first stages of designing of the research. Unfortunately after completing this research I am far from sure if other researchers carried out the same research they would produce the same results. I do feel though, that if a researcher is coming from the same country as I am and know the existing educational system good, then there is a big possibility to have the same impressions.

### **3.8. Research Strategy**

#### **3.8.1. Interviews**

Interviews were chosen as the main methodological tool to be used in this study. Armstrong and Barton (1999) mentioned that inclusive education is just a part of the term inclusive society, in which each one will enjoy full membership. As such, it involves asking questions and making demands that are disturbing because they challenge the familiar and the way in which our own societies are organized. In addition to interviews, participant observation was used in order to find out about whether primary teachers are trying to use inclusive techniques in their classes and to explore their attitudes towards disabled children and young people.

As Watts and Ebbutt put forward in their article (1989) interviewing is very much an accepted methodology within educational research. Moser and Kalton (1996) also argue that personal interviewing is one of the most appropriate methods of collecting data in

social research. According to Bechofer and Lindsay (2000), although most people seem to enjoy well conducted interviews on topics which interest them, response rates in research are falling. It is arguable that across the board social scientists invade people's privacy too often and demand too much of people's time (Bechofer and Lindsay, 2000). I must admit that I had this in my mind all the time when I was interviewing people, since I did not want to get into people's private life without them wanting this.

There are various types of interviews. Bechofer and Lindsay, (2000) mentioned four different types of interviews that I had in my mind before deciding which type is the best for my research plan and purpose to do.

- The focused interview - this technique can be used when the respondents know the specific situation and they have been involved.
- The non-directive or reflective interview - the interviewer does not ask questions, but they reflect the ideas back to the respondent.
- Group interviewing and the focus group - several respondents are interviewed together. Focus group technique involves a slightly structured interview around some particular focused topic.
- The use of multiple interviews - this is the reverse of group interviewing, since there is one respondent and two interviewers.

Cohen et al. (2000) prefer to group interviews into four kinds: the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview, and the focused interview. An interview is a conversation initiated by an interviewer for the specific purpose of

obtaining relevant information and focused by him/her in terms of content by the research objectives of the study (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987). As a distinctive research technique, the interview may serve three purposes. First it may be used as the principal means of gathering information, having direct bearing on the research objectives. As Tuckman (1988) argued by providing access 'to measure what is inside a person's head' it makes it possible to measure what a person knows, what a person likes and dislikes and finally what a person thinks (Cohen, and Manion, 1980).

According to Bell (2002), a focused or a structured interview highlights the fact that is controlled by the interviewer rather than by the respondent. It could be said to amount to little more than a face-to-face questionnaire (Parsons, 1984).

It was thought that interviews permitted a number of distinct advantages for my study. The interviewer during the interview is in a position to clarify the answers of the respondent. In addition the interviewer can encourage the participation and the involvement of the interviewee. Furthermore, the interviewer can offer the possibility to interviewees to modify their line of inquiry, following up responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that questionnaires cannot (Robson, 1993). Nevertheless the interview as a method of collecting data has disadvantages as well. Interviews are a time consuming method. In addition to that the data that the interviewer selects may be affected by the characteristics of the interviewer herself. Finally there may be an interviewer bias, where the interviewer probably unwillingly may influence the responses obtained (Papanastasiou, 1994). It is very interesting to have a look at what

Fetterman, (1989) refers to: the questions of the interview will depend upon the research setting and the reciprocal relationship the researcher has established with those in the setting. Eventually I decided for the needs of my research, to use semi-structured interview, since this would allow both the researcher and the interviewee to feel free to create an input in the discussions, making the interview process more and more inclusive.

It was decided to use a tape-recorder, during the interview. The tape-recorder recorded everything that the respondent said. Thus the interviewer then, was free to concentrate on the interview itself.

### **3.8.2. Observations**

Apart from the use of interviews, the use of observation was decided to help me to gather data from the everyday life of schools. Observation is a method that provides the researcher with lot of ethical issues. For example I knew from the beginning that my personality and attitudes would not help me in conducting research observation, since I simply cannot stand to see disabled children and young people to be neglected by a teacher. I knew though that I had to try and observe sensitively for this research and I decided to write all my feelings and impressions in my diary and try not to show them to the teachers or to anybody else during the observation periods. I could not imagine how helpful this diary would be for me in the beginning of the research. Now I know that it was my secret friend for this research, since it remembered for me lot of things that I may have forgotten and which were later important in understanding the issue of inclusion. Glaser (1995) recommends against recording or intently taking notes during observation.

He suggested that it is helpful to take key-word notes during the data collection and convert them to themes afterwards. This is what I did. I became quick in doing this, and this helped not to offend anyone when I was observing them.

Before I move forward to explain to the reader the way I used this method for the needs of this piece of work, it is important to mention the several types of observations (Gall et al, 1996). Mainly there are two different types of observation and several subtypes. In 'direct observation' people know that someone is watching them. There is a danger that they might react to the researcher, when you choose this kind of observation. This is not necessarily bad however. For example the contrived behavior may reveal aspects of social desirability, how they feel about sharing their feelings in front of others, or privacy in a relationship. Even the most contrived behavior is difficult to maintain over time. A long-term observational study will often catch a glimpse of the natural behavior (Gall et al, 1996). Another problem that may appear in this method is the generalization of the findings. The sample may not be representative of the population of the behaviors observed are not representative of the individual. From the ethical point of view however, people know that you are watching them and this can be very good in terms of ethics.

The other type of observation is 'unobtrusive observation' (Gall et al, 1996). This involves any method for studying behavior where individuals do not know that they are being observed. In this type there is not the concern that the observer may change the subject's behavior. Issues of ethics though need to be thought through with care if people do not know that they are observed for research purposes. Direct observation was the



method thought to best fitted to the needs of the present research as I was so much in the field.

### **3.9. Researcher presence**

The schools that were involved in observation were a primary school in Cyprus and a “special” school in Cyprus. For the purpose of respecting anonymity and the confidentiality of schools I decided not to mention the names of the schools and the names of everyone who has been interviewed or observed for the purpose of this research have been changed. More information about both schools will be mentioned later in this chapter.

During the collection of data at both schools that participated in this research, I had the chance to gain precious informal field experience that would help in the research. A premise of a feminist ethical stance is that the process and outcomes of field research are greatly affected by the relationships that develop between the field researcher and those in the setting (Sieber, 1982). In my case I was the field researcher and under this role I managed later on to support, encourage, advice and empathize with people who became involved. Observation helped me to start doing this. As Bailey (1996) mentioned, when we talk about observing we have to remember that we have to observe by using all the senses. I believe that the use of this specific method made me think otherwise since I was in a setting that I used to work at, but in a different role now as a researcher. I found out, by observing for example, that I was not the perfect or as good teacher as I thought I was. I had and I still have lot room for improvement.

There were several times either during observation or during interviews that teachers needed support or feedback from me. The first time I came across this, I was observing one teacher in the primary school. She came and asked me about my opinion of her work. I did not know exactly how to react, since I had a dilemma. From the one hand I wanted to answer to her and tell my opinion, from the other hand I knew that if I had answered then, probably her behavior may change during the other observations or during the interview. I decided then to say a very general comment, which was a positive comment, and tell her that after the completion of this work we would have the chance to meet again and talk about my thoughts and also her thoughts. I am not sure if she liked my answer, but I tried to be as more accurate to my observations as possible.

After completing all the observations and the interviews, I decided to have a look to my results and arrange meetings with all the persons that wanted to have a feedback from concerning their observation or interview. I was very anxious about doing this and also curious about their responses and feelings. I decided prior to the meetings that I would mention the advantages of their lessons more and, if appropriate, provide them with some practical advice from my point of view. I have to admit that I did that with three persons, with whom I had a very beautiful conversation which felt positive both for me and for them. They have asked me to inform them about my results again when I have completed this piece of work.

Before I started to observe both schools, I had to organize some practicalities, in order to prepare myself for this. I visited both schools and informed them about my research and my research plans. I also explained my interests for this study. The two administrators of the schools were very friendly. The primary school was a new school for me but the “special” school was a school that I had worked in the past for three years as a “special” teacher.

To begin with, during observations at the Primary School I had in my mind the collection of data on the ‘Worst Practices’ that Heward (2003) refer to. The nine notions are:

1. Do not teach toward any predetermined corpus of knowledge or curriculum objectives. With support and encouragement children and young people will naturally discover and learn what they need to know.
2. Let students find their own way, even if they are going to make mistakes
3. Replace drill and practice with interesting activities
4. Do not objectively measure students performance
5. Be patient. Do not expect do much
6. Slow the pace of instruction to accommodate low achievers
7. Make the children and young people feel good about themselves, even if that means letting them repeat their mistakes
8. Be sure to include instructional methods and materials from many different learning theories, models and approaches.
9. Be creative

(Heward, 2003)

Those notions helped me keep notes that would be useful for me in the future. I tried not to be structured with those notions, otherwise I could not freely observe. In the beginning, when I did my first observation I made a table with nine columns one for each notion and I tried to observe and write down everything I saw which could be placed in each notion. When I completed my first observation I found out that this was not helpful for me, on the one hand, since it made me be too structured. Thus I decided just to have in my mind those notions, which I have to say were very helpful to me and I made notes in my diary. When I went back home I found that those notions were helpful in order to help me think and write about the different observations, but they were not a panacea. I used a lot of other ideas and information that I have gained apart from those notions to write up my observations.

At the end of the observations I realized the richness of data that an observation provides to the researcher. When I was designing this research I had some thoughts about the value of observation as a method of data collection. During my research though, I found out that in my opinion every research in social science must use this method of data collection. This method provides the researcher with a lot of freedom to work and also it gives the chance to see more aspects of the researching theme. Observation though cannot be called an easy method of data collection, since it has serious dangers. The researcher must be very careful within the observed situation. All the emotions that the observer may feel during the observation must be well controlled in order not to be revealed to the participants and also not to upset proceedings or change the reality of the data. Finally the observation gives to the researcher the feeling of interaction. I thought in

the beginning that the interaction would only be between the teacher and me or me and the students of the class. I must confirm thought that I had a lot of interaction with myself, when I was thinking about various observed practices and techniques and their use. This maybe, gave one of the most useful and precious experiences I have gained from this work.

### **3.10. Triangulation**

Triangulation is:

“a method of finding out where something is by getting a fix on it from two or more places”

(Hornby, 1993, p.209).

Triangulation may also be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior. (Cohen and Manion, 2000). The use of multiple methods, or a ‘multi-method approach’ as it is sometimes called, contrasts with the ubiquitous but generally more vulnerable single-method approach that characterizes so much of research in the social sciences (Tuckman, 1988). Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than standpoint (Cohen and Manion, 2000).

Triangulation of data rests on the idea, that several observations of a datum are better than one. This idea is that while any observation is prone to error, taking multiple observations together will provide a more accurate observation. Triangulation is an indispensable tool in real world enquiry. Robson (1993) argued that triangulation is particularly valuable in the analysis of qualitative data, where trustworthiness of the data

is always a worry. It provides a means of testing one source of information against other sources: if two sources give the same messages, then to some extent, they cross-validate each other (Bechofer and Lindsay, 2000).

There are several types of triangulation (Wellington, 2000):

- Data triangulation
  - Time triangulation
  - Space triangulation
  - Person triangulation (the individual level, the interactive level, between groups, the collective level).
- Investigator triangulation
- Theory triangulation
- Methodological triangulation

For the purpose of this research triangulation had been used in bringing together results from observation and results from interviews. In my case I wanted to investigate the application of inclusion in Cyprus. I decided not to use only one method of collecting my data, since I would gain more rich and valuable data if I would use interviews *and* observations. The use of both those methods would provide me with the chance to explain in more detail the richness and complexity of the specific issue and bring two sources of insight.

During observation I had the chance to observe the attitude of teachers, towards inclusion. By observing a person on several different times, it is my belief that those persons can not hide their “real” attitudes. In the process of interview I had also the chance to ask teachers about their beliefs on inclusion. These two tasks gave me the chance to triangulate my results and have a broader outlook on their beliefs. Similarly, I observed the attitude that the students of the primary classes had and also explored these through interview. Putting together the observation and afterwards the interviews I had the chance to have a clearer view of their beliefs.

### **3.11. Participants**

The opinions of people from different perspective were needed for this research as outlined next.

#### **3.11.1 Participants from the Primary School**

The vast majority of participants for this research were members of two schools in Cyprus, teaching staff and administrators and also students. The first school was a Primary School and the second one was a “Special” School. At the Primary School two classes had been chosen in order to collect the needed data. The two teachers of those classes were interviewed and also I observed their classes six times. Some of the children and young people of those classes were interviewed as well. After listening to Lewis lecture at the University of Cyprus (May 2003), I decided that it would be very interesting and also very useful for this research if the voices of the children and young people could be listened and accessed as well. The importance of giving children and

young people a “voice”, as an integral part of the process of developing inclusion, is widely recognized and is encapsulated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **3.11. 2. Primary Head Teacher**

**Dimitris** graduated from the Pedagogy Institute in Cyprus. He has been a Head Teacher in this school for the last two years. He was a teacher for 24 years and he said that he loved teaching very much. In the specific Primary School he could not teach because of the various difficulties of the school. He had many other responsibilities than no other Head Teachers have in other primary schools. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture policy, Head Teachers can teach seven periods per week in their school. Other Head Teachers used to have some teaching hours in the school that they administer, but in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture excuses the Head Teacher from teaching hours as it excuses the Head Teacher of “special” School.

### **3.11.3. Primary classes**

The decision about the two classes that I had observed came from the Head Teacher of the school. He asked me to take those two classes as my sample, because *‘they are the most difficult classes to handle’*; the classes were facing various problems and they wanted some advice. I could not say no to the Head Teacher, since he was very helpful and kind to me. On the other hand my research could have some immediate practical implications and in the life of a specific school too - since I could do this I decided that it would be the best decision. The meeting with the two teachers of the primary school



classes which I observed later was not so friendly however, since one of the two teachers was very angry and negative to me. I informed them about the discussion I had with their Head Teacher and why their classes had been chosen. I explained my role in their class and I confirmed them of what I could do to respect anonymity and confidentiality. Also I informed them about my research plan and the aims of the specific research. There were a male and a female teacher. The female teacher seemed to be very helpful and understanding and she assured me of her help.

I did not face any difficulties when I had interviewed a sample of students in each class. All the students were friendly to me and very willing to answer all the questions I had for them. The reason for this attitude is probably because those interviews had been held after the six observations I had in their classes, so the students had the chance to know me and feel safe and comfortable with me.

Some parents of the children and young people who attended those classes were interviewed as well. I randomly chose ten families whose child was attended either class key stage 2 or class key stage 3. I did not have any problem in my co-operation with them, since they were very helpful and friendly. It seemed to me though that the issues I was interested in was not of such a huge interest for them.

### **3.11.2 Participants from the “Special” School**

Coming now to the participants from the “special” school, a school in which I had the chance to work for three years as a “special” teacher the environment was different, since

I felt very familiar with the already known environment. Two “special” teachers were interviewed, plus the Head Teacher and finally three parents of disabled child attending the “special” school. I gave various thoughts to the way I could represent the voices of the disabled students who attended this school. I decided after lot of thought that the best way to do this was by presenting the story of each student separately.

#### **3.11.2.1. “Special” School Head teacher**

**Paulos** was much older than the Head Teacher of the Primary School. He is going to retire in two years and was at the time of the study an Assistant Head Teacher. Paulos said that his academic background is as ‘an ordinary teacher’ but he worked in “special” education for many years. He had worked as a mainstream teacher for only four years and during all his other teaching experience he worked in the “special” school. Paulos admitted that he loved disabled children and young people.

#### **3.11.2.2. “Special” school classes**

**Antri** has been teaching for three years. She has graduated from the University of Cyprus and was working at the Primary School for two years. She said that while she was a student in the University of Cyprus, she had been chosen “special” education as one of her two major fields of expertise. Antri mentioned that in her opinion all the primary teachers should be trained to “special” education, especially in learning disabilities, because they definitely will find such cases in their classes during their work experience.

It was easy for me to contact parents, because all the parents knew me, since I had been a “special” teacher in the specific school. It was thought, that those interviews would have been easier for me to control, because I has already known the families. This task though, was found to be very difficult. It was too difficult to control the members of the families, because all of them felt free to talk to a person who knew their situation well. In some families, the fact that I was known, did not allow the families to accept being interviewed, even though I sent them a letter informing them that all the information that would be taken would be secured. I must admit that I had been waiting for such a reaction, because I knew the parents and anticipated their reaction in advance.

The three families that had been interviewed have a child with:

- ❖ Autism and Hyperactive syndrome
- ❖ Angelman Syndrome
- ❖ Autism and Epilepsy

I did not face any problem interviewing those families. The main difficulties that I faced had to do with the fact that the interview was very big in length and also that sometimes some parents became emotionally involved in their answers, because they knew that I worked in that school, so I could understand what they wanted to say.

### **3.11.3. “Special” Education Inspector**

Apart from the parents, teachers and students of both schools an interview with the “Special” Education Inspector in the area of the two schools had been held. The view of “Special” Education Inspector is very important in such a work, since this view

represents the view of the whole Ministry of Education and Culture. This is why the “Special” Education Inspector had been interviewed as well (there are three “Special” Education inspectors now in Cyprus). I did not face any problems with this interview. The “special” Education Inspector was friendly and he co-operated in order to gather the needed information. Even though I was afraid in the beginning about the co-operation and finally about the views this person would have, at the end of the interview as it can be seen in the next chapter, I had been surprised by his attention.

The position of the “Special” Education Inspector is an official position at the Ministry of Education and Culture. It requires at least 19 years of teaching experience and Post Graduate studies. It is an administrative job, since its description is related with the evaluations of “special” education teachers and also the evaluations of speech-therapists. The person who is going to apply for this position must worked in the field of “special” education whether or not they had studies in the specific area. Experience in the field is enough, in order for someone to apply for this position. This is why in the past the “Special” Education Inspector, sometimes was an educational psychologist.

According to the “Special” Education Law, there are three “Special” Education Inspectors in Cyprus. All of them have worked either or “special” teachers nor primary teachers in the field of “special” education. The two of them hold a Masters degree in “Special” Education apart from their Bachelor Degree in Education.

There is some local controversy about these appointments which I feel I must inform the reader about. Ever since there was “Special” Education in Cyprus, the inspector also happened to gain the position of the General Director of Primary Education in which “Special” Education belongs. The previous Director of Primary Education was a “Special” Education Inspector before and also the present Director of Primary Education was a “Special” Education Inspector. From this situation lot of problems have arisen. Many primary teachers believe that it is very unfair that a “Special” Education Inspector can gain the position of the Director of Primary Education, and possibly this is one of the reasons why primary teachers are feeling so terrified by “special” education teachers. The situation is complicated because people feel some of those working in the field of “special” education are “using” “special” education in order to have better careers. In my personal opinion I have to admit, that I agree with this view. What is sad is that those people are using on the one hand “special” education, and then they forget “special” education when they gained the position to which they aspire. I know that this is a rather strong argument, but it is the everyday reality which colleagues come across.

### **3.12 General information about the participating schools**

#### **3.12.1 Primary school**

The specific Primary School in my study is the oldest school in Cyprus with a great history. As the Head Teacher mentioned, this school used to be ‘the best primary school in Nicosia’ because of the place where it is situated. The school is in the centre of old Nicosia and before the 1974 War, this area was one of the best and rich areas in Nicosia.

After the 1974 War the school is next to the Green Line, the line that separates Nicosia into two pieces, the Greek-Cypriot part and the Turkish-Cypriot part. The area now is full of poor houses in which are staying Greek-Cypriot families with low socio-economic status and also families from Russia, Romania and Ponto because the area is cheap for renting a house. Thus the student population of the school consists of Greek-Cypriots and students from Eastern Europe. The vast majority of students are students from Eastern Europe.

The school is in the same building as the Secondary School and this creates lot of problems for both schools, even though the breaks are not in the same time. The level of noise though in the schools is too high. Apart from this problem, the fact that the primary school is in the same building as the secondary school makes the communication between the two schools easier. So information concerning disabled students can easily be transferred from one school to another and also information concerning the family of the children and young people can also be shared, in order to help the students.

The Primary School consists of six classes, one first year, one-second year, one-third year, one-fourth year, one fifth year and one sixth year class. There are six primary teachers, one for each class and two more teachers who help students with language problems individually or in groups. Also there is a Russian teacher, who teaches Greek to the students if they have lot of difficulties. There is a music teacher, a physical education teacher, a “special” education teacher who came to the school twice per week for four

periods per time. All of the teaching staff has at least a Bachelor degree and two of the teachers have a Masters degree as well.

Two different classrooms at the Primary School were observed. As already mentioned, the classes had been chosen by the Head Teacher as the most difficult classes in terms of the nonexistent homogeneity and the large amount of non Cypriot students. The first class was a second year class and the second one was a third year class. Both classes were observed six times each by the researcher.

All the information that had been mentioned here is based on an interview that I had with the Head Teacher of the school.

### **3.12.2 “Special” School**

The student population of the “Special” school consisted of 45 disabled children and young people divided into nine groups according to the difficulty of each child. The staff is the following:

- ❖ Head teacher
- ❖ Assistant Head Teacher
- ❖ Four “special” needs teachers
- ❖ Two Psychologists who worked as “special” needs teachers
- ❖ Two kindergarten Teachers
- ❖ The Psychologist of the School
- ❖ Two Physiotherapist

- ❖ One Speech-therapist
- ❖ One Music Teacher
- ❖ One Physical Education Teacher
- ❖ One Music Therapist
- ❖ One Occupational Therapist
- ❖ Six Para educators
- ❖ Three cleaners
- ❖ Two drivers

The majority of the teaching staff have a Bachelor Degree in Education or in “Special” Education, the music teacher and the music therapy teacher have a Masters degree as well. Almost all of the staff is being employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, except from the Para educators, who are being employed by the Parents Association and one of the two physiotherapists.

The disabled children and young people that attend the “special” School cannot attend mainstream setting according to the Provincial Committee and the only place in the specific town that the needs of those children and young people can be served is this one. According to the Head Teacher in the past, before this new law, the school used to have disabled students with more abilities. Nowadays the disabled children and young people who are attending this school are said to have fewer abilities.



The vast majority of disabled children and young people in this school have multiple impairments. There are students with autism and mental retardation, Down syndrome, with hyperactive syndrome and autistic characteristics, some syndromes like Williams Syndrome, Asperger Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome. The ages of children and young people according to the Head Teacher vary. The youngest child is seven years old and the oldest is almost twenty-one years old. The vast majority of disabled children and young people though are between 14-18 years old.

This school is the oldest “special” school in Cyprus. According to the Information Leaflet of the school, the school is a “special” school for “mentally handicapped children and young people” (exactly copied from the 1987 Information Leaflet. There is not a more recent leaflet) aged 5-18 (it is with the passing of the new law that disabled children and young people can attend a “special” school until they become 21 years old).

The school was established in 1965 on the initiative of the Pan Cyprian Society for Mental Health in co-operation with the Greek Ladies Association “ENOSIS” and the Ministry of Education and Culture. It originally occupied a building, which was held by the Archie-episcopacy. After the Turkish invasion in 1974, it was moved into a house which again was offered by the Greek Ladies Association “ENOSIS”. Since January 1983 it functions in a new building that was built with donations of the Greek Cypriots living in Austria and New Zealand.

The main aims of the school are as follows, according to the Information Leaflet (1987):

1. To offer basic education to its students and to help them develop their mental potential to the highest possible degree.
2. To help the children and young people become self-reliant
3. To promote the socialization of its students
4. To help the children and young people acquire useful vocational skills.

It is obvious from what had been mentioned above that the notions of inclusion had no place in the existing Information Leaflet of the school. This is an indication of the way neither the Ministry of Education and Culture, nor the administration of the School view the issue of inclusion as a priority.

### **3.13 Research procedures**

Each researcher devotes a considerable amount of time in the necessary practicalities, which will give them, the access to samples and make the application of research more successful. I did not encounter too many difficulties, thanks to the willingness of those concerned in both the “special” School and in the Primary School. Also most of the families that had been interviewed were very friendly to me.

As a first step, a letter was sent to the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus. In this letter I explained the aims and the reasons for conducting this research project and asked for permission to carry it out, in the “Special” School and also in the chosen Primary School. Through this letter I asked to gain access to the school for two years. After two months permission had been granted. When I received the letter of consent

from the Ministry of Education and Culture, I wrote another letter to the Head Teachers of those Schools informing them what I would like to do and when my research plans would take place.

I went to both schools in order to outline the purpose of my study and the reason why I had chosen the two specific schools. Both of the Head Teachers agreed with the way of my thinking, that in order to evaluate inclusion policy and practice in Cyprus it is necessary to investigate schools like the two that had been chosen. They expressed their willingness to help. They both were very interested about the study, because as they mentioned, they hoped this study may provide the Ministry of Education and Culture with some ideas in order to solve the existing problems and difficulties. The attitude that both of them had made me feel that my job would not only have a personal result (the completion of a PhD) but also a result in a practical level of achievement, since this work may be the beginning of future developments in the field of inclusive education in my country.

Also a letter was sent to the selected families in both schools informing them about the aims of the research and asking them if they were willing to participate. With this letter, I sought permission to interview them, about their beliefs towards inclusion policy and also about the way they view their children and young people in the educational system. Acceptance letters were returned to the Head Teachers of the School and I collected them and started organizing the interviews.

### **3.14 Research Tools**

A chance for the reader to go through the various questions that were used during the interviews is provided through Appendices as follows:

The interview schedule used for the Head Teachers of both schools can be found in **Appendix 1.**

The interview schedule used for the class teachers of both schools can be found in **Appendix 2.**

The interview schedule used for children and young people can be found in **Appendix 3.**

The interview schedule used for parents at the primary school can be found in **Appendix 4.**

The interview schedule used for parents at the “special” school can be found in **Appendix 5.**

### **3.15. Limitations**

According to Barton (1996, p.152) “the researcher must have the humility to identify the limitations of the research”. It is my belief that especially in our field of interest, it is very difficult to organize a research without any mistake, because our research is strongly connected with people. Reactions of people are unique and no-one, no matter how many research qualifications or how much experience they gained, is in a position to make an unfaultable research. Moore, in the book “Researching Life Stories (2004), mentioned that there is a major question for her concerning the way in which we enhance

professional and academic interventions in the disabled people's lives, through the telling of life stories, like this.

In my case, I only studied two schools. Unfortunately I could not have more case studies of schools, since the amount of work was already huge. It is my belief though that those schools, may represent lot other schools, since the notions and beliefs in a small society, like the Cypriot society, do not "allow" a great deal of variation. I will mention some examples from my experience as "Special" Education Counselor in the area of Nicosia in order to make clearer to the reader what I exactly mean. During my visits to several schools I had the chance to talk either with Head Teachers, or with teachers or "special" teachers and also with parents of disabled children and young people. Those conversations identified concerns not so different from the results of the research I later conducted. For example, I met teachers who believe in inclusion and the benefits of its application, but also teachers who do not believe in inclusion, since in their mind this is a chimera. The attitudes of a number of teachers I have met over the years in Cyprus do not vary from the attitude of the teachers I observed for the research. Also the attitudes of Head Teachers did not vary greatly either, since again there is a group of them who believe in inclusion and another group who do not believe in inclusion, who believe that the issue of inclusion is only about disabled students - who they view as "special" beneficiaries of education.

My data has been collected from only one region of Cyprus, for practical reasons of convenience. It would be very interesting to investigate the beliefs and the notions of

teachers all over Cyprus. Future plans for research might be organized in order to examine this. What may be useful is to organize the same research in other areas of Cyprus, in order to examine if there is a different notion of inclusion in those areas. Especially areas that are far from the capital must be researched, since sometimes communities in those areas sees inclusion in a more “philanthropic” way. In some of those areas, according to the comments of some teachers who used to work in those areas, the notion of empathy and pity is so big, that you can not talk about inclusion: the word seemed to have an unknown meaning.

The main purpose of my study, however, was to gain in-depth insight into the actuality of the issue of inclusion in the focal schools and not to gain more general results. I believe that it will be more interesting to repeat the research in some years in order to evaluate inclusion and see progress in the field. Before doing this, I believe it is essential though to re-organize the existing policy, in order to try to make inclusion a matter not only for disabled children and young people, but for the whole school community.

My role as “Special” Education Counselor and also as a “special” teacher in the educational system that I am investigating helped me to name my self as an “insider”. In some cases being an insider makes your research easier mostly in sense of accessibility to the research participants. On the other hand though, being an insider may cause you several difficulties in your research. The field of “special” education in Cyprus, as it happens all over the world, is an area which is full of feelings and emotions. In my case I have tried hard not to let my emotions appear (like the anger I felt with the teacher at the

primary school). Yet all these emotions in a way provide this work with a different atmosphere *because* I bring insider perspectives. I wanted this work to have a strong connection with the everyday reality of a school life about inclusion and my role as an insider helped me to manage this.

Another serious problem encountered that has to be mentioned is that because of the small Cypriot society, and in order to make sure that my research will not offend anyone who took part, I had to change the names of the participants. I have done this in order to assure confidentiality for the participants. My feelings though are so strong in some cases that I really wanted *not* to change the names and to publish this work in order to *make* some people think otherwise. Under the terms of my ethical consideration as a researcher I did not try to do anything like this but the issue raised many dilemmas for me.

Also what I consider as an important gap in my work is the absence of the various organizations of disabled people. I did not have the capacity to take into consideration what the various organizations of disabled people believe about inclusion in Cyprus, not least because in Cyprus there is not one major organization for disabled people but various impairment specific organizations. This is a limitation of this work.

There are various things I might have done differently looking back. For example, more time spent on observation at the primary school would have benefited this research. In further time I would have been able to become a stronger participant observer using the observation time in order to help and provide with some ideas to the teachers.

Also a good idea could be to interview parents as a group, bringing together the parents of disabled students and the parents of non-disabled primary students. Even though I did think about doing this I was afraid that I could not control easily the conversation with so many emotionally involved parents and I was not sure if I manage the role of 'researcher' effectively as parents knew me as a "Special" Education Counselor.

Finally what I had to admit is that this research was only about how "Special" education is been provided in the primary sector of education. I did not collect data about the provision of "Special" Education in the secondary education. Even though this is a very serious issue that had to be researched soon, since we must have a good connecting path between primary education and secondary education, I could not investigate secondary provision as well, since the amount of work that I would have to cope with would have been huge. But I know the thought that "special" education is the responsibility of primary education has to be ended in Cyprus.

### **3.16 Ethical Issues**

A very important issue in such a piece of work issue, which is related to human beings, is the ethical issues. Codes of ethics are very general and they do not even pretend to provide guidance concerning situations or definitive answers to specific questions (Arksey and Knight, 1999). The key, according to ethical issues is as Crow (2000) stated, is to ask how we would want others to treat us and as a result to make sure we treat others as we would wish to be treated. The key ethical consideration is how the specific research affects the people whose experiences, perceptions, behaviors and attitudes are researched



(Goodson and Sikes, 2001). If a researcher tries to implement this key question, then hopefully the research can be called an ethical piece of research.

### **3.16.1 Feelings and ethics**

In this research I felt that I had to be very serious about the issue of ethics, since Cyprus is such a small place and people who are disabled are likely to be known. I needed then, to try to establish the trust of the involved parties in this research and also protect their interests. When I was thinking about this it was very difficult for me, because I was intending that this piece of work would serve to create a shock first to the Cypriot society, and then lead to changes in the existing situation in “Special” Education. But I knew that I had to take measures to ensure that the involved persons would feel secure of saying their “real” opinions and so I decided to control all the anger I felt and to respect the confidentiality of everyone who contributed in this research. This is why pseudonyms have been used in all cases. I have to admit that this was really hard for a person like me, who prefers to say always the truth without any restrictions.

The biggest challenge I came across was with one of the two teachers that I observed. He was the teacher of the Key Stage 2 class. During the observation in his class I remember that I became so nervous that I sometimes badly wanted to stand up and tell him to leave the class. I knew that I did not have any right as a good ethical researcher to do such a thing. Unfortunately though, his behavior to disabled students and his neglect of anyone who was not named and measured as a ‘good’ student made me furious. I tried hard not to say anything negative to him and also not to say anything to his Head Teacher and his

Inspector, since I knew him very well. I found my self becoming so nervous, and I am not such a nervous person. My researcher identity was mixed up with my colleague identity, since apart from a researcher I was a colleague to him as well, and I felt confused and angry. I could not do anything to change him and unfortunately teachers like this one will continue working in our schools. His behavior was not only a matter of lack of inclusive policy in his class; for me it was a matter of absence of human rights in the class.

Another example that makes me feel strange was the attitude of my colleagues when I went to the “special” school, a school that as I have mentioned above, I had worked in the past. In the beginning I did not notice that they viewed me in a different perspective. I thought that they were as friendly as in the past. Then I found my new role as a researcher made them feel different for me. I noticed that in the interviews that they were trying to say the truth to a point, but they seemed afraid. They were very careful of making no ‘mistake’ in the interviews. They did not let themselves freely express their views, since they knew that they could not lie to me, since I worked with them in the past and I knew how they were working. This all made me think a lot about whether a researcher must be known in the research environment of their research, before they start the research. I do believe that in my case I was lucky, because I had the chance to know the hidden beliefs and ideas, behind what respondents had said to me in the interview. If I was not a staff member of this school, I am sure that I could not understand and finally I could not so fully analyze this very complex issue of inclusion. So I decided for a researcher it is very important to know the field and, if it is possible, to work in the specific setting before they start the research. Otherwise the researcher will view the issue

as an outsider and I believe that in fields like “special” education it is necessary in lot of cases to be a full member of a system before you started investigating it.

In order to have confidentiality I changed all the names of the schools, colleagues, and students disabled and non-disabled. Also small characteristics that may reveal the identity of the persons were changed, in order to guard confidentiality. I knew that the best way to carry out ethical research was to build a very good channel of communication, between the involved persons and me as a researcher. Thus I informed all the involved people about the procedures of the research. This is why I sent a letter to all interested parties asking them to sign it, if they agreed to take part in this research. This letter had to be signed not only from the parents of the children and young people, but also from the children and young people by themselves. In order to be sure that each child would understand exactly what I said in this letter I ask for each teacher to provide me with five minutes in order to explain in detail what that letter was about. The reason for doing this is because I wanted to show to all involved parties that their opinion was very important and valuable. I wanted to turn them from passive objects to active participants in the project (Alderson, 1995).

My thoughts when I was writing on this subject had to do with the fact that this work is strongly connected to feelings and emotions. I kept thinking of something I heard several times when I was an undergraduate student, that you need to ‘leave away all emotions and feelings when you are doing research’. My research though was full of those ingredients. I did not know if this was appropriate in the scientific world of PhDs. I kept

thinking and thinking until one day I came to the conclusion that if I did not mention all those feelings, thoughts and worries, then this work could not be fulfilled. My subject has to do with people and their behavior, attitudes, feelings and thoughts. My work has to have a strong connection with these ingredients.

### **3.16.2 Ethics of telling stories**

Concerning the stories of the three disabled children and young people that attend the “special” school, I decided to write their stories and express their views through my own words. I have lived with those students for some years, since all of them were my students. I claim to know them very well, and I believe that it is very important for such a research, to take into consideration the feelings and beliefs of those students. I have tried not to mix my feelings with the stories, but I am not sure if I finally manage to do this. I had a diary full of facts and incidents that happened when I was their teacher. When I started planning this work I did not even think that those sources would be valuable for me. Now, I believe that probably they have helped build the strongest part of this work, since those stories never had the chance to be heard in the past. I knew though that from an ethical point of view such experiment in telling stories may seem to be inappropriate. My feelings though, were too strong and I felt I knew that my students would say, if they have the ability to talk in the same way we are talking, that they would provide me with the chance to tell their stories in order to reveal the real face of their experience. A similar difficulty had been described by other researchers as well. Goodley et al (2004) for example mentioned that in their work, often:

“the people whom the story is about had minimal input into its production and no input into its writing” (p. 94).

I tried to have this in consideration and thus I decided to inform all the parents of those children and young people and to have them sign an acceptance letter, with which they provided me with the right to tell the stories of their disabled children and young people in my work. All the parents said to me that their children and young people would love this, because these stories will come from a person who really loves and who has helped their children and young people. It was very important for them that someone would listen to the voices of their children and young people finally. Before I wrote the stories in English I have written them in Greek and I asked the parents of disabled students to have a look and tell me their opinions. All of them said they were satisfied with the result.

### **3.16.3 Ethical enquiries**

Another ethical dilemma that must be considered arises because during interviews I tried to push the interviewees as much as I could. I wanted them to tell me the truth and did not want this research to have fake results. I wanted the findings to have a strong relation to the everyday life of schools. I sometimes “pushed” interviewees to tell me the exact truth without any fear. I do not know if that was acceptable. What I did has raised many questions. I was though very careful, because I did not want them to answer the questions in the way they thought I believed was the truth. If the response was weak I tried to ask the same questions, in a different way, but when I was sure that the interviewee actually did not want to answer the question I decided to leave the question. It was too important for me not to make the interviewee feel stressed and anxious during the interview.

I will give a specific example in order to be as clear as possible. During the interview of the Head Teacher of the “special” school I asked him about his opinion about the new law. He answered me in the beginning that this law is not applicable for “special” schools. He did not mention anything else. That answer was not enough for me. I wanted to have a more descriptive and analytic answer. So what I did was I tried to ask him again the same questions, asking for specific examples of what he meant when he said that this law was not applicable to “special” schools and why he used the term “special” schools. The answer that came after this was rich and provided me with a lot of knowledge.

The ethical issue that constantly came into my mind when I was doing this piece of work was that I knew all my participants in this research very well. I tried to minimize my personal feelings and inputs as much as I could at the beginning of this work. As it went on though I decided that it is very important for the reader to have all the information, including my personal feelings, in order to understand the meaning of the discussion. Plummer (1983, 2000) said that researchers need to know their informants very well, from the inside. He believed that the researchers need to work emotionally and empathically with the people whose stories we are helping to present. I believe that this was my main thought when I was doing this research.

### **3.15 Concluding remarks**

This chapter comes to an end. It provided to the reader lot of information concerning the research strategy and procedures that had been used and the participants that have taken part to this research. Also the limitations of this work have been mentioned in this chapter

as well. The trust and the feelings of the participants have been taken into consideration in the subsections on ethics.

The following chapter will present the data that had been gathered for the needs of this research. The data will be presented in a story form. The stories will be enriched from the exact saying of the participants. A very interesting chapter is coming next ....

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS



#### **4.1. Introduction**

This is the heart of this work, in my mind. In this chapter inclusive education will be explored through the eyes of the administrators, the policy makers, the professionals, the parents and the disabled and not disabled students. Grounded Theory was chosen as the analytic tool for the purpose of this work (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Since its introduction in the 1960s, Grounded Theory has been progressively developed in a way that is consistent with its original formulation, such that it is currently the most comprehensive qualitative research analysis method available. Its purpose is to systematically guide the generation of hypotheses and finally come up with a theory from data. This method is designed to serve as a flexible guide for researchers in their course to reflect on the data, to generate effective theory that fits the reality of the situation it originated from. Grounded Theory provides an analytic qualitative approach explicitly concerned with seeking out theoretical explanations (Goodley et al, 2004).

What most differentiates Grounded Theory from much other research is that is explicitly emergent. It does not test a hypothesis. It sets out to find what theory accounts for the research situation as it is. In this respect it is like action research: the aim is to understand the research situation. The aim according to Glaser (1995) is to discover the theory implicit in the data. Grounded Theory has is responsive to the situation in which the research is done. There is a continuing search for evidence which disconfirms the emerging theory. It is driven by the data in such a way that the final shape of the theory is likely to provide a good fit to the situation (Glaser, 1995).

“Grounded theory gives an analytic qualitative approach explicitly concerned with seeking our theoretical explanations for what is going on in any given research situation, and is sufficiently adaptable to be fitted to projects in which both the research methodology and the process of analysis are developing in unpredictable ways”

(Goodley et al, 2004, p. 119)

In this chapter, each interview will be presented and lots of actual sayings of the interviewee have been quoted in order to present real data and non fictional data. At the end of each interview a summary of the key findings provides the reader with the key issues of the interview.

Also in order to present the voice of the disabled students and young persons, I have decided to write a story for each disabled student who attends the “special” school. All my feelings, worries and thoughts will be presented through these stories in order to share with the reader all that I have experienced as a researcher and as a practitioner as well. Being in that dual role I had the chance to see the difficulties that the researcher *and* the practitioner feels.

I believe that the richness of data will provide a valid and reliable picture of how the education of disabled children is in Cyprus today.

Handling such qualitative data is not an easy task to be making. After collecting the data I had to try and write down the various stories. When I was writing the stories the diary that I kept while I was collecting the data was a precious and valuable partner to me. Having in mind the data and the notes of my diary I wrote the stories. Stories though

would not be complete if I had left my feelings and worries apart. Thus I decided to write all my feelings and worries in to those stories. I have tried also to put as many quotes in as possible, since it seemed to me that the views of the participants should be heard as much as possible.

## **4.2.Exploring inclusive education with the “Special” Education Inspector (representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture)**

### **4.2.1 The Perspective of Antreas**

It was very difficult to organize this interview, since the “Special” Education Inspector had a very busy schedule. The interview took place in the “Special” Education Inspector office in the Ministry of Education and Culture in Nicosia. The meeting took place in a pleasant environment and atmosphere since I knew the “Special” Education Inspector personally, from his work as a “special” education teacher. This interview was extremely interesting to me, since it could reveal so much about the everyday practice of inclusion from the eyes of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In order to make this story easier for the reader, I have decided to use a pseudonym for the “Special” Education Inspector, thus I will use the name “Antreas”, which is a common name in Cyprus.

We started our discussion by exploring the reasons why he had chosen to apply for the specific position in the field of “special” education. Antreas admitted that:

*“I loved the field of “special” education very much and I believed that perhaps is the only part of education in general, that needs urgent help”.*

He believed that through this position:

*“I will be in a key position to change some things in the field of “special” education”.*

He admitted also that:

*“my experience in the field, makes me think realistically - in a way that I perceive the academics who work in the field of “special” education cannot. We know the everyday needs of the children and young people through the experience at schools and we have noticed that there is a big gap between ideology and practice”.*

I was very interested about these statements that he made. I felt reassured to find that my own thoughts were the thoughts of someone else as well. The reason why this was so important to me is because the loneliness that you might meet in this work is sometimes so big, and this is why it is so nice when you find finally someone who believes the same as you do.

I asked about his studies and his work experience. Antreas answered that:

*“I gained a bachelor degree in education and I worked as a primary teacher for some years”.*

After that:

*“I have worked in the School for the Deaf and I found that this placement would best suit me, since I was interested in new things”.*

Before he went to the School for the Deaf:

*“I had an opinion that most of those children and young people would have mental retardation as well, apart from their hearing problems. This is not something strange for Cyprus, some years ago, because the majority of people used to believe that all disabled children and young people are children and young people with mental retardation”.*

The School for the Deaf was, at the time when the Inspector worked there, a place where the teacher was free to do anything that interested the children and young people and

there was no requirement to follow a curriculum. Antreas soon discovered that the vast majority of pupils did not have learning difficulties and that their abilities were greater than assumed, if a teacher worked to find the proper ways to reveal them. His major concern was not to help those children and young people read and write in the beginning. He wanted to help the students increasing their self-esteem, apart from their academic performance. This was important, because he said, if a student has low self esteem then they cannot be improved academically.

His experience at the School for the Deaf was precious to him, he admitted. He gained lot of valued experience. He came across various problems. He wanted to make lot of changes in the way the educational system worked, but he could not, since he was only a teacher. He decided though to start making the change from his class. The chance to make a bigger change came after he gained the position of “Special” Education Inspector. When he took up this position, he believed that he would be able to make a real difference to the existing educational policy and practice. Unfortunately, Antreas said that, changes could not become a reality in such simple terms. In order to change the existing way of thinking he came to realize:

*‘you have to fight a lot and in different levels, in the political and in social level as well’.*

Antreas felt that “special” education required immediate help in order to be improved, and for changes required to become reality. The possible explanation for this is because “special” education is strongly connected with the society. He said:

*“In order to change “special” education settings, we need to change the way society views “special” education. “Special” education is not realized through*

*empathy and pity. "Special" education is a fact which must be understood ... Better days will come for "special" education, since the first "special" education law is a reality. Even though there were lots of misunderstandings and mistakes in the existing law, the law can act as the base for change. During the last years, there is much that has been done in the field of "special" education. More "special" teachers have been employed, inclusion started to be a reality, "special" units started working. All those developments are trying to implement inclusion".*

I asked Antreas for his definition of inclusion and also to evaluate the way inclusion is being applied to Cyprus nowadays. Inclusion according to his view:

*"is a philosophical path of life and it does not have to do only with the application of inclusion in schools. Inclusion is about feeling equal with the person who is sitting next to you, no matter how many entitlements this person has. Inclusion has to do with democracy and human rights. In the case of education, inclusion must be the first goal to be achieved in schools. We need students to accept their disabled classmate, in order for the society later to accept them. Each student is different and the Ministry of Education and Culture must try to offer to each student the chance to be educated in the best place, according to his needs".*

Antreas does not believe that every student can be included in the present system of "special" education in Cyprus. The Ministry of Education and Culture, had tried to apply inclusion through a new type of class, the "special" units, in some primary schools and through the full inclusion of disabled children and young people in mainstream classroom. He said :

*"special" schools still exists in the educational system of Cyprus for the children and young people who face lots of difficulties".*

What the "Special" Education Inspector mentioned here is a widespread belief in Cyprus.

We cannot talk about inclusion however, if we still have "special" schools in our educational system as his comments show:

*“It would be the goal to include those disabled children and young people as well in the primary school, but unfortunately now with the existing practice this cannot be done”.*

Even though the Antreas knows contemporary literature is talking about the dream of inclusion and all the benefits that a disabled child will have from inclusion, Antreas stated that:

*“we can not include all the disabled students in the primary school”.*

The reason for this he said is that Cyprus is not ready for such a great social change. I asked him why did he has such a view and he said to me that:

*“we have tried in the past to include children and young people with severe disabilities to mainstream schools and the responses of the Parents Association, the Teachers Association and also the attitude of the parents of the disabled children and young people were so negative. It would be better to apply inclusion wherever we can now, and after that we have to evaluate inclusion and ask ourselves if inclusion has succeeded. The development of inclusion is not a matter of two months work”.*

There are serious problem with the application of inclusion in the primary schools in his view. Antreas said that:

*“for example in a “special” unit, which was situated in the primary school, there are so many disabled children and young people (between five to seven disabled children and young people in each unit). The needs of those disabled students are trying to be taken into consideration from the “special” teacher of the unit and from the speech therapist who is usually coming to school twice per week. Also there is no homogeneity in those units, for example the needs of each child vary and sometimes this creates a big problem to the way the unit is working. The “special” teacher that she (I am using she, since each “special” teacher is female) is responsible for the inclusion of the children and young people and for the implementation of their IEP”.*

Talking about the way that “special” units works he added that:

*“A common problem concerns the application of inclusion with the “special” unit students. Sometimes the Para educator of the “special” unit goes with the disabled child in their mainstream class and the “special” teacher cannot be there in order to evaluate the inclusion and find more effective ways and solutions for the better application of inclusion. Even though this may be done during some meetings with the mainstream teachers, in the practicum level this cause serious problem, because sometimes mainstream teachers, need the everyday support of the “special” teacher”.*

A very important input that Antreas made is that:

*“These difficulties appeared after the application of the new “special” education law, since the law allows to each child to attend their neighborhood school. Sometimes the Ministry of Education and Culture cannot create a new “special” education unit for the child and this is the reason why there are such a big number of students in the “special” units.*

According to Antreas, difficulties for the parents of the disabled children and young people must be recognized:

*“On the other hand, since there is no “special” unit in each school that means that the disabled child can not attend his/her neighborhood school. The new law provided to the parents a lot of rights for their disabled child. The information that a disabled child’s parent can provide to the Ministry is valuable, but unfortunately the parent is not the expert in order to decide where is the best place for their child to attend. Sometimes we have to deal with parents who cannot understand easily the needs of their disabled child. Most of the parents in Cyprus cannot accept easily that they have a disabled child, because the society stigmatizes them. This is the reason why they prefer their child to attend a “special” unit, which is situated in a primary school, and they would rather not attend a “special” school”.*

Antreas declared that this is something that has to be change in the nearest future. Parents of disabled children and young people do not have any coordinated support:

*“The Social Welfare Department faces several problems and so there is not a proper co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Social Welfare Department”*

One idea that Antreas came up with is that:



*“the psychologists who are employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and who are working in “special” schools could provide this emotional help to the parents of disabled children and young people. Until today the psychologists of the “special” schools used to work only with disabled children and young people, and they did not have the time to offer support to those parents. Maybe in the beginning this role change of the psychologists who work in “special” schools will be the solution of the problem”.*

Antreas also commented that:

*“Special” units are not yet well equipped, because of the lack of financial support on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture”.*

He added:

*“Another very serious problem is the administration of the primary schools and the teachers, who sometimes are negative about inclusion”.*

He had tried to accelerate change:

*“Through various seminars I have personally tried to talk to them about the advantages of inclusion, but I did not manage to do so well. Primary teachers cannot easily support the disabled students who have been included in their class, since they may have 30 or 32 children and young people in their class. They do not have the time and the knowledge to help disabled students. They have a very strictly determined and a huge curriculum, which they have to complete by the end of each school year. The presence of a disabled child in their class may cause them lot of problems, in terms of the disabled child’s behavior. This is a result of the non existing curriculum as well”.*

Antreas believed that:

*“The administration of the school sometimes is very negative in order to create a “special” unit in their school ... Sometimes even the Parents Association is very negative, because they say they do not want their children and young people to be in the same playground or even in the same class with those children and young people”.*

Antreas mentioned a specific incidence of a Parents Association of a school which is situated in the centre of Nicosia and which historically is one of the best schools in Cyprus academically:

*“The Parent Association of this school sent a letter to the Ministry of Education and Culture, informing it that they demand (they used this term according to Antreas) that a disabled child, who has been diagnosed as having emotional difficulties, must leave their school, since their school has a good reputation”.*

According to Antreas:

*“behaviors like this are not acceptable anymore ... but this behavior must be encouraged from the administration of the school, otherwise this letter could not be sent so easily to the Ministry of Education and Culture”.*

According to Antreas other problems that “special” education is facing in Cyprus, concern the Educational Psychology Service. According to the new “special” education law, each disabled child needs to be evaluated from the Educational Psychology Service. Those evaluations though, need a lot of time in order to be completed, but the number of educational psychologists that work to this department in the Ministry of Education and Culture is too small. Antreas admitted that each educational psychologist is responsible for 75 schools:

*“It is impossible for those professionals to deal adequately with such a big amount of work. The biggest problem though appears when a disabled child needs immediate help and the “special” teacher and the parents of the disabled child ask some explanations and some guidelines in order to work with the child. More educational psychologists must be employed immediately in order to help the situation change”.*

A relevant issue is the problem with the evaluation of the disabled students in terms of the medical evaluations. According to Antreas:

*“medical evaluations are useful in cases where the child is taking medicine who may have various consequences in their educational or emotional behavior at school or at home. Unfortunately in Cyprus there are not enough qualified personnel for this”.*

He mentioned the example of the General Hospital of Nicosia where there is only one neurologist who has expertise in the child neurology:

*“This person is responsible for all the disabled children and young people not only in the area of Nicosia, but for all the cases in Cyprus”.*

Unfortunately the “special” teachers are facing lot of problems and the major one at present is the isolation that the teaching staff in “special” education is facing. The “special” educator and the speech therapists are alone in a school environment, sometimes viewed negatively, and they need to take care of the disabled children and young people, to organize their work with the Para educators, to make the school environment accepted for those children and young people, to organize the inclusion program of the disabled students etc. Andreas said:

*“I am trying with the help and support of the Connecting Officials and the “special” schools to support all the disabled children and young people, their parents and the teaching staff but unfortunately I can not manage to do much, because of the limited time we have ... The time is limited and my duties are so much. This is why the Ministry of Education and Culture decided to create a new position in the field of “Special” Education, the “Counselor of “Special” Education. This person is responsible to visit all the places where “special” teachers and speech therapists work and help them to solve the difficulties they may face. Also this person is responsible to organize seminars in order to present to the “special” education teachers/speech therapists, new methods and techniques in the field of “special” education”. This new position though is only for two days per week. The Counselor of “Special” Education is responsible for approximately about 167 schools in the area of Nicosia. The time that has been provided is not enough but I believe it is the beginning for something better”.*

Coming to the important issue of the education of the primary teachers Antreas mentioned:

*“Primary teachers need to be educated about “special” education and there must be found ways in which those professionals come to appreciate and accept “special” education. If teachers can be informed about the various ways they can work with disabled children and young people, I believe that teachers will not be negative, but positive. In order though to be positive the Ministry of Education and Culture, must try to minimize the number of students that attend each class and also to create a curriculum for all the students”.*

Antreas believes that:

*“ there is lot that can be done in the future about “special” education. We must though admit that there have been some changes from the past. The Ministry of Education and Culture must try with the academic support of the University of Cyprus to establish the new face of “special” education, the face of accepting the difference, respecting it and living with it. ... The society in Cyprus needs to be changed first and after that, all will be easier”.*

The task is very difficult but the Antreas thought that:

*“the professionals who work in “special” education are highly skilled and also concerned about the field - the great need is to educate primary teachers”.*

#### **4.2.2 My perspective on what Antreas revealed and summary of key findings**

Antreas gave lot of important and valuable information to me. It was surprising and I have to admit that it was difficult to accept that an official of the Ministry of Education and Culture would admit that there are lots of dark sides in “special” education now in Cyprus. The reason for which I believed that is because a big percentage of the persons, who work for the government in Cyprus, used to be afraid to admit that there are lots that must be change in order to have better days. The surprise though was very exciting and also supportive, since a “special” education administrator admitted the “wrongs”, the “misunderstandings” and the “problems”, that “special” education is facing in Cyprus. For me as a practitioner, the meaning of the above interview is supportive because if we

started admitting that we facing problems then we are half way through the solution of those problems.

I feel an important meaning of the interview was that the Inspector understood that the issue of “special” education is highly connected to the community. He argued that if the community cannot change, then “special” education cannot be improved but we must hope there can be change and that better days are coming in the field of “special” education in Cyprus.

After finishing this interview I must admit that I had very positive feelings about the future of “special” needs in Cyprus. I was thinking that there is room for people to try and change things since the “Special” Education Inspector was so supportive and positive implying changes can be done.

Even though those thoughts remained in my mind for some days, suddenly one day while I was driving I realized that I couldn’t be sure about the truth of what the “Special” Education Inspector said to me. He may answer me the way I have presented above because he wanted to show me how caring was about “special” education. I cannot know the truth. I wondered if my enthusiasm (even though I was trying to be as professional as I could as an interviewer) made him say particular things. I cannot know now if what he said to me had meaning for him. His work long after the interview will show me the truth.

## **Key Findings**

The interview I have presented above was one of the most important interviews I did for the purpose of this work. There was a lot revealed from this interview. The main findings are:

1. There is a strong connection between the application of “special” education at schools and the society.
2. The main problem why inclusion can not be a reality in Cyprus is because there is a difficulty in understanding and accepting the meaning of the term difference.
3. The Educational Psychologist Service, the Medical Services and the Social Welfare Department needs to be re-organized in order to provide better services.
4. Parents of disabled children and young people gained lot of rights with the existing law. They do not know though that they have acquired these rights. They do not have anyone to support them and show them the best way to use those rights.
5. The whole educational system must change in order to develop “special” education. The number of students in all classes must be reduced.
6. There is a great need of a new curriculum which will take into consideration all the needs that all the students may have.
7. “Special” teachers and speech-therapists desperately need support in order to continue doing their work efficiently. In particular, more “special” teachers and speech therapists need to be employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
8. The school must be organized in a way it will offer to each child the chance to take as much as it is possible from it. A school for all.

9. “Special” Units need to be re-organized.
10. Primary school teachers require initial teacher training and continuing professional development opportunities in order to be able to make inclusive education a reality.

#### **4.3. Exploring inclusive education with the “Special” School Head Teacher**

The atmosphere during the interview of the Head Teacher of the “Special” School was very friendly. As I have mentioned before I had been working in this school for two years as a “special” teacher. The Head Teacher knew that I had the chance, since I was an insider in the specific setting of the school, to have a deep understanding of what took place in the school. This is the reason why I believe that all he talked openly in his interview about his beliefs. I assured him of confidentiality from the beginning of the meeting. Nicos was much older than the Head Teacher of Primary School interviewed for this research. He is going to retire in two years and at the time of the interview was an assistant Head Teacher of the school, since the previous Head Teacher earned a promotion and had left the school. I will use the pseudonym “Nicos” in order to refer to the Head Teacher of the “Special” School. All the information that Nicos provided to me was really interesting and he offered a lot to this research.

##### **4.3.1 The Perspective of Nicos**

Nicos said that in accordance with his academic qualifications he is a primary teacher but he worked in “special” education for many years. Nicos had worked as a primary teacher for four years and he spent the rest of his teaching experience in the “special” school. He

said that he loved disabled children and young people and it is his belief that during his experience he managed to offer a lot to disabled children and young people.

We started our discussion by focusing on the daily program of the school, in order to find out if the focal “special” school has a different program, in contrast to other schools. Nicos made several comments which stress detrimental differences of segregated provision which impact on the experience of disabled children and young people:

*“The daily program of the school used to start at 7.30 in the morning and end at 1.05 as the daily program of each public primary school in Cyprus ... disabled children and young people used to arrive and leave school with the school buses ... there are children and young people who used to wake up at six o’ clock in order to be ready for the school bus. ... The Ministry of Education and Culture was informed about this and they answered that this is a public school and it will work as any other public school. The teaching staff of the school used to arrive before 7.30 and leave after 1.05. The Para educators used to come at the same time but they used to leave later, at 1.30”*

From these remarks, it can clearly be concluded that the Ministry of Education and Culture cannot understand the different needs that disabled students who attend this school face. The disabled students came to school tired and the “real” role of school which is to offer the best education according to the needs of each student, could not be made, since students were tired. School seemed in my view to take the role of a daily care centre for tired children.

Nicos revealed that the socioeconomic status of the majority of disabled children and young people that attend the focal “special” school is very low. Nicos admitted that some of the families face serious difficulties in their everyday life, for example, they do not have enough food, clothes for their children and young people. He explained:



*“Lots of our students live in conditions of poverty. They do not have food to eat, thus lots of them are stealing money and food. School is trying to provide some of those families with food and clothes, with the money of donations ... I do not like doing this, since this is the responsibility of Social Services, but unfortunately they cannot do enough for those children and young people and their families, so we have to take this role as well”*

Nicos made several comments on the impact of changing legislation:

*“After the new legislation about Inclusive Education all the disabled children and young people who face lot of difficulties ended up at the “special” school” ... This makes the work of the staff of the school very difficult ... The number of the students in each class is very small (according to the Ministry of Education and Culture, but this is not what school believes) 4-6 disabled students in each class ... Also the School with the help of the Parents Association is trying to employ as many Para educators as possible because their help is very important in the everyday program.”*

Nicos mentioned that when there is no Para-educator in a class, then the educational program of the teacher is not appropriately accessible and manageable, because the multiple difficulties that the students are facing cannot be adequately responded to without the additional support.

Nicos' opinion of inclusion is very interesting for me. He said that:

*“inclusion is not something that will definitely help all disabled students .. disabled students who do not face so many difficulties are attending “special” units and mainstreaming settings as well. In my mind though the inclusion technique that is being used is not such a good idea, because primary school students in most cases make fun of disabled children and young people in a primary school ... It is more probable that the climate of a “special” school may be better for the majority of the disabled students except for the cases that can easily be included into a mainstreaming classroom”.*

*“It is worthless”* according to Nicos, that some children and young people may attend only (using the meaning of being included in) one period in music lesson and two periods

in art lesson in the program of a primary school. He was clear that *“this will not help them to be socialized”*.

Nicos felt that:

*“the main problem is that those disabled children and young people will definitely end up in a “special” school when they will be 14 years old, since at present there is no “special” provision in the secondary education now .. The precious years when someone can easily be educated and skilled will be lost and everything will be much more difficult in terms of progress .... this is why it will be more beneficial for disabled children and young people to attend “special” schools, where they can find a safer environment and also where the needs of disabled children and young people can be more easily be satisfied (because of the expertise staff)”*

According to Nicos:

*“Another problem that has arisen from the new law is that the law allows disabled children and young people after the age of 18 to stay in school until they become 21, if there is a program for Occupational Inclusion ... Almost all of the parents, during the last two years, that the new law has been applied, are trying to persuade the Ministry of Education and Culture to leave their children and young people in segregated school until they will become 21. This creates a lot of problems at the “special” school because it is not an easy task to have the same playground for disabled children and young people between the ages of 5 and 21 ... This creates lot of safety problems, because of the different needs of each one of those disabled students .. The oldest students of the school need specific programs for work and socialization that cannot be done, because there is no staff for these programs ...Also, most of those children and young people are in this school for more than 10 years ... It is time for the disabled children and young people and their parents to decide what they must do next”*.

Nicos admitted that parents used to accept their disabled child would attend the school until the age of 21, since there was no alternative place for them to take their children and young people, adding:

*“also the same environment makes the parents feel that their child will be safe and secure there”*.

He went on to explain his views further:

*“Inclusion is a very fair issue but unfortunately in practice everything is so different from the ideal ... I am a fan of inclusion in the theoretical part, but in practice this is so difficult to be implement ... It is a matter of justice and equal opportunities but I believe that opportunities for disabled students can be given better in a “special” setting, such as a “special” school ...Some teachers are trying to include some inclusion programs in their daily programs”.*

For example, Nicos mentioned that there is a group of disabled students, the youngest members of the school, who attend every week for two hours a program with a kindergarten, which is situated very close to the segregated school. In addition he explained that some disabled student groups used to spend one day per week outside in the local community

*“in order to implement the socialization of disabled students”.*

Nicos believed that:

*“this socialization works in a vice-versa way ... disabled students are being socialized and also society has the chance to meet with disabled students and try to accept them ... at the beginning this was so difficult, because people were looking at disabled students in a very strange way, like they were aliens, but after some months they started accepting them ...*

Nicos explained that disabled students would be supported to go to the city center, to the cafes, restaurants, supermarkets, and parks to gain acceptance. I found this extremely interesting and I asked him how he understood that non-disabled people came to accept the disabled students. His answer was rather shocking, he said:

*“they ignored them”.*

I realized that I had never thought in the past that ignorance would prove to be a source of acceptance! Nicos went on:

*“Inclusion cannot so easily be accepted by Cypriots ... The society is so closed that everything that differs makes the people feel strange ... If the Ministry of Education and Culture wanted to apply inclusion, first it would have to inform the primary teachers and after that make the society more amenable. ... Unfortunately primary teachers often have an idea that inclusion is not their job; it is someone else’s job”.*

Coming to the help and provision that the Ministry of Education and Culture to the School, Nicos mentioned that :

*“unfortunately, after this new law the Ministry of Education and Culture did not have time to spend on the development of “special” schools. “Special” schools have been rather excluded from this notion of change that there is in Cyprus during the last years. ... The Ministry visited the school just a few times per year, in order to check out if everything works perfectly. This school needs more support from the Ministry. Some teachers of the school used to ask me all time, where is the Ministry to help them and I did not know what it was best to do, to tell them the truth or to try to excuse the Ministry”.*

According to Nicos the big problem will arise:

*“When the first disabled graduates of primary schools attend the secondary education they will understand the value of a “special” school since there is still no provision for secondary education for disabled students. The only place for disabled students will be the “special” school”.*

Also Nicos mentioned, another problem that exists and said it was his hope that this will end with the new law, even though it did not look promising:

*“The workload of the teaching staff is so big. Most teachers used to work for 29 periods (45 minutes) every week. Teachers who work at this school need to work fewer hours and have some hours in order to contact the family and inform the family of their child’s situation. Also some extra time is needed for the co-ordination between the different professionals that work with each disabled student. Most teachers are doing this in their free time, but I am not sure how long they will manage to do this in the future”.*

Nicos is trying to have good relationships with parents and said:

*“The relationships between the school and the Parents Association are trying to be as good as possible”*

However, parent-professional relationships are not trouble-free:

*“Sometimes parents are aggressive and they demand so much from the teaching staff, but this is something common in our field. I am trying to remind the teachers that it is very important to have good relations with the families of their children and young people and that we must be patient with them. I know that it is not an easy task to do, but I am doing my best in order to make them understand the value of a good relationship between parents and the school, for the disabled child and also for us as a school”.*

A very interesting example that Nicos mentioned to me, was the example of a mother who has a child with multiple impairments:

*“Her child is now 13 years old and when they asked the parents whether they were interested to leave their children and young people until four o’ clock in the school, in the case that the school will become ‘daily’ school (from 7.30-4.00) she answered ‘yes’ and she also wrote that she preferred that her child would take some lessons in computers and English. It is amazing that this mother could not understand the real need of her child. She lived 13 years with her child and she seemed that did not understand her child at all”*

Even though I found this incident to be so interesting I did not mention this during our conversation. The example of this mother is something not strange for the case of Cyprus, since those parents do not take any support from anyone in order to realize the real needs of their child. This mother needed desperately their disabled child to do as all the other children and young people, who used to stay to daily school in order to take some extra lessons in languages, computers, etc.

The final question once again concerned the future of “Special” Education in Cyprus. Nicos felt:

*“We need to work harder if we want “Special” Education to move forward. The steps though of this new beginning must be slow. The general education system must be reconsidered. “Special” Education is not only about disabled students. It is about education in general.*

A very good suggestion was made:

*“There must be a research group from the Ministry of Education and Culture who will be investigating, in order for all the problems to be revealed and solutions for those problems to be finally established. Maybe examples from other countries would help the “special” education system to be improved. Those examples though, must be legitimated, before they will be tested in the every day life of disabled students”*

Finally Nicos mentioned that

*“a lot can be done with the help of the University of Cyprus. Even though my experience with the co-operation with the University of Cyprus was not the best, since the University of Cyprus used to blame the administration of the school and also the Ministry of Education and Culture about the existing situation of the school, I believe that it can play an important role in the development of “special” Education. We do not want the University of Cyprus to concentrate only on our problems. We want it to support us and try with us to find the solutions”.*

#### **4.3.2 My perspective on what Nicos revealed and summary of key findings**

First I have to add to all the above my experience with the students of the University of Cyprus, a University from which I have graduated but which I feel does not effectively promote inclusive education training. The main reason why I am mentioning this experience is because I want add to what Nicos said above, while he was talking about the way that the University of Cyprus views them as a school. One day the Head Teacher of the school ask me if I wanted to talk to some second year students of the Education Department of the University of Cyprus, about the way that I work with my own students. I accepted to do this and I was sitting in my class with my pupils, whom I

informed about our visitors. The door opened and 15 young trainee teachers came to my class. The vast majority of them were terrified by the children and young people they saw in front of them. I was started feeling very angry and disappointed as well, since those visitors were the future teachers of Cyprus. I was explaining to them how we usually work and what the difficulties that face us are. Most of them did not listen to me. They were looking straight at the children and young people and they did not even try to hide their fear and their disgust. While I was talking to them one of my pupils ran to one of the trainee teachers to play with her. The trainee teacher started shouting at him. I could not be patient anymore. I took them out of my class the whole group and I told them to inform their professor that when they will go to a school and visit a class it is better first for all for them and also for the disabled children and young people to be informed about the student population of the school first. They all were looking at me in a very strange way. I apologized for being rude to them but I added that I did not expect, and as a person I cannot accept, from future teachers to behave in this deeply offensive way to disabled students.

### **Headline findings**

The discussion that I had with the Head Teacher of the “special” School was very interesting to me for various reasons. On the one hand in this interview I had the chance to view the various perspectives from a different glance since in my researcher role I was not an insider anymore in that school, I was an outsider. In my view being an outsider provides you with the chance to have a fresh perspective and a deeper perspective also, away from all the feelings and the experiences.

The main findings of this discussion are the following:

- The daily program of the “special” school is the same as the program of the primary schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture seemed to believe that “special” school is not something different than primary schools and this is the reason that it does not allow to this kind of school to have a different daily program. It may be there is another possible explanation of the attitude of the Ministry of Education and Culture; that the Ministry cannot realize and take into consideration the different needs of the specific school.
- School acts as a social welfare department who is responsible for providing food and clothes to some of its disabled students. The way that school understands its role seems thus to be rather complicated. Apart from the educational and the psychological part schools must take other roles as well.
- There is a belief from the Head Teacher of the school that inclusion works only for children and young people who do not face lot of difficulties and that the children and young people who face lot of difficulties must attend “special” school in order to take the appropriate help for them.
- Disabled students attend “special” schools after the age of 14 years old, when they can not attend secondary education, since there is no provision organized for them.
- The teaching periods that a “special” teacher must work per week do not allow “special” teachers free time in order to do the co ordination or discuss with the parents for their disabled child. The main reason for this is financial. The Ministry of Education and Culture does not have the financial resources for



employing more professionals. Another possible reason for this is the Association of Teachers which definitely will create a serious issue in case that the professionals who work in “special” education take a reduction of their teaching load, since the Association of Primary Teachers believe that all their members are equal.

- Parents of disabled students may need help, in order to understand their disabled child and help their child. The disabled child usually attends a “special” school at the age of 14, in most cases it is too late to try and help those parents cope with their disabled child.
- The role of the University of Cyprus seemed to be extremely important. The role that the University of Cyprus has today in relation with the school is rather disappointing, since it has a reputation for criticizing and blaming the school for any shortcomings. It is time that the University of Cyprus took a consulting role to help the school implement all the news findings and ideas that research suggests.

#### **4.4.Exploring inclusive education with the Primary Head Teacher**

##### **4.4.1 The Perspective of Panos**

The Head Teacher of the Primary School, who I shall call Panos, was much younger than the Head Teacher of the Special School. Panos graduated from Pedagogy Institute in Cyprus. He has been a teacher in this school for the last two years. He was a teacher for 24 years and he said that he loved teaching very much. In this specific primary school he said he could not teach because he had so many other responsibilities – more than Head

Teachers usually have in other primary schools and so he is excused from these teaching duties by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Panos explained that his primary school has some “special” programs for students that face difficulties in Greek Language. After lot of pressure by Panos as he had secured some additional resources:

*“The Ministry of Education and Culture decided to provide the School with two more primary teachers in order to help us establish those special language programs. After two years experience, we found out that those programs offered a lot to the students of the Primary School. Those two teachers organized, after the assessment of the students, some special programs. The programs were either based on an individual base or in a group base. After the investigation of the students needs the two teachers organize the programs. Those programs became something usual in the everyday life of the school”.*

He provided some more information about those programs by adding:

*“The students, who faced difficulties with the effective use of Greek language, leave their class once hour every day and they participate in those special programs. Some students mentioned to me [the Head Teacher] that they did not feel comfortable to leave their class and go to those tutorial classes, because most of them participate in those programs and they did not name their self as children and young people with special needs. As time passed though the vast majority of those students who attended those programs did not feel so bad in order to leave their class and participate to these programs”.*

Apart from those programs the school offers “special” education to the diagnosed disabled children and young people from the Provincial Committee but Panos feels this is not adequate:

*“Unfortunately the Ministry of Education and Culture and especially the new “Special” Education Law is too general and it does not cover cases of minority children and young people with difficulties. Those children and young people are not under the coverage of the Special Education Needs Law. Even though we tried to inform the Ministry about the unspecificness of the New Law, the Ministry of Education and Culture kept telling us, that they could not do something for this”.*

The Head Teacher followed this response from the Ministry of Education and Culture by asking the Ministry to provide the school with a “special” teacher, because of the range of difficulties the school faced on behalf of the students and their families:

*“We also informed the Ministry that those parents could not afford economically to provide to their children and young people individual help in the afternoons, and that the school must try to provide them the best they could”.*

In addition Panos explained to the Ministry of Education and Culture, that:

*“If a lot of those students could not take the appropriate kind of help they would end being criminals when they grow up”.*

According to the Head Teacher the “special” education teacher used to come to the school twice per week for two periods every time. She used to take individually two students not from minority group, and help them. Both of those students are diagnosed as been students with learning difficulties. The Head Teacher also admitted that:

*“I have asked from the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide our school with more hours in the specific school, because of the difficulty of the cases and the Ministry was negative again”.*

One advantage that this Primary School has in contrast to other schools is that this school has close relationships with the Greek Orthodox Church:

*“Just next to the school there is one of the biggest, richest and most popular churches in Cyprus. This church has a lot of money and it used to provide the school with a lot of financial help”.*

Panos admitted that the Ministry of Education and Culture was negative but the Church was very supportive:

*“The Church provides financial help to poor families and also ethical support to those who need this kind of help”.*

Panos said that:

*“All the times that I asked the Church for financial help, the Church did not deny offering it to the school”.*

Panos assumed that maybe the Ministry of Education and Culture is informed about the help that the Church provide to the school and this is why they ignored in a way this school. He pointed out that:

*“it is not the job of the Church to provide the school, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Those students even though they have families with low socioeconomic status they deserve to take all that they deserve to. Those students are not second-class students”.*

Concerning the issue of inclusion, Panos felt:

*“there is a huge climate for inclusion in Cyprus and the Ministry of Education and Culture is trying to include all the students into primary schools. In the case of this school, which in my mind looks like a “special” school because of the special programs that the school needs, the Ministry excluded those students from the population of other schools. Those students were excluded from the system, because they have different needs.*

He added that:

*“it is not acceptable for me that every child that is from Russia and from all the countries named before, attends this Primary School, because the Ministry of Education and Culture force them to take their child to this specific school. The culture that has been created during all these years of the existing situation is so strong that the Greek Cypriot students are afraid to go to the school, since they are a minority in this school. So the right for each child to go to his or her neighborhood school did not exist in reality”.*

According to the view of the Head Teacher, not every educational change in Cyprus is well planned. He explained that by saying that:

*“In the example of inclusion no research or pilot study was made in order to decide if inclusion was an applicable aim in the Cypriot society. Somebody from the Ministry administration decided that Europe for example applied inclusion, so*

*it is the time for Cyprus to apply inclusion as well. This is how things unfortunately work in Cyprus”.*

He went on to argue that inclusion cannot be achieved without careful preparation:

*“We became great fans of Inclusion without even working to develop ideas on inclusion and find how this works in practice. We tried as an educational system to include all disabled students in primary schools without thinking about the needs of those students and where is the best place for the needs of those students to be met. Some disabled children and young people’s needs would be better served in a “special” school and “special” schools must be reorganized in order to take part in the inclusion project. Some children and young people may attend “special” schools for a short period of time in order to get ready afterwards to attend primary schools.*

The Head Teacher was asked about “special” units in primary schools and he answered that his opinion is that:

*“The only advantage of the “special” units is that children and young people can be socialized in a way, and they can attend a joint program in the unit and in the primary classroom. Those “special” units need support from the Head Teacher and the teaching staff of the school and sometimes non-disabled primary students make fun of the disabled students that attend special units. The Cypriot society is not ready to view disabled students as equal students with needs that must be served by the system in the same way as the system serves the needs of the other students”.*

Panos made some suggestions as well:

*“different types of schools can be created - not to support exclusion, but in order to fulfill the needs of every child. For example there could be a school for students who face difficulties with Greek language. This school’s job would be to help the students learn the language and after that each child can go to his/her neighborhood school”.*

Panos said that they have suggested this to the Ministry of Education and Culture but no response had come yet. He felt the educational system usually works in such slow motion and faces many new demands:

*“Another very serious problems that has arisen from the new law is for the Educational Psychologists, who must evaluate the child first and then all the*

*others colleagues, the special teacher, the primary teacher of the class will do their evaluations”.*

The Head Teacher also mentioned that in his view:

*“schools with more difficulties than other schools must have their own psychologist who will stay in the school every day and participate in the school activities. With this set up children and young people will definitely be helped and also parents of those children and young people will be supported. Schools like ours need not only a full time psychologist but also a full time social worker as well ... and more support from the Ministry of Education and Culture”.*

Panos mentioned that the teaching staff sometimes feels that the Ministry of Education and Culture ignores them. The discussion though ended with the Head Teacher saying:

*“I hope everything will be better for both “special” and for general education. Education needs workers, workers who must love their job. The Ministry of Education and Culture must try to deal with the needs of the teachers, because if the teachers are not happy then, this will have a negative result for the students”.*

#### **4.4.2. My perspective on what Panos revealed and summary of key findings**

Panos provided with his story lot of interesting findings. The main findings of this interview were:

- The Ministry of Education and Culture seemed to have a different policy for schools who face difficulties. They allow to their Head Teachers not to teach, but use this teaching periods for consulting the well being of the school.
- The idea of attending some “special” programs which were not taking place in the class but somewhere else outside the class, seemed to be a usual practice in this school. So, we conclude that in some cases the idea of being provided with some “special” help outside of the settings of the class seems to be a familiar approach for the students. In that school according to the Head Teacher, students do not

face difficulties leaving their class and attending the Greek class in order to improve their language skills. On the other hand though the difficulties in language that those students face may be so many that learning Greek was a matter of having an equal approach from the Cypriot society. Those students seemed to understand their difficulties and they did not face any problem leaving their class and attending another class which was much more interesting and helpful for them.

- In the beginning of those special programs some students face difficulties and they did not like leaving the class. Let's imagine how disabled students and young people feel when according to the present educational system we ask them to leave their class and attend tutorial with the "special" education teacher or the speech therapists; all professionals connected with disability - since students know exactly who attend tutorial with those professionals?
- The present law seemed to leave a very big gap in relation to the cases of disabled students and young people from minority cultural groups. The school informed the Ministry of Education and Culture about the issue and no solution had been found. Minority group disabled students and young people appear to be viewed in unfavorable ways.
- The church plays a very critical role in the case of this school, since it offered to schools much more than the Ministry of Education and Culture. Sometimes the church seems to take the place of the role of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

- There was not a proper evaluation of inclusion on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture before it decided to apply inclusion.
- The view emerges that needs of disabled students and young people sometimes are better served in segregated places, thus “special” school need to be re-organized in order to help the application of inclusion
- The Cypriot society is not ready to accept the full inclusion of disabled students and young people.
- The Educational Psychologist Department must provide more support in schools (like this one) which face a lot of difficulties.
- The needs of teachers must be heard, otherwise this will have a negative effect on the students.

#### **4.5 The Perspective of Primary Teacher Andri (“Thank God there are some teachers like this one!”)**

As mentioned before, the teacher of the key stage three at the Primary School Andri (I will use this pseudonym for her) was very friendly and helpful to me, during the whole process of research. She was happy for me to observe her classes even though she was experiencing teaching difficulties as she explained in her interview:

*“The classroom in which I am teaching now is a very difficult class with a very low learning level. At the beginning of the year in this class there were a lot of children and young people with emotional difficulties. Those children and young people, the vast majority of them are coming from very poor families. Most of them are not Greek- Cypriot citizens yet, because their parents are from Russia, Romania, and other Eastern Europe countries. Their parents used to work all day in order to manage to feed their families and they do not have time to spend with their children and young people at home”.*

As it was mentioned above according to Andri:



*“these children and young people have lot of emotional and behavioral problems in the beginning of the year”.*

Andri decided that if she wanted to work with these children effectively:

*“it will be very important to be clear with them from the beginning how their behavior must be, what I consider as good and acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable behavior. I have tried to put to them the limits. I knew that this would be extremely difficult for me, but I wanted to try and set boundaries”*

She found a strategy by herself:

*“I decided with my students the way that we would punish the students who gave undesired behavior. At the beginning of the year, when I tried to implement this I found so many difficulties because the majority of my students could not accept easily the meaning of punishment. After some time though, when they realized that I was very strict with the rules they started becoming better and better”*

#### **4.5.1 The Perspective of Andri**

*“My philosophy is that each student, has the right to be educated and the school must provide equal opportunities for all students. School must be the place that every student, regardless of their abilities has the right to be educated. In my class I am trying whatever I can to implement this, since otherwise my students will not respect what I am saying to them. I tried very hard to be consistent”*

Her philosophy was not only a philosophy since she tried to implement it in practice.

Her teaching strengths were that she prioritized equality and that she tried to offer individual help to every student they needs it. However, she did not have enough time in order to consider the needs of each child and even though she did not want to lose her patient, sometimes this happened. She admitted:

*“I know that sometimes I had to have more patient, but honestly I could not do anything else. I was alone in a class with lot of difficulties. I was convinced though that I tried to do my best with my students”.*

Then she added:

*“The most rewarding aspect of my job is when I see all of my students smiling before they enter the class and not feeling miserable and sad because they have to start the lesson”.*

I asked Andri about her feelings of “special” education. She answered that:

*“I was interested in “special” education and this is why I have chosen this as one of my major fields of expertise while I was a student at the University of Cyprus”.*

Regarding her feelings about “special” education she said that:

*“I believe that “special” education in Cyprus is not so developed and that something quickly must be done from the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to change the existing situation at schools, concerning “special” education. More “special” needs teachers must be employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and each school must have it “special” education teacher. This person could be responsible for giving guidelines to other colleagues and also could provide individual help to disabled students”.*

Another interesting issue that we discussed was parental involvement in Cyprus concerning not only the disabled students but all the students in general. She had strong views on the importance of this:

*“There is no welfare for parents with disabled students. The responsible Ministry of Social Work must work on parental involvement; implement some parents workshops, in order to help those parents who - apart from their economic problems - have difficulties with their everyday life with their disabled children and young people. Each school must have a psychologist responsible for supporting the teaching staff and also for supporting not only the disabled students but also the non-disabled primary students and their families”.*

Concerning now the changes that must be done in the way “special” education is applied in Cyprus, Antri said that:

*“ beside the need of employment of more “special” teachers, speech-therapists and psychologists, the notions of the general culture must be changed, if we want to move forward on “special” Education. The Ministry of Education and Culture must implement a program with long-term and short-term goals which will be aimed to make inclusion an every day reality”.*

I must admit that when I was interviewing this colleague I was wondering all the time if I am as good a teacher as she. I certainly wished I would be as good as she was. I also felt as a researcher, that what said to me was her truthful opinion. And I found that to be so beautiful at that moment.

#### **4.5.2 My perspective on what Antri revealed and summary of key findings**

A lot of findings came up from this interview. The richness of data surprised me a lot, I have to admit that. The following findings came up from this interview:

- There seemed to be a strong connection between teachers who have a “specialization in the field of “special” needs” in the University of Cyprus and their approach to disabled students. All teachers through their career will definitely come across disabled students, so there is a great need for the all the teachers who graduate from any University to be familiar with issues concerning “special” education.
- Antri seemed to understand from the beginning the value of trying to work with her students behavior first and then care about their academic skills. This is the right way in my mind as well, how a teacher has to work. In the case where we have a class of students with a large proportion of students with difficulties (no matter how many and what kind of difficulties) we must first think about their behavior and inclusion and then their academic results.
- Antri also admitted that she sometimes feel that she did not have any more patience sometimes. This is not strange in the Cypriot educational system. Teachers a lot of times have those feelings, since there is no one in terms of

the Ministry of Education and Culture to understand them and try to help them. A lot of the teachers do not accept that they face difficulties, since the system sometimes will label them as 'not able' teachers. So they believe that it is much better for them not to refer any problems that they face either to the Head Teacher or to their School Inspector.

- Antri said clearly that parental involvement needs immediate support and provision in Cyprus. There is no parental involvement workshop, so parents not only parents of disabled children and young people but all parents, are at a distance or absent in the school-home partnership.
- The general notion about "special" education must be changed and in order for this to happen the Ministry of Education and Culture must try to implement a program with long and short term aims. In other words what Antri suggested is that the Ministry of Education and Culture must take the development of "special" education in a more serious way.

#### **4.6.Exploring inclusive education with the second year primary teacher**

##### ***(The experience that made me think a lot )***

As already mentioned the second year teacher of the Primary School, who I will call Kostas, was not so happy and enthusiastic to participate in my research. When he was asked about the interview, he answered that the interview could be arranged during school hours. I have tried to explain him that it might have been a better idea if we could meet in the afternoon, in a place where we could discuss without interruption. The expression on his face showed me very clearly that he did not like my idea and I waited

for some minutes for his negative answer. His answer though was not negative, surprisingly it was positive. We arranged the appointment and I must admit that I was very interested to find out what would happen during our meeting.

Before I went to this appointment I found my self to be very anxious about the way that I would behave to a person whom I honestly did not like so much. I tried to convince my self that I would go there as a researcher and I was trying to remind myself that I was there as a researcher. When I left my house to go the interview I was determined to control all my negative feelings.

#### **4.6.1 The Perspective of Kostas**

The teacher came to the appointment quite nervous and stressed. He said that:

*“I have been teaching for six years, since I graduated from the University of Athens in 1997. I have been in this school for one year and I have already applied to the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to leave this school next year. I do not like this school, because almost all the students of this school are difficult cases, they do not even know Greek and this causes lots of communication problems.*

Also according to this teacher:

*“in this school there were lot of thieves, because a lot of the families are very poor. My class is a very difficult class with lot of disabled students. Lots of my students have learning or emotional-behavioral problems. Even though I tried very hard in order to have a good communication between me and my students, I found this to be a very difficult aim.”*

He said with a really sad face:

*“sometimes I was so desperate and I did not have an idea what I should do. I found myself grappling with feelings that I had not experienced before. I did not have any support from anyone, not even from the “special” teacher, because she is in the school only twice per week, for four periods. I tried through my Head*

*Teacher to call the Educational Psychologist Department and no one ever appeared. I do not know what else I could have done”.*

Also the teacher was very angry with the existing law about “special” education because in his view:

*“this law was incomplete and there were lot of things that must be done and the law did not mention anything for that. According to the law, a lot of students from my class must be treated as disabled students but they are not diagnosed, because they are coming from a minority group. So those children and young people are not allowed to receive “special” education, because if someone faces difficulties in Greek language they are not called disabled student and therefore are not allowed to take “special” education provision”.*

We discussed his teaching style and he told me that:

*“in schools like this, the teacher is not allowed to have his own teaching style’. At the beginning of the year I tried several types of teaching techniques, in order to find out what would best feed the needs of my students. I have discovered later that I couldn’t use a specific technique, because of the variety of learning levels that exists in my class”.*

The reason why he wanted to leave the school is according to him:

*“I wanted to leave this school at the earliest opportunity because the school is too far from my house. I need more than one hour to get to school and to get home from school (for Cyprus this distance is big). I do not like this school also because it is in the same building with the high school. Even though the breaks are not the same there is so much noise all the time at school and a lot of high school students used to hit and tease our primary school students”.*

According to Kostas the field of “special” education needs further development:

*“I believe that there must be more “special” teachers at schools and that the creation of “special” unit at primary schools is not the solution, for the right application and expansion of this field. The solution is to try and include all the students with abilities in primary school and then all the other students must attend different kind of “special” schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture must decide to do something with disabled students. They must do something for those children and young people and not simply remember them twice a year.*

A very important suggestion that he ended up making is that:

*“primary teachers must be trained in “special” education issues, because each teacher will come across cases of disabled students and they must know how they must behave to disabled students”.*

#### **4.6.2 My perspective on what Kostas revealed and summary of key findings**

At the end of the interview I was very proud that I managed to control all my feelings and I was nice and polite to him during all our conversation. I did not enjoy the interview as much as the previous one, but I knew at that point that I manage to fulfill my expectations as a researcher.

#### **Headline findings**

The main findings that came up from this interview are the following:

- The primary teacher felt disappointed by the existing educational system. He works in a school that he does not like and he did not have anyone to support and help him.
- The Educational Psychologist Department cannot respond to its role to respond to the calls of the schools in order to identify the needs of some children and young people who might be disabled students.
- Students who are coming from minority cultural and linguistic groups cannot be classified as disabled students because they face difficulties with the language. Disabled students seemed to be more privileged than children from minority cultural and linguistic groups because they have individual tutorial in order to overcome some difficulties that they face.

- The primary teachers suggested that the educational system must be divided into two main parts. The first part will be about students who do not face difficulties and the second part will be for disabled students. Disabled students can not be included in a mainstreaming school in his view but they must have a segregated setting.
- It is very important to educate trainee primary teachers because they are coming across disabled students and they need to know how to behave to disabled students.

#### **4.7 Exploring the perspective of the “special” teacher who work at the primary school**

##### **4.7.1 The Perspective of Primary Teacher Maria**

The “special” teacher that worked at the Primary School has been working there from 2002. She acknowledged:

*“I love the field of “special” education but I hate the way “special” education works in Cyprus”.*

Maria (I will use this pseudonym for this colleague) admitted that:

*“during the day I used to spend my time at two or three different schools, in order to help the disabled students. I have been coming to the primary school twice per week, for four periods (40 minutes) every time. I have asked the “Special” Education Inspector for permission to stay to the primary school for more hours but the inspector told me that the vast majority of children and young people that attend the primary school are not disabled students according to “special” education law, because they are from minorities groups and they face communication problem. Those children and young people must not be provided with “special” provision, since they are not students with “special” needs.” But I felt there were two classes with lot of disabled students in each one. Those students cannot be helped, because they are not diagnosed as disabled students”.*

Those classes were the same classes that I had chosen to investigate.



Maria described her experience in the field:

*“I have been working in “special” education for ten years. In the past I worked in “special” units and also in primary schools as a “special” teacher”. At this specific school I used to take two disabled students out of their classrooms twice a week for 45 minutes each time. The help I used to give to those students was not enough but I could not do anything about that, since the Ministry of Education and Culture was negative. I had such a big number of disabled students at the other schools that I worked in (four different schools) that I could not find enough time to provide individual help to disabled children and young people”.*

She also talked about her individual work with the disabled students:

*“With the two diagnosed disabled students, I especially helped them do their everyday exercises. For example if the disabled students have a difficult passage in Greek, I used to take this passage and analyze it with them by explaining the meanings of the difficult words, help them to understand the meaning of the passage and answer some basic questions. In order though to do this, the teacher of the classrooms of those students, must inform me prior to the lesson about the specific passage, so I will have time to organize some specific material for the children and young people’.*

The difficulties though are a lot at the practitioner level:

*“Experience reveals that this is quite difficult because some colleagues were not willing to co-operate. I think that what is at the back of their mind is that ‘those disabled students can not do much, so why do we have to pay so much attention and try to do so much?’ Some teachers also did not believe that those children and young people can make important progress with the help of the “special” educator”.*

She added details of her experience when she first came to the school:

*“when I first came to the school I faced lot of difficulties in order to collect information about the disabled students. There were not any personal files of those students in the school and I had to collect all the necessary information from the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to work. When I found the information about disabled students I realized that the diagnoses were not specific and they cannot give you important information about the nature of the difficulties. The diagnoses were too general and without any recommendations for practice. Thus, it took me a month in order just to start working with the disabled students”.*

At that time :

*“The provision of “special” education in the specific school was given to a separate room, which is situated far from the classrooms. I used to take disabled students from their classes and take them to the small room, which was named as the “special” education room. Personally I strongly disagreed with the way the “special” education has been provided to disabled students. The help must be provided in the environment of their classrooms with the rest of the students, and the help must be given not only to disabled students but to all students who may face difficulties”.*

Maria believed from her teaching experience:

*“ that those children and young people who left the class have - or if they do not have they create after a period of time - a very low self-esteem because everybody in their class named them as disabled students, students with such needs that they have to go somewhere else in order to be assisted”.*

Maria talked about the way colleagues work with her:

*“I have tried very hard in the beginning of the school year to talk with the two colleagues who are responsible for the classes that disabled students attend in order to discuss the meaning of being different and the way that the students must behave to disabled students. I have even tried to suggest specific games and questions that those teachers can make to their students. Both teachers promised me that they would do something about this, but unfortunately nothing happened during the year. I am not sure about the reason, why this is so, but the most possible explanation I can find is because the two colleagues do not consider those disabled students as equal students or as the same as all the other students of their classrooms. Also another possible explanation is that they did not know how to talk about such issues to their students and they decided that it would be best not to mention anything”.*

Maria feels the problems that having the “special” education room create are very serious:

*“Disabled students find it very difficult to leave their classes and go the “special” education room in order to take some individual help. They felt embarrassed and they were afraid that someone would have seen them going in or out of the specific room. It took us several conversations in order for those disabled children and young people to come to the “special” education room. I am sure that they still feel strange when they are coming to me. I have seen them*

*several times running in the corridor, because they want to come as early as possible so no-one sees them. While they were working with me, both of them felt very relaxed and they do not create any problems for me. Especially after some meetings, I felt that the disabled children and young people felt that our room was their home rather than the room where they have been taken to for “special” provision”.*

Maria expressed critical thinking about “special” education. For example, she mentioned that the administrator of the school, the Head Teacher, was very good and helpful, but unfortunately the only one that can take decisions concerning “special” education issues was the Ministry of Education and Culture. She gave several thoughts about the system of “special” education in Cyprus:

*“Special” education in Cyprus is in its infant age and all the involved partners must try to nurture and grows up this child. The right way for this to be dome, is through the acceptance and realization of our previous mistakes.*

Maria added that :

*“The Cyprus system of “special” Education follows the English system. In the case of Cyprus though, the Cypriot society is not the same as in England and this parameter was not take into consideration by the Ministry of Education and Culture, when such a huge change was implemented ...*

There is a great deal that must be done in the provision of “special” “education” in Cyprus according to Maria:

*“First of all the Ministry of Education and Culture must employ more educational or clinical psychologists, in order that the evaluation procedure becomes faster. The way things work now is too slow, mainly because there is not enough staff to work for the evaluation and it might take a year or more in order for a child to be assessed. Also the new law is too general. The case of this school is a good example of how the law turns out to be too general”.*

She expanded on the problem of generalities and the absences in provision of the new law:

*“Children and young people from minority groups, who also have been evaluated as disabled children and young people, cannot be given “special” education provision, because they cannot be called as disabled students, since they face difficulties with the Greek language. The example of this school where almost all the student population is not from Cyprus, they are from Russia, Romania and other Eastern Europe countries is shows the limitation of the law. Greek-Cypriot students are a minority here. Also the socioeconomic status of the parents of those children and young people is for the vast majority too low. Where is the help and the co-operation from the Welfare Department?”*

She had many interesting thoughts for the future of “special” education in Cyprus:

*“Special” Education needs changes immediately. In the educational system in Cyprus primary teachers used to believe that since they are not the experts, like “special” education teachers, it is not their job to work with disabled children and young people. There are teachers who believe that all disabled students must be taken to “special” schools, where they will have the chance to have “special” provision for them”.*

Finally Maria mentioned that:

*“in the past I used to feel that I was alone in my work and that there is nobody to listen to my anxieties, worries and fears. Unfortunately I felt this again during this year. It is my opinion that the Ministry of Education and Culture usually only arrives to help only in very serious cases. I am dismayed by this continuing situation. I do not want someone to administrate for me, but someone to listen to my voice, my opinion”.*

She stressed her commitment to supporting improvements in special education:

*“special” education can not be improved only by one person - we want to improve “special” education but they did not like us to do such thing”*

Maria wanted so much to make the improvement but feels her voice is not taken seriously. Unfortunately the existing educational system, not only in “special” education but also in general education in Cyprus, does not tend to listen to the voices of its employees.

#### **4.7.2 My perspective on what Maria revealed and summary of key findings**

##### **Headline Findings**

The main findings that came up are:

- The “special” teacher feels alone and neglected by the system.
- The primary teachers seemed to be “absent” from involvement in discussions about their disabled students. The perceived reason for this is because they may not feel that disabled students are equal students in relation to the rest of their classroom population.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture seem not to listen or pay attention to the voices of the teaching staff and shows no inclination to get really involved in this.
- The employment of more psychologists seemed to be a real need, since their absence makes the evaluation procedures last more time.
- Disabled students seemed to prefer to work with the “special” teacher in their classrooms, because they do not like to leave their class and go to a specific class in order to take individual help.
- Students who are coming from a minority group can not take provision as disabled students. The Ministry of Education and Culture believes that their problems in most cases are coming from the fact that they cannot speak and write in the Greek language.
- No satisfactory co-operation between the school and Welfare Department exists.

#### **4.8 Exploring inclusive education with Teachers who work at a segregated “special” school.**

In order to have a wider insider view of the way that inclusion has been applied in the educational system in Cyprus, I decided to interview two “special” needs teachers who work at a “special” school, from the school that I had been working in the past. Colleagues, in the vast majority, did not like the idea of being interviewed by an ex-colleague. Some of them felt this was unethical though others found the idea interesting, feeling that it was very important that a person from the system, a person who knows the system very well to investigate and make suggestions for further development of the “special” education system.

The persons, who were positive, were the “special” education teachers. I decided not observe them, because I thought that was not appropriate to do, since those persons were my ex-colleagues. I think that it is not difficult for someone to explain why the “special” needs teachers did not have any ambiguities for the interview: they were educated as “special” need teachers and they know they were doing their job as well as they can. One had worked in this school for six years and the other for two years. Both “special” teachers mentioned admitted having the same problems in this school and most of those problems are the results of the way that the educational system in Cyprus has been working. This is the reason why I have decided to amalgamate their discussions.

#### 4.8.1 Perspectives of the teachers who work at a segregated “special” school.

The teachers described source of difficulties in their work:

*“We find our work to be rather fascinating and challenging, but unfortunately we are facing a lot and different kind of problems. The main sources of problems are the school culture and also the educational system in general. You are coming in the morning full of energy in order to do so many things. At approximately ten o’ clock you find out that your disabled students cannot do much, since they start getting tired. This is rather disappointing for us”.*

First of all they both mentioned that there were teaching staff in the school who had stayed in the school for more than 18 years. In their view:

*“this situation is dramatically wrong, because most of those teachers have been institutionalized in this school and they cannot do much, because they are tired and now bored. Those teachers in most cases do not accept to work with challenging cases in their classrooms and they usually express the view that those challenging cases must attend the classes where youngest teachers are responsible.”*

*“According to their views we are the “specialized” and also the less tired. Those attitudes make us feel very uncomfortable and also angry. In the beginning when both of us came to this school we thought that we would change the existing practice. After lot of try we understood that it would be rather difficult to change the existing practice of the school. It took us two years to understand this and get used to this idea. I was lucky because I found my colleague who understands me and tries to help me cope with this idea. We decided that we would make the changes in our classes since we can not change the system”.*

The oldest “special” teacher was very nervous about other people’s attitudes and she mentioned that:

*“those attitudes, concerning the way some colleagues work is rather irritating”.*

She mentioned also another issue, saying:

*“it is too unfair that the educational system requires at least 13 years of teaching experience in order for someone to apply for promotion. There are so many good teachers in Cyprus in the specific field and they will work for the biggest part of their career as “special” needs teachers, with no “real” power to change things. Only administrators can change the system, no one else and in the case of Cyprus*

*almost all administrators are tired and they usually do not have the will to fight for changes. Those persons wait for their retirement and in Cyprus we put those persons in the keys position for change”.*

In this school both “special” needs teachers mentioned that:

*“the problems that the school faces become bigger, because of the difficulties of the disabled students. All the disabled students who are coming to this school are the students who can not be included in primary classrooms or “special” units in primary schools.”*

They added a very serious problem:

*“The disabled students of the school are coming to school on the school buses. There are students that have to wake up at 5.30 in order to get ready for the bus of the school to go and pick them from their houses. It is a very serious issue that the school program used to begin at 7.30 and end at 1.05, like the rest of the public primary schools. The disabled children and young people that attend this school need to have a different program. This school is not working in a different program like it should, it works rather like a primary school”.*

An example that the colleagues mentioned, is the *Visiting Policy* that the Ministry of Education and Culture has. According to this policy:

*“each school has to organize four visits to different places in Cyprus for the students. Sometimes it has been very difficult to take those students to four places in Cyprus, firstly because lots of places and restaurants have a negative attitude to the population of this school and also some of them did not have the facilities for disabled students”.*

Also both of them mentioned that:

*“ it was very difficult for autistic children and young people to leave the well-known place of the school ... the transportation was very difficult in the cases of children and young people with motor difficulties, because there were not as many seats for wheelchairs in the school buses”.*

Other problems that the “special” school faces they felt was the need for more paraeducators. The school has five paraeducators for the nine classes so:

*“as a result, not every class has a paraeducator in it, and this must be changed immediately. Each class must have a paraeducator, in order to be easier for the*



*teacher to work with the disabled children and young people. The difficulty for employing more paraeducators in school is mainly because of the lack of financial resources, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture”.*

What is worthy to be mentioned at this point;

*“is the interesting culture that paraeducators make, especially when they work in a “special” school. In a “special” school the number of paraeducators is large. Often the administration of the school faces problems concerning the relationships between the teaching staff and the paraeducators. Sometimes paraeducators misunderstand the way “special” educators work especially when we are working with behavior issues. They believe that disabled children and young people must be happy and that we as adults must not deprive anything from them. This attitude is totally wrong, and it creates lot of problems especially in the relationship between the teaching staff and them. We have tried several times to explain to them why we should use specific techniques and how they can implement those techniques in the everyday life of the student. On the other hand some of them, after some period of time working in a “special” school they may come up with the belief that they do almost the same work as the “special” teacher, with the difference though that they take much less money. All those beliefs make sometimes a very negative climate. There is a possibility that in such exclusive settings such as a “special” school burn out is a very common psychological situation”.*

Another problem that had been mentioned is that:

*“ there was not enough money in order to buy proper educational games, and materials that they are useful for teachers. The school used to buy only the necessary things and the material that we have in our hands were limited. We want more up to date material. It is amazing that there are computers in each class, but there is no specialized software, or even a specialized mouse or touch screen which best will fit the needs of the disabled students”.*

The most serious though problem of the “special” school is:

*“ the notion that “those children and young people could not learn to do much and this is why we must not try to teach them much. The notion that the disabled students, who attend this school, do not have the abilities to learn to do much is believed by the majority of the teaching staff of the school and makes us very nervous”.*

The two “special” teachers admitted that:

*“this notion makes some of the staff very lazy and bored. A school like this one looks like a small society where everybody has a right to express their views, according to their knowledge and experience. Some colleagues are ready to express their views about other colleagues work so easily, in a gossiping way. We can tell you an example. During the Christmas celebration we decided to make traditional chocolates with the students. The students did not have the ability to make chocolates by themselves, but the whole procedure would be very interesting to them. This event made lot of the teaching staff feel furious and uneasy. This happened because even though all the others classes have students who have more abilities, the teachers of those classes were too lazy to do anything like this with their students and they have just made the typical cards and Christmas trees”.*

Another incident that expressed the same attitude:

*“ is when during July, we decided to take our students to the swimming pool, this action had been criticized and had been gossiped about as well, because they have realized that this was such a lot of fun and the children and young people were very enthusiastic with this. How the students felt did not make any difference to them though”.*

The power of the Parents Association came in fro some criticism:

*“Another very serious issue is the power and level of control that the Parents Association has in this school. The Parents Association usually works as a threat to the staff of the school. They do not show any respect either to the teaching staff of the school, nor to the cleaners, paraeducators or bus drivers of the school. They have a notion that they are the people who face lot of problems and that everybody else must understand their mood and must forgive all their actions. Respect is a word that cannot be seen in their vocabulary”.*

They added also that:

*“the Parents Association is responsible in the “special” school according to the new law to interview all the paraeducators who are applying for this work. This provides the parents with the right to offer the paraeducators job vacancies to people who are relatives or friends to them (this is a common behavior in Cyprus anyway). This situation is something unacceptable”.*

The voice of the two “special” needs teachers became very determined when they discussed the issue of the parents of the disabled children and young people:

*“Parents feel that they are the experts. They believe that they know their disabled child better than everyone else, thus they are the best placed in order to discuss their child educational program. We believe that we have to co-operate and discuss with the parents on a daily basis, but unfortunately we have parents who cannot respect our privacy. They call us during the night and ask us what to do with their disabled child. We are trying to understand this, but we have our own families and when we go home we want to spend our time with our family. They want us to be available on a stand by basis, and whenever they want something they can call us. We tried several times to explain to those parents that we need some time in order to get some rest. They seem to us like they can not understand this”.*

The other teacher expanded on this:

*“The vast majority of the parents seem to us that they are not thinking about the future of their child. “Special” schools” is like the baby sitter for their disabled child. Sometimes their anger is so big and they cannot control it. As a result all this anger ends up with us and there is no one to protect us. The Head Teacher of the school used to say to us that we have to understand those parents and let them express their anger. We are humans though and we cannot accept this”.*

The two teachers feel support from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the way in which this Ministry behaves towards “special” education, is problematic:

*“we are not happy about the Ministry of Education and Culture. The times that the “special” Education Inspector or the Connecting Official has visited our school are not a lot. They usually come to our school only when there is a very serious problem which it cannot be solved by the Head Teacher. We need support and someone to listen to us. Sometimes we are thinking we are the second-class citizens of the education system”.*

#### **4.8.2 My perspective on what the two “special” needs teachers who work at the “special” school said and summary of key findings**

After the discussion I had with those two colleagues, I found out that we have to fight immediately for the implementation and the development of what we call “special” education in Cyprus. The two teachers seemed to me that their motivations to work are not safeguarded. They are already tired and they do not know what to do in order to

change their everyday reality in this school. It seemed to me also, that the main difficulties they face in their work did not concern the issue of the student population, but the issue of the attitude of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Those teachers are doing a lot and no-one really seemed to appreciate all that they did.

### **Headline Findings**

There are a lot of findings that they came up from those two interviews, which I have combined. The main findings are the following:

- The “special” school has to work exactly as a primary school in terms of the time schedule and the trip organization and this shows some lack of understanding of the “special” school from the Ministry of Education and Culture, because they do not provide the school with the freedom to choose what to do for its student population.
- There is a notion shared between most staff that the children and young people who face more difficulties must go with the “specialized” teachers and that the disabled children and young people who face less difficulties, must attend the classes of the non-specialized staff.
- The paraeducators who work in this school need support and training in order to understand their role and their duties easily.
- Parents of disabled students seem to require support. They must be supported in order to understand the needs of their disabled child and what the school can do.
- The Parents Association needs to be overhauled so that school staff and this powerful group can work together as *allies*

- The Ministry of Education and Culture must come to the school and listen to the voices of its employees in order for a change to take place.
- The teachers seem willing to work for a change in the school, but if this change does not come in a short period of time, I think that the symptoms of burn-out will come across.

#### **4.9 Exploring the voices of the primary school students**

Children and young people's own voices could not be absent from such a research. The views of the students of the primary school are really interesting. Firstly it must be reported that there were no differences in the general view of how the students feel or think about how they must behave towards a disabled student, between the two classes that participated in the research. In general, it can be said that the vast majority of students admitted that they would accept a disabled child in their class and that they will help this student as much as they can.

All of the students mentioned several reasons why they would not mind having a disabled student as their friend. There are a lot of answers that reveal clearly that non-disabled students can have a disabled student as their friend, because they recognize their inabilities and not their abilities.

##### **4.9.1. Perspectives of the primary class children**

The main impression from listening to the voices of the primary children is that they feel more positively about including disabled children and young people in their school than

some of the teachers whose views I put earlier in the chapter. For example, children explained:

*“I will be good with those children and young people because I feel sorry of them”*

or

*“I want to have a disabled friend because I have a pain in my heart for them”.*

Also they seemed to feel genuine empathy for those students:

*“I want to have a disabled friend because those children and young people are young and they can not understand as much as we can understand”.*

Apart from the feeling of sorrow, there was a child who admitted that:

*“I want to have a very “special” friend that no one else will have”.*

The students who really wanted a disabled student as their friend were not many and they seemed to know someone who was disabled in their family or in their group of friends or social environment:

*“I have a cousin who is a disabled child and I learn how I can take care of those children and young people”.*

Those are some of the answers that the students gave. Almost all of the students face disabled students in a philanthropic way; the way that the society teaches them to view those children and young people. Those attitudes must be worked on as helpful in the beginning, in order to change the way that primary students view their disabled classmates to a more equal view.

Also the majority of children and young people mentioned that if a classmate makes fun of a disabled child, they will report to the teacher and they will feel very angry with them.

Some of them also mentioned that they would not play with that student (the one who make fun of the disabled student) in the future. From a child's point of view:

*“those disabled students, want some “special” treatment, and all the people who are next to them must work as nurses in order to provide them with all the necessary help”.*

Several children made kindly intended and supportive remarks:

*“if a child makes fun of a disabled student I would beat them very hard, because those children and young people can not be humiliated”.*

Finally a boy from the third year class said:

*“those children and young people must be cared because they may die very soon”.*

Besides those attitudes, I came across with a very small number of students who were negative with the idea of having a disabled student in their class. Even though at first almost all the students answered that they wanted a disabled student as their friend, some students during the completion of the first paper that I had given to them, did not manage to hide their real feelings and views towards disabled students. Three students said that their school is not the right place for disabled students and that the right place will be a “special” school. One of those students said that:

*“disabled students need a protected and secured environment for them - this place is the “special” school”.*

Also this student said that:

*“during the playtime disabled students will be made fun of by the other students that they might play with in the playground”.*

To the last question ‘what would you say to one of your classmate that makes fun of a disabled student?’ the vast majority of the students reveal their feelings of sorrow and empathy:

*“The disabled student needs your support and love and not your rejection”.*  
*“You need to think more about your behavior towards disabled students”.*

Also statements like:

*“[I would say] you are an idiot”, or “you must be ashamed” or  
“you are pathetic”*

#### **4.9.2 My perspective on what the primary children revealed and summary of key findings**

It must be seen from all the above that the vast majority of children and young people have a conservative attitude towards the disabled children and young people. The educational system must take into consideration the answers of the primary students. The primary students must learn more about how they can accept and include the disabled students in their everyday life.

The educational system in general must pay attention in order to learn that many of the primary students have a positive attitude to difference. And when I am using the word ‘difference’ I must explain that by this I mean everything that differs in our lives, for example our height, our eyes color, our weight, our learning abilities, etc. If we manage to find the way to explain to the children and young people the right attitude towards everything that differs, then inclusion would be a reality. I understood from my teaching experience that during their school years the vast majority of children and young people are not having a set impression of what is a disabled child – they are open to learning inclusive attitudes.



When I completed this part of my research I was thinking about all the traditional research methods that I had been taught through my studies. I found out that each researcher must have the freedom to do the method or the combinations of methods that they believed are the rights, in order to collect the necessary data. I must admit that I have never read anywhere about the approach I took to researching with the children but I believe that following the children's lead gave me the chance to collect data that I might never have collected with the typical traditional data collecting methods. Group discussions worked as 'an interview', but in a sense better than the traditional interview, and I gave the children as much time as they want in order to write down their answers too. The children had the chance to answer and discuss all the questions as they wanted to. At the end of this attempt, I realized that sometimes a researcher must listen to their own intuitive voice and do what their inside voice said. This is what I did during the children and young people's 'interviews'.

### **Headline findings**

From the primary children I learned:

- The majority of the students seemed that they do not accept their disabled classmates as equal to them but they feel rather sorry for them and express and empathy for them.
- The students admitted that if anyone is going to make fun of a disabled student this is not acceptable for them.
- Some students said that they think the 'right' place for the disabled students is not the primary school, but the "special" school.

- Listening to the voices of students ended as a wonderful opportunity in terms that it gave to this research lot of richness, concerning the collected data.
- Researchers have to try new methods apart from the traditional research methods, if they feel that those new techniques fit the needs of their research.

#### **4.10. Exploring perspectives with the “special” school children and young people**

The data that follows is written as ‘stories’ of aspects of my students experience during the two years I had been working as a “special” teacher at the “special” school. During those two years I had the same students and the same paraeducator. The names of the students are changed because of confidentiality issues. The purposes for writing the stories (which it is important to note I have said in Chapter 3 comprise a *composite story* combining my observation with their experience) are the following:

- to raise the voices of three disabled students who do not have the ability to communicate in a verbal way.
- to reveal the general climate of the “special” school through reference to a disabled child’s experience
- to show the ways that inclusion had been applied and the results of those inclusion techniques that I used in relation to the experience of disabled children and young people
- to give suggestion for further improvement.

Before I started I must admit that I had lot of thoughts about this specific piece of writing.

I was worried again about the mix of being a teacher and at the same time acting as a

researcher in this school. It seemed to me that this mix of roles involved lot of danger, in the matter of ethics, but unfortunately in order to listen to the voices of children and young people in the “special” school, nothing else in my opinion could be done. Some of the incidents that will be mentioned later in this section of the chapter will have a deeply personal input from me, but I will try to be as specific as I can, in order to divide my personal opinion from the real facts and incidences. I know that this aim will be a very difficult one to satisfy, but the only way to articulate the perspectives of those children and young people, was through the voice of someone else who knew them very well.

#### **4.10.1.1. GEORGE’S STORY**

George (the name is a pseudonym) is one of the disabled students that came to the “special” school in the year I was researching. He spent all his kindergarten years at a private nursery school and at the age of seven years old he came to the “special” school. The diagnosis that George had, was ‘hyperactive syndrome, with severe mental retardation’ (this is exactly the diagnosis according to the doctor). He did not talk at all and he did not have a way to express his major needs. During the years that George was a student of mine, we found out that he was an autistic child. As mentioned before, there is a problem with the medical evaluations in Cyprus, and George is one of the students that did not have the right evaluation when he arrived at our school.

He was not so friendly at the beginning of the school and he was also very hyperactive. George’s family was very supportive to me and his mother used to visit school once a week, in order to have a really good co-operation. The major aims in my opinion, for

George in the beginning, were concerned with the behavior of the child. We wanted the child to feel secure and happy in his new environment. George was a very lovable child and he wanted a lot of support, care and love both from me, and from the paraeducator that worked with me. Beside the behavioral aims, I tried to offer a toilet training program to the student, which was successful, because at the end of the first year in school George was in a position to go to the toilet by himself, wash his hands, and do his bath with some help.

After the first months, I started thinking about the learning program of George. In co-operation with all the “specialists” that work with George (speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist) we designed an individual educational program for the child. The program consisted of learning the colors, the fruits, some animals, doing some exercises which will prepare him for writing, learning to work with other children and young people around him, respecting other children and young people, learning some simple mathematic concepts (‘up-down’, ‘big-small’, ‘fat-thin’, etc.) and finding a way through the use of Pecks (a symbol system) to communicate effectively with the child.

During the first week of school a major incident at school made me think that George was a child with lot of difficulties. It is usual in the educational system of Cyprus, that in the first week of the school year, a priest comes to each school and blesses the school, the children and young people and the staff, in order they should all have a good school year. During that ceremony I was holding the hand of George and I took him next to the priest in order to be blessed. The blessing is done with the blessing water that the priest has in a

bowl. The priest used to take some leaves and bless each child with the blessing water. When George's turn came he decided in seconds that it would be funny if he threw the bowl with the water that the priest had in the table next to him. He did that and he broke the bowl and all the blessing water went down to the floor. I felt so embarrassed and also responsible for that accident. After that George started laughing very loud. It was one of the times that I felt that maybe I will not be the right person for doing this job. That was a thought that came to my mind lot of times, while I was at the "special" school.

According to the mother of the child, George had been facing lot of problems with his socialization. They could not take him anywhere, because he started screaming and crying. Having that in mind, after the first month that was used for preparation, learning the environment of the school, my group of student started every Friday to visit various places in the society. The socialization program used to be sent to the parents once a month with the main aims of each visit explained. I must admit that I did not find any problems or concerns from the parents of my students, but I faced very serious problems for my colleagues. The main reason for their negative behavior was that the vast majority of them felt that socialization program was not so useful and generally it was unnecessary for disabled students. They started commenting to me in the beginning, that I would be so tired at the end of the day and that this was not necessary, because the children and young people would not gain anything from the visits. I started thinking about their behaviors and sometimes the idea that they might have been right passed my mind. Fortunately at the end of the day I have discovered, that their negative behaviors towards the socialization program, was because they did not want to do something like that. Also they

were afraid that if the other parents find out about the existence of that program, they would demand from them to do something similar with other students. Even the administration of the school was not supportive and the Head Teacher used to tell me, that my socialization program created a lot of problems for the children and young people. No matter what the problems were, I decided that the program would move forward.

At the beginning of the program we were visiting places like, parks and playgrounds, where there was not so much noise. After a month I decided that it was time to try something more crowded. We went to supermarkets, to the city center, to the shops, to restaurants, cafeterias, farms, small trips to the mountains, or to several churches.

George in the beginning when we used to go to parks he was happy and relaxed, because they were not crowded. He used to play by himself, run, and screaming. I left him to do whatever he wanted, because I thought that this would make him feel less stressed and happier. I tried to have the behavioral aims in the classroom and I decided to leave him free elsewhere. When we started visiting more crowded places he started crying and shouting very loud. He wanted to be with me all the time and go with me wherever I went. I found that to be very stressful and sometimes I must admit that I was very nervous too. After some visiting to crowded places George started becoming better and better. He was walking next to me, holding my hand, but he did not shout any more. I was so proud and happy for that. The first experiences of George social inclusion were becoming a reality.

The mother of George did not believe me in the beginning when I informed her about George's behavior during the socialization program. The improvement of George was amazing. One day I invited his mother to join us to one of our visits to a big supermarket. I told her to meet us there, so she would have a chance to see her child, before George saw her. While we were at the supermarket I saw his mother was crying because she could not believe that the child who was waking next to me without making any noise was her son. The right and proper behavior of George continued even after he saw his mother. After that incident George used to go with his family to lot of places. He still makes noise sometimes but he was much better than in the beginning. I informed the mother that we still had a long road and that this was only the beginning.

All the above were the first inclusion experiences of a child with lot of needs according to the medical diagnosis that George had. After that socialization program and after the response that this program had, I decided during the first year to do something different, apart from the socialization program that had been continued. I decided to make a contact with a nursery school that was situated very near to the school and ask them if they were interested in organizing a joint inclusion program according to the needs of my students and to the needs of the students of the kindergarten. A lot of questions and gossiping started in the school, concerning my new idea. Nevertheless, the two "special" teachers that worked with me in the "special" School at that time told me that they would support this idea and that they wanted to take part to this program as well.

The Head Teacher of the school could not be named as supportive. He said that the specific task was a very difficult one and he mentioned that according to his experience in the field of “special” education in Cyprus, ideas like mine were excellent - in a theoretical framework. I decided though to move forward with my idea. I had a meeting with the Head Teacher of the kindergarten school, in which we talked about various ways of implementing this program and also about the possible problems that may arise from this. I tried to be as realistic as possible with them, when I was describing the strengths and the weakness of my students. Also we discussed about the importance that this program would have for disabled students and also for the kindergarten students as well. Sometimes when I was talking to her, I thought that I was not valid in a sense that I overestimated the abilities of my students. I realized then that it was very difficult task for me to be ‘just’ a teacher without mentioning any feelings for my students.

After lot of discussion we decided that we would have meetings once a week for two periods (45 minutes each period). During those 90 minutes the students would dance, sing, exercises, and do art lessons together. In each meeting either me, or the kindergarten teacher would be responsible for the program and for the exercises that took place. The main place that our meetings would take place would be the kindergarten school and we decided that sometimes our meetings would take place to the “special” school as well.

I returned to school very excited and full of energy and I went to the Head Teacher office in order to inform him about the results of my meetings. When I started telling him what happened and what we decided I found out that my energy started leaving my body and



in its position lot of anger took place. The Head Teacher was not so excited about the results of the meeting, because I am sure now that in his narrow mind he believed that the other Head Teacher of the kindergarten school would be as negative as him. Unfortunately for him she was very supportive to the idea. He even told me that it would be very difficult for the school bus to take us there once a week and also once a week to the socialization program. I have to clarify that the distance between the “special” school and the Kindergarten school was just five minutes with the school bus. I decided that I would fight for that program and that I would do the best in order for that program to end as a great success.

We started the program with another colleague, a “special” teacher and we used to go to kindergarten once a week. I believed, and I still believe, that this program offered to the students of my class the best socialization experiences. As times passed it had been found that this program was indeed very tiring for the teachers and very happy and relaxing for the students.

The first day we went to this program we went to the kindergarten class full of stress. We did not know what would be the first reaction either for our disabled students, not for the kindergarten students. In the first meeting we decided that we would sit in a circle and that the children and young people would introduce their self. After that, a teacher would explain to the children and young people in a very simple way the reasons for doing this program. Following this we had a discussion about the accepted and unaccepted behavior in order to set the rules, which would be the same for all children and young people.

After the discussion a music lesson started with all the students singing and clapping. We encouraged our students to go and sit next to the kindergarten students and vice versa. When all the students were either singing or clapping, one of our students, Marios, started running to the class and he went to the dolls house and he wanted to sit there instead of sitting with all the other students. Marios was so excited he started shouting. Suddenly all students stopped singing and they looked at Marios with alarm. Some of them were afraid and they started crying. The kindergarten teacher started talking to them and explaining to them why Marios behaved like that and that his behavior was not the right one but an excuse must be given to them since that was the first time he did something that was wrong. Some of the children and young people after this event were afraid of Marios and they took lot of time in order to feel better towards him.

When we left the school that day we were exhausted and also we were very anxious and nervous about all the suspicious questions that we would expect back at our own school. We decided that at that time it was better for us not to provide a lot of information about the way the program went on. I started feeling that the Cypriot educational system had a way in order to dissolve all the dreams you might have. I decided that I would never be a member of this tradition.

The program moved on very well and in a very smooth way. All the worries that we had in the beginning went away, when we saw our students sitting with other students, laughing with other students and playing with other students. The importance here was that those students were non disabled students. Our disabled students found it more

difficult and they needed more time in order to feel secure and accepted than kindergarten students. Before we started the program I thought that since our society was too small and since everything in Cyprus is so narrow-minded, kindergarten students would have difficulties in order to accept disabled students. When we went to places like parks and restaurants it was amazing that kindergarten students started feeling responsible for those disabled students and took care of them very good. They got used of them when they were angry and they shouted and they did not make fun of them. They even helped them to eat.

The last parameter that had to be mentioned about this program was that at the beginning of the program we asked kindergarten students to draw the way they imagined a disabled student would be like. Almost all of the students had drawn a very sad face for the disabled student. At the end of the program, some months later, we asked for those students to draw again the way they imagined a disabled student. The differences were a lot. The vast majority of the kindergarten students had drawn the disabled child as a very happy child. What we wanted to succeed was a reality. From the disabled student's view, students were very excited when I was telling them in the morning, that those were the days when we would go to kindergarten school. They were very happy and I am sure also slightly anxious until they went there. At the kindergarten the disabled students felt nice and warm after the first three meetings. The same feelings appeared on behalf of the kindergarten students who seemed to have a great time when we went to their school. They kept asking their teacher when we would visit them again. Thus we thought the purpose of the program had been succeeded.

#### **4.10.1.2. Headline Findings**

The major findings that came up from this story are the following:

- There is widespread suspicion from within educational system about the usefulness of socialization programs for disabled children and young people. Indeed the Head Teacher of the focal “special” showed doubt and no interest in trying such a program.
- The results of the socialization program with the Kindergarten school seemed amazingly positive not only on behalf of the disabled students but also on behalf of the kindergarten students.
- The will of a small group of committed teachers managed at the end to resist the old fashioned programs which wanted disabled students to be away from society.
- There are colleagues in the education system who believes in inclusion; the system though did not have mechanisms in order to support them and congratulate them.

#### **4.10.2.1. JEAN’S STORY (*My Challenging Student*)**

The second student whose story I will tell was Jean. Jean was the main reason why I felt sometimes bad and not able to be an effective teacher during my experience at the “special” school. On the other hand I felt a special emotional bond with Jean.

Jean was one of the oldest young people in the school. He came to the school when he was 17 years old. Before he attended our “special” school, Jean was attending a private “special” school the only one in Cyprus. The experiences of the parents of that school

forced them to find another better school for their son. As the father of Jean informed me at the beginning of our meetings, one day he went to school earlier in order to pick his son and take him to the doctor. He found Jean sitting in a chair alone and looking outside of the window like he was waiting for someone to give him some attention. The worst thing though was that he was roped in the chair and he could not go anywhere. The father became so angry that he decided to take Jean and take him to a public school where things may be better, since it would be administered and controlled by the Ministry of Education and Culture. I asked Jean's father why he did not go either to the police or to the Ministry of Education and Culture and report this incident and I have to admit that his answer was very disappointing. He said to me:

*"I have tried several times to change the things but unfortunately I could not manage to do anything. What do I have to do? Please tell me!!!"*

During the first two years of Jean being at the "special" school his parents were not very happy as they were informed their son was almost all the day in the bus, a place that Jean used to love until today. The bus is the vehicle that takes him outside to the world.

Jean is an autistic child with challenging behavior and almost all the staff of the "special" school felt very worried and terrified in front of him because it is very possible that he would hit anyone in front of him. When Jean became violent he became also very frightened. I decided to take Jean in my class and I asked specifically to have him. I knew that this case would be a difficult one but on the other hand I thought that as the case of Jean would be a challenging case for me, I would have an opportunity to show to some of my colleagues that even with very disabled students like Jean, a committed teacher can work and make progress.

The first days with Jean were very difficult. The first aim that I had for Jean was to leave the bus a little earlier every day. During the first days I went to the bus and sat with him in the bus for a short period of time before I forced him to leave the bus. The first tries for Jean to leave the bus were very difficult. Jean used to hit me a lot and also he used to injure himself a lot. I tried to give him boundaries for his behavior. I showed him very clearly which behavior was right and which was wrong. After three weeks and also after a lot of injuries that I had from him, I decided that it would be better for him to be more calm. We had problems with Jean and the bus for a long period of time, but eventually he came to school happier and he wanted to leave the bus in order to meet his teacher and his classmates.

Jean's family was very friendly the first time they met me. They were very happy because as they informed me it was the first time that someone invited them to the school and asked them to provide information about their son and the behavior of their son. During the first meeting I informed the parents about the main aims of their child's individual educational program. Both of the parents, and one of Jean's sisters who joined the meeting, seemed to be very satisfied. During the meeting Jean's family provided me with very useful information concerning the life of Jean at home and his daily routine. The parents admitted that they could not go anywhere, because the child used to get so frustrated and angry. They could not visit friends' houses anymore and they did not take any invitations from friends because of Jean. The parents seemed to be very depressed from that situation.

At home Jean used to do whatever he wanted and if anyone was telling him not to do something he injured himself and all the others. Thus, they decided not to push him so much and just try to make him feel happy. When at first someone told them that Jean must learn how to behave and must also learn what is permitted and what not, his parents seemed to be sure that this could not succeed with their son. I tried to explain them what would be the consequences for the future if Jean would continue to do whatever he wanted and I realized that this was the first time that someone talked to them very honestly about their son.

From the first days I understood that Jean would be a student that I would love very much. He was very sweet and lovable. He wanted some attention in order to show his love. He started getting out of the bus without a problem when I was there and with some problems when I was not there. I used to sing with him lot of songs that Jean loved according to his parents and the child used to be very happy for this. We used to draw things with our hands and we used to dance a lot. After one month in my class Jean started to change.

After this change to Jean's behavior I thought that it was the time to start his socialization program with the rest of the team. My worries were mainly about the responses of Jean. I felt very secure with all the other students and my only concern was Jean. We decided that the place to start our socialization was a park, which was situated next to the school, a place where it would be safe for all the team. All the worries I had turned out to be wrong with Jean that day. The child was very happy. He started walking around and he

started singing the songs he loved. He did not create any inconvenience or problem. After some time he sat next to me and me wanted me to hug him and kiss him. He seemed to be very relaxed. His behavior towards the other students showed us that he ignored them and he wanted all the attention from the teacher and the paraeducator.

Half an hour before we left, a couple came to the park and sat very near to us. The man started smoking and he put his lighter on the seat next to him. The color of the lighter was green. When Jean saw the smoke from the lit cigarette he started saying to me “smoke, smoke”, very clearly and suddenly he went next to the man and he picked up the lighter. I went next to him saying to him that this behavior was not right, because the lighter belonged to the man and that the appropriate behavior was to give him the lighter back. Jean denied returning the lighter and he started injuring himself. I tried to stop him and he hit me as well. The couple was in a panic and I managed at last to take the lighter from Jean and return it to the man. I took him by the hand (which was full of blood) and I took him to the bus in order to return to school.

When we returned to the school all the colleagues saw him and all of them started saying to me how big my mistake was to take him outside and that this might have caused me some injury as well. I closed my ears and I went to class where he was crying very much and he was showing me his tears. I did not know how to react. From the one hand I thought that it would be better if I left him there crying without paying any attention to him. On the other hand, I decided that it would be proper to go next to him, hug him and tell him that what he did was wrong and he must no do anything like that in the future. I



did that finally and Jean became very happy and relaxed. In my car, when I was leaving the school that day I was thinking whether I should take him again to the socialization program or just leave him in school and go with the rest of the team. I decided that according to my principles I should provide to Jean one more chance next week.

The following week, according to the socialization program, my team would visit the center of Nicosia. I was very afraid of the behavior of Jean but I did not say anything to anyone. I talked to him before we left the school that his behavior must be the right one this time. I believed that he understood what I said to him, because during this visit to the city center, he was excellent. I held his hand all the time. He did not make any problem. He saw a shop with lot of chocolates and he wanted to go inside that shop in order to buy some chocolates which he loved. I said he could not go inside the shop and we continued our walk without any problem.

His parents could not believe that their son went to the city center without making any problem and I invited them to take part in our next visit. His mother agreed to do that.

During our third visit we went to another park. Jean was there and his mother as well. I told to his mother to leave her son with me and to take another child from the team in order to help us. She did that. Jean was very lovable at that day. His mother was very happy that his son was so happy. She even started crying from her happiness. I was ready to start crying as well, but I stopped myself.

He was excellent on all the other visits we did during the year, when I was next to him. I tried to leave my paraeducator to walk with him some days but he started complaining that he wanted me. Jean started be more patient with less violent, and also he started socializing. He could not take part to the kindergarten program because he was too old at almost twenty years old and his challenging behavior did not allow us to take him with us to the kindergarten. He went though to the joint socialization program that the kindergarten with my class had. At the end of the second year he was in a position to go to a restaurant and visit a supermarket without any problem, if his teacher was with him.

A last example of Jean's socialization was that at his mother birthday, his family decided after lot of years to go somewhere out to celebrate the event and they wanted to take him with them. Two days before the birthday of Jean mother's, I got a telephone from his mother, asking me to join them to the restaurant. I worried that it would not be so professional for me to join them. But on the other hand I decided that this was a very good example to show them what their child can do and show them ways they could behave to help him. We went out and Jean was amazing. He even took his plate and went with me in order to be served. His father could not believe what he was seeing. He ate properly not with a folk and a knife but with a spoon, and he used a tissue as well. At that time I felt very proud of my work. The "wild animal of the school" (which is how some colleagues used to name this student) became a student. I think that the only thing that Jean wanted from the others was to respect him and value him. This was the "recipe" for Jean's progress.

#### **4.10.2.2            **Headline Findings****

The major findings that came up from this story are the following:

- Everything can be done in the field of “Special” Education. According to people’s views of this student, nothing could be done because of the challenging personality of the student. It can be concluded though that when some respect and some interest was shown then the abilities can be seen.
- The work between the family and the school is one of the most serious parameters to work with in order to try and help the student.
- We as professionals have to collaborate with the parents of a disabled child in detail in order to gain their respect and their trust.
- The socialization program is very important for all disabled students because it enables them to escape loneliness.

#### **4.10.3.1. ANGELOS’S STORY**

Angelos was the third student that I had in my class for two years. He came to the “special” school after his attendance at a private kindergarten. He was seven years old, when he came and he was diagnosed as having Angelman Syndrome. Angelos is a very beautiful and lovable student. From the first day he came to my class he was an easygoing student. I knew from the beginning that this student would not create a lot of difficulties. Angelos took part in the socialization program as the other students of the class. He was very used to socialization though, because his family used to take him everywhere, since he did not make any problems. Angelos behaved properly on both the

socialization program and the kindergarten program. He loved going to the kindergarten but he loved more going to the city center.

The main difficulties that we faced with Angelos though, were that the student was very jealous of the other students in his team. He preferred to be the only student in the class and he wanted to be next to me all the time. He wanted always to sit next to me and to hold my hand. If he wanted to eat I had to sit next to him in order to eat. There were sometimes I felt that I was more like a mother for him than his teacher. I got very frustrated. One day I got angry with him because he even wanted to follow me to the toilet. I denied taking him with me and he started crying. I left him though with the paraeducator in the class and with the other classmates of his and I went to the toilet. When I returned to the class after a period of maximum five minutes I found a big mess in the class. Angelos after I had left the class started shouting very loud and started throwing things in the class. His behavior started being very serious. I informed the psychologist of the school and I also informed his family and I asked them to come to school. When they came to school and after a very short conversation that they had with me and the psychologist, they said that they did not know how to behave towards their child's reactions and said that they desperately needed help.

After this meeting and after we informed the parents, about the various strategies they could try, they promised that they would try and that they would visit the school more often, in order to get informed about their child progress. Angelos's behavior at school remained the same though during the socialization program his jealous behavior did not

appear at all. His behavior at school did not progress well. His progress at the learning part of the day was excellent, since the child was working alone with me. I believed that the role of mine at the school for him was not the role of his teacher but the role of his mother. I felt at various times during the two years that I stayed at the "special" school that I was not a good teacher for him. I used to ask myself about other possible ways to help this student. Unfortunately I did not manage to do much. I was wondering whether the behavior of Angelos had something to do with the way I treated him. I could not make an answer about this. What was sad was that I did not have anyone from the school staff to talk about this. Everyone at the school felt they were very good teachers. I was the only one feeling that I needed support. They believed that if they said that they needed help that would mean that they are weak. During a staff meeting I suggested that it would be a very good idea and helpful for all the staff, if during the staff meeting the staff would analyze cases of students. At those meetings, a student case would be analyzed and all the staff would say their comments, which may be very useful for the teacher. We did this case study once; I was the one who raised a case and that was all. We did not continue that.

Angelos continued acting very jealously. When I was talking to other students, or even to my colleagues Angelos used to be next to me, holding my hand. He did not want to go to the other therapists by himself or with the paraeducator, he wanted me to take him. I tried so hard with the help of the psychologist of the school to work with him and his family but unfortunately we could not manage to do much. It was the first time that I felt that all my efforts did not achieve anything. No-one from the teaching staff supported me. They

left me alone. I was thinking that probably I was the person who created some of those problems for my student Angelos. It took me lot of months after I left school to understand that there are times where you cannot do much. You cannot stop trying though, you have to continue try.

#### **4.10.3.2. Headline findings**

The main findings of this story are the following

- The staff who work with disabled students need support because of the stress and the anxiety that can be created from the challenging cases.
- We must listen to the voice of ourselves as professionals. In this case I listened to my voice that I did not cope right with Angelos, but I was afraid to express this and ask for help.
- The existing educational system makes us feel that we are not allowed to make any mistakes in our work with disabled students and this inhibits our efforts.
- The co-operation with the family of the disabled child and the school is very important.
- The role of the psychologist is very important because they can act in a less emotional way to the parents of the disabled child than the teachers. Teachers are the professionals that the parents will have the closer connection with, someone else apart from them, who is part of the system, and who has the right qualifications such as psychologists, can work with the parents who currently have no one else to support them.

#### **4.11.1. Exploring perspectives with the parents of the primary school children**

The views of the parents of the students who attend the primary school could not be absent from this research. The story of the parents is also interesting and it provides us with lots of information. I quickly found that the vast majority of parents with children attending the Primary School are not informed about the “special” education policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, because as they explained, this law was about disabled children and young people and not their children and young people.

It is not strange to find this response. The vast majority of parents with children at the Primary School have a very low socioeconomic status as has been explained, and they have to worry a lot about their financial situation and they do not have time to be informed about other matters. Also they are frequently not Greek Cypriot citizens (the largest percentage) but they are going to stay in Cyprus for all their life and so have many things on their plate.

Two parents out of ten that had been interviewed said that:

*“we have heard something about this law, which nominated the inclusion of disabled children and young people in the primary classrooms”.*

When the parents were asked if they believe that inclusion is related to the issue of social justice and human rights, they said that they agreed with this and I was informed that:

*“in the case that a disabled child will attend our children’s class, we will suggest to our children and young people to take care of this child. We can understand in a way the feeling that parents with disabled children and young people may have. The reason for this is because in a social way we have been excluded as well. The Cypriot society has a great difficulty to accept difference. A large amount of the Cyprus population usually believe that we came to Cyprus in order to take their jobs and their moneys and that we do not want to stay in Cyprus. Also because of the poverty that lot of our families face, some members are forced to steal money*

*in order to feed their families sometimes. These behaviors are unacceptable for the Greek-Cypriots, since all of them have worked and they are still working too hard in order to have better life conditions after the Turkish invasion of 1974. The population of Cyprus is very proud about this (the way they managed to get through all the difficulties) and they cannot accept other ways different from those they used to have”.*

One of the two families was very supportive to the idea of including a disabled child to a primary classroom and they admitted later that:

*“in our family we have a disabled child and this child make us view the issue of disabled children and young people in a different- more supportive - way”.*

They added that:

*“when a family has a disabled person, then all of its members usually do behave to disabled person in a more accepting and emotional way”.*

The parents that were not informed about “special” education law said that:

*“disabled children and young people who can be educated must attend primary schools and all the necessary attention must be given to those children and young people”.*

It was though, very interesting to consider the view of two parents that:

*“some children and young people with severe difficulties cannot attend primary schools and they have to attend to “special” schools”.*

And one parent mentioned that:

*“ the best place for disabled children and young people is the “special” school. Disabled students must stay at those schools in which they would take the appropriate help. Sometimes it is too difficult and also too dangerous for primary students to have disabled students in their classrooms”.*

In the last question about the future of “special” education in Cyprus, almost all the parents, except one, agreed that:



*“we cannot predict the future of “special” education in Cyprus, but we do hope that this future will be the best for disabled students”.*

Only one parent mentioned that:

*“the future must be better for all students and not only for disabled students. The government must try to fulfill all the needs that the students have. Also more money must be spent in order to develop education in Cyprus”.*

The most interesting part of these interviews was when this group of parents revealed their feelings about the education of their children and young people in the specific school and also about their feelings on the way that Greek Cypriot people often behave to them. They said:

*“The school offered us a lot and we do not have problems either with the administration of the school or with the teachers. All of them are trying to help their children and young people and they wanted to thank them for this”.*

Eight of the ten interviewed families though mentioned that they have a problem with the Ministry of Education and Culture:

*“Our problem firstly begins with the Ministry of Education and Culture attitude to our children and young people; all of our children and young people have to attend the same school, no matter where our house is.”*

Almost all of them are staying in the area of the school but there are families who staying far from there and their children and young people must attend this same school:

*“Our children and young people want to attend their neighbor schools and they did not give them that chance; they forced them to attend this school”.*

Another parent said to me:

*“I am feeling now that I and my family are like disabled persons. This is the way they make us feel in this island. Disabled persons have some rights according to the law; we do not have any of those rights. We only have obligations”.*

The comment this father is making very clear the way that lot of those persons feels in Cyprus. If we want to talk in terms of inclusion we must recognize that they feel we exclude them from our society, since we believe that we are ‘the natives’, ‘the normal’ and others are ‘the abnormal’. So the term ‘disabled’ is – for the contributing parents - equivalent to the term ‘oppressed’:

*“Greek Cypriots are very strict and very racists as well. They do not like someone if they are not Christian orthodox. In such a case it seems they don’t like things that seem to be different”.*

An explanation that someone may give is that Greek Cypriot people have minds closed to difference, because they suffered so much in the case of the Turkish invasion. They believe that they made lot of fights and that they suffer a lot and to be honest they are still suffering. This is probably the reason for this behavior, even though this behavior is not the right one.

#### **4.11.2. Headline Findings**

The main findings from this account of the parents views are the following:

- The majority of the parents who had been asked are not informed about the “special” education policy, since this seemed not to be relevant for them.
- They have a philanthropic attitude towards disabled students.
- Some of them feel that they are like disabled citizens, since the society cannot accept them as equals.
- Parents seemed to be happy with the focal school and they also seemed to appreciate all that the school is doing for their children and young people.

Nevertheless they feel their children and young people should have the right to attend their neighborhood schools.

#### **4.12.1. Exploring the views of parents of the “special” school children and young people**

The interviews with the parents of the disabled students who attend the “special” school provide a lot of light for the needs of this research. All the families I talked to appeared to be very negative and also angry with the government, not only the present one, but in general with all the governments of the last years. Even though they were angry, they express the view that things started going much better nowadays than in the past, and that:

*“the government has started showing some interest to “special” education matters and also it has started to develop bigger amounts of money in order to improve the existing situation of “special” education”.*

All the parents were informed about the “special” education law. They mentioned that:

*“this law has been only the beginning to the improvement of the “special” education”.*

One family added that:

*“the law was very good” and that “the law would help us to help our children and young people”.*

The other three families were happy for the law but not enthusiastic. They mentioned several problems that arise from this law and they have characterized this law as “not complete”. For example, a parent said that:

*“this law is about disabled children and young people who do not attend “special” schools, since it is a law about inclusion”.*

Two of the parents were very angry with the law since that law:

*“did not mention a lot about “special” schools. It is like the law has been ashamed of “special” schools. We are not ashamed of “special” schools since those are the best places for our children and young people”.*

He added by saying that:

*“The new law does not say anything new for “special” schools, except from the part of the law, which is mentioning the regulations that a private “special” school must follow. All the other issues remained the same with the previous law”.*

Three of the four parents were very negative about the idea of inclusion for their children and young people. Only one of the families was enthusiastic and happy for the law, since this law may lead to inclusion of their child into a primary school.

All of the families that had been interviewed have more than one child in their family but only one disabled child. The rest of the children and young people in each family are non-disabled children and young people. The three families mentioned that they faced lot of problems when they were trying to involve their disabled child with a group of other children and young people. They even faced problems when they were trying to include disabled children and young people with children and young people who are their relatives. I asked the parents to mention some example that reveals this and the answers that have been given were very interesting and connect with literature suggesting parents with disabled children and young people face the same problems all over the world.

The parents mentioned for example, birthday parties and how in most cases the other children and young people did not manage to involve the disabled child. Also another very interesting incident that they referred to is that sometimes disabled siblings feel embarrassed about their disabled brother/sister and they prefer not to take them with them. The parents though, mentioned that:

*“the behavior of their non disabled children and young people towards their disabled brother or sister is very good when they are at home or at places where it is known that they have a disabled sibling. Especially when they are at home they usually treat the disabled child in a non-disabling way. They try to involve them in their play. This scenario though, usually changes when they leave home and they go to places where it is not known that they have a disabled sibling”.*

As it had been mentioned above the vast majority of the families interviewed were negative to the idea of inclusion, typically saying:

*“Inclusion is not for our children and young people”,*

A parent felt:

*“Inclusion is for children and young people with learning difficulties. Disabled children and young people with a lot of difficulties cannot be included to primary classrooms. The educational system is not for these children and young people, it is for children and young people with less difficulties”.*

The majority of parents of the disabled children and young people who attend “special” school mentioned that:

*“we prefer our disabled child to stay in a protected environment and this kind of environment is the “special” school. “Special” school is a protected environment. Also this place contains lot of specialists like a speech therapist or music therapist, “special” educators, occupational therapist and lot more. Those specialists can not be found in a primary school.*

They added that:

*“Even though the “special” school is a good “special” school, there is lot space for improvement. More “special” teachers must be employed by the Ministry.*

*Only three “special” teachers work in the school and there must be only “special” teachers in this school”.*

The families believe :

*“There is an explanation about the specific attitude of the Ministry of Education and Culture, concerning the issue of the employment of more “special” teachers. They do not employ more “special” teachers, because they believe that the abilities of the children and young people are so low that is a waste of experts, if they employ “special” teachers in the “special” school. They prefer that their “special” teachers work in “special” units, the places where inclusion can be best served”.*

They said that:

*“The vast majority of the teaching staff of the school are not specialized and also they have at least ten years experience in this one school. My disabled child has been with the same teacher for eight years. We are pleased with the teacher, but we want something different for our child and we prefer to have a “special” teacher rather than a primary teacher”.*

The government must do a lot more according to the parents:

*“Also more money must be given from the government to the school in order for the teaching staff to be equipped with all the necessary materials/games that they will be needed. Families need more financial support in order to provide to their disabled child all the expertise that will help them”.*

Also all the parents mentioned, that the government should provide other support, beside from the financial aid that it offers to them:

*“it never supports us emotionally. From the first moment we have realized that we have a disabled child, and we have tried by ourselves to continue our lives in a normal way”.*

Also all the parents mentioned:

*“almost all of our friends did not want to socialize with us after the birth of the disabled child. The invitations for parties started to be fewer and there were invitations only for the parents without the disabled child”.*

Even though the majority of parents are against inclusion, parents want for the teachers to organize some inclusion programs that would be applicable to the needs of their children and young people. Parents mentioned that:

*“the only teaching staff that organized those inclusion programs was the “special” teachers, who tried to include with those programs our disabled children and young people in the society. They used to take the children and young people to the parks, supermarkets, shops, cafes, etc”.*

One parent who met his child with his “special” teacher to a cafe one day said that:

*“it was the first time that my son was sitting properly in a café, without making any noise or destroying something. I started crying, when I saw this. My son seemed to be so happy and relaxed”.*

Also one of the families mentioned the program with the kindergarten, which was situated very near to “special” school:

*“Before the visit the “special” teacher informed the kindergarten teacher about her plans and they agreed on a combined program for the hours, which contained art, music, physical education. The parents were informed of this program. They have asked us whether we approved for our disabled child to participate in this program and we were all enthusiastic for that inclusive program”.*

The thoughts that the parents expressed about the field of “special” education in general and about its future were very interesting and also they provided me with useful information and lot of food for thought. All the parents with a child attending “special” school said that:

*“our predictions for the future of this field in Cyprus are good in general”.*

Becoming more specific, three families agreed that:

*“the future for our disabled children and young people is not so hopeful, because the government probably will not pay any attention to those cases of disabled children and young people, because their number is not so big. The future*

*attention of the government will be disabled students who have learning difficulties and not mental retardation and autism”.*

Only one family said that:

*“the future of “special” education seems to be very good and ambitious. “Special” education is going to be developed more and more. The future of disabled children and young people today is much better than the past”.*

All the parents mentioned that:

*“our disabled children and young people need immediately a place where they can attend after the completion of the 21<sup>st</sup> year of our child. Now in Cyprus there is only one place, the Christou Steliou Ioannou Foundation that is working and has some houses in which disabled young adults can stay for the day. The problem is that the existing foundation is not for those who have mental retardation or autism. The student population of the existing foundation is only children and young people who can verbally communicate and take care of themselves properly. All the most challenging cases of disabled children and young people cannot attend this foundation. On the other hand all the houses that take care of the children and young people cannot offer any learning or even entertaining program to the disabled children and young people. Finally all of the places that have been mentioned are not under the authorization of the Ministry of Education and Culture, since the disabled children and young people that used to attend those places are above the age of 21 years old”.*

So as a conclusion on this issue according to parents of disabled children and young people:

*“the government must organize places which disabled adults can attend and those places must be authorized by the Ministry of Education and Culture”.*

On the subject of inclusion, the three families remained pessimistic and said that:

*“the idea of including those cases would be dismissed in the future. Inclusion can be applied only for disabled children and young people who have the ability to be included in a primary school.”*

But one parent told me:



*“ it is nice to have dreams like the inclusion dream because the dream make people feel good and alive”.*

I choose to place this quotation in bold.

#### **4.12.2 Headline Findings**

The main headline findings that can be concluded from the above material offered by parents of children and young people in “special” school are the following:

- The government needs to do more in order to develop the “special” education field, even though it has tried to do something during the last years more action is required
- The new law feels as if it does not take into consideration the “special” schools, because it is a law that promotes inclusion. Thus parents of disabled children and young people seem to feel left out of the new notion of inclusion.
- Parents of disabled students express fear of inclusion, because in the past they have experienced social exclusion and been left out of the society. They are afraid that again this will happen.
- Almost all of the parents interviewed have experienced in the past the feeling of loneliness, since they do not have a social life with their disabled child. It seems to them that the combination of having a disabled child and a social life does not exist.
- The parents believe that inclusion is something that cannot be applied to their disabled children and young people: it can only be applied to children and young people who have learning difficulties.

- The government has to pay attention to the development of some centers for disabled adults which should be under the authorization of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to be evaluated.

#### **4.13. Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I have presented all of the data I collected for my PhD research and I have threaded analytic thinking through the data by writing about my own reactions to the material and trying to pull out the key of ‘headline’ findings which I feel should be noted.

In the next chapter, I revisit this data chapter and present a discussion on the principle findings, such as concern the existing situation of the educational system, the level of parental involvement, and the “special” education law. Several suggestions and thoughts about how are we going to improve the way inclusive education has been applied will be mentioned as well. The aim is to try to view clearly the existing situation and to provide guidance in order to make inclusion a reality. The suggestions I have tried to make as practical as could be, since what we need immediately is not the theoretical framework of inclusion alone, but the practical applications of this framework.

# *CHAPTER 5*

# *CONCLUSION*

## **5.1 Conclusion**

### **5.1.1. Introduction**

This Ph.D. worked as a path for me as a “special” education practitioner and also as a “special” education researcher to better understand the project of inclusion in Cyprus. I cannot decide yet which role is most interesting and important for me, even though I have thought about this a lot. Each role has its own attraction and uniqueness. It is my belief that in this combined role that I have walked through, I manage to view “special” education and especially inclusion not only as a theory but also as a practice as well. Experience in the every day life of inclusion makes me think otherwise.

Even though I am near the end of this work I cannot find easily the proper words to express what I mean by inclusion. Inclusion involves feelings, pictures and beliefs. And those feelings, pictures and beliefs cannot be easily put into a piece of paper. I will try though to provide the reader with as much of my reflection as I can.

### **5.1.2. Reflections on findings**

Inclusive education is not simply a reform in “special” education today in my belief as a result of my research. It is about the convergence of the need to restructure the public education system, to meet the needs of a changing society. It is about the development of the unitary system that has educational benefits for both typical students and disabled students. It is about a system that provides quality education for all children and young people (Lipsky and Gartner, 2000). The realization of inclusion is seen not as something that has to be fought for but as something that results from taking the “right” sort of

action at different levels of policy-making and implementation (Dyson, 2000). Inclusive education is not merely a characteristic of a democratic society, it is essential to it (Lipsky and Gartner, 2000.) Merry Cross was made particularly conscious of the stereotypes that are attached to people in wheelchairs when she was temporarily confined to one in place of the caliper she was then using. She mentioned that when she was in the wheelchair for three weeks she was appalled. People patted her on the head and called her “dear” and offered to do things for her that was ludicrous (Sutherland, 1981). It is not time for “special” education to have such attitudes. It is time for full inclusion.

We do know the fact that some children and young people, especially the group of children and young people that face multiple difficulties can not be easily included in primary classrooms, but my research has convinced me that they can be treated in an inclusive way, using inclusive techniques. Experience revealed to us that this is something possible. Inclusion is not a monolithic concept. There are multiple versions of inclusion, so that it makes the sense to talk about “inclusions”, in the plural (Dyson, 2000). Inclusion as an idea, as a belief is something that cannot mean the same to each person, no matter in which society this person is living. Inclusion is a personal feeling that each human being will transform in his /her own way. The only ingredients that inclusion must include in my opinion in order to have and apply inclusion is, respect, dignity and equity. Those are the vital ingredients. Some teachers in my every day life at school used to complain that even though they believe in the necessity of inclusion they can not apply inclusion, because they do not have the school environment to support them for this application. I must admit that I hate those beliefs. Because in my opinion if

you believe in inclusion, they you will find the various ways to support it and make it reality. All outside factors are excuses. I may sound hard, but the reality in Cyprus according to the data I have reported in this thesis, makes me see the truth in a clear view.

If a dialogue on inclusion does not take place, inclusion may become an empty slogan.

We do need to ensure that inclusion itself is deconstructed and reconstructed in a way that it does not become a restrictor to the continuation of that process (Skrtic, 1995). The reason why I mentioned this, is because I want to express the view that this dialogue must take place in the mind of each one of us and especially in the mind of educators that have to deal with inclusion everyday. No matter how helpful the Ministry of Education and Culture must be in order to apply inclusion in Cyprus, inclusion does not need technicalities in order to be a reality. What it needs is minds and souls. I do not express the view that the role of Ministry of Education and Culture is not important. It is important, but not the most important part. The desire for an inclusive society and educational system is arising from the conviction that discrimination is deeply connected with a society which is based on inequalities and disadvantages (Barton, 2000).

The main job of schools in the years ahead must be to try to change the existing social differences and stereotypes (Armstrong, 1998). Students in the primary schools of Cyprus have not learned to view and accept the term “difference” as something ordinary and valuable. They are afraid of differences. If we have those beliefs how can we believe that the aim of inclusion will be something accessible? Barton (2000) mentioned that an inclusive society is concerned with issues of equity and non-discrimination in which the

well doing of all is at the top of the agenda. If we set the issue of disability within the human rights perspective, there are more possibilities that the society will realize the different meaning of difference.

### **5.1.3 Personal reflection**

On this point I would like to mention my own experience as a fat student in the past and as a fat teacher now. I must admit that I have come through the experience of exclusion and I must admit that even today I am facing various insecurities in my everyday life. When I was a student I was one of the best students in my class. I consider myself a hard working person and I believe that as a student I was a hard working person as well. I wanted to be the best. I knew that everybody was gossiping about the way I looked and laughing at me and I wanted to prove to them that I was the best in the academic level. I felt that I was excluded in a way, because of the way I was looked. I must admit that I have shown them that I was much better in different ways. This experience of my personal exclusion as a fat student I believe is nothing in contrast to the difficulties faced by the disabled students who are the focus of this study. As it mentioned above still today many students do not have the social skills to accept and respect the different. They view the different as very strange, and they are afraid of the strange. Everything that differs from the norm can not easily be accepted. How do we expect as “special” education teachers then that students of primary schools will accept a disabled child in their class? Those students are not taught inclusive attitudes and the society is not inclusive either. So this is the starting point.

On the other hand as I have mentioned above, as a fat teacher today I have faced several difficulties. Students have to know me first in order to accept and like me. The way I look is inferior to them, since I am not a part of the 'norm'. I am different as are the children and young people I have in my "special" class. We are seen as "specials" - but not "specials" with a positive meaning, "specials" with the meaning less able and also that the others must feel empathy and sorry for us. To change this, teachers and students must have a new understanding of difference in their life.

My experiences and my research give insight in to how disabled students are feeling in schools in Cyprus everyday. They feel that they are not valuable, they are in a school and in a society in a general that do not believe they have something to offer (Hadjiyiannakou, 2003). They are positioned as different and different is not accepted. Maybe what I am writing now makes the reader think that I have overdone it. Maybe this is true in a way, but I believe in what I am writing and I want my writing to make us think what must be done. I was lucky because I had the inner power to solve some of my difficulties and my problems. I fought very hard and through those fights I came to the conclusion that "being different" means it is not easy to be accepted for your self; it is much worse for disabled students if all the others around you see you as not able.

So what must be done first of all is to change the policy, the educational policy in Cyprus, in general. We must make the educational policy in Cyprus more socially oriented. Such an education, in its inclusivity would be richer and it will offer a more appropriate preparation for post-school life not only for those students who are



disadvantaged but for all students (Ramsey, 1992). I feel now, that this is the right path to inclusion. We must not forget that: “inclusion and participation are main ingredients for human beings” (Salamanca Statement, 1994, p. 11). Kunc (1992) argues that the main principle of inclusive education is the valuing of diversity within the human community. Every person has a contribution to offer to the world. Equity in education for all students, including those who named as having “severe” disabilities requires:

- Unfettered access to publicly and adequately funded education
- Educational services provided in an inclusive setting, that is in the same school available to their non-disabled peers in age-appropriate classes.
- Educational programs that offer effective opportunities for success, in schooling and life and
- Holding those who govern and manage school accountable for the achievement of that success.

(Kerzen and Gartner, 1996)

#### **5.1.4. Finding ways forward**

The first parameter of equity as Kerzen and Gartner (1996) mentioned does not exist in the Cypriot system of “Special” Education. As we have seen through the research data, disabled students do not have access to publicly and adequately funded education. The educational services that are provided in an inclusive setting in a primary school do not offer to those students as much as they deserve, even though there is a “special” education law called “inclusive law”. The data shows schools do not have enough staff trained for disabled children and young people. Yet I feel on the other hand, inclusion

need not involve “special” educators and therapists so much. It involves teachers, who may not have the knowledge but more importantly do have the will to include those students in their class.

To explain their negative attitude at the moment, teachers are mentioning several reasons such as: the large amount of work they have their inability to control and teach those students, their belief that only “specialized” teachers can work with those cases, and finally their view that disabled children and young people are not their responsibility, they are the responsibility of the “specialized staff. Those reasons are serious reasons, but in my opinion, as I have mentioned before, those are the excuses. Teachers who do not believe that difference can exist normally in their class, cannot accept the meaning of difference. It is well known between professionals in the field of education in general that a teacher acts like a model for their class. If teachers do not have the acceptance of difference and the respect of those persons with difficulties then what can we expect from our students? As teachers we are the models and students will learn to act and behave like their model.

Even though there is individual educational program for each disabled student in Cyprus the research picture shows this program exists only when the child is with the “special” education teacher or the speech-therapist. In other cases the existence of this program is unknown. For children without a program there are no opportunities for success. I must not be so pessimistic and I have to mention that there are cases where the primary teachers are trying. Those cases though are not enough.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has conflicting policies on this point. Because on one hand it believes that we must provide for disabled children and young people all we can, and on the other hand it did not offer any training or support to primary teachers. Also the Ministry of Education and Culture push their teachers to complete their aims in terms of how many chapters they teach of mathematics and language for example, and does not pay any attention to students who may not be disabled children and young people but may be slow learners. There is no individualization, there is not much quality in education, and there is emphasis on quantity. And the reason for this is obvious. Quality is much more difficult to be seen and to be understood. Quantity though can be seen very easily.

The absence of a meaningful policy is obvious. According to Fulcher (1999) policy is equal and synonymous with practice. If we do not have the right policy, then how we are expecting to be effective in our everyday practice? Policy can be seen as a strategy of action that is going to be followed by the individual, the community or the state (Oliver 2000). Inclusive education always wanted a policy function in Cyprus.

Those who manage schools in Cyprus have many problems to solve and such an amount of work that is not manageable. I feel my project shows you have to be superhuman in order to manage a school and also care about the social aims of your students apart from the learning goals. Head teachers of primary schools are not going to have good reports or good evaluations because they are working on social skills and inclusion aims. They have to work for the aims that the Ministry of Education and Culture defines every year.

For the last five years those aims are the same and they are the following: (1) *creativity*, (2) *using technology in education* and (3) *co-operation in learning procedures*. There are no official aims for social and inclusive education. How then we want to establish inclusion if we do not have any goals to start from? What is clear then, is the immediate need for a social policy from the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to implement meaningful inclusion. This policy thought must not stay in the theoretical framework. What is needed is with this policy is a time schedule, with plans for actions stated in order to apply this policy. The University of Cyprus and especially the Education Department of the University of Cyprus may help this social change in a professional way. What do I mean by this? I mean that the University of Cyprus should set up a research plan which will examine the existing situation before the implementation of the inclusive policy and the situation after the application of the policy, in different time levels.

## **5.2 Suggestions**

All that had been mentioned above must be taken in mind, and must be forwarded and explained to the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is through my new role as “Special” Education Counselor that I will find the paths to inform the Ministry of Education and Culture about the results of this research. By doing this, I will avoid the danger to be purely theoretical. I will transfer my knowledge to a practical level combining my commitments as both practitioner and researcher.

The suggestions I am going to make came up from my explorations carried out for this PhD – explorations of the existing “special” education system and the various notions of special and inclusive education that exist in Cyprus, plus examination of the relevant literature. My academic knowledge of the field has helped me to understand the experiences I explored in Cyprus and to know they are not unique and that literature can help us to understand the reasons why and to find the possible solutions.

Suggestions which come from my data will be divided into four main parts in order to be easier for the reader to follow the thoughts of the writer. Suggestions about the way that the educational system must change are going to be mentioned.

#### **5.2.1 Lets change the way the educational system is working ...**

I will start by saying that the role of “Special” Education Inspector must be changed. In the Cypriot educational system the role of inspector is seen as they are the person who is going to visit the teacher once or twice a year and they go to evaluate the teacher’s work. “Special” education, especially this field of education with all the tensions and the problems, does not need teachers to feel this pressure as well. I do not believe that we need the inspectors to have such a role. We must find other ways in order to examine or evaluate the work of the teaching staff. If we are going to enter a “mood” of inclusion and create an inclusive policy as I mentioned above, we can not have such insensitive practices.

The current role of the “Special” Education Inspector must be changed to a counselor or consultant role, a person who will have the ability to listen carefully and provide guidelines. Sometimes through my teaching and research experience I heard colleagues admitting that they cannot handle the power that the role of “Special” Education Inspector has over them. The problem is that “special” education staff needs to be free in order to work well. They cannot work under several barriers and limitations. Thus “special” education staff must be able to work independently, in order to have effective results in teaching, with support they ask for. We must not forget that “special” educators and generally the teaching staff of “special” education have been trained to work in several settings with several kinds of students. Easily those professionals can adapt themselves. So we must leave them free to be creative.

An important aim that the “Special” Education Inspector must make real, is the provision of information that other inspectors must have in mind and provision of information for all the Head Teachers of the schools that they are responsible for. By doing this, we will be sure that the Head Teachers will exactly know what will be the policy and what the aims are that they have to be applying in the everyday life of their school. Also the Head Teachers can affect the teaching staff of their school in order to try to apply inclusion and notions like “this child is not my responsibility” must be removed. During the school year in 2005 we tried with the Inspector in Nicosia, to organize seminars to the Head Teachers that gained promotion in 2005. During those seminars, we had the chance to inform them about the law, the police and practice that we are using and also the inclusion aim which is our dream, and for me the dream has been fuelled by my research. We also informed

them about the various practical issues in our field and finally we let them tell us about their experience with disabled students in their school and the problems that they faced. I believe by doing this we helped them a lot. This seminar though is not enough. We must move forward and inform all the Head Teachers and also we may find a way to communicate effectively with them during the year, in order to support them. This will definitely lead us to the better application of inclusion techniques.

The research shows administrators want someone to listen to their voices. They have so much to do in their school that means they do not have time to spend on “special” education. First of all what must be stopped is the fear that they cannot handle disabled children and young people. Head Teachers must understand that they are responsible for those children and young people as well, since they will attend their school. Also they must understand clearly that if they have positive attitude towards inclusion, then inclusion can be something accessible. As Zoller, Ramanathan and Yu (1999) mentioned, and my research suggests too, a successful inclusive climate depends a lot on the attitudes and the actions of the principal of the school.

From the findings of this research it is very clear that Head Teachers believe that inclusion is connected to social changes, democracy and human rights. Those are the most important parameters which must be attended to in order to implement inclusion. If inclusion is to be a feasible alternative to more segregated placements its success will depend heavily upon the readiness and willingness of general education administrators to make decisions that will provide appropriate opportunities for disabled students to remain

in general education for most or for all of the school day (Ayres and Meyer, 1992). Since we have those notions and beliefs, at least from some Head Teachers, the Ministry of Education and Culture must move forward and resolve some practical problems that Head Teachers say they face every day. For example the number of students in each class must be minimized, no matter whether there is a disabled student or not. Also the rigid connection between the teachers and the set curriculum must be stopped: it is more important that students have better communications skills, better memory and learning skills, more creativity and generally more social skills, apart from the huge amount of knowledge we offer them today. The main problem for primary teachers who might want to be more inclusive is the curriculum and whether they can manage by the end of the year to complete all the teaching material they have to.

The Ministry of Education and Culture must try to be more flexible to the number of students in each class. By this I mean that there are schools where they can be 25-28 students in the class and no problem will be released. From the other hand there are schools like the Primary School which I investigated in this research, in which there should be 15 students in the class or less, since there is such diversity in the student population. Further, the Ministry of Education and Culture must find ways to stop the grouping of non Greek Cypriot students in specific schools. Those students must be admitted to different schools, since our aim is to try to include them in the Greek Cypriot society.



Administrators also mentioned that they need better communication with the Psychologist Department. This is one of the main problems of “special” education in Cyprus and a political decision must be taken. The government of Cyprus must decide that in order to implement an air of change in the Cypriot educational system it must provide education in a financial way. By saying this, I mean that more educational and clinical psychologists must be employed and also more “special” teachers, speech therapists, and other specialized staff, as so many people in the research told me this is essential. The reason for not doing this, in my opinion, is not the absence of the money. It is the belief that “special” education is about a minority of students and we are doing more than enough for a minority. This notion is what must be changed first. Each school must have its own psychologist, who is going to work not only with the children and young people but also with the parents and with the teachers of this school. At least the schools that have “special” units or multicultural student populations must have a psychologist who is going to support not only the students but also the teachers and the parents.

Teachers want different support from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Their main worry is that no-one seems to ever care about them. My study has showed that teachers need someone to understand them and share their worries. Teachers must be trained in “special” education issues. By this training, I mean that they must be in a position to understand whether or not a child is a disabled student. It is not necessary for them to do the evaluations, since assessments can be the work of “specialized staff, but we do want teachers to be aware if one of their students may have some “special” individual needs.

This training will involve the meaning and the value of the application of inclusion as well. Also practical guidelines must be mentioned. Teachers seemed to be against inclusion, because no one ever informed them about it. The only idea that the vast majority of teachers understood because of inclusion is the presence of more disabled students in their class and the demand that they must consider those students as their students. Thus training is essential and it must involve examples from other countries that have an inclusive policy and specific examples of schools that apply inclusion.

Teachers in Cyprus have to be trained in a way which means they can educate a diverse student population. They must learn mechanisms for working towards more inclusive thinking. Teacher continuing education needs to help them reconceptualise their task and restructure ideas about how they undertake their work. This could include having new links with schools, trade unions and other interested groups (Barton, 2003). Education seemed to be mainly a political issue with the struggles for social justice to be fundamental to this agenda (Barton, 2003).

In working towards change, teachers must leave the attitude that they know everything – which is a well established belief in the educational system in Cyprus. The reason why this belief is strong, is because in order to become a primary teacher today you have to be an excellent student during secondary education. Thus they continue to believe that since they have been the best they can do everything. This notion though seemed not to persist in “special” education, since a lot of those teachers admitted that they cannot educate disabled students. I personally do not believe that teachers cannot educate disabled

students. Most of them do not want to educate disabled students and say this is the job of someone else. Primary teachers must understand that they need not be the experts in every field of education. Their knowledge and attitude are precious keys to their ability to provide inclusive classes and this is something that they need to understand.

I think my research shows that in Cyprus, teachers must learn to accept the need for a “special” education teacher in the inclusive primary school. They must understand that the “special” education teacher can offer them a lot and can help them. They can do co-teaching with them, or they can ask about the various techniques of helping a student with difficulties. By this everyday relation, teachers will understand that they do not have inferior abilities, they are a co-operator in school and can play a part too in reducing the loneliness that the “special” education teacher often feels.

The non existence of an inclusive curriculum makes lot of problems. The Ministry of Education and Culture may have an inclusive law but it does not have an inclusive curriculum. In my opinion curriculum will be the practical tool for developing suggestions of inclusion. The attitude of the non disabled students will change if we change the curriculum and the notions of Head Teachers and teachers. Non disabled students usually feel sorry for disabled children and young people and we have seen they view them in a “philanthropic” way. In Cyprus, the *Radiomarathonios* fund raising event makes a big impact on the students, so a good idea will be to change its face. Radiomarathonions can help to teach the society about disabled people and encourage respect and to value the difference. The philanthropic face that Radiomarathonios have must be transformed to a social inclusion face.

### 5.2.2 Let's change the evaluation procedure

As we have seen, the procedure of discovering a disabled child creates a lot of problems to schools in Cyprus, since it may take six months or sometimes even a whole year in order to evaluate the needs of a child and decide to offer them the appropriate education. In order to change this, what I believe can be done as mentioned before, is the creation of an Assessment Centre from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which will be responsible to evaluate disabled children and young people. This Centre will have educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, "special" educators, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other kind of expert staff, *in situ*, whose job will be to provide a valid evaluation of the needs of the child. By doing this several existing problems will be solved. First of all evaluations could be completed quickly and the necessary help provided to each child. Second, since this Assessment Centre will be constituted from expert staff, the reliability and the validity of the evaluations will be high. Finally "special" teachers, speech therapists and primary teachers will not have the responsibility of doing the evaluations and thus their stress will be less.

In Cyprus according to the law, each disabled child or adult may also attend the National Hospital for free. The difficulties of the General Hospital echo the difficulties in the evaluation procedures. For example, I will mention that there is only one Children and Young People's Neurologist. This person is responsible for all disabled children and young people in Cyprus. As it can be easily being understood, this is something unacceptable. Parents wait for months in order to take their disabled child to that doctor and in case that there is an emergency with their child it is better to take their child to a

doctor from the private sector than going to the doctor at the National Hospital. Also there are two occupational therapists and one physiotherapist who work in the National Hospital. Those three professionals are entirely responsible for all the cases of disabled children and young people in Cyprus. Parents in most cases end up paying large amounts of money to doctors and therapists in the private sector – if they can afford it - and so access to services is not equal.

### **5.2.3 Let's work with parents of disabled children and young people**

Coming now to parents of disabled children and young people, there is a lot that must be done beyond the sympathy of every one of us. We must not stay in this empathy attitude only. We must help them to move forward. Support groups must be run from the day the parents identify they have a disabled child. The main purpose of these groups will be to promote understanding and acceptance and will show ways to treat to the children and young people in their family.

Data presented in Chapter 4 has shown that parents need a lot of support and my thoughts are further enriched by examples from my teaching experience. I often met parents who even though they had been informed from the professionals about their child's situation, did not accept the real needs of their child and they prefer to try and fulfill all the needs themselves. If those parents were supported from the early days they would find it easier to accept support and guidance. Recently, parents have a great power that has been given to them from the new law. Parents have the right to decide where the best place is for their children and young people but to implement the law properly we must consider that

this freedom that parents of disabled students have can make serious problems if parents do not know how to take the decision that will best fit the needs of the child.

#### **5.2.4 Let's change the Social Welfare Department**

The data shows more involvement in the lives of families with disabled children is needed from the Social Welfare service. Families with a disabled child do not only need financial help. Sometimes this help is not enough or is not given for disabled children and young people. The Social Welfare Department must improve guidelines about how it allocates money and must be also sure that this money goes to the disabled child. During my experience as a "Special" Education Counselor I came across various cases where the families of disabled students take the financial help from the Social Welfare Department, but that money does not end with the disabled child. That money is used in some cases for other needs of the family and the disabled child ends up not to be given any benefit from this kind of help.

Also as it had been seen from the story of the primary school, there are schools where the presence of the Welfare Department is needed everyday. In the specific primary school the Head Teacher of the school had to arrange the daily lunch of the poorest students and also he was responsible to find the money in order to provide those students with clothes and shoes. This role is not the role of the Head Teacher of the school. It is the role of the Welfare Department.

### **5.2.5 Let's change the "Special" Education Law**

Coming now to the last part of the suggestions lot of changes must be done in the existing "Special" Education Law. We must not forget that this law was the beginning for better days in "special" education in Cyprus. If we did not have the law, then we would not do as much as we can now. After practicing more than five years the law, we are in a position to criticize the law, in order to make it a helpful tool for the application of inclusion. This law change must be done through all the interested parties: Ministry of Education and Culture, Parents of Disabled Students, University of Cyprus, Teachers Association, Parents Association, etc.

What it was found from the implementation of this law is that this law has three main problems, all reflected in my research findings. The first one is that is too general, which allows everyone understand it, in their own personal way. The second one is that it provides parents with the right to decide what is best for their disabled child, apart from the opinions of the professionals and this is problematic. Finally the third problem is that it does not mention anything about the financial implication that the application of this new law will have.

In addition, the definition of who we name as a 'disabled child' must be revised. We need a more inclusive definition. The definition must be broader and not include only children and young people who have mental or physical problems. Disabled children and young people can be any children and young people who face difficulties in any part of their school life, no matter how serious and difficult.

It will be helpful in my opinion to write about practical suggestions which I have found through my study, concerning the improvement of the existing “Special” Education Law. Starting with the way that “special” units are working, the new improved law must have a minimum and a maximum number of students that each “special” unit will have. Also the same must happen with the numbers of students in the “special” school classes. “Special” educator and speech therapists must have a maximum number of disabled students who will be responsible for. They cannot be responsible for large numbers of different cases of disabled students, as it had been mentioned before. I have discussed at length the importance of employing more specialists immediately and creating a new Assessment Centre.

Coming to “special” schools, “special” schools must have their own program and their own individual scope for differentiated curriculum. The teaching staff of the “special” schools must be given motivation in order to work there. Also it is very important that each professional who is working in the field of “special” education must gain some teaching experience in both mainstream and “special” schools. This would help remove the phenomenon of teachers staying for years in the same “special” schools.

In addition to all the above the security of the teaching staff and the paraeducators must be taken into serious consideration. According to the general rules about discipline in the National School, no teacher can for any reason hit a child. In the case of “special” schools though, situations are complicated. What my experience and data tells me is that some disabled students hit and sometimes cause serious long-term medical problems to



colleagues and other children and teachers need guidance on how to restrain children and young people in these situations. “Special” schools are often afraid of the Parents Associations in relation to these matters because of the power that this association has and this needs changing.

Finally it is very important that “special” schools change their aims. The way the education system works in Cyprus today is not ready yet for a complete inclusion of all disabled students. It is better then, in order to provide the best for all students to organize the primary schools and they try to include disabled students to those schools.

The law must state clearly the value of the parent’s voice on the one hand, but must also respect the voice of the professionals who works in the field.

What we need, summarizing is a new Inclusive Law, which has clearly the aim to change not only the way disabled children and young people have been treated in schools, but also to change the way our students see and value difference.

From all that had been mentioned above it is very clear that existing policy must be changed immediately if we really want to apply inclusion in Cyprus. My findings from this research support the ideas of other writers in Cyprus who argue that future policy must take into consideration the following points:

- Rights and entitlement must be grounded on the specific conditions, practices and relations that discriminate and exclude certain groups of people within different contexts.

- Statements of rights and entitlements must be related to specific strategies for change in terms of creating these specific conditions, relations and practices that are necessary for the promotion of a more inclusive society.
- They must be enforceable and underwritten by appropriate sanctions if they are breached

(Vlachou, 2004).

#### **5.2.6. Let's have more research**

What must be done in Cyprus is more research whose purpose will be to investigate the way we apply inclusion and discover where the problems are. Cyprus in my opinion was not ready for inclusion at the time when it began to be introduced and my research backs this up. Schools, teachers, students and parents were not ready for this change. This is why parents, students and teachers today often do not believe in inclusion. We must have in our minds that Cyprus is a small island, a Greek island with 800,000 populations only. Everyone knows each other in Cyprus. So the acceptance of difference is not an easy task to be made. Schools must try to begin this by including disabled students. Instead of searching for the conditions needed for creating more inclusive schooling communities for disabled students there is a need to investigate the everyday life of schools in order to understand clearer how and why schools face a lot of difficulties to respond to the demands of developing collective or individual potentials (Vlachou, 2004).

### **5.3 Conclusions**

My research has convinced me that “special” education is not a separate part of education. In my mind “special” education is not for disabled students only. All schools

must be making efforts to become inclusive schools. This is a political theme though, as well as an educational one. The political idea is in place in Cyprus, since there is an inclusive law. What remains then, is for the educational policy and practice to be developed and well-established so that schools can become inclusive.

Looking back over my research I find that for me, inclusion is like a life journey. It never ends. No matter how many difficulties you will find no matter if you become poor, or rich from this journey, the meaning is one and only: that inclusion deserves the time. We need a world where impairment is valued and celebrated and all disabling barriers are eradicated. Such a world will be inclusive for all (Oliver and Barnes, 1988).

I want to end up this piece of work with a poem that I love a lot. The name of the poem is "Ithaca" and it has been written from Kostantinos Kavafis, a well know poet, either in Greek literature, or in worldwide literature. Inclusion is a life long journey, with lot of adventures, sometimes really dangerous. The destination is not so important. What is important is what you pass to your journey and all the experiences that you have gained during this journey.

## Ithaca

When you set out on your journey to Ithaca,  
pray that the road is long,  
full of adventure, full of knowledge.  
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,  
the angry Poseidon -- do not fear them:  
You will never find such as these on your path,  
if your thoughts remain lofty, if a fine  
emotion touches your spirit and your body.  
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,  
the fierce Poseidon you will never encounter,  
if you do not carry them within your soul,  
if your soul does not set them up before you.

Pray that the road is long.  
That the summer mornings are many, when,  
with such pleasure, with such joy  
you will enter ports seen for the first time;  
stop at Phoenician markets,  
and purchase fine merchandise,  
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
and sensual perfumes of all kinds,  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
visit many Egyptian cities,  
to learn and learn from scholars.

Always keep Ithaca in your mind.  
To arrive there is your ultimate goal.  
But do not hurry the voyage at all.  
It is better to let it last for many years;  
and to anchor at the island when you are old,  
rich with all you have gained on the way,  
not expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.

Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.  
Without her you would have never set out on the road.  
She has nothing more to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.  
Wise as you have become, with so much experience,  
you must already have understood what Ithacas means.

(Costantinos Cavafis, 1911)

# *References*

- Ainscow (2001). Developing Inclusive Schools. **NFER Bulletin, Issue 26.**
- Ainscow, M. (1998). Would it work in theory?: arguments for practitioner research and Theorizing in the special needs field, in C. Clark, A. Dyson and A. Millward (eds.) **Theorizing special education.** London: Routledge.
- Ainscow, M. Booth, T. and Dyson A. (2004). Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools: a collaborative action research network. **International Journal of Inclusive Education , 8 (2),** pp. 125-139.
- Alderson, P. (1995) in Arksey H. and Knight P. (1999). **Interviewing for Social Scientists.** London: Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Allan, J. (2003). Productive pedagogies and the challenge of inclusion. **British Journal of special Education, vol. 30 (4)** pp. 175-179.
- Andrews, J., Carnine, D. Coutinho, M. Edgar, E., Forness, S. Fuchs, L. Jordan, D., Kauffman, J. Patton, J. Paul, J. Rosell J. , Rueda, R. Schiller, E. Skrtic, T. & Wong, J. (2000). Bridging the special Education Divide. **Remedial and special Education, 21(5),** 258-260.
- Armstrong F. , Armstrong, D. Barton, L. (2000). Eds. **Inclusive Education: Policy, Contexts and Comparative Perspectives.** London: Fulton.
- Armstrong F. and Barton L. (1999). Developing Future agendas in Barton L. and Armstrong F. (eds.). **Difference and Difficulty: insights issues and Dilemmas.** Sheffield: Impact Graphics.
- Armstrong, F. (1998). Inclusion, Curriculum and the Struggle for Cultural Space. **International Journal of Inclusive Education, 3 (3).**
- Armstrong, F. and Barton L. (eds.) (1999). **Disability, Human Rights and Education.** Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Armstrong, F. and Moore, M. (Eds.) (2004). **Action Research for Inclusive Education: Changing places, changing practices, changing minds.** London: Rutledge Falmer.
- Ayres, B. and Meyer, L.H. (1992). Helping teachers manage the inclusive classroom. **School Administrator, 49, (2),** pp 14-21.
- Bailey.C.A. (1996). **A guide to Field Research.** Pine Forge Press.
- Ball, S. (1994). **Education Reform: A critical and post-structural approach.** Buckingham: Open University Press

- Barnard, A.L. (1997). Report to the Ministry of Education of Cyprus: **Integration of children and young people with special educational needs**. Newcastle upon Tyne: Author.
- Barnes C. Mercer G. (2003), **Disability**. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Barnes, C. (2003). What a difference a Decade Makes: reflections in doing “emancipatory” disability research. **Disability and Society**, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 3-17.
- Barnes, C. Oliver, M. Barton, L. (2002). **Disability Studies today**. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Barton, L. (1994). Disability, difference and the politics of definition. **Australian Disability Review**, 3, (94) pp. 8-22.
- Barton, L. (1996). Sociology, Disability: some emerging issues. In Barton L. (ed.) (1996). **Disability and Society –emerging issues and insights**. London: Longman.
- Barton, L. (1997). Inclusive Education: romantic, subversive or unrealistic? **International Journal of Inclusive Education**, 1, (3), pp 231-242.
- Barton, L. (2000). Market ideologies, education and the challenge for Inclusion. In Daniels, H. and Garner, P. (ed) (2000). **Inclusive education. Supporting inclusion in education systems**. London: Kogan Page.
- Barton, L. (2003). **Inclusive education and teacher education. A basis for hope or a discourse of delusion**. London: Institute of Education.
- BBC News (2005). Special needs education queried. **BBC News**, 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2005
- Bechofer F. and Lindsay, P. (2000). **Principles of Research Design in the Social Sciences**. London: Routledge
- Bell, J. (2002). **Learning from research: getting more from your data**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Belmon. B.. Verillon, A (1999). Integration of disabled children and young people in French schools: partnership between mainstream schoolteachers and specialist professionals. **European Journal of special Needs Education**. Vol. 14, no. 1 pp. 1-11.
- Bines, H (1999). Teachers, change and professionalism in England and Wales: professional development for difference or difficulty? **In Difference and**

**Difficulty: insights, issues and Dilemmas.** Barton, L and Armstrong, F. (1999). Sheffield: The University of Sheffield.

- Booth, T (ed.) (2003). **Developing inclusive teacher education.** London: Routledge Falmer.
- Booth, T. and Ainscow, M.(eds) (1998). **From them to Us. An international study of Inclusion in Education.** London: Routledge.
- Booth, T. et al. (2000). **Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools.** Bristol: Center for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE).
- Booth, T.(1996). "A perspective on Inclusion from England". **Cambridge Journal of Education**, 26(1), pp. 87-99.
- Booth, T., M. Ainscow, and A. Dyson (1998). **Inclusion and exclusion in a competitive system, in From them to us: An international study of inclusion in education**, T.A. Booth, Mel, Editor. 1998, Routledge: London.
- Boutskou, E. (2005). Special Education teachers in Greece:the loneliness and ambiguity of a profession. **Paper presented at the International Special Education Conference (ISEC).**
- Bowden, A. (2005). Anger over Warnock's criticism of special schools. **Education Guardian**, June 10, 2005.
- Branson, J. and Miller, D. (1989). "Beyond Integration Policy-the deconstruction of disability" in L. Barton (ed.) (1989) **Integration Myth or reality?** Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Brewer, J. D. (2002). **Ethnography.** Jossey-Bass.
- Bricher G. (2000). Disabled people, Health Professionals and the Social Model of Disability: can there be a research relationship? **Disability and Society**, vol. 15. no. 5, pp781-793. Oxfordshire, Carfax Publishing Company.
- Brisendem, S. (1986). Independent living and the Medical Model of Disability. **Disability, Handicap and Society**, vol. 1 (2).
- Bryman, A. (1988). **Quantity and quality in social research.** London: Routledge
- Byrne, E.A. Cunningham, C.C. and Sloper, P. (1988). **Families and children and young people with Down's Syndrome: One feature in common.** London: Routledge.



- Calvert, M., Harvey, J.A. and Cole, B. (Eds). (2001). *Managing to include in Managing change.* Sheffield: Philip Armstrong.
- Carlson, E. (1997). An in-school and post-school outcome of student's declassified from special Education. **Unpublished doctoral dissertation.** College of William and Mary: Williamsburg, VA.
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986). **Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research.** Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Casey, M. and Kruger R. (2000). **Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research.** London: Sage Publications
- Casswell, D. (1995). Is anybody there? **Special Children and Young People.** January, pp 56-59.
- *Cavafy, C. (1911). Poems,* Athens: Ikaros Publications.
- Center, Y., Ward, J., Ferguson, C. (1991). Towards an index to evaluate the integration of children and young people with disabilities into regular classes. **Educational Psychology, 11 (1), pp 77-95.**
- Chan , P. and Harris, C. (2002). **The Beijing Project: Action Research at Work.** School of Education, Brigham University-Hawaii Campus, Laie, Hawaii.
- Chen, M.R. and Miller, G. (1997). Teacher stress: A review of the international literature. **ERIC document 410 187.**
- Chenoweth, L. and Stehlik, D. (2004). Implications of social capital for the inclusion of people with disabilities and families in community life. **International Journal of Inclusive Education, vol. 8. (1) 59-72.**
- Clark, C., Dyson A. and Millward A. (eds.) (1998). **Theorizing special education.** London: Routledge.
- Clough P., (2002) **Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research.** Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Clough, P (2000). Tales from the edge: narratives at the borders of inclusive ideology. In Moore, M. (2000). **Insider Perspectives on Inclusion.** Sheffield: Philip Armstrong.
- Clough, P. (1998). **The end(s) of ethnography: from realism to social criticism.** New York: Peter Lang.

- Clough, P. and Barton, L. (ed.) (1998). **Articulating with difficulty: research voices in inclusive education**. London: P. Chapman Pub.
- Coffey A. and Atkinson P. (1996). **Making sense of qualitative data- Complementary Research Strategies**. London: Sage Publications.
- Coffey, K. (1997). Educational for students with a severe disability: parental and
- Cohen L. Manion L. and Morrison K. (2000). **Research methods in education**. London: Routledge, Falmer Press
- Cohen, L, Manion, L. (1980). **Research Methods in Education**. London: Groom Helm.
- Conwall, J. (2001). Enabling Inclusion: is the culture of change being responsibly managed? **In Enabling Inclusion: Blue skies .....dark clouds**. O' Brien, T. (ed.) Norwich: The stationary Office.
- Conway, R. N. F. and Foreman, P.J. (1988). **Mainstreaming students with behavior difficulties**. Australia: University of Queensland Press.
- Corbett J. (1996). **Bad Mouthing- The language of special Needs**. London: The Falmer Press.
- Corker M. and French S. (2000). **Disability Discourse**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Croll P. and Moses D. (2000). Ideologies and Utopias: education professionals' views of Inclusion. **European Journal of special Needs Education**. Vol. 15, No. 1 pp 1-12.
- Croll, P. (2001). Children and young people with Statements in Mainstream Key Stage 2 Classrooms: a survey in 46 primary schools. **Educational Review**. Vol. 53. no. 2. p. 137-144.
- Crow, I. (2000). The power of research. In Burton D (2000). (ed.). **Research Raining for social scientists**. London: Sage Publishers.
- Crozier, G. (1999). Is it a case of: We know when we're not wanted?" The parents' perspective on parent-teacher roles on relationships. **Educational Research**, vol. 4 (3) pp. 314-328.
- D' Cruz H., Ayre, M. (2003). Implementing an inclusive social work curriculum. **Inclusive Education**, 7 (2), p.p. 121-143.

- Daniels, H. and Garner, P. (2000) (ed.). **Inclusive education. Supporting inclusion in education systems.** London: Kogan Page.
- Denzin N.K. (1997). **Interpretive ethnography-ethnographic practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.** London: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. (editors). **Handbook of qualitative research, 273-285.** Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). **Handbook of qualitative research.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Department for Education and Skills (2003). **Every Child Matters.** Green Paper.
- DFEE (1997). **Excellence for All Children and young people.** Green Paper. London: HMSO
- DFEE (2003). **The report of the special Schools Working Groups.** Annesley: DFEE.
- Doyle, R. (2004). A social development curriculum: applying nurture group principles and practices to support socially and emotionally vulnerable children and young people within mainstream classrooms. **British Journal of special Education, vol. 31, no. 1 pp.24-30.**
- DPI (1982). **Proceedings of the first world Congress.** Singapore: Disabled People's International.
- Duckworth, S. V. and Kostell, P.H. (1999). The parent panel: Supporting children and young people with special needs. **Journal for the Association for childhood education international, 75 (4), 199-203.**
- Dunn, K. (2000). Perspectives of Non-disabled children and young people n their disabled siblings. In Moore M. (ed.) **Insider Perspectives on Inclusion-raising voices, raising issues.** Sheffield: Philip Armstrong Publications.
- Dunn, K. and Moore, M. and Murray, P. (2003) **A Good Practice Guide to Developing Accessible Play Space.** London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Publications
- Dyson C, A. Millward A. and Skidmore, D. (1997). **New directions in special needs.** London: Cassell.

- Dyson C, A. Milward, A. and Robson, S. (1999). Inclusive educations and schools as organizations. **International Journal of Inclusive Education**, 3, pp. 37-52.
- Dyson, A. (1999). Inclusion and Inclusions: theories and discourses in inclusive education. In H. Daniels and P. Garner (eds.), **Inclusive Education**, London: Kogan Page.
- Dyson, A. (1991). Rethinking roles, rethinking concepts: special needs teacher in mainstream schools. **Support for Learning**, 6, 2, pp 51-60.
- Dyson, A. (2000). Inclusion and inclusions: theories and discourses in inclusive education. In Daniels, H. and Garner, P. (ed) (2000). **Inclusive education. Supporting inclusion in education systems**. London: Kogan Page.
- East, P.L. & Rook, K.S. (1992). Compensatory patterns of support among children and young people's peer relationships: A test using school friends, non-school friends, and siblings. **Developmental Psychology**, 28, 163-172.
- Farrell, P. (2001). special Education in the last twenty years: have thinks really got better? **British Journal of special Education Volume 26, no. 3.** p. 147-152.
- Feiler, A. and Gibson, H. (2002). Ethical Issues for educational psychologists engaged in research. **Educational and Child Psychology. Volume 19, No. 1,** p. 61-69.
- Ferguson, P. and Asch, A. (1989). "Lessons from Life:Personals and Parentals perspectives on school, childhood and disability" in Biklen D., Ferguson, D. and Ford. A.(1989) (Eds). **Schooling and Disability**, Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Ferguson, P.M. Ferguson, D. L. and Taylor, S. J. (1992). **The future of interpretivism in disability studies. In interpreting disability: A qualitative reader.** New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fetterman, D. (1989). **Ethnography step by step.** Newbury Park, CA:Sage.
- Flem A. & Keller. C. (2000). Inclusion in Norway: a study of ideology in practice. **European Journal of special Needs Education. Vol. 15, no.2.** pp 188-205.
- Flem A. Moen, T. and Gudmundsdottir S. (2004). Towards inclusive schools: a study of inclusive education in practice. **European Journal of special Needs Education, vol. 19, no. 1** pp. 85-98.

- Flem, A. and Keller, C. (2000). Inclusion in Norway: a study of ideology in practice, **European Journal of special Needs Education**, 15 (2), pp. 188-205.
- Flick, U. (1998). **An introduction to qualitative research**. London: Thousand Oaks.
- Florian. L. Rouse. M. Black-Hawkins K. Jull S. (2004). What can national data sets tell us about inclusion and pupil achievement? **Paper presented on BERA 2004**.
- Folley, D. (2002). Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. **International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education**, v. 15, issue 4, p. 469, July, 2002.
- **For the Education of Special Needs Students** (1999). Nisocia: Official Newspaper of the Government of Cyprus.
- Forlin C. (2001). Introduction: The role of the support teacher in regular schools- an international comparison. **European Journal of special Needs Education**. Vol. 16 no.2, pp 83-84.
- Forlin, C. (1995). **Concepts and beliefs about inclusive education: appraisal of stress and coping**. Unpublished manuscript, University of Western Australia.
- Forlin, C. (2001). Inclusion: identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. **Educational Research**. Vol. 43. no, 3 pp 235-245.
- Fraenkel, J. Wallen, N. (1993). **How to design and evaluate research in education**. New York: Mc-Graw-Hill.
- French, S. (2004) 'Can You See the Rainbow?' The Roots of Denial in **Disabling Barriers, Enabling Environments (2004)**, Swain, J., French, S., Barnes, C., Thomas, C.(2004) London: Sage Publications
- French, S., Swain, J. (2000). Personal perspectives on the experience of exclusion.. In Moore, M. (ed.) (2000). **Insider Perspectives on Inclusion. Raising voices, raising issues**. Sheffield: Philip Armstong.
- French, S., Swain, J. Atkinson, D., Moore, M. (ed.) (2006). **An oral history of the education of the visually impaired people: telling stories for inclusive futures**. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Fuchs, D. & Fuchs, L.S. (1994). Inclusive School movement and the radicalization of special education reform. **Exceptional Children and young people**, 60, 294-309.

- Fulcher G. (1999). **Disabling policies? A comparative approach to education policy and disability.** Sheffield: Philip Armstrong Publications.
- Fulcher, G. (1993). Schools and contests: a reframing of the effective schools debate?. In R. Slee (1993) (ed.). **Is there a desk with my name on it? The politics of integration.** London: Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (1993). **Change Forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.** London: The Falmer press.
- Furman, W. & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children and young people's perceptions of the personal relationships in their social networks. **Developmental psychology, 21**, pp. 1016-1024.
- Gall, M., Borg, W., Gall, J. (1996). **Educational research: an introduction.** New York: Longman Publishers
- Garner, P. (2000). **Mainstream Teachers and Inclusion.** A chronic case of NIMSA. ISEC 2000 CD ROM, Inclusive Consultancy and Training Ltd. Oldham.
- Garner, P. (2001). Goodbye Mr. Chips: special needs inclusive education and the deceit of initial teacher training in **Enabling Inclusion: Blue skies...dark clouds.** O' Brien, T. (2001) (Ed. ) Norwich: The stationary Office.
- Georgiou, S. (1996). **Parental Involvement in Cyprus.** International Journal of Educationally Research, 25 (1) pp. 33-43.
- Geprgiou, S. (1997). Parental Involvement Definition and outcomes. **Social Psychology of Education, 1**, pp. 189-209.
- Gersten, R. Keating, T, Yavanoff, P. Harniss, M (2001). Working in special Education: Factors that Enhance special Educators' Intent to Stay. **Exceptional Children and young people, vol.67, no.4**, pp 549-567.
- Gibson, Jr. Academic failure and school dropout: the influence of peers. In Juvonen, J, and Wentzel, K. (1996). **Social motication: understanding children's school adjustment.** New York: Cambridge Press.
- Gibson, S. (1999). Determining the Middle Management Role of the special Educational Needs Co-Coordinator in a Secondary School Setting within a Pluralist Society. **Graduate Education Forum, vol. 1. no. 1.** pp. 14-29.
- Gibson, S. (2004). **Managing Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the mainstream School. The role of the SEN team.** Paper presented at BERA 2004.

- Giddens, A. (1999). **The third way: the renewal of social democracy**. London: Polity Press
- Glaser B. and Barney G. (1995). **Grounded theory 1984-1994..** Volume 2. Mill Valley, Ca: Sociology.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). **The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research**. New York: Aldine.
- Goodley D. (2003). Against a politics of victimization: disability culture and self-advocates with learning difficulties. In Riddell S. and Watson N. (2003) (eds.). **Disability, culture and identity**. London: Pearson Prentice Hill.
- Goodley D. Lawthom R. Clough P. and Moore M. (2004). **Researching life stories-method, theory, and analysis in a biographical age**. London: Routledge and Falmer Press.
- Goodnow, J. and Collins, W. (1990). **Development According to Parents-the nature, sources, and consequences of parents' ideas**. Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Goodson and Sikes P. (2001). **Life history research in educational settings**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Gorbett, J. and Slee, R. (2000). An international conversation on inclusive education in Armstrong, F. Armstrong G. and Barton,L.(2000) (eds.), **Inclusive Education: Policy, contexts and comparative education**. London: David Fulton.
- Great Britain. Department for Education and Employment. (1997). **Excellence for All Children and young people**. London: DfEE.
- Gwynn, J.D. (2000). **Being on the Inside: Policy making at Balott School**: unpublished assignment. University of Sheffield.
- Hadjiyiannakou A. (2005). Dilemmas of every day practice of inclusion in Cyprus: through the perspectives of a practitioner. **Paper Presented at I.S.E.C.2005**.
- Hadjiyiannakou, A. (1995). **The education of children with multiple disabilities**. Unpublished paper.
- Hadjiyiannakou, A. (2003). **Dilemmas in the everyday practice of inclusion in Cyprus**. Paper Presented at BERA 2003.

- Hadjiyiannakou, A. (2004). **Special Education Teachers in Cyprus. The face of loneliness.** Paper Presented at BERA 2004
- Hahn, H. (1989). The politics of special education, in Lipsy, D.K. and Garner, A. (eds.). **Beyond Separate Education: Quality education for all.** Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, pp. 225-241.
- Hanko, G. (2004). Towards an inclusive school culture-but what happened to Elton's affective curriculum? **British Journal of special Education**, vol. 30, (3), pp.125-132.
- Hanson, M., Horn, E. Sandall, S, Beckman P. Morgan, M. Marquart, J. Barnwell D. Chou, H. (2001). After preschool inclusion: Children and young people's educational pathways over the early school years. **Exceptional Children and young people**, 68, 65-83.
- Hart, S. (1986). **Beyond special needs: enhancing children and young people's learning through innovative thinking.** London: Paul Chapman.
- Hastings, R. (2003). The Relationship between students behavior patterns and Teacher Burnout. **School Psychology International**, 24, pp. 115-127.
- Haug, P. (1999). **Special education in elementary school.** Oslo.
- Heward, W.L. (2003). Teen Faulty Notions about teaching and Learning that Hinder the Effectiveness of special Education. **The journal of special Education**, 36, pp.186-205
- Hornby G. (1995). **Working with parents of children and young people with special educational needs.** London. Cassell.
- Hornby S (1993). **Collaborative care: interprofessional, interagency and interpersonal.** Oxford: Backwell.
- Hornby, G. (2001). Promoting responsible inclusion: quality education for all in **Enabling Inclusion: Blue skies... dark clouds.** O' Brien, T.(2001) (Ed.). Norwich: The Stationary Office.
- Hornby, J. (1999). Inclusion or Delusion: Can one size fit all? **Support for Learning . Volume 14, no, 4.** p. 152-157.
- Jenkinson J.C. (1997). **Mainstream or special? Educating Students with Disabilities.** London: Routledge.
- Kelley-Laine, K. (1998). Parents as partners in schooling: The current state of affairs. **Childhood Education**, vol. 74, no. 6 pp. 342-345.



- Kenworthy, J. and Whittaker, J. (2000). Anything to Declare? The struggle for inclusive education and children and young people's right. **Disability and Society**, vol. 15. no. 2. pp. 219-231.
- Kerzner, D. and Gartner, A. (1996). Equity requires inclusion: the future for all students with disabilities, in Christensen C. and Fazal R. (ed.) (1996). **Disability and the Dilemmas of education and justice**. London: Open University Press.
- Kostandinides, I. (1992). **Special Report for the need of providing "special" education to "special"needs students**. Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture
- Kunc, N. (1992). The need to belong: Recovering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in R. Villa, S. Thousand, W. Stainback and S. Stainback (eds.). **Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous Schools**. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Baltimore MD. PP.25-39.
- Kyriakides, L. (1996). Reforming Primary Education in Cyprus. **Education 3 to 13**, 24 (2), pp. 50-54.
- Lake, J. and Billingsley, B. (2000). An analysis of factors that contribute to parent-school conflict in special education. **Remedial and special Education**, vol. 21 (4), pp. 240-251.5
- Lantier, N. Verillon, A. Auble, J. P. Belmont, B. And Waysand, E. (1994). **Enfants handicaps a l' ecole:des instituteurs parlent de leurs pratiques**. Paris: INRP-L'Harmattan.
- Lebeer, J., Garbo, R. Engels P. De Vroey, A. (2000). Advocacy, self-advocacy and inclusive action: a concluding perspective. In Daniels, H. and Garner, P. (ed) (2000). **Inclusive education. Supporting inclusion in education systems**. London: Kogan Page.
- Leinhardt, G. (1983). Novice and expert knowledge of individual students achievement. **Educational Psychologist**, 18, pp.165-179.
- Leo, J. (1994). Mainstreaming's Jimmy problem. **U.S. News and World Report**, Juner 7, p.22.
- Levy, G and Allen, P, (1998). "Selfish Parents, Spice Girls and children and young people of 10 Obsessed with Sex". **Daily Mail**, Friday February 6, 1998, p.17.

- Lewis, A. and Norwich B. (2005) **Special Teaching for Special Children?** Berkshire, Open University Press
- Lindsey, M.M.(1957). special Schools now and in the future. **Special Schools Journal**, vol. 46. no. 1, pp.123-128
- Lipsky, D. K. and Gartner, A. (2000). Inclusive education: a requirement of a democratic society in Daniels H. and Garner, P (ed.). (2000). **Inclusive education. Supporting Inclusion in Education Systems.** Kogan Page: London.
- Lipsky, D.K. and Gartner, A. (1997). **Inclusion and School Reform :Transforming America's Classrooms.** Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Baltimore.
- Llewellyn A. and Hogan K. (2000). The use and abuse of models of Disability. In **Disability and Society** vol. 15, no. 1 pp. 157-165. Oxfordshire: Carfax Publishing Company.
- Lobato D.J. (1990). **Brothers Sisters and special Needs: information and activities for helping young siblings of children and young people with chronic illnesses and developmental disabilities.** Baltimore MD: Paul H Brookes.
- Logan, K.et al. (1998). The impact of typical peers on the perceived happiness of students with profound multiple disabilities. **Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps**, 23, pp 309-318.
- Lunt I. & Norwich, B. (1999). **Can effective schools be inclusive schools?** London: Institute of Education. University of London.
- Makri, K. (2005). **Inclusion in primary education.** Paper presented at the conference Inclusion of children and young people with special needs at primary and secondary education in Cyprus. University of Cyprus: KOEE conference
- Margerison, A. (1997). Class teachers and the role of classroom assistants in the delivery of special educational needs. **Support for Learning**, 12, 4, pp. 166-179.
- Markussen, E. (2004). special education: does it help? A study of special education in Norwegian upper secondary schools. **European Journal of special Needs Education.** Vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 33-48.
- Mason, J. (1996). **Qualitative researching.** London: Thousand Oaks
- Mason, M., Richarf, R (ed.) (1992). **Disability equality in the classroom: a human right issue.** London: Disability equality in education.

- McConkey (1998). Education for Life. **British Journal of special Education**. Vol. 25. no. 2. p. 76-80.
- Meijer C.J.W., Pijl, S. J. and Hegarty S. (1997). Inclusion: implementation and approaches, in: S.J. Pijl, C.J.W. Meijer and S. Hewarty (Eds.) **Inclusive Education: a global agenda**. London: Routledge.
- Meijer, C.J.W. (1994). “ The Netherlands”, in Meijer, C.J.W., Pijl, S.J. and Hegarty, S.(1994) (Eds.) **New Perspectives in special Education**. London: Routledge.
- Meijer, Cor J.W. & De Jacer, B. (2001). Population density and special Needs Education. **European Journal of special Needs Education**. Vol. 16, no.2 pp 143-148.
- Mejer, C.J.W., Pijl S. J (1997). **Factors in Inclusion: a framework**. London: Routledge.
- Mejer, C.J.W., Pijl S. J. and Hegarty, S. (1997). In Pijl S. J., Mejer, C.J.W, Hegarty, S. (Eds.) **Inclusive education: A global Agenda**. London: Routledge, pp 150-161.
- Ministry of Education and Culture (1994). **National Curriculum**. Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Ministry of Education and Culture (1996). **Information Bulletin of Special Needs**. Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Minow, M. (1990). **Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion and America Law**. Cornell University Press, Ithaka, NY.
- Mittler P. (2000). **Working towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts** London: Fulton.
- Mittler, S. (1996). Living with a disabled sibling-a review. **Pediatric Nursing** vol.8 no.8 pp. 21-24.
- Moore, M. (2000). **Insider Perspectives on Inclusion. Raising voices, raising issues**. Sheffield: Philip Armstrong Publications.
- Mordal K.L. and Stromstad M.(1998). Norway: Adapted Education for All? In Booth and Ainscow M (1998). (eds.). (1998). **From Them to Us-An international study of inclusion in education**. London: Routledge.
- Morris J. (1997). Gone missing ? Disabled children and young people living away from their families. **Disability and society**, 12 (2), pp. 241-258.

- Morrison, G. et al (1992). Preferences for sources of social support of Hispanic male adolescents with mild learning handicaps. **Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities**, 27, pp 132-144.
- Moser, C (1996). **Reforming education in the United Kingdom: the vital priorities**. Belfast: Northern Ireland Economic Development Office
- Murphy, P.M. & Kupshik, G. A. (1992). **Loneliness stress and well-being. A helper's guide**. London: Routledge.
- **National Study of Inclusive Education (1995)**. "New York: the City University of New York. National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion.
- Newson, E. Hipgrave, T. (1983). **Getting through to your handicapped children and young people**. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Norway, R. (1997). Integration and inclusion: illusion or progress in services for disabled people? **Social Policy and Administration**, 31. pp. 157-172.
- Nutbrown, C. (1996). **Children's Rights and Early Education. Respectful Educators, Capable Learners**. Paul Chapman Publishing. London.
- O' Brien , T. (2001). Learning from the hard cases in O' Brien, T (2001) (ed.) **In Enabling Inclusion: Blue skies .....dark clouds**. Norwich: The stationary Office.
- Oliver, M and Barnes, C. (1998). **Disabled people and Social Policy: From exclusion to inclusion**. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Oliver, M. (1990). **The politics of disabledment**. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Oliver, M. (1992). Changing the social relations of research production? **Disability and Society**, 7 (2). Pp 101-114.
- Oliver, M. (1996). **Understanding Disability-From Theory to Practice**. London: Macmillan Press.
- Oliver, M. (1997). Emancipatory Research: Realistic goal or impossible dream? In Barnes C. and Mercer G. **Doing Disability Research**. Leeds: The Disability Press, pp. 15-31.
- Oliver, M. (2000). Decoupling education policy from the economy in late capitalist societies: some implications for special education: **Keynote speech in the ISEC 2000 Conference on Some Implications for special Education**.

- Oliver, M. (2000). Why do insider perspectives matter? In Moore M. (ed.). **Insider Perspectives on Inclusion. Raising voices, raising issues.** Sheffield: Philip Armtrong.
- Palmer, D. Fuller, K, Arora, T. Nelson, M (2001). Taking the Sides: Parent views on inclusion for their children and young people with severe disabilities. **Exceptional Children and young people, vol. 67, no.4** pp 467-484.
- Papanastasiou, K. (1994). **Methodology of Educational Research.** Nicosia: Kantzilaris Press.
- Parsons D. (1984). **Employment and Manpower Surveys: A practitioner's Guide.** Aldershot: Gower Press.
- Peck, C. Donalson, J. and Pezzoli, M. (1990). Some benefits non-handicapped adolescents perceive for themselves form their social relationships with peers who have severe handicaps. **Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, vol. 15. no. 4.** pp. 241-249.
- Phtiaka, H. (1995). **It is their job, not ours. Home school relations in Cyprus.** Paper presented at the symposium Home and School: An equal partnership? Nicosia: University of Cyprus
- Phtiaka, H. (1997,a). Children and young people with special Needs: **Parental Involvement in the Education Process.** Poster presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> European Conference for research on learning and Instruction
- Phtiaka, H. (1997,b). **Parental Involvement in Cyprus: Past, present and future.** Presentation prepared for the International Meeting on Parent's Education.
- Phtiaka, H. (2003). **The inclusion of children and young people with special needs in the Cypriot school system. Problems and perspectives.** Paper presented at the conference Inclusion of children and young people with special needs at primary and secondary education in Cyprus.
- Pijl, S. J., Meijer, C.J.W. and Hegarty, S. (ed.) (1997). **Inclusive education: a global agenda.** London:Routledge.
- Pivik, J., McComas, J. LaFlamme, M. (2002). Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education. **Exceptional Children and young people. Vol. 69, no.1,** pp 97-107.
- Plummer K. (2001). **Documents of life 2-an invitation to a critical humanism.** London: Sage Publications.

- Plummer, K. (1983). **Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of Humanistic Method**. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Ppraisner, Cc. (2003). Attitudes of Elementary School Principals Toward the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities. **Exceptional Children and young people**. Vol 69. no. 2. pp 135-145.
- Pressley, M. and McCormick C. (1995). **Cognition, teaching ad assessment**. London: Harper Collins.
- Pugagh, M. (2001). The stories we choose to tell: fulfilling the promise of qualitative research for special education. **Exceptional Children and young people**. Vol. 67, no,4, pp 439-453.
- Punch M. (1986). **The politics and ethics of fieldwork**. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Ramsey, E. (1993). Foreword in R. Slee (ed.), **Is there a desk with my Name in it? The politics of the integration**. London: Falmer Press.
- Rea, P. MCLAughlin, Thomas, C.W. (2002). Outcomes for Students With Learning Disabilities in Inclusive and Pullout Programs. **Exceptional Children and young people vo.68, No.2** pp.203-222.
- Robinson C. and Stalker K. (1998). Introduction in Robinson C. and Stalker K.(1998) (eds.) **Growing up with disability**. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Robson, C. (1993). **Real World Research**. Blackwell: Oxford
- Rose, R. (2001). Primary School Teacher Perceptions of the Conditions Required to Include Pupils with SEN. **Educational Review. Volume. 53, no. 2.** p. 147-156.
- Russell, F. (2004). The expectations of parents of disabled children and young people. **British Journal of special Education, vol. 30 (3)**, pp. 132-137.
- Sainsburry C. (2000). **Martian in the Playground**. London: The Book Factory.
- Seligman M. and Darling R.B. (1989). **Ordinary families, special children and young people: a system approach to childhood disability**. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Shakespeare, T. (1992). A response to Liz Crow. **Coalition, September, 40-42**.
- Sieber, J. (1982). **The Ethics of social research**. New York: Springer-Verlag.

- Sizer, T. (1992). **Horace's School. Redesigning the American High School.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Skrtic, T.M. (ed.) (1995). **Disability and Democracy: Reconstructing special education for postmodernity.** New York: Teachers College.
- Slavin R.E.(1986). **Using student team learning.** Baltimore, MD:Center for Research on Elementary and Middle schools. The John Hopkins University.
- Slee, R. (1996). "Inclusive Schooling in Australia? Not yet". **Cambridge Journal of Education, 26(1)**, pp. 9-32.
- Slee, R. (2001). Inclusion in practice: does practice make perfect? **Educational Review, Vol. 53, no. 2.** p. 113-124.
- Slee, R. (2001). Social justice and the changing directions in educational research: the case of inclusive education. **International Journal of Inclusive Education, vol. 5, 2/3**, pp. 167-178.
- Solity, J. (1992). **Special Education.** London: Cassell.
- Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (Eds.)(1992). **Curriculum considerations in inclusive classrooms: Facilitating learning for all students.** Baltimore: Brookes.
- Stainback.W. and Stainback, S. (1996). **Controversial issues confronting special education: Divergent perspectives.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Stangvik, G. (1997). **Beyond schooling: integration in a policy perspective.** London: Routledge.,
- Steele, J. (1998). Routes to inclsion. In Tilstone, C. , Florian, L. and Rose, R. (eds.) **Promoting Inclusive Practice.** London: Routledge
- Strahan, D.B. (1989). How experienced and novice teachers frame their views of instruction: An analysis of semantic order trees. **Teaching and Teacher education, 5**, pp 53-67.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994). "Grounded Theory Methodology: an overview". In: Denzin, N.K. & Lincon, Y. (editors). **Handbook of qualitative research, 273-285.** Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Sugai, G.M., & Tindal, G.A. (1993). **Effective school consultation.** Pacific Grove, CA:Brooks/Cole.

- Sultana, R. (1997). Towards a critical sociology of Education. In R. Sultana (ed.). **Inside/Outside Schools: Towards a Critical Sociology of Education in Malta**. Malta: Publishers Enterprises.
- Sutherland, A.T. (1981). **Disabled we stand**. London: Souvenir Press.
- Symeonidou, S. (2002). The changing role of the support teacher and the case of Cyprus: the opportunity for a cooperative teaching approach. **European Journal of special Education**, vol, 17. no. 2. pp 149-159.
- Talbert, J. E. and MCLAughlin, M. W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. **American Journal of Education**, 102, pp 123-152.
- Tedlock, B. (2001). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.). **Handbook of qualitative research**. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- **The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special Needs**. World Conference on special Needs Education: Access and Equality (1994). UNESCO, New York.
- Thomas, C. (1999). **Female forms: Experiencing and Understanding Disability**. Buckingham Open University Press
- Thomas, C. (1999). **Female forms: experiencing and understanding disability**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Tod. J. and Grainger T. (2000). **Inclusive educational practice: literacy**. London: David Fulton.
- Tomlinson, S. (1982). **Sociology of special Education**. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Tornillo, P. (1994). A lightweight for bad for our schools? **Orlando Sentinel**, March 6
- Tuckman B. (1988). **Conducting educational research**. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). **Tales of the field: On writing ethnography**. Chicago: University Press of Chicago Press.
- Vaughn, S, Schumn, J. Sinagub, J. (1996). **Focus group interviews in education and psychology**. Sage Publications



- Verna, G. and Mallick, K. (1999). **Researching education: perspectives and techniques**. London: Falmer Press.
- Vidich, A. and Lyman, S. (2000). Qualitative methods: their history in sociology and anthropology. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (2000) (eds.). **Handbook of qualitative research**. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Vlachou, A. (2004). Education and inclusive policy-making: implications for research and practice. **International Journal of special Education**, 8, (1), pp. 3-21.
- Vlachou, A. and Barton, L. (1994). Inclusive education: teachers and the changing culture of schooling. **British Journal of Special Education**, 21, 3, pp. 105-107.
- Vlachou, A.D. (1997). **Struggles for Inclusive Education. An ethnographic study**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- 
- Walther-Thomas, C, Korinek, L. McLaughlin, V. & Williams B. (2000). **Collaboration for Inclusive Education**. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ward. L. Mallett, R. Heslop, P, Simons, K (2004). Transition planning: how well does it work for young people with learning disabilities and their families? **British Journal of special Education**, vol. 30 (3), pp. 132-137.
- Warnock, Mary (2005). Special Educational Needs: a new look. **Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain**. No. 11. August 2005.
- Watts, M. & Ebbutt, P. (1987). More than the sums of the parts: research methods in group interviewing. **British Educational Research Journal**, 13 (1), pp. 25-34.
- Wedell, K. (2000). Points from the SENCO forum: putting inclusion into practice. **British Journal of Special Education**, vol 27, no,2, p.100
- Wellington, J. (2000). **Educational Research. Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches**. London: Continuum.
- Wendell, S. (1997). Towards a feminist theory of disability. In Davis, L. (ed.). **The Disability Studies Reader**. London: Routledge
- Wilczenski, F. L. (1992). Measuring Attitudes towards Inclusive Education. **Psychology in the Schools**, 29 (4), pp. 306-312.
- Willis, P. (2002). **The ethnographic imagination**. Jossey-Bass, 2002.

- Willis, P. and Trondman, M. (2002). Manifesto for ethnography. *Cultural studies/Critical Methodologies*, v. 2 issue 3. p. 394, August 2002.
- Willis, S. (1996). Perspectives on social justice, disadvantage and the mathematics curriculum: a view from Australia. Paper presented at the Plenary at ICME 8, **International Congress of Mathematics Education**, Seville, Spain, 14-21 July 1996.
- Wills, R. (1994). "It is time to Stop" in Ballard, K. (Ed.). **Disability, Family Whanau and Society**, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press, pp.247-264.
- Wilson J. (1999). Some conceptual difficulties about inclusion. **Support for Learning**. Vol. 14. No. 3 p. 110-112.
- Wilson J. (2000). Doing justice to inclusion. **European Journal of special Needs Education**. Vol.15, no.3 pp. 297-304
- Wilson, T.D. (1999). "Models in information behavior research". **Journal of Documentation**, 55 (3), p. 249-270.
- Withrell, C. Noddings, N. (Eds), (1991). **Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education**. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wolfendale, S. (1983). **Parental participation in Children and young people's Development and Education**. London: Cordon and Breach Science Publishers.
- Wolfendale, S. (1999). Parents as partners in research and evaluation: methodological and ethical issues and solutions. **British Journal of special Education**. Volume 26, no. 3. pp 164-170.
- Zarb, G. and Oliver, M. (1992). **Ageing with a Disability: The dimensions of need**. London: Thames Polytechnic.
- Zoller, N. J. Ramanathan, A. K. and Yu, M. (1999). The relationship between school culture and inclusion: How an inclusive culture supports inclusive education. **Qualitative Studies in Education**, 12 (2), pp. 157-174.

## Website References

<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiefaqs.htm>

*Date accessed: 29 March 2004*

<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/tmlnsn.htm>

*Date accessed: 29 March 2004*

[http://ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/95\\_docs/haig.html](http://ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/95_docs/haig.html)

*Date accessed: 16 July 2005*

[http://ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95\\_docs/kinach.html](http://ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95_docs/kinach.html)

*Date accessed: 16 July 2005*

# *APPENDICES*

## APPENDIX 1

### Semi-structured interview schedule for Head Teachers

Following introduction and opening remarks, the main questions asked and prompts used were as follows:

- Where and what did you study?
- For how many years have you been a head teacher in this school?
- Tell me the story of this school ...
- Inform me about the qualifications of the staff who work at this school ...
- Inform us about the student population of this school (origin, socio-economic status) ...
- Inform us about the policy of “special” education that the Ministry of Education Culture has ...
- Do you believe that the school you direct is a normal primary school or does it has any differences from the other primary schools?
- What is your opinion about inclusion?
- Are you informed about the new “special” education law? What is your opinion about that new law?
- Do you believe that your school works as an inclusive setting?
- What is the policy of the specific school concerning the issue of “special” needs?
- What further development do you believe the school needs in order to implement the inclusive setting?
- What further changes does our educational system need, in order to be inclusive?
- Do you believe that you have all the necessary help from the Ministry of Education and Culture or you may needs more? If you need more in what specific areas?

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Semi-structured interview schedule used for class teachers**

- How long have you been teaching?
- Tell me about your previous settings in which you have taught?
- Describe the classroom in which you are presently teaching?
- Tell me about the students you are teaching?
- How you will describe your teaching style?
- How is your teaching philosophy?
- What do you consider your teaching strengths?
- What do you consider to be your teaching weaknesses?
- What do you think is the most rewarding aspect of your job?
- Can you think of a specific event that has changed your perspective on teaching “special” education?
- What do you think is the most frustrating aspect of your job?
- What do you think makes a “special” education teacher an expert?
- Do you think you need more help from the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to help the students with “special” needs in your class?
- What changes must be done in order to help the system go on with “special” education?

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Semi-structured interview schedule for children and young people**

- Do you think that you ever be able to have a friend with “special” needs?
- How will you feel if you have a disabled friend?
- How do you feel if tomorrow a disabled child will join your class?
- If you have in your class a child with mental problems do you think it will be proper if you and your classmates make fun of her/him?
- What is the appropriate attitude towards a disabled child in order to make them feel comfortable?
- If one of your classmates makes fun of the disabled child, what will you said to him/her?

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Semi-structured interview schedule for parents at the primary school**

- Are you informed about “special” education policy that the Ministry of Education and Culture has?
- Are you informed about the “special” Education Law? If yes what do you believe about the law?
- Do you believe that the present legislation gives you the required rights? If not what do you think should be included? (only to parents with a disabled child).
- Does the present system of “special” education be supportive to parents of disabled children and young people?
- Do you believe that inclusion is a matter of human rights?
- How do you find the idea that a disabled child will be educated with your child?
- How do you evaluate the services that the Ministry of Education and Culture offer to your child?



## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Semi-structured interview schedule for parents at the “special” school**

- Do you believe that “special” schools must continue to exist in the Cypriot Educational System?
  
- Are you satisfied with the progress of your child at school?
  
- Do you believe that if certain factors change at school, then your child progress will be more substantial? If yes name the factors in detail?
  
- What changes you think the “special” education system needs?
  
- Can you predict the way educational system of Cyprus concerning “special” education will be in ten years?