

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	2
1.1. The situation in the Maltese Islands.....	2
1.2. Who are the special and regular children?.....	5
1.3. Why are we interested in this subject matter?.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	6
2.1. Inclusive Education	6
2.2. Schools	11
2.2.1. Promoting inclusion in schools.....	11
2.2.2. Disability as a threat?.....	12
2.2.3. Roles of school administrators, social workers and school counsellors.....	12
2.2.4. Steps to develop and implement inclusion in schools.....	14
2.3. Teachers.....	15
2.3.1. Dealing with students' misbehaviour.....	15
2.3.2. Teacher-student relationship.....	17
2.3.3. Practical considerations for teaching.....	18
2.3.4. What teachers should not do.....	22
2.4. Curriculum.....	23
2.5. Facilitators/Special Educators	24
2.6. Information on Students' Conditions Encountered in this Study	26
2.6.1. Autism	27
2.6.2. Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD).....	27
2.6.3. Dyslexia	27
2.6.4. Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD).....	28
2.6.5. Cerebral Palsy.....	28
2.7. Parents	29
Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology.....	30
3.1. Qualitative Interviewing.....	31
3.2. Sampling.....	32
3.3. Research Management	34
3.4. Recording the Interviews.....	35
3.5. Ethical Considerations.....	36
3.5.1. Informed consent	37
3.5.2. Confidentiality.....	37
3.6. Limitations	37
Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings, Analysis & Discussion	38
4.1. The School	39
4.1.1a School policy.....	40
4.1.1b How is a facilitator appointed?.....	42
4.1.1c Are the student's needs really be met?	43

4.1.1d More training needed?	45
4.1.1e What can be done?	45
4.1.1f Commincation outside school premises.....	48
4.2. Teachers	48
4.2.1a Is it a burden to have a student with a special condition in your classroom?	49
4.2.1b Does any communication exist between the facilitator and yourself in order to see what could be done for the student’s benefit?	50
4.2.1c Do you take into consideration special students when planning a lesson?.....	53
4.2.1d Do you perceive any acceptance and relationships between students of different abilities?	55
4.3. Facilitators	57
4.3.1a What did you do to find more about the student’s condition?	58
4.3.1b What is your role as a facilitator?	59
4.3.1c What can teachers do more in order to help special students?	63
4.4. Students	64
4.4.1. Students’ perception on teachers and lesson delivery.....	64
4.4.2. The use of resources in the classroom.....	67
4.4.2a Pictures	67
4.4.2b Discussions	68
4.4.2c Role-Play.....	70
4.4.2d Music	71
4.4.2e Computer.....	73
4.4.3. Social integration among students: inside and outside the classroom. 78	
4.4.3a Regular students’ point of view.....	78
4.4.3b Special students’ point of view.	82
4.5. Conclusion.....	84
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations	85
Bibliography	89
Appendix One	94
Appendix Two.....	95
Appendix Three.....	96
Headmaster.....	96
Teacher.....	97
Facilitator.....	98
Regular Students	99
Special Students.....	102

Chapter 1: Introduction

Inclusive Education is essentially an issue of human rights. It calls for respect for student diversity. It is “a moral responsibility” of a society that

“believes in the broadening of democratic boundaries, in the fostering of a participatory culture, in the defence of the basic rights of children, in the constant struggle against all those factors that prevent the students’ different abilities from being brought to fruition and in safeguarding and strengthening of our country’s achievements in the social and cultural fields.” (NMC Principle 8)

1.1. The situation in the Maltese Islands.

The Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b’Dizabilita’ (KNPD) introduced a strong inclusive education initiative which has been growing in Malta since 1993. One of the aims was to include children with special educational needs in mainstream education. Figure 1 below shows that a total of 889 students currently identified as having a learning difficulty or disability, 69% now attend regular schools. Fewer students are being admitted into special schools, mainly for two reasons: the first being that few children are being admitted into special schools, and secondly, some children are being transferred to regular schooling.

	No. in each category	Distribution in regular and special schools (%)	Distribution of included students in state and church schools (%)
In state schools	490	69	80
In Church Schools	124		20
In Special Schools	275	31	
Totals	889	100	

Table 1: Proportion of students with Special Educational Needs in regular and special schools.

In Malta, children with special educational needs are being aided within mainstream schooling by a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to provide extra assistance to facilitate the child's inclusion in classroom activities. The facilitator needs to be seen as part of the support system of the school rather than only assigned to the child.

Although having facilitators can benefit students with special needs, four concerns may arise. Firstly being that having a large number of facilitators may cause a serious financial concern. The solution which the Educational Division has come up with is to assign a facilitator to more than one child, thus having a "shared facilitator". Secondly is the issue of discrimination whereby with special educational needs where not sent to school or where literally sent back home because no facilitator was provided. Thirdly, concerns the issue of how far a

facilitator is promoting inclusion. One may argue that the facilitator may act as an obstacle for communication between the student and the teachers and the students themselves. Fourthly is the fact that students with special educational needs and their facilitators are admitted in the mainstream organisation of education due to policy, rather than being truly included in the system.

	Totals		Student/Staff ratio
STATE SCHOOLS			
Facilitators	33		
Kindergarten Assistants	51		
Kindergarten Assistants-Special Needs	95		
Eden Foundation-Facilitators	2		
Part-time Kindergarten Assistant	4		
Supply Kindergarten Assistants-Special Needs	193		
Peripatetic teachers of the hearing impaired	12		
Peripatetic teachers of the visually impaired	2		
Total in state schools		392	
CHURCH SCHOOLS			
Facilitator/Kindergarten Assistants (Special Needs)	110	110	
Total in regular education		502	1.2:1
SPECIAL SCHOOLS			
Teachers	48		
Supply Teacher	1		
Instructors	3		
Kindergarten Assistants	80		
Nurses	6		
Total in special schools		138	2:1

Table 2: Extra staff support in regular schools and teaching staff in special schools.

1.2. Who are the special and regular children?

All children are “special”, and a “special” or good, education is prized in all communities of our nation. “Special” in this long essay will refer to children with special needs who have a facilitator. Therefore, the regular children are those who are considered to be “normal”. It is important to mention that each student’s contribution to the community is important from the ‘A’ student to those who require extra support.

1.3. Why are we interested in this subject matter?

We believe that in an inclusive school, each individual’s efforts are to be celebrated. The journey is just as important as the destination. Public awareness of special children’s problems and inequities has increased significantly during the past few years. There is now a major national effort to integrate individuals with special disabilities into the mainstream of community life. Placing special children in special schools may stigmatise them and impair their efforts to live productively in society. Concerns and issues related to disability in Malta seem to reflect the same concerns and issues in foreign countries. The following chapter will clearly confirm this.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Inclusive Education

Inclusion is no longer about “special” education for a “special” group of students, but it is about improving the education of ALL students

(McLeskey, J & Waldron, N.L., 2000: 16)

Inclusive education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff. Inclusive education means disabled and non-disabled children, and young people learning together in ordinary pre-school provision, schools, colleges and universities, with appropriate networks of support. Inclusion means enabling pupils to participate in the life and work of mainstream institutions to the best of their abilities, whatever their needs. While inclusion has focused on individuals with disabilities, it is designed to alter the educational system so that it is more able to accommodate and respond to the needs of all students.

Inclusive education starts from the belief that the right to education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Inclusive education is at the heart of ensuring access to basic education for these excluded groups.

Magrab, P.R. (2003: 8), argued that “inclusive education is an approach that recognises each child to be a unique learner and requires ordinary schools to be capable of educating all children in their community regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other differences”

The principles of inclusion which Salend, S.J. (2005) mentions in his book, summarises the philosophies on which inclusive practices are based. The first principle of having an effective inclusion is diversity, which claims that students are entitled to an education by being placed together, regardless their learning ability and style, race, language, economic status, gender, ethnicity, religion and others. The National Minimum Curriculum claims that each and every student should be provided with the “best possible educational experiences, irrespective of their social realities and abilities” (Giordamaina, J. 2000: 507). Each school is endowed with a vast repertoire of skills, experiences and needs. This diversity, associated with the individual and social differences evident in the school population, enables and requires a pedagogy based on respect for and the celebration of difference.

Individual Needs is the second principle which the author mentions. Everyone should learn and therefore, everyone should have the same learning opportunities. No matter how different each and every student is, the teacher has to cater for each and every one of them. The teacher has to try to teach the same material in

different ways to students. S/He should also teach them skills to compensate for their deficiencies and keep pace with their classmates. Everyone has the right for a quality of education and this is what they must be given, even if it means that the teacher has to change his/her teaching method and/or come up with a variety of resources. When the school tries to ignore these differences by treating students equally, automatically what happens is they create new differences along the way. Thus, the differences between the students should be noted because if for example, a child has a learning disability and the school ignores him/her so that s/he isn't treated differently, what happens is that the student will fail in school. A point which could be taken in consideration is that the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) of students with disability should be developed on the specific needs of that particular person where the administration, teachers and parents try to seek the best way of teaching and learning for a particular child.

Effective inclusion requires reflective educators, and this leads us to the third principle – Reflective Practice. Teachers must realise that every child in the class is their responsibility, and they therefore have to know a variety of instructional strategies, that is, they have to be able to adapt materials and rewrite objectives for a child's needs. Teachers should view each child in the class as an opportunity to become a better teacher rather than a problem to be coped with. Students' progress should be monitored and if there is no progress in the student, then s/he should modify his/her techniques.

Effective inclusion is a group effort as it involves the collaboration of the administrators, teachers, students, families and community agencies. Thus, the fourth principle is Collaboration. Working as a team with parents and the school community helps to learn what skills a child needs and to provide the best teaching approach. Welcoming parents into a classroom and school is vital to having them to be part of the team for inclusive education. Some parents may think their children will not make the same academic gains in an inclusive setting as students in a demanding academic class, but an inclusive setting enriches the educational environment for all children. On the other hand, parents of students with disabilities, learning differences and others, fear that their child will be teased or harmed. School administrators provide the energy and support to make inclusive education happen. They can facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration by removing the barriers to change. Staff training and continuing education are also a must. School administrators can support teachers in inclusive schools by providing in-service training.

Inclusion has a number of benefits not only for children, but also for education in general, for teachers and even for society. With regards to education in general, inclusion provides opportunities to experience diversity of society on a small scale in a classroom. It develops an appreciation that everyone has unique and beautiful characteristics and abilities. It also develops sensitivity toward others' limitations. On the other hand, inclusion helps teachers recognise that all students have

strengths. It increases ways of creatively addressing challenges, in which collaborative problem solving skills and teamwork skills are developed. Society also benefits from inclusion as it promotes the civil rights of all individuals. It also supports the social value of equality and thus, provides children a 'miniature model' of what democracy is.

McLeskey, J & Waldron, N.L. (2000: 50), pinpointed a number of criteria that do not meet the definition of inclusion. These include:

- "Dumping" students with disabilities into general education classrooms with careful planning and adequate support
- Reducing services or funding for special education services
- Overloading any classroom with students who have disabilities or who are at risk
- Teachers spend a disproportionate of time teaching or adapting curriculum for students with disabilities
- Isolating students with disabilities socially, physically or academically with the general education classroom
- Jeopardising the achievement of general education students through slower instruction or less challenging curriculum
- Special education teachers are relegated to the role of assistant in the general education classroom

- Forcing general and special education teachers to team together without careful planning and well-defined responsibilities.

Being different is not a threat but it is something to be valued! Everyone is entitled to a just education, no matter his/her circumstances and everyone should have the same learning opportunities.

2.2. Schools

“Education is the sustenance of a democratic society. A truly democratic society must provide appropriate education for all its children as well as equal opportunities for all citizens.”

(Haring, N.G., Schiefelbusch, R.L. 1976: 1)

2.2.1. Promoting inclusion in schools

School is an important context for children because it is a place where they spend much of their day. In school, children begin the process of becoming life-long learners and develop both emotionally and socially. Having a positive experience, then, is central to promoting psychological health and well-being for all children (Cowen, 1996).

Most often special and regular class children mingle effectively if educational environments are designed to encourage their co-participation. As Peterson. J. M., Hittie., M. M. (2003: 40) argued advocates of inclusive education hope that attending regular education classes, with needed support will help children develop relationships, become a meaningful part of their community and improve their self-esteem.

2.2.2. Disability as a threat?

“For teachers and education administrators alike disability promises tyranny in the classroom, disturbs the organizational calm, stretches the boundaries of narrow academic curriculum offerings and assumes variety in approaches to teaching and learning.” (Barton,L. 1996: 112 :113)

Foucault (1979 :138) argued that the ‘disabled student’ might put an amount of hassle on the school system since a change in the school culture is needed. Administrators and the whole school system should not fear such challenges.

2.2.3. Roles of school administrators, social workers and school counsellors

The administrators can directly affect students by acknowledging and encouraging the best efforts of teachers. Administrators can also plan with teachers, specialists, parents and children so that problems are evaluated and solved. "The administrator is also a problem solver in designing and supporting a teaching system at various levels, including interschool planning and intraschool concerns." (Haring, N.G., Schiefelbusch, R.L. 1976: 12)

The social worker serves as a link between the home, the school and community agencies. The social worker counsels students and families and assesses the effect of the student's home life on school performance. In addition, the social worker can help families obtain services from community agencies and contact agencies concerning the needs of students and their families. Social workers may also offer counselling and support groups for students and their families.

The school counsellor can provide information on the student's social and emotional development, including self-concept, attitude toward school and social interactions with others. In schools that do not have a social worker, the counsellor may assume those roles. Frequently, counsellors coordinate, assess and monitor the student's program, as well as reporting the student's progress to members of the team. The counsellor may also counsel students and their families.

2.2.4. Steps to develop and implement inclusion in schools

McLeskey. J., and Waldron N.L.(2000:120:121), came up with a number of steps which should guide planning and decision making as inclusive schools are developed, implemented and maintained:

- i. Begin with a discussion of schooling for all students
- ii. Form a team including administrators, teachers and other members of the school
- iii. Examine your school
- iv. Examine other schools
- v. Develop a plan for the inclusive school
- vi. Review and discuss the plan with the entire school community
- vii. Incorporate feedback from the school community regarding the plan for inclusion
- viii. Implement the plan
- ix. Monitor, evaluate and change the inclusive program as needed.

In short, a systematic approach is needed to attain an inclusive school but it should be tailored to the individual needs of the school.

Biklen (1985) stated that the development of inclusive programs; "HAS MORE TO DO WITH HOW PEOPLE FEEL and THINK THAN ANYTHING ELSE." (caps in original as cited in McLeskey. J., and Waldron N.L. (2000:146)

2.3. Teachers

A teacher should sincerely believe that every student in her classroom has the ability to be successful and to learn. Her obligation is to discover how each student learns best and use that information to the student's advantage.

(Ceifetz, 1997: 5, as cited in Barton, L.,1996 : 56)

2.3.1. Dealing with students' misbehaviour.

All teachers, no matter how effective, will need to deal with pupil misbehaviour from time to time. Being able to deal with such misbehaviour is extremely important in complementing their ability to set up and sustain effective learning experiences. Pupil misbehaviour refers to any behaviour by a pupil that undermines the teacher's ability to establish and maintain effective learning experience in the classroom. One must keep in mind that pupil misbehaviour lies in the eyes of the beholder, and therefore each teacher will have his or her own idea of what constitutes misbehaviour. While there is a large consensus amongst teachers regarding some forms of misbehaviour, over many circumstances, there is a high degree of variation in teacher's judgements.

The behaviour of children can at times be blamed on their poor home backgrounds. Rutter (1976) argued that there is a good correlational evidence linking misbehaviour with socio-economic factors, such as, poor housing and poverty. However, while these links are correlational and statistically significant, there are always cases of children with poor home backgrounds who do not develop Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Thus, this suggest that more than one factor can lead to misbehaviour. Yet, when faced with a child showing EBD, teachers lead to blame home factors.

The teacher cannot and should not try to address all of a student's problem behaviours at once. If a student has more than one difficult behaviour, the teacher must decide which behaviours are of greatest concern. Janney, R., Black, J., & Ferlo, M. 1989, (as cited in Janney, R., Snell, M.E., 2000:17) came up with three priority levels for problem behaviours. The first being destructive which is health or life-threatening to the student and/or others such as biting, hitting and head banging. Destructive behaviours are top priority and should always be addressed through a comprehensive plan. The second type of behaviour the authors came up with is disruptive behaviour. This prevents teaching and learning from taking place or prevents a student from participating in daily activities. Such behaviours include tantrums. If ignored this behaviour could become destructive. Following these two behaviours the authors identified a third behaviour, which is known as the distracting behaviour. This behaviour may interfere with social acceptance

such as hand flapping and tics; and the student can even damage items such as tearing books.

Having discussed the issue of pupil misbehaviour, the next issue in discussion is the way a teacher can punish students for misbehaving. Hemming, J. (1949), identified two kind of punishments;

- i. Reprimand refers to a communication by the teacher to a pupil (which can be verbal or non-verbal) indicating disapproval of the pupil's misbehaviour. Such actions include; a serious stare, moving a pupil to a seat at the front of a classroom, a threat of a punishment, and suspension from school.

- ii. One of the most unpleasant and distressing situations that can occur in the classroom is a heated and emotional confrontation between a teacher and a pupil. The ability to avoid such confrontations or to deal with one which develops is crucial to the effective management of discipline.

2.3.2. Teacher-student relationship.

Teacher –pupil interaction is measured in terms of the extent to which the teacher uses a mixture of praise, instructive criticism, enthusiasm and good humour to develop a positive and encouraging tone in the lesson which will foster and support pupils' self confidence and self esteem.

(Hemming, J., 1949:109)

Often teachers, carry with them expectations of what others are like and it is important for them to get to know their class for themselves and not rely on other's judgments. Teacher-student relationships cannot be created without informal chats with the children. This can be done in the morning or when saying goodbye at the end of the day. This might be extremely useful for those children who may often feel left out. Having someone take an interest in him/her as a person with hobbies, worries and ambitions can be a useful starting point. Some children seek out an adult's attention whilst others may struggle to make contact. As Thacker. J., Strudwick. D., Babbedge. E. (2002) claimed, it is important that in these cases the teacher makes the initial effort at bridging the gap rather than expecting the child to do so.

2.3.3. Practical considerations for teaching.

One of the important “side effects” of inclusive classrooms is that students learn how to deal with people who aren’t like themselves. By explaining to others they increase their own communication skills. By trying to see others’ point of views, they increase their empathy. These social considerations are incredibly important as our society becomes more and more diverse.

(Turnball, R., Turnball, A., Shank, M., Smith,S.J., 2004)

The climate of the classroom and the school community and the types of attitudes and relationships fostered among students and between teachers and students, play important roles in students’ social and emotional development. A supportive classroom environment is one which is based on values of respect and concern for others and fosters self-direction and decision making by students.

Several studies including Carr et al., (1994), Goldstein and Glick., (1987), et al., (as cited in Janney, R.,Snell, M.E.,2000:41), have investigated variations in students’ performance and behaviour under two conditions:

- i. Performing teacher-selected, repetitive tasks.
- ii. Activities that are of students’ preferences and interests.

The researchers found that the students’ task performance and behaviour improved when the students were doing activities that reflected their interests

and preferences. Findings such as these show that greater relevance to students' interests, contributes to improving students' behaviour.

To determine whether students have understood or not various teaching strategies need to be used. Therefore, when teachers encounter students whose abilities, interests, problems and needs do not fit teachers' original plans, adaptations need to be made. The following are a number of teaching methods which can be used in the classroom and which can be of great benefit to all learners:

- Multiage Teaching – students from two or three typical grades learn together in one classroom, using the same curriculum and staying with a particular teacher for two or three years. Teachers engage students in projects that explore questions and facilitates mutual helping by older and younger students. In Multiage Teaching, students work in pairs or small groups while the teacher moves from group to group. (Peterson. J. M., Hittie.,M. M.,2003)
- Role play – a powerful teaching technique that engages students and teachers in living through experiences that engage emotions, mind and body. When using role plays empathy is involved since students are putting themselves in the shoes of others.

- Portfolios – collections of students’ work that demonstrate growth and learning. Students choose examples of their best work in each subject, as well as work that shows improvement. Portfolios are useful as a support to the new instructional approaches that emphasize the student's role in constructing understanding and the teacher's role in promoting understanding.

- Age Peers as Teachers – another type of support for the teacher is the child’s peers. Children enjoy playing teacher. There are of course, limitations on the use of children as teachers. There may be objections from both the parents of the children being taught and the parents of the child doing the teaching. Haring, N.G., Schiefelbusch, R.L.(1976: 263), identified two advantages of children doing some of the teaching:
 - i. “They may learn that handicapped children are not “monsters” to be feared or organisms incapable of learning.
 - ii. They learn some things about teaching: (a) any person can be taught provided the task being taught is appropriate for the person’s current skill level; (b) the types of materials are important.”

- Cooperative Learning – one approach to grouping students that many teachers and researchers feel is a good fit for inclusion is cooperative

learning. This type of learning is interdependent as group members depend on one another to reach a goal. In addition, face-to-face interactions are possible, as group members work together to achieve goals. (McLeskey. J., Waldron N.L., 2000: 88)

- Group Work – “Working in groups is important as school is a microcosm of society and as such is both a reality in itself and a preparation for the adult world. We need to help children work successfully with a range of people, not just their friends.” (Thacker. J., Strudwick. D., Babbedge. E. 2002: 46: 47).
- The teaching of social and personal skills – one of the aims of inclusive education is that it provides opportunities for socialisation and development of friendships between regular and special students. Thus, just as the teacher teaches academic skills, s/he should teach students social and personal skills indirectly, through a number of activities.

2.3.4. What teachers should not do

Schools may play critical roles in creating learning difficulties. Erdmann (1994) describes it this way: The instructional programs in our schools create educational disabilities by teaching children in ways they cannot learn. When a

teacher groups students according to their abilities, s/he is promoting exclusion rather than inclusion. Thus students are made more aware of their differences in ability. Another way is when a teacher denies access to books and other reading materials to those students who are less capable than others. The teacher is a helping aid and not an individual who limits learning.

When teaching languages, teachers should not expect kids to learn from sitting all day without talking. Teachers should encourage students to be participative throughout the lessons and organise extracurricular activities where learners practice the language. Questioning techniques are very much encouraged in the classroom, however, this can be a pitfall when teachers ask questions and expect only one right answer. Teachers should encourage students to express themselves freely since every student has his/her way of interpreting things. Reprimanding is another tactic used by teachers where they scold children for giving wrong answers. This leads to students avoiding risk-taking in learning.

2.4. Curriculum

To achieve inclusion, all students must have access to the curriculum regardless of their disability, gender or ethnicity. This requires flexible, creative planning to accommodate and adapt all students' needs. In secondary schools, all academic departments must show involvement and commitment.

Public school curriculum guides are relatively standardised. Thus, this might be a disadvantage to those students who either have a learning disability or any other form of disability, most likely these students will not attain all the goals listed in the curriculum guides, at least not at the same level as their regular counterparts. This is not to imply that the goals should be different or even 'special'. Indeed they should be the same but it is the teaching method and teaching pedagogy that should be altered.

A number of research studies have shown that altering the curriculum – either its content or its mode of delivery – can have a positive influence on problem behaviour. As Richards (1999) found, an inclusive school curriculum content is examined to supply 'meaningful and relevant knowledge and skills at a level that provides challenge and achievement.' (as cited in Thacker. J., Strudwick. D., Babbedge. E., 2002:100).

2.5. Facilitators/Special Educators

One can argue that children with special needs may be treated differently from other students, however this is not viewed as a form of inequality but ultimately different endowed students, whatever their abilities and disabilities, are all entitled to similar outcomes in terms of a quality education. Nevertheless, the

process by which they achieve that entitlement can be differentiated. Here one can mention the notion of positive discrimination where students having special needs are given preferential treatment to make up for what they lack. If the school determines that a student's needs require special educational services, an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is developed for the student. In the IEP a list of annual goals including benchmarks or short term objectives to address the student's needs and progress in the general education curriculum, as well as other educational needs are discussed and written down. From here onwards, the facilitator's aim is to achieve these goals with his/her student. In fact facilitators can be actually viewed as preferential treatment for special children who have the 'advantage' of a one-to-one educational delivery.

The facilitator provides information on the student's academic and social skills and the student's responses to different teaching techniques and materials. When a student is placed in an inclusive classroom, the ideal scenario would be where the facilitator works hand-in-hand with the teacher in which they tackle issues such as teaching modifications, classroom management strategies, assessment alternatives, a wide array of resources and peer acceptance.

The facilitator works with families and staff to plan and implement effective teaching strategies to help the child have a smooth and positive transition into an inclusive environment.

2.6. Information on Students' Conditions Encountered in this Study

"Not surprisingly, students with disabilities, whether mild or severe often have poorer social skills and are less often accepted and more often rejected."

(Peterson. J.M., Hittie., M.M. 2003:41)

It is important to understand the difference between the words impairment, disability and handicap. The World Health Organisation (WHO) came up with these differences;

- An impairment is a physical, cognitive or psychological abnormality such as down syndrome, a defective limb or brain damage.
- A disability describes the functional impact of an impairment in performance of human activities such as difficulty in walking, speaking or doing math.
- A handicap is a problem resulting from difficulties in performing a social role such as work or friendship.

Hereunder, is a brief outline of the different conditions we encountered in the study. Some of these conditions were discussed in Salend's Book, *Creating Inclusive Classrooms: Effective and Creative Practices for all Students*

2.6.1. Autism

Autism usually involves a severe disorder in communication and behaviour that occurs at birth or within the first two and a half years of life. Students with autism may have trouble dealing with others; engage in repetitive, stereotypical behaviour; exhibit various inappropriate behaviours; and have learning and language problems.

2.6.2. Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD)

Students with ADD also have specific learning problems, low self-esteem and poor socialisation with peers. Students suffering from ADD have a persistent pattern of inattention, impulsivity and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe. One subtype of ADD is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students with ADHD have poor attention, impulsive behaviour and over activity. They may have difficulty sitting still, playing with others, and completing tasks because they shift from one activity to another.

2.6.3. Dyslexia

Dyslexia causes difficulties in learning to read, write and spell. Short-term memory, mathematics, concentration, personal organisation and sequencing may be affected. Dyslexia is biological in origin and tends to run in families, but

environmental factors may also contribute to it. Dyslexia affects all kinds of people regardless of intelligence, race or social class. The effects of dyslexia can largely be overcome by skilled specialist teaching and the use of compensatory strategies. (<http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk>)

2.6.4. Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD)

Students with emotional and behavioural disorders include those with obsessive compulsive traits. They feel compelled to think about or perform repeatedly an action that appears to be meaningless and irrational and is against their own will. Both biological factors and socio-cultural factors can affect an individual's behaviour. Students who are mildly emotionally disturbed may resemble students with learning disabilities and mild retardation in terms of their academic and social needs. They are also at risk in dropping out of school, absenteeism and suspension.

2.6.5. Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral Palsy is caused by damage to the central nervous system. It is not hereditary, contagious, progressive or curable. Students with cerebral palsy may

have seizures, perceptual difficulties and motor, sensory and speech impairments.

2.7. Parents

Family members are key members and communication and collaboration with them are essential. They can provide various types of information on the student's adaptive behaviour and medical, social and psychological history. Research shows that one of the most important factors that affect a child's performance in school is parental involvement. All too often, parents assume that just sending their children to school and looking at their report cards is enough. This is not true! If a parent wants to be involved, and actively participate in the relationship between his/her child and the school, there are some things s/he can do to make this relationship positive and productive.

When school personnel and parents communicate, they establish a stronger learning environment for the student both at home and at school. Schools contact parents for many reasons, including when their child is experiencing academic or behavioural difficulties, when the teacher wishes to discuss future plans for the child. Each parent and teacher has the same goal - to help children love learning and be successful. The following are some tips to help parents when communicating with the school.

- Recognize the teacher as an important partner in the child's education and future.
- Meet and talk with other parents and school staff.
- Learn about the school's curriculum and support services.
- Notice when his/her child completes homework and provide encouragement.
- Recognize progress. Praise steps taken and efforts made.
- Encourage his/her child to talk to teachers if he/she does not understand an assignment. (<http://www.adprima.com/parents.htm>)

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

This section shall describe the methodology, the methods, the research design and the processes used in collecting data. The aim of this study is to study the extent to which students with different abilities are socially integrated into the school system. The objective of this dissertation is to take the perception of a

number of Headmasters, teachers, facilitators, regular and special students in relation to the aim of this research.

3.1. Qualitative Interviewing

It was decided that for the purpose of our research, qualitative analysis would be the most appropriate, as this is the only way in which perceptions of people could be analyzed and the nature of the subject is also in itself a detailed form, so a quantitative method would be deemed as inappropriate. Bogdan, R. and S. J. Taylor (1975) argued that qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour.

Consequently by means of qualitative methodology meaning is more significant while interpreting. Blumer, M. (1984) stressed that while in quantitative social research concepts tend to be pre-formed and fixed, in qualitative research they tend to be fluid and emergent. By resorting to the use of the semi-structured interviews, which are derived from the qualitative technique, certain information was gained unexpectedly thus exploiting the technique while extracting unexpected, useful information. This was done by probing and asking further questions from those that were previously set. All of this would not have been possible if a structured questionnaire was used.

Nevertheless, general statements and theories is not the aim of this dissertation as it will be based only on perceptions of two Headmasters, a number of teachers, facilitators, regular and special students regarding the topic under study; in addition general statements are the objective of large scale quantitative studies not of qualitative research. The researcher seeks not truth and morality but understanding (Bogdan, R. and S. J. Taylor, 1975)

3.2. Sampling

Qualitative and quantitative researchers move towards different ways of sampling. Quantitative researchers focus on the representativeness of a sample while qualitative researchers focus on the particular information which gives insight into social life. In quantitative research a population is precisely defined and so researchers make use of probability sampling. Thus the sample permits the probability that each sampling unit will be included in the sample. Alternatively, qualitative researchers gather data where it is impossible to draw up a probability sample. Therefore qualitative researchers go for non-probability sampling, and this is what we opted for, for this research.

The sample in this research consisted of the Headmaster, four teachers, six facilitators, thirty regular students – five from each class having a special student

within their class, and six special students from Forms 1, 2 and 3. This sample was carried out in two Boys' Area Secondary Schools.

The sampling unit for choosing students both regular students and special students was chosen with the technique of non-probability haphazard sampling.

From the first school in which we started our research, we found that from Forms 1, 2 and 3, there were six students who have a facilitator, therefore in order to achieve a balance we chose six students from the other school at random, since there were more than six. In addition, we also interviewed their facilitators, thus having six facilitators in each school. We chose five regular students from each class having a special student within their class, because we felt that such a number was appropriate for this study.

Qualitative researchers rarely draw a representative sample from a huge number of cases to intensely study the sampled cases – the goal in quantitative research. For qualitative researchers, “it is their relevance to the research topic rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which the people to be studied are selected” (Flick, 1998: 41, cited in Neuman, L.W. 2003: 211). Haphazard sampling was used as it is the most convenient and easily available sample. In addition these samples are cheap and quick.

Haphazard sampling was also used in selecting three teachers from each school. However, particular attention was given to select teachers teaching different subjects to get a broader viewpoint and more rich data. As this long essay will include a resource pack in Social Studies, both Social Studies teachers of the two schools understudy were interviewed. Since there is only one headmaster in every school, no sampling method was needed.

3.3. Research Management

The data for this project was obtained by utilizing an interview, which was more in the form of a conversation held at the school's premises, including the staffroom and the headmaster's office. The interview was not totally structured and face-to-face interviews were conducted. Further questions from those pre-set were asked, this means that probing was used to extract further information from the respondents. Although further questions were asked to give more detail and provide clarification, the process of leading and forcing the person in any direction was avoided as much as possible. In other words the respondents were left free to express themselves and give their perceptions. Bryman, A. (2001) argues that questions in a semi-structured interview may not follow on exactly in the same outline schedule. Questions which are not included in the interview guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees.

However, more often than not, all questions were asked and similar wording were used from one interview to another.

The interview included only questions which are open ended as these type of questions allow respondents to compose their own answers rather than choosing between a number of preset answers. This may be more likely to provide valid data since respondents can say what they mean in their own words. (Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. 2000). Since face-to-face interviewing provides such detailed information, and being very time consuming, each interview varied significantly in length. The length of each varied from ten to twenty minutes, however this depended on the respondent and the experience the interviewee had to share.

3.4. Recording the Interviews

The interviewer's data consists almost entirely of spoken material that come through the interview and these are overwhelming in volume. The interviewer cannot just sit back, listen and jot down each and every uttering that is said, as it not the aim of this study to reproduce in detail all information. To solve this problem, all interviews were tape recorded with the respondents' consent, and transcribed afterwards. As a matter of fact tape recording was used because;

the interviewer is supposed to be highly alert to what is being said following up interesting points made, prompting and probing where necessary and drawing attention to any inconsistencies in the interviewee's answers. It is best if he or she is not distracted by having to concentrate on getting down notes on what is said. (Bryman, A. 2001: 322)

Since tape recording can only capture utterings, voice tonalities and silence gaps, any striking non-verbal expressions made during the interview were recorded. Consequently minimal notes that did not interfere with the flow of the conversation were taken, with 'filling the blanks' of data afterwards during the transcribing process. Another point worth mentioning is that the interviewees did not find any difficulty in the conversation being recorded.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

"Conducting research that may violate the rights and welfare of research participants is neither the intent nor the major interest of social scientists. The sole objective of research is to contribute to development of systematical verifiable knowledge."(Nachmias, D. & Nachmias, C., 1996: 77)

3.5.1. Informed consent

Research involving human participants should be performed with the informed consent of participants. Headmaster, teachers and facilitators were provided with a letter of consent, which had to be signed prior to initiating the actual interview. Most importantly the letter of consent indicated that the interview will be tape recorded and when the process of transcribing will be done, all the recordings will be erased. Permission from the Education Authority was obtained to conduct research in these two Area Secondary Schools.

3.5.2. Confidentiality

Commonly used methods to protect participants are anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity, as regards all respondents was not possible in this type of research as they were known by name and there was a face-to-face contact with the respondents. Conversely, participants in this research were told that the information they provided will be treated as confidential, that is even though the participants are identifiable, the information provided will not be revealed publicly.

3.6. Limitations

In the sampling process, several limitations were encountered.

- i. The type of sampling used, that is, haphazard sampling can produce ineffective, highly unrepresentative samples and is not recommended. When a researcher haphazardly selects cases that are convenient s/he can easily get a sample that seriously misrepresents the population (Neuman, L.W., 2003: 211).

- ii. Two Area Secondary Schools for Girls could have been used for this research to create a comparative study. However this was impossible due to limited time.

- iii. Mathematical sampling was too large to task. Even though it was beyond the present researcher's scope, effort was still made.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings, Analysis & Discussion

This chapter represents the findings of the research through the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with two Headmasters, eight teachers, twelve facilitators, sixty regular students – five from each class having a special student within their class, and twelve special students from Forms 1, 2 and 3. Here, the findings will be analysed and presented with the work of other researchers so as to present a stronger argument. Data will be categorised in different topics, to make the analysis more flowing. However, all topics are related to one another. Different topics regarding social integration in schools will be discussed and put forward. Some citations of direct speech; collected from the interviews conducted will be presented to provide a more clear picture of the topic under discussion. The following table is a simple synthesis of the respondents who were interviewed.

Respondents	Number of Participants
Headmaster	2
Teacher	8
Facilitator	12
Regular Students	60
Special Students	12

Table 3: The number of respondents who were interviewed.

4.1. The School

Inclusive Education is about removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities. Magrab, P. R. (2003), argued that to establish practice in secondary schools some specific challenges must be addressed. Creating a responsive climate in secondary schools requires a commitment to the mission of inclusion, strong principle leadership, and a collaborative spirit. Traditionally teachers in secondary schools work in isolation from each other as do groups of students. A significant transformation in both the structure and culture of the school environment must occur.

4.1.1a School policy

The classroom is not an island isolated from the rest of the school community. Individual teachers not only make a difference to the children they teach but to the schools within which they work. Similarly, the school has an impact on the teacher and the class. There is an echoing between the class and the school. There is the necessity for a whole-school policy that promotes consistency and a team approach to working with special children.

A significant difference came out with regards to the policy of both schools. Although the fundamental matter was very similar, since both Headmasters reported that the school believes in integrating special students in mainstream

schooling, one Headmaster gave a broader view of the school's inclusion policy where he pointed out that inclusion also refers to those students who come from foreign countries. Both schools promote inclusion; however one of the schools has a number of limitations.

It is easy to plan and discuss certain needs and practices that should be altered in order to cater for the various needs of students, however, one should keep in mind that there might be some restrictions; which are resources. The Maltese government values education and tries to provide whatever necessary for the successful running of the school, but there may be some restrictions. This is particularly true when confronted with raising aspirations and higher standards of living, where parents, students, and teachers expect their work and study environment to be as pleasant as those they enjoy in their homes. It is easy to preach and say that inclusion should also apply to children with special needs, without considering the cost of such things. One of the schools under study is quite old, having lots of stairs, and no facilities of ramps and lifts. For the same reason, lifts can never be installed in such old buildings. Another setback is that pupils especially in the secondary level of education move from one class to another, making it even more difficult for students with mobility problems to integrate within the system. This particular school is divided two -the lower and upper school. This makes it definitely difficult for them to move from one block to another especially if they make use of a wheelchair for instance. All this does

not place the school policy against the idea of inclusion of special children, on the contrary it believes that these students should be given the chance to socialize and get their education with all the other kids. When reporting such factors, the Headmaster was trying to create awareness of the rigorous work that should be done in the school.

“Għandna l-location għall-affarijiet għal lift, toilets għall-handicapped people f’kull sular għandna imma l-lift għadu ma sarx. Imma l-policy hi li ngħinu mill-aħjar li nistgħu; xi kultant ma jkollix control fuq l-affarijiet imma l-parents li jgħu jsaqsu, intihom l-informazzjoni possibli.”

“We have a location for the lift, and we also have toilets for the handicapped people, but the lift still has to be done. But the school’s policy still insists on helping the best we can; at times certain factors are above our control. Parents are still given information when needed.”

4.1.1b How is a facilitator appointed?

Both Headmasters emphasised on the difference of a shared facilitator and a one-to-one facilitator. A shared facilitator, as the name indicates, is shared between two students. A shared facilitator is not shared randomly, but the teacher, guidance and parents study the child’s weaknesses and then come up with a scheme which notes which subjects the student needs extra help. Thus, a shared facilitator will attend those classes in which the student needs additional help. On the other hand the one-to-one facilitator is appointed to only one child. From

this one can observe that facilitators are allotted according to the gravity of the child's condition.

Both Headmasters referred that it is not the first time that a student attends the first year or two without a facilitator and is then given a facilitator through suggestions from the parents or teachers. The Headmasters were also asked what happens to a studented child when s/he moves from primary to secondary school. They answered by saying that the facilitator does not follow the child from primary to secondary school. A suggestion that could be taken in consideration here is that the facilitator should follow the child through this school process, as this will highly benefit the child. Here one can add that students are already struggling to settle down in secondary school let alone having a change of facilitator.

4.1.1c Are the student's needs really be met?

Fullen and Miles (1992) address what it means to work systematically in a school to bring about change. They suggest that if school change is to be successful, it must "focus on the development and interrelationships of the main components of the system simultaneously – curriculum, teaching and teacher development, community, student support systems and so on." They go on to note that "reform

must focus not just on structure, policy and regulations but on deeper issues of the culture of the system.” (as cited in McLeskey, J., Waldron, N. L. (2000:11)

In this research there was an emphasis on the continuous relationship between the school and the child’s parents. It was pointed out that there are no problems for special students with regards to having a facilitator, in Form 1 and Form 2 however a certain embarrassment might arise when they reach Form 3. To avoid this embarrassment, one of the Headmasters told us that they keep in contact with the parents through the telephone instead of having them come to the school, for the child’s sake.

“Fil-Form 3 it-tfal jibdew jitfarfru u qisu t-tifel donnhu jisthi li qed tigi ommu, imma aħna xorta nżommu l-kuntatt bit-telefon.”

“Form 3 students will be embarrassed if his mother comes to school, however we keep contact with the telephone.”

Both schools are trying their best to satisfy and meet the child’s needs. The school which has certain limitations still tries to accommodate these students by adjusting classroom facilities and doing ramps. The Headmaster referred to one particular case where the administration had to take the decision of moving a whole class of students to the ground floor so that the child who was wheel-chair bound did not find difficulty to access the school premises. The other Headmaster does not have these difficulties since the school is well-equipped, so

he went a step further by buying a special computer for those children who suffer from severe disability such as Cerebral Palsy.

4.1.1d More training needed?

Both Headmasters insisted that teachers are not trained enough. They claimed that time and needs change and therefore a person who was trained ten years ago is proved to be out of training nowadays. In the same way, facilitators should also be retrained as today's needs are totally different from tomorrows. They agreed on the fact that the in-service courses which take place during summer should include sessions on how to deal with students who have a facilitator. This can be of great benefit to all teachers as having another adult in the classroom can be a distraction.

4.1.1e What can be done?

Inclusion requires substantive change: change that influences every aspect of a school; change that alters the daily professional activities of teachers and administrators; change that alters how students are taught, what they are taught, how they are grouped to receive instruction and who delivers that instruction;

change that challenges traditional attitudes, beliefs and understandings regarding students with disabilities and other students who do not “fit” into the typical classroom in a school.

With regards to this question, a contrast was formed where one of the Headmasters did not see any room for improvement since there were no negative annotations from the parents:

“La ma għandhiex garr mill-parents allura m’għandhiex problema, għax għandna ħafna komunikazzjoni.”

“Since there are no complaints from the parents, we do not have any problems, because we have a lot of communication.”

On the other hand the other Headmaster sees room for improvement. At the moment his focus is on trying to invest on a multi-sensory room, which would be of great help to special students especially those who suffer from conditions such as Autism, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy. Multi-sensory rooms are environments in which stimulating activities and experiences are used to increase awareness and positive behaviours for individuals with severe sensory impairment or neurological challenges. Multi-sensory rooms have been shown to enhance skills such as sensory development (hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch), hand/eye coordination, cause and effect, language development, control over one’s environment, and relaxation.

McLeskey, J., Waldron, N. L. (2000:44:45), came up with five strategies to ensure that an inclusive school continues to improve and be successful:

- i. Maintaining an inclusion planning team with responsibility for monitoring and suggesting changes in the inclusive school as needed.
- ii. Ensuring continuity among teachers who teach in the inclusive school.
- iii. Continuing to provide teachers with time to plan for the ongoing, day-to-day collaboration that is such an important part of an inclusive school.
- iv. Ongoing staff development is critical to the continued success of an inclusive school.
- v. Ensuring that a plan for evaluating the inclusive school is developed and implemented.

4.1.1f Commincation outside school premises.

Both Headmasters remarked that when certain problems arise the first thing they do is that they communicate with the counsellor, and assign the guidance to decide whether welfare or social worker is needed. If they are suspicious about a child's strange behaviour, they first contact the parents and from there they decide which steps should be taken. If help outside the school is needed, they first talk to the guidance, the guidance talks to the counsellor and the counsellor takes note of what should be done.

One Headmaster showed some disappointment about things which used to be done but for some reason or another stopped. By this he meant that one particular Non-Government Organisation (NGO) stopped its communication with the school: in the previous years this NGO used to organise a number of activities for these special students such as horse-riding, however this stopped.

4.2. Teachers

As Barton, L. (1996), claimed, teachers should promote a spirit of community and common ownership rather than seeing the school as belonging to the power structure.

4.2.1a Is it a burden to have a student with a special condition in your classroom?

Educators face the challenge of managing classroom behavior, teaching acceptable social skills, and maintaining curriculum standards in diverse classroom settings, however this is not always possible when everything is not so plain sailing. One challenging situation is to cater for each and every student in spite of these having different abilities and needs. When teachers in both schools, in our study, were asked this question they seemed to agree and brought forward similar points. The first being the gravity of the child's condition. If a student is quiet and therefore does not cause any trouble in the classroom is one matter, but having a child with difficult behavioral problems is another matter. A Physics teacher noted that having a student with a physical disability can cause another obstacle especially during experiments since the lab's benches are quite high and therefore it is difficult to perform an experiment. This teacher also pointed out her difficulty when trying to include these children with the mainstream.

“Ostaklu ieħor hu li xi kultant ċertu tfal ma tkunx taf kif ser iddaħħalhom f’experiment. Per eżempju l-facilitator tgħidlek “Le, ħallih lil dan, għax dan ma jkunx jaf x’għandu jagħmel u jtellifhom lil oħrajn” U tigi darek mal-ħajt x’taqbad tagħmel.”

“Another obstacle is that at times it is difficult to integrate students in experiments. For example when the facilitator tells you “Leave him, as he wouldn’t know what to do and so he will end up disturbing the others” This causes a bit of a problem as you would not know what to do”

To overcome these obstacles teachers have to find ways and means to cater for these students. An English teacher came out with a very good point being:

“Hemm ħafna kundizzjonijiet, b’daqsxejn paċenzja xi kultant, b’ċertu ħlewwa u dedikazzjoni minn naħa tal-facilitator ukoll, tifel tista’ tlaħħaq mal-bżonnijiet tiegħu.”

“There are many different conditions, with a little patience, charm, and dedication even from the facilitator’s side, the child’s needs can be met.”

The same teacher remarked on the lack of resources available in some schools and the lack of training which should be given to all teachers in order to be more diligent.

4.2.1b Does any communication exist between the facilitator and yourself in order to see what could be done for the student’s benefit?

To make sure that special students are successful and feel welcome in the school, continuous communication is needed between teacher and facilitator. In addition, teachers should gather broad and specific information in order to better understand the specific reasons for the student’s problem. In this research we came across a particular circumstance where teachers of a particular school

“Allura jkollok xi kultant you brush aside u hija ħaġa sfortunata ħafna imma trid tibqa għaddej.”

“And so at times you have to brush aside. This is something very unfortunate but you have to keep on going.”

referred to us that a number of facilitators do not attend lessons with their pupils and so these students are left to fend on their own in their classroom. In this situation, the teacher’s role is even more important since s/he has to serve as a facilitator to this child. In fact, a Social Studies teacher claimed that she used to spend extra time, after the bell rings, in order to give extra help to this student.

“Kien hemm student li ma kontx naf li għandu facilitator imma kont ninduna li ma kienx ilaħħaq mal-kumplament tal-klassi u kont dejjem nispiċċa nagħmel 10minutes extra miegħu wara l-lezzjoni. Kont ninkoraġġiġi, nagħtih ftit aktar attenzjoni biex jaħdem u ma jaqtax qalbu.”

“There was a student and I didn’t know he had a facilitator but I noticed that he wasn’t catching up with the others, and so I used to end up spending an extra 10minutes with him after the lesson. I used to encourage him and give him more attention so that he continues to work and won’t give up.”

Due to this, special students have to attend lessons on their own and try to cope and catch up with the academic material and the abilities of the other students. Teachers that teach a subject once a week said that they cannot stop and interrupt the lesson to give extra attention to special students, since this would be a drawback for the mainstream students and the syllabus would not be covered.

However, a number of teachers claimed that some kind of communication exists and it is impossible to cope without this communication. Both teachers and facilitators should work hand-in-hand for the benefit of the student. at times, it is the teacher who takes the initiative to give lesson plans, notes and worksheets to the facilitators, but there are cases in which the facilitators ask teachers for material. A Physics teacher remarked that in one particular case, a student was finding it hard to understand a particular topic. Thus, she had to explain to the facilitator the topic, since the facilitator had some difficulties, and then it was the facilitator who tried to explain the topic to the student. However, she also claimed that when after a number of weeks the student still didn't understand the content, they decided as a team to move on to another topic and not waste more time on just one topic.

One subject which doesn't face a lot of problems with having students with learning difficulties is Physical Education (P.E.). A P.E. teacher claimed that he was able to control all the class without the help of a facilitator and thus didn't struggle to integrate all students. The only problem which such teachers face is when students are physically disabled as they might find it hard to include them in certain activities.

4.2.1c Do you take into consideration special students when planning a lesson?

When answering this question, teachers mentioned a number of approaches which they believe can integrate the students when planning a lesson. Teachers did not mention the word 'Constructivism' literally however, from the literature read we could make an association between what the teachers expressed and the material read.

In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning encourages students to use active techniques such as, experiments and real-world problem solving, to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. One of the teacher's main roles becomes to encourage this learning and reflection process. Constructivism does not dismiss the active role of the teacher or the value of expert knowledge. But it modifies that role for a purpose: so that teachers help students to construct knowledge rather than to reproduce a series of facts. Students are therefore transformed from a passive recipient of information to an active participant in the learning process. Always guided by the teacher, students construct their knowledge actively rather than just ingesting knowledge from the teacher or the textbook. One of the teachers remarked that one of his students suffered from cerebral palsy, and a way in which he could integrate the student and make sure that he understands is by using ample resources and even bringing real objects in the classroom.

“Anke tfal bi bżonnijiet speċjali jaraw, jmissu, jagħmlu reazzjoni. Nipprova nippjana l-lezzjoni biex kemm jista’ jkun lil dan it-tifel ma nħalliġx barra mis-circle tal-klassi.”

“Even special students can see, touch and make a reaction. I try to plan a lesson where the student is not left out from the circle of his classmates.”

One can clearly see the difference between traditional classrooms and constructivist classrooms. Whereas in traditional classrooms the teacher sticks to materials being textbooks and workbooks, in constructivist classrooms materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials. Students in the traditional classroom who cannot guess what the teacher has in mind for the right answer will quickly drop out of the discussion, because they fear of being humiliated. But students must not be humiliated or ridiculed, but they should be encouraged to voice their opinion, without the fear of being judged. The teacher should also encourage students to make meaning by breaking wholes into parts. Therefore, instead of the teacher talking about a certain subject s/he can include in her lessons guest speakers which are experts on that particular subject, can take students on field trips related to what they are covering in that period of time. Teachers claimed that when doing their lesson planning, they planned in such a way to cater for the abilities of all students, and not making such a difference between special and regular students.

Principle 2 in the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) focuses on the respect for diversity. One of the many aims of the NMC is to respect students coming from all backgrounds, having different needs and skills. The aspect of inclusion is very much related to this principle. Even though teachers need to value this principle, a barrier exists – the syllabus. One particular teacher referred to the importance of giving attention to all students. However, he claimed that this is impossible at times, since the syllabus has to be covered and they are pressed for time.

“Tibda tinduna li jew ha tmexxi ma’ l-iskeda jew inkella ser tieqaf u tagħmel tajjeb għat-tfal. Imma mbagħad f’Gunju jkollok problemi kbar fejn jidhrol is-sillabu.”

“You come to realise that you are either going to follow the schedule or else you are going to stop every time, in order to meet the students’ needs. However in June you might have serious problems regarding the syllabus.”

4.2.1d Do you perceive any acceptance and relationships between students of different abilities?

Thacker, J., Strudwick, D., Babbedge, E. (2002: 65) argued, that sometimes you get children in your class who get left out socially; they are the last to be picked for a side in P.E.; the last to be chosen in partner work; the ones nobody wants to sit next to; the ones you often see on their own in the playground. This is where the teacher’s role comes in. For this reason we felt the need to ask teachers if they see

integration between special students and regular students. On the whole we got a positive feedback as most of the regular students help these special students both in the classroom and during break. However, teachers also identified some factors to why sometimes these pupils are isolated. The first factor is related to age, where students integrate easily in the lowest stages of secondary school. On the other hand, this is may not be the case when students are in their higher years of secondary school, as bullying might arise. The second factor is the child's character. The more outgoing the child is, the more s/he will find it easier to make new friends. Being a loner does not help to build friendships. The last factor is concerned a lot with one's condition. Having a child who is autistic or who has ADHD can make him look like a pest or even be violent with regular students and this can be a drawback as students do not like to be with friends who have similar traits. This is why it is important to educate students and make them aware of such dissimilarities.

"Fil-brejk jkun hemm aċċettazzjoni ħlief meta l-istudent b'każ speċjali, hu nnifsu juri biċ-ċar li hu ma jridx jintegra. Hemm xi każijiet fejn l-istudenti jkunu vjolenti u għalkemm ma jkunx tort tagħhom, l-istudenti mhux ser jjeħdu pjaċir jilgħabu magħhom. Bla ma jrid dan l-istudent ser jiġbed ċertu antipatija."

"During break time there seems to be acceptance, unless it is the special student himself who shows no interest of wanting to be integrated. There are cases where students are violent and it is not their fault, however the other students aren't going to enjoy playing with this student. Without wanting to, the student is going to portray a dislike on himself."

Nevertheless the attitudes of the teacher make a crucial difference as to whether or not children with special needs are accepted in the class. Once these children are well-accepted in the class, it is far easier for them to integrate during break time. Teachers can give a warm, caring, supportive environment, in which students feel comfortable to learn, feel safe to share their ideas, and feel free to ask questions and take risks. Having this kind of classroom is very essential as the students learn to trust the teacher and a good student-teacher relationship will develop. When both students and teachers are able to voice opinions and thoughts in a quiet, respectful atmosphere, mutual respect and understanding develops. The students realize that it is *their* classroom as much as the teacher's and they take ownership and pride in that.

4.3. Facilitators

A facilitator should act as a mediator between a teacher and a student. Students with disabilities or learning difficulties should be given an extra help by the teacher and even by his/her shared or one-to-one facilitator. Both teachers and facilitators have to work hand in hand so that there will be progress from the students. Positive discrimination is when one favours and gives more to students who have less so they are given preferential treatment to make up for what they are lacking in. Having facilitators can help these students to catch up with what their classmates are doing. Some might disagree with children who have a

facilitator as they claim that these children are looked down on and are therefore treated differently. There should not be a negative vibe with regards to students having a facilitator, for the simple fact that all people need and deserve help. Everyone should be allowed to specify the kinds of help they need and want and when they want it. Both giving and getting help are positive actions and can help bring people closer together. There should be no stigma nor shame associated with needing other people's help, support, encouragement and appreciation.

4.3.1a What did you do to find more about the student's condition?

Due to the vast number of conditions, it is impossible for a facilitator to know everything and therefore s/he should keep up-to-date. When a facilitator is appointed a new child it is his or her responsibility to have a good overview of the child's condition. Precisely, we asked this to a number of facilitators to get to know what they do to find more about the student's condition. They came up with five different ways and means. The first being the internet which was used as an online library and it was exploited to extract knowledge. Secondly, books were also useful. Some facilitators used their course books as another helping aid. Two facilitators informed us that they had just finished a ten week intensive course on how facilitators are going to become Learning Support Assistants (LSA's). Learning Support Assistants means that facilitators are going to be a

helping guide to all students with particular attention to special students. Some facilitators have already adopted this strategy as it is not the first time that they help other students apart from the student under their care.

Although the above mentioned are all useful strategies, all facilitators concluded that experience is the best teacher.

“L-iktar tgħallimt mill-esperjenza miegħu, sirt nafu aħjar, u skoprejt il-karattru ftit ftit”

“I learnt through experience by getting to know him and his character”

Lastly information can also be obtained from the child’s parents, the school guidance and from the previous facilitator if handover has occurred.

4.3.1b What is your role as a facilitator?

When answering this question the facilitators identified three main roles which they feel they have. These are; to help the child in the classroom during lessons; to build a relationship and rapport with school administration, child’s parents and teachers; and to promote social integration between students both inside and outside the classroom. In the following pages, the facilitator’s role will be presented and discussed briefly.

Helping the child in the classroom:

- i. To help him keep his focus and tries to keep him on track when a student can distract himself easily.
- ii. Copies what is done in the lesson, just in case the student does not understand or does not finish writing in time.
- iii. Verbal prompting: *"Ejja Kompl!"* (Come on, continue!)
- iv. Provides him with resources when needed, such as pictures and flashcards.
- v. If the help of the facilitator is not accepted by the student s/he has to find other ways and means to get his attention.
- vi. One way for a facilitator to enhance students' self-concept and increase their great expectations for their future is to enable them to achieve academic success.
- vii. Facilitators who build on their students' strengths help them to reach their potential.
- viii. In certain situations when the child is uncontrollable the facilitator should be flexible in continuing the lesson elsewhere.

"Gieli jkun hemm mument i fejn it-teachers jgħiduli biex noħorġu u jien nieħdu fil-football ground u noqgħodu nagħmlu xi affarijiet orally, jew noqgħod nilgħab miegħu."

"At times teachers ask me to take him out of the classroom and I end up taking him outside in the football ground to continue doing some work orally, or else to play with him."

Building a relationship and rapport with teachers, school administration, and child's parents:

Teachers may have the misconception that facilitators are knowledgeable of all subjects. This is not the case since facilitators are not jack of all trades. Therefore, facilitators have to build a relationship with the teachers so that if a student has a difficulty and the facilitator is unable to help, the teacher will take over and spend extra time with him. Even though in this research an emphasis was placed on the teacher-facilitator relationship, some facilitators told us that it is impossible to get all lesson plans before the actual lesson, since too many teachers are involved.

Another standpoint a facilitator should take is to inform the teacher beforehand on the child's condition and its effects in order to prevent certain misfortunes such as scolding and punishing a child unjustly.

"Importanti li tkun taf anke bir-reactions tat-tifel biex ma taqbadx tirrabja miegħu għax ma tkunx taf li hi xi ħaġa normali fil-kundizzjoni tiegħu...L-Għalliem/a m'għandhiex titgħalliem mill-iżball."

"It is important that the teacher knows about the child's reaction so that she won't scold him for nothing....The teacher should not learn from his/her mistakes."

A positive remark which all facilitators agreed on was that help and support was always provided from the administrators.

Parents must play an active part with the facilitator in developing educational goals. Moreover, parents will have to play a part in initial and periodic evaluation of the child. The aim of education is not simply performance at school but also performance in non-school situations. (Haring, N. G., Schiefelbusch, R. L. (1976:266)

“Hija importanti li jkun hemm teamwork bejni, bejn il-ġenituri, bejn il-Head of school u l-għalliema, għax jekk mhux kullhadd jgħbed habel wieħed, dan it-tifel żgur mhux ser jagħmel progress”

“Teamwork involving myself, parents, Head of school and teachers is very important, as if not the student can suffer academic consequences.”

Promoting social integration between students both inside and outside the classroom:

Facilitators really showed concern about this issue. Although the majority of the special students have friends, the facilitators still feel the need to try and help those who do not have any friends and also try to keep an eye on them to make sure they are not bullied. These two quotes show concerns which facilitators face:

“Importanti ħafna li jkollu inclusion ma’ sħabu għax jekk hu jinduna li hu maqtugħ għalih hu jaħseb li hu inqas minn ħaddieħor, u jekk jien

“ It is important for him to be included because if he realises that he is left all alone he will realise that he is different from his classmates. And if I won’t do

ma nagħmilx mill-aħjar li nista' hu jaqa' aktar lura."

my best he will be left out."

"Mhux li tkun int il-ħabib tiegħu għax hu mhux lilek irid, imma li jkollu ħbieb oħrajn. Trid toqgħod attent li ma jkunx bullied għax ħafna drabi jkunu l-mira tagħhom."

"My role isn't to be his friend as he doesn't need me as a friend, but he needs other students to be his friends. You should keep an eye on him so that he won't be bullied."

With reference to a student who suffers from ADHD, a facilitator claimed that her student does not have any difficulty to make friends but unfortunately, due to his condition he finds it hard to nourish friendship.

"Hu jilgħab ma' ħafna tfal u jaf ħafna nies, imma ma jafx iżomm ħabib, jġifieri hu jilgħab u hekk imma jekk ħabib ser toqgħod tinkih u tagħtih hija impossibli li jzomm ħbiberija"

"He knows a lot of people and he plays with lots of kids, however he does not hold nurturing friendships. A friend can only tolerate a certain amount of irritation and annoyance "

4.3.1c What can teachers do more in order to help special students?

Continuous improvement is always essential; not enough is ever done. When talking to facilitators they proposed a number of ideas which are worth mentioning and taking note of.

- i. Teachers should be more patient especially with students suffering from hyperactivity and who might be a bit annoying.

- ii. More individual attention should be given to see students
- iii. There should be more communication between student and facilitator.
- iv. Teachers should give these students extra time to finish their homework
- v. Teachers should involve these special students more during the lessons.
- vi. Teachers should make use of more resources

“Flok il-lezzjonijiet tagħhom ikunu lecturing, għandhom jaħdmu aktar b’teamwork, jagħmlu exercises interessanti u mhux jagħmlu tal-kotba biss. F’għajnejn dawn it-tfal, dawn l-activities ikunu aktar fun u aħjar.”

“Instead of lecturing, they should make more use of teamwork, do interesting exercises and not only work exercises from books. These students really like these activities and they find them really fun.”

4.4. Students

4.4.1. Students’ perception on teachers and lesson delivery.

Since we had our teaching practice in the schools under study, we had the opportunity to observe some teachers in the school. We noted that a number of

teachers adopted the traditional way of teaching, mainly consisting of dictating notes or reading from the book, which made the students far less attentive and easily bored leading to having a distractive classroom. Adolescents need fun lessons and this is the only way a teacher can actually manage a classroom effectively at secondary level.

This was confirmed by both regular and special students themselves, when they were asked which lesson they enjoy the most. In fact the lessons they mentioned the most were Physical Education (P.E.) and Mathematics. The reasons given for such a choice were that the students liked the subject, because it interests them and because they see its relevance to life. The majority who chose P.E. claimed that they liked this subject as it is different from other subjects, since it involves a lot of physical activity and breaks away from the traditional mode of teaching. Another criterion which the students put an emphasis on was the character of the teacher. The students asserted that they wanted teachers who knew the subject well and therefore knew how to transmit her/his knowledge. They expected teachers to be in total control of the classroom and therefore be disciplined enough to implement what s/he promises.

"Il-Miss trid iżżomm il-kastig li ttik u mhux tinsa!"

"The teacher has to keep a punishment and not forget all about it!"

In addition students claimed that they want teachers who take initiative in the classroom and provide interesting activities which correspond to different interests of pupils. Moreover quite a number of students sustained that they want teachers who can have a laugh and share a joke with them. Therefore one can conclude that students prefer teachers who are firm, flexible and fun.

*“L-ewwel ngħidu xi ċajta bejnietna,
nikkummidjaw naqra u mbagħad
tibda l-lezzjoni, mhux ċimiterju ta’!
Kultant kollox irid ikun”*

“In the beginning of the lesson we would tell a joke and the teacher would collaborate with us and then the lesson begins. There should be a time for everything”

When students were asked what they seek to find of relative importance in a lesson, both regular and special students said that a teacher should use a number of activities, such as pictures, drawing, discussions, worksheets, quizzes, group work, charts, and outings.

*“Mhux il-ħin kollu tikteb u tikteb,
imma tagħmel xi logħba u fl-istess
ħin nitgħallmu ukoll.”*

“ We shouldn’t spend a whole lesson always writing and writing but the teacher should do a game in which we are also learning”

Part of this research’s aim was to present a resource pack therefore in our study we asked students to give their opinion regarding different kind of resources.

Thus, resources were built upon the students' feedback. The following section will present such findings including literature material.

4.4.2. The use of resources in the classroom

4.4.2a Pictures

Since pictures involve a lot of colours, it was important for us to ask students what their favourite colour is. Colour is essential therefore teachers should make use of colours which are liked by students in order to grab and maintain their attention. The colours which were mentioned the most by students were red, blue, green and black. Something which really surprised us was that the majority of the students preferred if the teacher showed them photos rather than animated pictures, as they linked photos to real life and saw cartoons as being too babyish.

*“Ritratti, għax aktar għandhom
x'jaqsmu ma' xi ħaġa realistika”*

“Photos, since they have more
relevance to real life.”

Pictures can reduce large objects to a manageable size or enlarge small objects and are also excellent when looking for detail. Pictures and photos serve as 'starters' for group discussion, individual work or group writing. A teacher can use them as an aid to vocabulary development or for the presentation of new

ideas. In addition, both pictures and photos help to develop thinking skills such as, brainstorming, making inferences, making judgments and evaluating.

4.4.2b Discussions

Discussions are also essential. They help students find out who they are and what they are all about. They also challenge their thinking and help them reflect on certain issues and life itself. Apart from that they also learn that everyone is different and therefore we have to respect each others opinions. Assigning group work will help the teacher give the pupils a greater chance to discuss different issues with other students and therefore start getting to know their class mates and thus, making more friends. In Social Studies pupils can relate to the issues discussed by applying them to real life. What Paolo Freire says makes a lot of sense. He claims that there should be a balance between teaching and involving students. He suggests that the teacher should include his/her students in discussions and activities.

One of the questions which the students were asked was precisely if they preferred a teacher who asked them a question directly or else if they preferred having a class discussion. The majority of all students preferred having a classroom discussion. The main reasons given were:

“Diskussjoni għax kulhadd jieħu sehem u mhux tkun qisek waħdek u fl-istess ħin tieħu u tisma’ l-ideat tagħhom.”

“Discussion as everyone participates and not just one person and at the same time you are listening to other people’s ideas.”

“Kulhadd jiddiskuti għax aktar interessanti u tisma’ l-opinjoni.”

“Everyone discussing as it is more interesting and you are listening to others’ opinions.”

However, in this study a clear disadvantage of discussions was pointed out by a student who suffers from speech impairment. He claimed that since he has a difficulty in expressing himself vocally, he finds it hard to say the answer before his classmates since he spends more time thinking about how to verbalise it.

“Hemm ftit li jaqbzu, imma li huma tajbin joħorġu mill-ewwel bl-answer. Ma nistħix imma sakemm ngħolli subgħajja u lanqas jarawni, malajr jaqbez xi haddieħor.”

“There are some who come up with the answer immediately. I’m not shy but until I put my hand up, and at times they don’t even see me, someone else will say the answer.”

On the other hand, there were also some students who preferred their teacher to ask them directly. One of the reasons given was:

“Issaqsi lili direttament, għax b’hekk kulhadd ikollu ċ-ċans tiegħu.”

“Asks me directly, so that everyone has a chance to talk.”

Discussion is the primary means of increasing active student involvement in the classroom, in which students gain useful skills in clarifying goals, planning, and being sensitive to others. A teacher's decisions on whether and how to use discussions in the classroom must be carefully considered. The focus must always be on the aims and goals of instruction and how discussion can help achieve them.

4.4.2c Role-Play

Role plays are staged 'dramas.' They can be based on real world issues and thus, provides students with opportunities for "hands-on" learning about important topics and issues. Participants in role-plays can either play themselves or they can play others. Role-plays are flexible activities that can be adapted easily to the learning goals of almost any lesson. As the students interviewed are still young, they like to actively participate during lessons. In fact the mainstream claimed that they do enjoy the lesson more if role-plays are used. We went a step further by asking them in what lessons they practice role-plays, and the subjects mentioned were Personal Social Development (P.S.D), Social Studies and even languages. However, it is important to note that role-plays in these two schools are not practiced as much as necessary. One student noted that:

"Kieku sew! Meta kien hawn l-istudenti kienu jagħmluhom imma t-

"That would be great! We used to do them when student teachers taught us,

*teachers ma naħsibx li għandhom
ċans.”*

but I don't think that teachers have
enough time.”

Conversely, students who didn't like the idea of using role-plays didn't so because they claimed to be shy to act their part in front of the whole classroom. Anything is possible with role-play. Students should not worry if they are not good actors—all one needs are a few props and some imagination. Changing one's voice, pitch, pace, or accent can make the role-play more vivid. The more students look and/or sound like someone else, the more exciting the role-play will be.

4.4.2d Music

Music communicates something to people and that is why people like and listen to music. Music is a way of communicating through sound, just as literature communicates through words, paintings communicate through colours and dances communicate through movements. Amid these reasons and many others, music can be a helping aid for both the teacher and the students in the classroom as it can make the lesson more interesting and more outstanding.

Integrating music with other academic subjects is one way to salvage some of its strengths and to enrich the entire curriculum. For example, using music is exactly

the way to teach a new language. In relevance to Social Studies, music can serve as a mediation tool and even as an ice-breaker to introduce a particular topic.

With regards to music, we asked pupils if they enjoyed listening to music during a lesson, followed by a discussion. The majority did as the table below shows.

Those who said no, said so because they did not like the idea.

Tgħoġbok l-idea li kieku l-għalliema waqt il-lezzjoni ssemmgħulkhom diska?	
Yes	59
No	13

Table 4: Showing the number of students who like or dislike the idea of listening to music during a lesson.

The results show that music is really significant. Musical lyrics articulate a relationship between teenagers and the public sphere, such as politics and important social issues. An example of this is the song *Where is the Love?* which is a cry out for help and brings awareness to what is happening in the world, in this case war. Teens might not be able to express what they actually feel, a reason being because they might not have access to the public sphere, and thanks to these lyrics they can participate in the public discourse indirectly, as it were. Thus, these musical lyrics link teens to the public sphere.

Table 5, below, shows the different musical styles which students thought the teacher should use during a lesson. Results show that students prefer to listen to contemporary music, being mainly Modern Music, Rock and Pop Music.

Type	Number
Rock	18
Reggae	1
Hip-Hop	3
Rap	6
R'n'B	4
Pop	7
Techno	4
Classic	1
80's	1
Maltese Music	3
Modern Music	24
Country	2
Italian Music	1

Table 5: Showing the type of music students would like to listen to, during a lesson.

In any lesson, songs should obviously be related to the topic but above all the students should be familiar with them. The more interesting they are, the more they grab and maintain the students' attention.

4.4.2e Computer

As Barton, L. (1996) argued, in the 80's students were fascinated by the use of the "magic lantern", there is nothing magical about computers but children are unwittingly drawn to the interactivity and colourful images on the computer.

Computers and internet facilities are now in place in all our state schools: from primary to secondary and also at the tertiary level. It is envisaged that education will see Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a major teaching and learning device across all educational institutions. With its power of interactivity, multimedia and communication, the computer proves an excellent tool for Social Studies education. The idea is that students will be active ‘participants’ rather than ‘spectators’ in this process.

Multimedia is the embodiment of text, graphs, animation, pictures, sound and video clips and it can be easily adapted for use in Social Studies. Graphics play an extremely important role in the learning process.

Knowing how important computer is in today’s world, students were asked if they think lessons would be more interesting if computers are used. Results show that students do agree and therefore see computers as a major component in today’s educational process.

Taħseb li jekk waqt il-lezzjoni jkun hemm l-użu tal-kompjuter tkun aktar interessanti?	
Yes	68
No	4

Table 6: Showing the number of students who think would be more interesting if computer is used.

One particular student came up with an interesting idea on the use of computers within the school premises.

“Iva, ngħidlek il-verita’ l-ħolma tiegħi hi li niġi l-iskola, kulħadd bil-laptop tiegħu u t-teacher tkellmek bil-laptop u tiktiblek u mhux teacher toqgħod tikteb fuq il-whiteboard.”

“To tell you the truth my dream is to come to school, in which everyone has his own laptop and the teacher communicates with us by writing on the laptop instead of using the whiteboard.”

However, those who did not like the idea did not do so for two major reasons. The first being that students are not used to using the computer during lessons, therefore they do not see any relevance. Secondly, is the fact that students might end up surfing on the internet instead of using the computer wisely.

“Ma naħsibx għax il-kompjuter m’għandux x’jaqsam mal-lessons l-oħra ħlief ta’ l-I.T.”

“I don’t think so as the computer doesn’t have anything to do with other lessons except I.T.”

“Ma naħsibx għax xi tfal jispicċaw imorru fuq l-internet u joqgħodu jilgħabu.”

“ I don’t think so as some students will end up surfing on the internet to play games.”

The role of the teacher needs to change from that of ‘gatekeeper’ of knowledge to that of ‘facilitator’ and ‘manager’ of the learning environment. The student will become a self-directed learner rather than a passive learner. S/he will, through

the guidance, of the teacher, set priorities and achievable goals and assume responsibility for reaching the goals. The Internet is one tool that will enable education to make this shift. It will enable students to engage in self-directed learning experiences and activities that encourage self-expression, co-operative learning and interaction not only with their immediate environment but with the outside world as well. The above was verified by the students themselves since quite a number stated that:

“L-istudenti jridu t-teknologija biex jjitgħallmu.”

“Students need technology to learn.”

Other statements put forward by a number of students showed other advantages of using Information Technology in the lessons. Other pros were mainly that students hate writing and therefore prefer typing since it is quicker for them; the computer is closer to the pupil therefore the pupil can see much more clearer than on the whiteboard; and students can easily have access to the internet which is an extra helping aid for them to research information.

“Iva, nitgħallem aktar. Il-whiteboard ikun il-bogħod u l-kompjuter ikun viċin, qisu tiegħi. Inkun nista’ nara aħjar.”

“Yes, I do learn more. The whiteboard is far away but the computer is closer. Therefore, I can see much better.”

(Quoting a Form 1, special student)

“Mhux li nitgħallem aktar. It-tnejn naħseb li titgħallem, kemm fil-klassi fik ukoll fil-kompjuter lab. Bil-kompjuter tista’ tidħol f’websites u fil-klassi tista’ ssaqsiha xi domandi.”

“I don’t learn more. I think that both help me to learn, when I am in the classroom and when I am in the computer lab. You can access different websites and in a classroom you can ask the teacher questions.”

Although its advantages, some students still prefer the traditional mode of teaching that is the teacher should teach the students and not a machine (computer).

The last question asked concerning computers was whether students prefer to complete a homework or schoolwork exercise on the computer rather than on a handout. Since there were a number of variations in the answers given, the best way to present such data is through a table.

Taħseb li tiegħu aktar pjaċir jekk il- ‘homework’ jew ‘schoolwork’ tagħmlu fuq il-kompjuter minflok tikteb?	
Yes	53
No	17
Don’t know	2

Table 7: Showing the number of students who prefer homework and schoolwork to be done on the computer rather than writing it down.

The table shows that a significant number of students still believe that they learn more when they write. It is important to note that those who answered ‘no’ to this question were too concerned about their inability to typing fast and therefore

see themselves as being put in a disadvantaged position. A child's honesty came out when he said that it is easier for him to have homework on the computer as his sister can do it for him.

To sum up students were asked if resources would help their learning if used frequently in lessons. All except two students agreed that resources do help their learning.

4.4.3. Social integration among students: inside and outside the classroom.

4.4.3a Regular students' point of view.

These last few years schools are trying their best to promote social integration among regular and special students. Thus students were posed the question which reflects the above question. From the regular students only three students, from one particular school expressed some doubt to having special students in mainstream schools. It seems that regular students find it hard to understand those students who have a facilitator especially those who suffer from ADHD. One of these students came up with an important remark which leads to a doubt if fairness in schools truly exists:

"Dan idejjaqni għax ġieli joqgħod jgħajjat u jiffidilja u mbagħad ma' l-Assistant Head u hekk, jgħidu li hu kwiet u għalhekk tehel int biss. Anke darba ġġilidna, l-exclusion

"He bothers me because at times he starts shouting and messing around, then he is known to the Assistant Head as being quite and therefore I am the

jiġena biss ħadtha u ma qlajnihiex it-tnejn li aħna.”

only one to blame. Once we had a fight, I was the one who got the exclusion and he didn't.”

This should not reflect badly on the school's administration since we do not and we did not research the case.

One particular student accepted integration to a certain point, he saw a difference between the physically handicap and those who have a learning disability. In fact he remarked that those students with learning difficulties should be placed in mainstream classrooms while the physically handicap should be placed in different classrooms.

The question which followed was if regular students find it difficult to communicate with special students. We were surprised that quite a number of students found it difficult since the conditions of the students under study were not severe.

Issibha diffiċli biex tikkomunika magħhom?	
Yes	12
No	42
It depends	6

Table 8: Showing the number of students who find it or do not find it difficult to communicate with special students during the lesson.

Research on peer attitude toward students with disabilities reveals that many students who do not have disabilities have negative attitudes toward persons with disabilities (Salend, 1998, as cited in McLeskey, J., Waldron, N. L., 2000:101). Two respondents came up with two appalling statements which reflect exclusion rather than inclusion.

“Insib ftit żgħira għax huma ma jkollhomx moħħ bħal tagħna; idumu iżjed biex jifmhu.”

“I do find it a bit difficult because they do not have a brain like ours; they take longer to understand.”

“Insibha diffiċli iva, għax mhux bniedem bħali – għax għandu facilitator.”

“Yes, I do find it difficult because he is different from me – he has a facilitator.”

However the ample number of students who do not find it hard to communicate, indicate that the school’s aspirations for social inclusion in being successful.

Dawn it-tfal jipparteċipaw waqt il-lezzjoni?	
Yes	50
No	3
At times	6
I do not know	1

Table 9: Showing the number that believes that special students do participate during the lesson.

In the literature review, emphasis was placed on the role of the teacher in integrating special students during their lessons. Table 9 above, shows that in these two Area Secondary schools, teachers do their utmost to involve all students in their lessons. We decided to pose this question to students and not only to teachers to get a valid answer.

Having a student who suffers from Cerebral Palsy - who communicates through hand gestures - an interesting quote worth mentioning is the following;

“Wiehed ma jtkellimx, imma xorta jifmhek meta tkellmu, u biex jirrispondik jgħolli jdejh.”

“One of these students doesn’t talk but he still understands you when you talk to him and his way of answering is by putting up his hand.”

Those who gave a different answer claimed that special students do not participate due to not being so intelligent.

Social Integration does not only exist in the classroom but also outside the classroom such as break time, and therefore we were interested to find out if there is a barrier between regular and special students. Most of the students argued that they do play with special students during break time. The only times they do not is because the latter spend a lot of time during break time with the facilitators to complete their homework or else because they do not like playing

football or any other sports like the other students. An additional point that could be made is that regular students still feel the need to help special students in both class work and home work, even though they have a facilitator. One way in which acceptance can be promoted is by peer assistance. Peer assistance refers to pairing students for the purpose of having one student available to assist another student when necessary. Peer assistance from a buddy can be helpful in promoting success in inclusive classrooms. However, peers should lend assistance only when help is required. But when help is unnecessary, students with disabilities should be encouraged to perform tasks as independently as possible.

4.4.3b Special students' point of view.

As our main concern is on special students, we wanted to verify if these students find it difficult to make friends. According to Cullinan, Sabornie and Crossland (1992), one of the criteria to determine if a student is fully integrated socially into a classroom is whether s/he has at least one reciprocal friendship. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a student as a full participant in the social community of the classroom who does not have a friend in the classroom. All special students except two confirmed what the regular students said about playing together during break time. One of the special students who only have one friend uttered the following:

*“Nixtieq kieku jkolli grupp imma
ħabib wieħed kull ma għandi
bħalissa.”*

“I wish to have a group of friends but
at the moment I only have one.”

One of the aims of this study was to see if there are any differences or similarities between these two Area Secondary schools. For the previous questions students from both schools seemed to agree, however a contrast resulted in this question where in one school students claimed that they do understand what is being explained during the lesson whilst in the other school the majority said that they do not always understand what is going on. A general remark from these students was that when they do not understand something they prefer to ask their facilitator rather than their teacher.

With regards to teachers, we can say that they do try their best to integrate special students and give them time to express their views and give answers to questions asked. This was evident from students’ response. In fact, one of them claimed that:

*“Iva, anke meta jarawni aljenat,
ġieli jiġbduli l-attenzjoni.”*

“Yes, even when I’m distracted they try
to grab my attention.”

Extra-curricular activities enhance the quality of learning and the full personal development of students. A school should believe that extra-curricular activities

(mainly drama, different sports – gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, handball, badminton, football etc., and choir singing) help to render school life a pleasure to look forward to with each day, both for staff and students, and therefore, school is not seen to be just sitting and listening to the teacher. When special student's in this research were asked if they have ever participated in an extra-curricular activity, all students gave a positive response. This outcome shows that there is no significant difference between regular and special students' participation in the school.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings and the analysis of the semi-structured interviews carried out during the research. Reference to direct speech of respondents was made in order to present a stronger argument. Some direct speech was presented in the first person to prove what was being discussed. This chapter provides an evaluation of the extent of social integration, from the perception of the Headmasters, teachers, facilitators, regular and special students in two Area Secondary Schools. In addition, the data which was collected from the students themselves regarding resources was used to formulate our resource pack.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The evidence is pretty clear that inclusive schools would improve the learning of all students, including those with mild to severe disabilities. We all have the responsibility to help create good schools and to promote excellence in instruction. School change is not easy, but it can be done. Change involves all of us. It must be both top-down and bottom-up. Problems can be helpful; they force us to think in different ways. We can come together to provide support and take action in ways both large and small. Ultimately, we build a movement of change.

This study leads to a number of recommendations;

- i. The first goal is to change the whole educational system from one excluding students on the basis of the examination system to one which includes all students. Since this study required us to interview students of different abilities it made us more aware how unfair examinations are. Students in Area Secondary Schools have difficulty in expressing themselves in writing; however they are able to express themselves verbally. Thus, examinations throughout all the scholastic years should not only be limited to writing but verbal expression should be given credit.

- ii. A significant transformation in both the structure and culture of the school environment must occur. This means that all schools should be accessible to all students- by this we mean having lifts, ramps, and toilets which can easily be accessed by the physically disabled. In addition assemblies may have more potential than many schools realised. They are not only opportunities for being together and building a school's culture but are reflections of the way that a school functions and includes people. This could be done by giving positive messages at assembly times such as praise for good work and achievement.

- iii. The manner in which schools relate to parents and the way the two support each other can make a big difference to the progress of the child in school through for example: written information from school to home to some or all parents; newsletters to keep parents informed of what is happening and what equipment their children need; open evenings and days to encourage parents to work with the child's school; parent/teacher social and recreational events.

- iv. This research may have given the idea that teachers are not so much trained in dealing with special students. No one should take for granted the fact that a facilitator is present in class, since there are still a number of students who are in need of a facilitator, but their needs are not as yet

recognised. Teachers should have an in-service course which makes them aware of the different needs students with different abilities may come across; and which teaches them how to deal with such situations. Teachers should also be trained to collaborate with facilitators and not see the facilitators as a threat. For example, teachers giving their schemes of work and lesson plans to facilitators beforehand. This initiative can lead to a network of support where facilitators will work collaboratively with the teachers rather than working in isolation.

- v. Good teachers need a variety of approaches and patterns of working, and the flexibility to call on several different strategies within the space of one lesson. Sound planning and skilful management are needed to blend class, group and individual work to provide a wide range of learning activities to observe, to solve problems, to offer explanations and to apply skills and ideas. Pupils of any age need a satisfying balance between oral, practical and written tasks providing scope for extended discussions.

“When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become ‘normal’ to contribute to the world. Instead, we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherent in all people. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to

realise the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging.” (As cited in Turnbull, R., Turnbull, A., Shank, M., Smith, S. J. 2004)

There are many sound reasons, psychological as well as practical, for including a course on Social Studies in the school curriculum. The purpose of Social Studies course is not to teach young people the unquestioning acceptance of any point of view, but to encourage them to think for themselves. As an example to integrate students of different abilities, a resource pack is included. The topic of 'Ix-Xoghol' was chosen from the Curriculum. We chose this topic as students in Area Secondary Schools might find it more relevant to real life, since they are more likely to connect work experiences with life experiences.

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Appendix One – Informed Consent Form (English Version)

To whom it may concern,

We the undersigned are currently undergoing a PGCE course in Social Studies. This course requires us to conduct a study in any topic related to Education. Being PGCE Social Studies students we proposed the following title of research: **Can I play too?**

The extent of Social Integration within two Maltese Area Secondary Schools for Boys.

The aim of this research is to study the extent to which students at risk are socially integrated into the school system and suggested strategies will be included to promote Social Integration for students at risk through Social Studies through:-Lesson Plans, worksheets, handouts and resources.

Our research will consist of interviews with the Head of School, teachers, facilitators, and students who have either physical, and/or psychological problems.

It is important to clarify that;

- Personal data shall only be collected and processed for the specific research purpose
- Subjects or people interviewed are free to quit the study at any time
- The people interviewed will not risk any physical, psychological, legal, and social harm by participating in this research
- All necessary measures shall be implemented to ensure confidentiality and, where possible data shall be anonymised.

Thank you in advance,

Alexia Nappa BA (HONS) Sociology

Trudy Muscat BA (HONS) Social Studies

I the undersigned agree to the terms and conditions of this research

Signature of Guardian _____

Appendix Two – Informed Consent Form (Maltese Version)

Lil min tikkonċerna,

Aħna żewġ studenti ta' l-Universita' li bħalissa qegħdin nagħmlu kors fil-PGCE f'lis-Studju Soċjali. Dan il-kors jirrikjedi li nagħmlu studju fuq suġġett relatat ma' l-edukazzjoni. Għalhekk aħna għażilna li nagħmlu dan l-istudju: **Can I play too?**

The extent of Social Integration within two Maltese Area Secondary Schools for Boys

L-għan ta' din ir-riċerka hu li nistudjaw kemm huma integrati daww l-istudenti li għandhom problemi fiżiċi u/jew psikoloġiċi fl-iskola. Barra l-istudju tagħna se ninkludu l-idea ta' integrazzjoni fl-istudju soċjali permezz ta' lezzjonijiet, worksheets, handouts u riżorsi oħra.

Din ir-riċerka tikkonsisti f'intervisti mal-Kap ta' l-iskola, għalliema, facilitators, u studenti li għandhom problemi fiżiċi u/jew psikoloġiċi.

Huwa importanti li nikklarifikaw dawn il-punti;

- Informazzjoni personali se tkun miġbura u proċessata għal użu tar-riċerka biss.
- In-nies li ser jieħdu sehem f'din ir-riċerka huma liberi li jiddeċiedu li jieqfu milli jirrispondu ċertu mistoqsijiet.
- In-nies li ser jieħdu sehem f'din ir-riċerka m'humiex se jidhru f'riskju fiżiku, psikoloġiku, legali u soċjali.
- Din ir-riċerka tassigura kunfidenzjalita' u anonimita' fejn hu possibbli.

Nirringrazzjawk bil-quddiem,

Alexia Nappa B.A Hons. Sociology

Trudy Muscat B.A. Hons. Social Studies

Jiena t'hawn taħt naċċetta t-termini u kundizzjonijiet ta' din ir-riċerka.

Firma: _____

Appendix Three – Interviews and Questionnaires

Headmaster

1. Hemm xi 'policy' fuq inkluzjoni fl-iskola?
2. Fil-bidu tas-sena taraw jekk hemmx tfal li għandhom bżonn 'facilitator'?
3. L-iskola qed tindirizza biżżejjed il-bżonnijiet ta' dawn l-istudenti?
4. Taħseb li l-għalliema ta' din l-iskola għandhom taħriġ adakkwat dwar il-kundizzjonijiet ta' dawn l-istudenti?
5. Taħseb li f'din l-iskola għad baqa' xi jsir għall- ġid ta' dawn l-istudenti?
6. X'livell ta' komunikazzjoni jeżisti bejn l-iskola u aġenziji oħra li jistgħu ikunu ta' għajjnuna?

Teacher

X'inhuwa s-sugġett li tgħallem?: _____

1. Taħseb li huwa ta' ostaklu l-fatt li jkollok student b'kundizzjoni speċjali fil-klassi?
2. Hemm komunikazzjoni bejnek u bejn il-‘facilitator’ biex taraw x'tisgħu tagħmlu għal ġid tat-tifel?
3. Meta tkun qed tippjana l-lezzjoni, tara kif tista' tintegra lil dawn it-tfal waqt il-lezzjoni tiegħek?
4. Tara li hemm aċċettazzjoni u relazzjoni tajba bejn studenti ta' abilitajiet differenti?

Facilitator

Eta' tat-tifel: _____

Kundizzjoni tat-tifel: _____

1. Kemm ilek tieġu ħsieb lil dan it-tifel?
2. Kif għamilt biex tkun taf aktar dwar il-kundizzjoni tat-tifel?
3. Bħala 'facilitator', x'inhu r-rwol tiegħek ?
4. Kif jistgħu l-għalliema ta' din l-iskola jgħinu aktar lil dawn l-istudenti speċjali?

Regular Students

Eta': _____

Form: _____

Sezzjoni A

1. Liema lezzjoni togħgbok?
2. Għaliex?
3. Xi tfittex l-aktar waqt il-lezzjoni?
4. Xi trid tagħmel għalliema biex int tkun interessat fil-lezzjoni?

Stampi

5. Liema huwa l-kulur li jogħgbok l-aktar?
6. X'tip ta' stampi jogħgbok l-aktar? Cartoons, stampi jew ritratti?

Diskussjoni

7. Kif tippreferi, lezzjoni fejn l-għalliema tistaqsi lilek direttament jew fejn il-klassi tiddiskuti flimkien ?

Role Play

8. Tieġu gost kieku int u sħabek tagħmlu reċta waqt il-lezzjoni?

Mużika

9. Tgħoġbok l-idea li kieku l-għalliema waqt il-lezzjoni ssemmgħulxhom diska?

10. Liema tip ta' mużika, taħseb li l-għalliema għandha tuża waqt il-lezzjoni?

Kompjuter

11. Taħseb li jekk waqt il-lezzjoni jkun hemm l-użu tal-kompjuter tkun aktar interessanti?

12. Taħseb li l-kompjuter jgħinek biex titgħallem aħjar?

13. Taħseb li tieġu aktar pjaċir jekk il-'homework' jew 'schoolwork' tagħmlu fuq il-kompjuter minflok tikteb?

14. Taħseb li jekk jintużaw riżorsi bħal; stampi, diskussjonijiet, reċti , mużika, kompjuter, int tkun tista tifhem aħjar?

15. Int xi kwalitajiet tfittex f'għalliem/a?

Sezzjoni B

1. Fil-klassi tiegħek hemm xi ħadd li għandu 'facilitator' ?
2. Int tiddejjaq li jkun hemm dawn l-istudenti fil-klassi tiegħek?
3. Issibha diffiċli biex tikkomunika magħhom?
4. Dawn it-tfal jipparteċipaw waqt il-lezzjoni?
5. Fil-brejk ġieli tilgħab ma' dawn it-tfal?
6. Għalkemm, ikun hemm il-'facilitator', tħoss li għandek tgħin lil dawn it-tfal?

Special Students

Eta': _____

Form: _____

Sezzjoni A

1. Liema lezzjoni togħgbok?
2. Għaliex?
3. Xi tfittex l-aktar waqt il-lezzjoni?
4. Xi trid tagħmel għalliema biex int tkun interessat fil-lezzjoni?

Stampi

5. Liema huwa l-kulur li jogħgbok l-aktar?
6. X'tip ta' stampi jogħgbok l-aktar? Cartoons, stampi jew ritratti?

Diskussjoni

7. Kif tippreferi, lezzjoni fejn l-għalliema tistaqsi lilek direttament jew fejn il-klassi tiddiskuti flimkien ?

Role Play

8. Tieġu gost kieku int u sħabek tagħmlu reċta waqt il-lezzjoni?

Mużika

9. Tgħoġbok l-idea li kieku l-għalliema waqt il-lezzjoni ssemmgħulxhom diska?

10. Liema tip ta' mużika, taħseb li l-għalliema għandha tuża waqt il-lezzjoni?

Kompjuter

11. Taħseb li jekk waqt il-lezzjoni jkun hemm l-użu tal-kompjuter tkun aktar interessanti?

12. Taħseb li l-kompjuter jgħinek biex titgħallem aħjar?

13. Taħseb li tieġu aktar pjaċir jekk il-'homework' jew 'schoolwork' tagħmlu fuq il-kompjuter minflok tikteb?

14. Taħseb li jekk jintużaw riżorsi bħal; stampi, diskussjonijiet, reċti , mużika, kompjuter, int tkun tista tifhem aħjar?

15. Int xi kwalitajiet tfittex f'għalliem/a?

Sezzjoni B

1. Ma' minn tħobb tilgħab jew titkellem fil-brejk?

2. Għandek aktar minn ħabib wieħed?

3. Tifhem dak li jkun qed isir waqt il-lezzjonijiet?

4. L-għalliema jistaqsuk waqt il-lezzjonijiet?

5. L-għalliema jtuk ċans titkellem u tipparteċipa?

6. Ġieli ħadt sehem f'xi 'play' ta' l-iskola, Sports Day jew Prize Day?