

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
IN KUWAIT AND ENGLAND**

By

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for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY WITH INTEGRATED STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This study is a comparative analysis of inclusive education for students with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) in Kuwait and England. A central tenet is that despite policies espousing the value of inclusion, implementation has been met with negativity in schools and communities in the Middle East, including Kuwait. The study aims to explore the factors necessary to successfully include such children in mainstream primary schools, with special reference to science classrooms. The present study is located in the fields of comparative education and special education. In order to explore understandings of inclusion in two different contexts, the study applies a comparative ecological framework. The study investigates current practice in Kuwait and England at different levels to reflect the perceptions of the various people involved, namely teachers, students, and parents, by applying an 'ecological model'. It applies a variety of methods to explore school and classroom practice, trying to identify the influence of key factors at different levels in developing inclusiveness and the barriers hindering this.

Inclusive education is considered to be part of a 'global agenda' to improve education for all, and is underpinned by United Nation's policy guidelines. However, comparative research has also shown that this global agenda takes on a 'local flavour' in specific countries. In this study, 'comparing' is not the end itself but a dynamic way to understand inclusive education, its origins and application to the Kuwaiti context. This contextualisation is essential in linking the policy level to the factors from the school level within an ecological framework.

The results suggest internal and external barriers at different levels to the development of inclusive education for children with MLD, particularly in Kuwait. The main implication of

the study is that once these barriers are identified, holistic frameworks can be implemented using knowledge of the local context with international support, to successfully adopt more inclusive practice.

DECLARATION

This thesis is as a result of my investigation and research and it has never previously been accepted in substance for any degree.

DEDICATION

This thesis is especially dedicated to my loving parents and uncle who inspired me from my early years with the dream that one day I would receive a PhD degree. Finally, this dream turns into reality with your support and encouragement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CSIE	Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
EBD	Emotional behavioral disability
IEPs	Individual Education Plans
LD	Learning Difficulties
LDD	Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
LEA	Local Educational Authority (LAs)
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NVIVO	Qualitative data analysis software
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning disabilities
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
SGSE	Secretariat General of Special Education
SLD	Severe learning disability
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SPLT	Speech and Language Therapist
Spt	Special educational teacher
TA	Teaching assistant
UKDPC	The UK Disabled People's Council
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPIAS	The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
WHO	The World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter sets out the general background of this study, together with the context of the research. It is followed by the research aims and questions, which guided the study. Then, the significance and the limitations of the study are discussed. In so doing, the scene is set to explore inclusive education practice in Kuwait today.

1.2 Context of the Study

1.2.1 Focus of the research

This study is a comparative analysis of inclusive education in England and Kuwait, as available to students with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). It is concerned with primary mainstream school practice in general and in the subject of science in particular. The purpose of the study is to explore the necessary factors for the successful inclusion of children with moderate learning difficulties.

The focus of the study is on pupils with MLD for several reasons. First, the MLD group in the UK forms the largest proportion of those with special educational needs (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Second, in the Kuwaiti context, the only group of children with disabilities who are offered inclusive programmes are children with Down's syndrome and children with MLD. I chose the latter because, unlike children with Down's syndrome, they do not exhibit any particular physical characteristics that this kind of difference might be significant in Kuwaiti culture. The categorisation and definition of MLD will be discussed in further detail later.

According to the literature, these children face challenges reflected in their performance in different aspects of school life (Mastropieri et al, 2005; Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Therefore, this study compares the nature of support for MLD students in mainstream schools in Kuwait with current practice in England. Note that the search is not for ‘good practice’ *per se* but for instructive lessons in different practices, as Booth (cited in Nind et al, 2003) stipulates when describing the aim of comparative studies. The practice of including MLD students in mainstream primary schools in England has evolved over time. Therefore, from this investigation, assuming that there are lessons to be learned from the lengthy experience of inclusion in one of the most developed countries, I would hope to suggest recommendations to improve Kuwaiti practice.

I wanted at first to make a ‘balanced’ comparison between Kuwait and England, with a similar sample of schools and individuals in each country. However, practical reasons made it necessary to alter the research design, as detailed in Chapter Four. As a Kuwaiti researcher and practitioner, my main concern was with the practice in Kuwait, and so I am satisfied that, while the samples are not on the same scale, the research in England still provides a very useful lens through which to view the findings from Kuwait.

1.2.2 The approach used to address the problem

As its supporting conceptual framework, this study employs Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory of human development. Applying this theory is important for deepening our understanding of the factors or barriers associated with developing or challenging inclusive education.

A case study approach was seen to be the most appropriate for the research and the most likely to yield detailed and extensive information on mainstream school conditions, and science classroom practice, in support of developing inclusive education. Chapter Three gives a detailed account justifying the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development, and the suitability of the case study design to the research.

1.2.3 Who are the pupils concerned?

Choosing the target population for my study was the first issue in designing it. It is worth noting that categories of learning difficulties are relative to context. The terminology has constantly changed over time, to avoid terms which might stigmatise those to whom they are applied. In England, the term applied to those with learning difficulties has changed from 'idiocy', through 'feeble-mindedness', 'mental sub-normality' and 'mental handicap', to 'learning difficulties' (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). In Kuwait, the term 'mental retardation' is still used, as it is in North America; it falls into the overall category of mental disorder and it describes what is referred to in England as 'learning difficulties'. The two systems also use different approaches to classify children with cognition and learning difficulties. In Kuwait, the definition incorporates an IQ score, while in England IQ tests are no longer used (Norwich and Kelly, 2005).

As a pragmatic option, I use each country's administrative categories; however, note that these groups as designated in England are not completely comparable with those of the same name in Kuwait. Due to such differences in the administrative categories, in particular the different IQ boundaries used, the group of pupils with MLD in England contains a wider range (IQ 50-85) than the group called 'slow learners' in Kuwait (IQ 70-84). Moreover, there

is no consensus in defining MLD (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). However, despite these differences, it seemed to me impossible to discuss the category ‘slow learners’ in Kuwait except in the terms available. The same category would fit the term MLD in England. Thus, ‘MLD’ refers to the same group of pupils in both countries.

1.2.4 Research studies on special education in Kuwait

Research literature on special education which also covers inclusive education in Kuwait is scarce. I review research published between 1983 and 2007. These studies, as far as I know, are the key studies.

I categorise these studies into two groups according to a methodological approach. The first group used the survey method exploring Kuwaiti educators’ opinions and attitudes regarding special education, mainly as related to inclusion. The following table illustrates these studies.

Table 1.1 Group 1 of selected research studies on special education in Kuwait

Study	Methodological approach	Results
Abdul-rahmin, 1987	A survey to investigate the attitudes of principals in Kuwaiti mainstream schools towards including children with SEN in regular classrooms.	The results show a variation of principals’ attitudes towards inclusion according to school level. The principals working at the secondary level showed a less positive attitude towards inclusion. However, overall there was strong support by the principals of the suggestion to include students with disabilities in mainstream schools in Kuwait.
AL-abdulghafoor, 1999	A survey of the opinions of 447 mainstream education administrators and teachers with regard to integrating children with SEN in mainstream primary schools.	The results indicate that the participants were least supportive of integrating students with mental disabilities and overall were accepting of the idea of including students with visual impairment and physical disabilities.

Al-Shammari, 2005	Surveyed Kuwaiti special education teachers' attitudes to explore their opinion on the importance of special needs education in Kuwait.	The results indicate that special education teachers' attitudes towards students with special needs were positive. Also, the influence of other factors such as teachers' gender, education/training and experiences in both mainstream and special education did not have an influence on his/her attitude towards students with special needs.
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These studies applied a quantitative approach without contextualising. The lack of contextualisation led to limitations in addressing the ideological aspects of special education/inclusive education in Kuwait. Also, these studies were limited in acknowledging the complexity of terms and concepts such as 'inclusion' and 'classroom practice'. These studies assumed that there is a shared understanding of inclusion between the researcher and the participants without acknowledging that inclusion is a new concept in the Kuwaiti context. Therefore, this new concept may be interpreted in many different ways as it is at the international level.

The second group of research studies on special education in Kuwait used a qualitative approach. The following table (Table 1.2) summarises these studies.

Table 1.2 Group 2 of selected research studies on special education in Kuwait

Study	Methodological approach	Results
Barr, 1983	Qualitative research including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Documentary sources – Observation – Interviews <p>The study aimed to develop a comprehensive description of the development and implementation of special education in four countries including Kuwait.</p>	The findings reveal that Kuwait compared to other countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar, is in an advanced stage in terms of special educational services. This conclusion was based on a number of strengths as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Well developed laws that guarantee the rights of individuals with disabilities. – An imported service delivery model from the West. – Effort towards integrating children with disabilities.
Bazna, 2003	Qualitative study on teaching assistants in the field of learning disabilities in Kuwait.	The findings indicate an ignorance of the local culture and knowledge, and a high reliance on a Western imported model in the field of learning difficulties.
Al-muhareb, 2007	A qualitative study aimed at providing a culture- and context- specific description of public special educational services in Kuwait.	The findings reveal that in spite of financial and welfare benefits, the education that is offered to children with disabilities was inefficient to enable them to reach their potential.

The second group of research studies showed limitations discussed in more detail in the Kuwait report chapter. First, Barr (1983) and Al-muhareb (2007) aimed at a comprehensive description of special educational services in Kuwait; this limited the focus to the policy and administrative level without considering other levels which would have better contextualised the local cultural influences such as the school, classroom and the community, as presented by families.

Bazna's (2003) study was the only study to avoid the previous limitation of focus on the description of the SEN programmes in Kuwait to policy and administrative levels; it went on to school level. It explored teaching assistants' experience in teaching children with learning disabilities, including aspects of the school, classroom and relations with parents, with the aim of contextualising the research findings. However, her findings could not be generalised, as

her research was conducted at one American international school in Kuwait which cannot have been typical of Kuwaiti local culture nor the public education system, in terms of the curriculum and classroom practice.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The research aims are stated as follows:

1. To develop a theoretical understanding of the growth of inclusion policies and practice in Kuwait and England.
2. To identify the school conditions which might make it easier to develop more inclusive primary classrooms.
3. To identify barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practice in primary schools in Kuwait in general, with specific reference to science teaching.

Consistent with the aims of the study, the following research questions are posed for investigation:

1. How did inclusion policies and practice develop in Kuwait and England?
2. What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Kuwait and England?
3. What does examination of the current teaching and learning of children with moderate learning difficulties in science classrooms tell us about the barriers to the development of inclusive primary classrooms?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The MLD students in schools often go unnoticed, in developing countries such as Kuwait above all. No specific studies have analysed the situation of MLD students in mainstream primary schools and their learning disabilities are therefore not addressed, or at least not to the necessary level.

1.4.1 Significance of the study in relation to inclusive education for students with moderate learning difficulties

Florian (1998) concludes from his literature review of inclusive education for students with learning difficulties that these studies rarely differentiate between different categories of students with special needs. Hence, pupils with all kinds of learning difficulties tend to be included in studies of inclusive practice, without being the focus of the study. Porter and Lacey (2005) confirm this, stressing the scarcity of research into inclusive practice and into the curriculum for children with learning difficulties, especially SLD.

1.4.2 Significance of the study in relation to Kuwait

Inclusive education in Kuwait is still being implemented and, to my knowledge, no other studies on aspects of teaching and learning for children with MLD have yet explored inclusive education in Kuwait. Having a government committed to implementing inclusive education encouraged me to evaluate existing provision and the possibility of implementing new approaches in Kuwait as a contribution to the growth of inclusive education in my country.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study confines itself within the following parameters:

1. This study is limited in terms of geographic location to the inclusive education practice of only one English school in Birmingham and two primary schools in

Kuwait. The limitation of the sample within the wide English context was due to factors beyond my control, as the methodology chapter makes clear. Therefore, the results of this case study approach may not be generalised to other schools. However, generalisation is not the aim of the current study; rather it seeks deeper understanding of developing inclusive education. Studying three schools, 33 participants and methodological triangulation raise the degree of reliability of its findings (Cohen et al, 2003).

2. Both the samples, in Kuwait and in England, are limited to pupils aged 7–12 with moderate learning difficulties in mainstream primary schools.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The first part of this thesis is the literature review, which take into account an analysis of three key areas of development in this research: firstly, understanding the concept of inclusion and the models of implementation; secondly, the factors that support development of inclusive schools and the barriers that hinder this development, integrated with the inclusive classroom practice to accommodate children with MLD in science; thirdly, the mapping of the field of comparative education in order to investigate the possibility of learning from international experience in general and especially the English experience. The second part of this study consists of five chapters. These chapters explain the methodological design and the findings that are divided under the theoretical framework of the ecological model. The third part of the thesis is an attempt to build an enhanced understanding of developing inclusive education in the Kuwaiti context based on a discussion of the findings and their implications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A review of the vast and expanding literature of inclusive education requires consideration of its complexity and the diversity of the ideology and political, philosophical, pedagogical and cultural perspectives. However, reviewing this vast literature is restricted by the thesis word limit, time frame, the need to focus on specific issues related to research questions and my capacity as an individual researcher. Therefore, I sought to focus on the literature which was available in international journals, conferences papers and books. The scope of this review encompasses the following key areas for my research questions:

- (a) Understanding the concept of inclusive education with special reference to children with MLD, seeking to view inclusion in a context beyond the school, and gain a holistic understanding of policy and implementation.
- (b) Enhancing the development of inclusive schools and the barriers to including particular groups of children with learning difficulties, in particular primary pupils with MLD.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section relates to (a) above. The review begins with a critical summary of current perspectives on learning difficulties, including the concept of MLD. It briefly highlights the limitations of these models to capture the complexity of learning difficulties. I use this summary as a platform to set the scene for inclusive education to serve the current research aims.

The second section focuses on identifying the school conditions/barriers which might make it easy/difficult to develop more inclusive classrooms for students with special educational needs in general and particularly for children with MLD. I will also make specific reference to special educational needs focused science education as this is reflected in my empirical research. Having both a first degree in science education and a master's degree in special education, I decided that it would be appropriate for me to investigate the practice of inclusion within the science subject's domain.

The third and final section aims to locate this study of special/inclusive education within the field of comparative education. In analysing the literature, I justify my approach in designing the research methodology.

2.2 Section One: Understanding Inclusion

This section discusses two major themes to set the scene for inclusive education. It reviews the major perspectives on learning difficulties and their influence on researching learning difficulties, then goes on to explore the meaning of inclusion with its corollaries 'integration' and 'exclusion' in search of an agreed definition for the whole study.

2.2.1 Perspectives on learning difficulties

I want to take the debate on 'inclusion' from an ideological contention to the conditions of school practice and provision in Kuwait, guided by my role as a mainstream teacher. The practical issues are my main concern. However, I agree that, without a clear ideological perspective to shape attitude and understanding, practice cannot advance. Therefore, I begin by reviewing the major perspectives on disability in general and then consider learning difficulties in more detail.

Ainscow (1998) introduces the notion of perspectives on disability as '*[a]lternative ways of looking at the phenomena of educational difficulty based on different sets of assumptions that lead to different explanations, different frames of reference and different kinds of questions to be addressed*' (1998, p.8). In interpreting and understanding learning difficulties, the field of learning difficulties is dominated by the medical/psychological and the social perspectives. As I explore these models, I try to divert the debate towards the current education system and learning difficulties. The dilemma is that learning difficulties are polarised either in the individual or in social oppression. Dyson (1997, p.152), as a teacher, summarises it *thus*: '*how far should children's difficulties in learning be seen as innate within the child, and how far should it be seen as the product of traditional forms of schooling?*'

The psycho-medical model has hitherto dominated views of learning difficulties (Skidmore, 2004; Porter and Lacey, 2005). It defines needs from a diagnostic perspective and provides '*a conceptual framework within which disability can be understood, assessed, experienced, planned for and justified*' (Swain et al, 2003, p.22).

For Skidmore (2004, p.20) '*work in this paradigm conceptualizes difficulties in learning as arising from deficits in the neurological or psychological make-up of the child, analogous to an illness or medical condition*'. Moreover, it reflects the social control of disabled people and the ascendancy of professionals. Social control is exerted when a child cannot be 'cured' or 'fixed' and is therefore segregated (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). This model empowers professionals and ignores the voices and rights of disabled people, treating them as merely incapable. The definitions of the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1980) are reflected as:

- Impairment: any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.
- Disability: any restriction or lack, resulting from an impairment of ability to perform any activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.
- Handicap: a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors for that individual.

Oliver (1996) critiqued this schema because, like the medical model, it links impairment with disability, and uses ‘handicapped’ to cover the problems of disability on the individual level. Skidmore (2004) notes that this perspective led to the focus of much research on refining and designing instruments and characterising quasi-clinical intervention; and it minimised enquiry into the implications for pedagogy and curriculum. Farrell, P. and Ainscow (2002) argue that interpreting the child’s educational difficulties in terms of deficits as the medical model does, not only slowed progress in special needs education but also diverted attention from questions of why schools fail to accommodate children’s needs.

However, it is difficult to ignore the importance of medical treatment in avoiding and reducing impairment. For example, studying genetics is vital for avoiding serious inherited conditions. Nevertheless, the dilemma, which reflects the tension between educationalists and doctors, is whether the medical model should be seen as part of the whole picture or the only solution.

The dissatisfaction with the psycho-medical model sought alternatives. In 1970 a new organisation run by disabled people, the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), started to challenge the dominant model and has since been working to re-define disability. For example, it has shifted the concept of disability into the social realm (Thomas, 2002), wanting social justice for disabled people, to free them from discrimination and stigmatisation; it has lately been the dominant paradigm in researching and understanding disability in recent years. This model empowers disabled people and gives them a say. As Oliver comments:

It does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation (Oliver, 1996, p.32).

This model highlights the distinction between impairment and disability; hence, it rejects labels of impairment and shifts the focus from individual disability to the environment/society. According to the model, any intervention should focus on changing the environment to something more suitable for everyone. For example, schools and teaching methods could be re-organised to meet the needs of more learners (Norwich, 1990).

As a result of this pressure, WHO redefined its schema (Thomas, 2002). The term 'impairment' remains defined as 'functional loss', while the term 'disability' has been replaced by 'disablement', which can exist in three dimensions: (1) body structures or functions; (2) personal activities; and (3) participation in society. Each refers to a restriction of activities by some combination of the effects of impairment.

To apply this focus more to children with MLD, Norwich and Kelly (2005) write of the two models of learning difficulties that: the psycho-medical model ignores the social factors and pathologises difficulties as within-child disorders, while the social model attributes the learning difficulties, including MLD, to the schools' failure to meet their needs. Dyson (1997) suggests that the psycho-medical model influenced the introduction of specialist provision such as special schools, educational psychology, remedial education, new diagnoses such as dyslexia and attention deficit, and the development of intelligence scales. The application of these scales impacted on children with MLD – defining their 'capacities' and segregating them – while the social model led to the integration and inclusion movements and the whole-school approach.

This model, however, is equally open to criticism because it splits disability from impairment and ignores the interaction between individuals and their environment and thus simplistically defines needs, without considering that they are dynamic, changing over time and with age. The debate is whether the social model should be transformed to a radical model because otherwise the issues of impairment are ignored (Thomas, 2002; Shakespeare and Watson, 2002; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009), whereas impairment is part of daily experience and impossible to ignore. Thus, Shakespeare and Watson (2002) go as far as claiming that the social model has outlived its usefulness. They argue that ignoring the effects of impairment caused by oppression is a three-way problem:

- Experientially: impairment is part of daily personal experience and salient to non-disabled; it cannot be ignored because of its effect on social life and political strategy.

- Politically: ignoring the effects of impairment in practice is seen as ‘idealistic’ and unjustified.
- Analytically: different impairments have different implications at the personal and socio-cultural levels.

Shakespeare and Watson (2002) want the social model to be developed to accommodate the political factors and acknowledge the diversity of individual experience. It has been argued that the social model has limited power to create an obstacle-free environment. For example, Abberley (1996) finds a barrier-free utopia where all disabled people could be employed impossible, because some impairments prevent people from working together. Therefore, Shakespeare and Watson (1993, 2002) suggest that social changes and the removal of social barriers should be combined with appropriate action on preventing impairment.

Given these sets of limitations, Norwich and Kelly (2005) resolve the tension between them by a fresh perspective, which includes the factors and processes within and between these models in an inter-disciplinary and multilevel framework. This enables an educational system to avoid ‘over-individualising’ and ‘over-socialising’ problems in education. Mittler (2000) also argues against polarising these two models and emphasises their constant and complex interaction.

2.2.2 Understanding ‘inclusion’

2.2.2.1 Towards a definition of inclusive education

No definition has yet been agreed for the concept of inclusion (Pearson, 2005), though many have been advanced. Mitchell (2005) notes that different countries define the

concept of inclusion from their own social and cultural perspectives. Table 2.1 gives some of the definitions so far proposed.

Table 2.1 Definitions of inclusion (cited in Florian, Rose and Tilstone, 1998, p.16)

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being with one another...how we deal with diversity. How we deal with difference (Forest and Pearpoint, 1992).• Inclusive schools are diverse problem solving organizations with a common mission that emphasizes learning for all students (Rouse and Florian, 1996).• Being a full member of an age-appropriate class in your local school doing the same lessons as the other pupils and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school (Hall, 1996).• Inclusive schools deliver a curriculum to students through organizational arrangements that are different from those used in schools that exclude some students from their regular classrooms (Ballard, 1995).• Increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from a mainstream social setting (Potts, 1996).• Inclusion describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricula organization and provision (Sebba, 1996). |
|---|

These definitions apply only within schools. More recently, Ainscow (2005) and Mitchell (2005) briefly note that inclusion is a broader term, covering several main features of inclusion. In Ainscow's list, inclusion is:

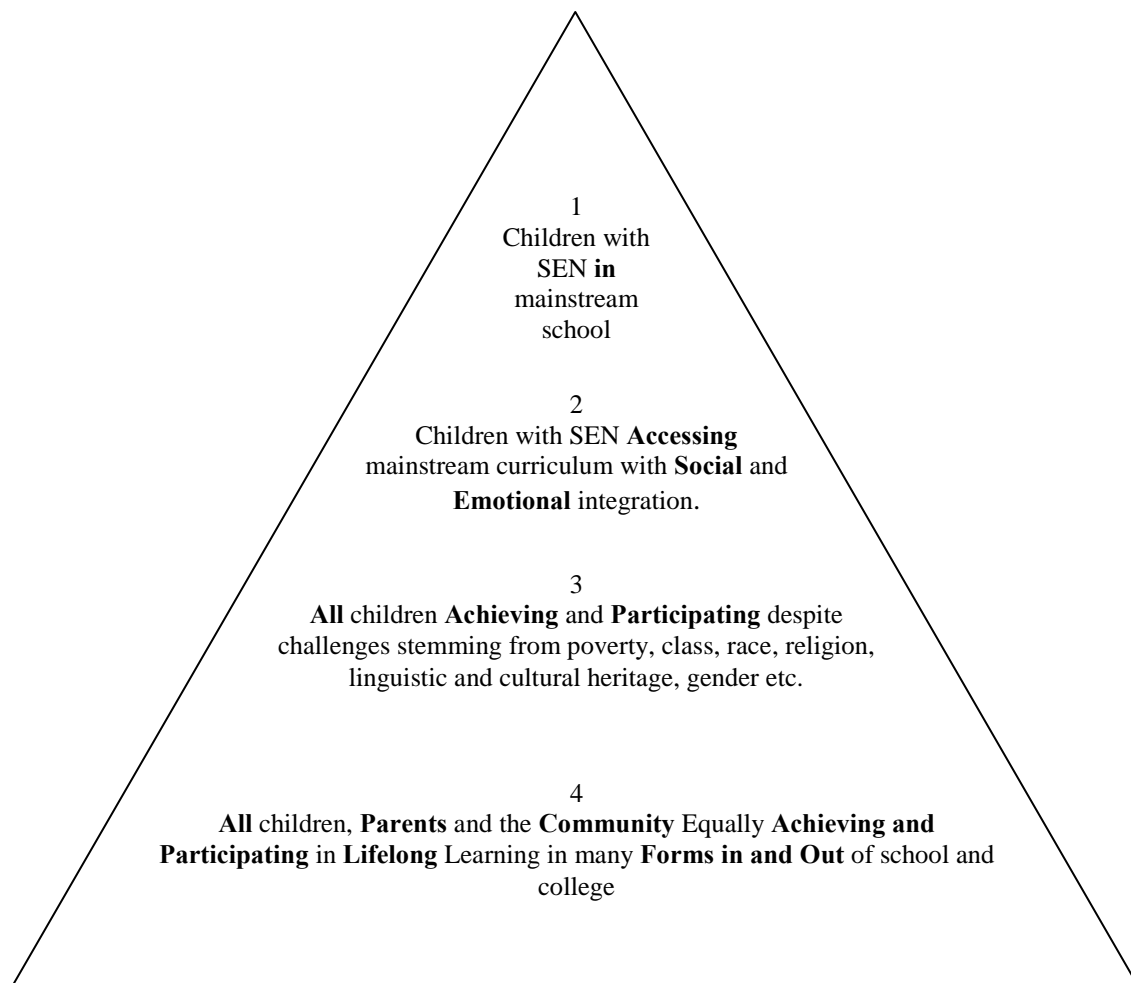
- a process;
- concerned with the identification and removal of barriers;
- about the presence, participation and achievement of all students, and
- intent on groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement.

While his elements can be applied exclusively to schools and schooling, Mitchell's (2005, p.4) are wider:

- Entitlement to full membership in regular, age-appropriate classes in their neighbourhood schools; and
- Access to appropriate aids and support services, individualised programmes, with appropriately differentiated curriculum and assessment practices.

The two sets of principles are more alike than not, based on celebrating the diversity, complexity and acceptance of heterogeneous students, not only within school but also within society. This vision requires more than satisfactory placement; it also involves changing society through restructuring the school organisation to accommodate all children. Topping and Maloney (2005) articulate four levels of the expanding concept of inclusion (see Figure 2.1); they start from accessing and participation in mainstream schools and expand to wider participation within a barrier-free society.

Figure 2.1 Expanding concepts of inclusion: four levels (taken from Topping and Maloney, 2005, p.6)



Ellis et al (2008) summarise another dimension of inclusion: how far the place in which the child is educated defines whether practice is inclusive. On the one hand, advocates for full inclusion, such as the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE), want all children to attend mainstream schools and special schools and other forms of provision-setting to close. This argument lies on the human rights principle that all provision outside the mainstream is morally wrong.

From an opposite perspective, others are less concerned with location and more with a wider understanding of inclusion (Farrell, M., 2000; Warnock, 2005; Hodkinson and

Vickerman, 2009). Farrell, M. argues that closing special schools itself contravenes human rights, notably that of parents to choose their child's schooling. Therefore, he suggests using 'educational inclusion' as an alternative to 'mainstream inclusion' in order to admit all types of provision:

This concept is not dependent on where the education takes place and is to some degree related to the idea of a curriculum entitlement for all... 'Educational inclusion' applies to all venues and enhances the aims of 'inclusion in the community' as a reinforcement of statutory, full-time education through appropriate placements, and gives parents the opportunity to express preferences for the education of their children which are not constrained by the belief that mainstream placements are necessarily the most appropriate (Farrell, M., 2000, p.28).

Among all these definitions and interpretations, the most applicable to this study is that of Farrell, M. (2000). He believes that the concept of educational inclusion would base a preference between settings on their appropriateness to children's educational needs, not on the doctrinaire belief that mainstream education is a human right, which, like all human rights assumptions, risks logical and conceptual naïveté (Farrell, M., 2000). Hornby (2001) separates human rights from moral rights that educating children with SEN alongside their mainstream peers may not be the morally right option.

Therefore, Hornby (1999) suggests that placement decisions are individual ones, for a full inclusion 'one size fits all' model has little pragmatic support (p.157). He views this debate between full inclusion ('radical') and responsible inclusion as a confusion of the rhetoric of full inclusion with the reality of the situation in mainstream schools which struggle to respond effectively to a diversity of needs. Hornby (1999) advocates the moderate stance of responsible inclusion, recommending a continuum

of provision to meet a continuum of needs. He asks '*is it more important for a child to be educated in the local school, or to be educated well?*' (p.153).

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) also argue that inclusion definitions should reject institutional and societal control; it is, they assert, more useful to define inclusion as a catalyst that requires both schools and society to identify and overcome the barriers that inhibit a child's choices and their ability to achieve their full potential. Within such a definition, the controlling power of the state:

its institutions and its vested interests, as well as the accountability of academic metrics, are diminished and replaced by understanding of individual value, respect and a commitment to the development of the staff" (2009, p.88).

Therefore, Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) locate the definition with the individual and the right to choose, far from governmental definitions tied to academic achievement or the full inclusionists' definition which disregards individual choice.

After focusing on defining inclusion as the basis for this study, I next explore some terminological confusion in this field.

2.2.2.2 Inclusion versus integration

As noted earlier, much confusion surrounds the terminology here, not only for categories but also for special educational provision (Corbett, 1996). Until the end of the 1980s, the term 'integration' described the placement of children with SEN in mainstream settings. By the late 1990s, 'inclusion' had come to replace 'integration'. However, authors such as Vickerman (2002) and Farrell, M. (2000) note that 'inclusion' and 'integration' were used by researchers and practitioners

interchangeably (e.g. *Every Child is Special: Proposals to Improve Special Needs Education* (Kilfoyle, 1997, in M. Farrell, 2000). Pijl et al (1997, p.2) argue that both terms are being used to express comparable processes and outcomes, since '[t]his wider notion of integration comes close to the concept of inclusion.' Conversely, other writers (Ainscow, 1997; Booth, 1995; Thomas et al, 1998) contrast these words in philosophical and practical terms. Vislie (2003, p.20) argues that '*the two notions have different foci, and [...] they should not be mixed*'.

First, the term 'integration', introduced formally in the UK in the 1978 Warnock Report regarding de-segregation practices, is concerned with making a limited number of additional arrangements for individual pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (Ainscow, 1995). Similarly, Mittler (2000) shows that integration refers to schools adopting individuals, not making changes in response to individual needs. Vislie (2003, p.20) argues that integration and inclusion focus on different things:

The core foci of integration being linked to system reforms...integration did not have much focus on teaching and learning or on classroom processes. Integration policies took mostly for granted that reforms at the system level would have an effect on teaching and learning as classroom practice.

Compared to integration, inclusion is concerned with radical reform of the school's systems of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of pupils (Mittler, 2000). Walker provides a summary of the differences between these terms (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Walker's (1995) contrast between inclusion and integration
(cited in Thomas et al, 1998)

Integration emphasises	Inclusion emphasises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Needs of 'special' students · Changing/remedying the subject · Benefits of being integrated · to the student with special needs · Professionals, specialist expertise and formal support · Technical interventions (special teaching, therapy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Rights of all students · Changing the school · Benefits to all students of including everyone · Informal support and the expertise of mainstream teachers · Good teaching for all

The shift from 'integration' to 'inclusion' created an international descriptor (Vislie, 2003; Kisanji, 1998), acknowledged by UNESCO at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, 1994. According to its document (see Table 2.3) inclusion should be incorporated into a human rights agenda.

Table 2.3 The UNESCO Salamanca Statement on special educational needs
(UNESCO, 1994, p.viii-ix)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. • Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. • Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. • Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools where a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs should accommodate them. • Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

Vislie (2003, p.18) justified the linguistic shift from integration to inclusion from an international perspective, as follows:

A policy vision for a wider world context needed a new label to avoid giving the wrong signals to significant actors representing relevant interests and partners in a wider international arena. Particularly for the developing countries, integration would have been a difficult descriptor for the new actions.

Armstrong et al (2010) argue that the dilemma for Western societies in developing segregation and integration has little bearing relevance on the problems for developing countries. Therefore, Vislie (2003) suggests that the local context should be carefully assessed, for '*[t]he danger now is that the resources and support come in packages from the west ...[showing] how to make inclusion in a western way*' (2003, p.19). Urwick and Elliot (2010) question the relevance of international orthodoxies to the education in the poorer developing countries. They point out the limitations when such countries adopt a highly demanding international initiative from countries at a different stage of development and suggest that before such initiatives are copied, normal conditions in developing countries should be considered. This point will be discussed further in section three, which explores inclusion from an international perspective.

2.2.2.3 Inclusion versus exclusion

In Kuwait, and perhaps elsewhere, the debate about inclusiveness focuses on the basic binary distinction from exclusion, while Western countries have a more developed debate. Despite the time lag, Booth (1999) recommends a comparative approach to exclusion in the fuller understanding of inclusive education. Inclusion, he thinks, involves two linked dimensions, defining it as the:

'process of increasing the participation of learners within, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of neighbourhood centres of learning' (Booth, 1999, p.97).

He would not regard inclusive education as an ideal or aim, but sees it as an attainable state exemplifying good practice. Still, few inclusive schools include all the local children and therefore inclusion is best seen as an *'unending set of processes'*.

Thomas et al (1998) also want inclusion and exclusion to be linked, moving attention from children to schools, above all when schools become reluctant to include all children due to market pressures. Parsons (1999) notes increased exclusiveness in England, embracing wider groups: boys – notably adolescents, children from families with low socio-economic status; ethnic minority pupils and children with special educational needs (especially those with behavioural difficulties). He sees its motivation as follows:

'while 'inclusion' has much rhetorical and moral backing, inclusion is not for these challenging children. Indeed, exclusion is designed into the system at the macro level, shaping the institutional response, and limiting options at the individual level.'

2.2.3 Conclusion

To sum up, inclusion, in Lindsay's words (2003), is a complex and challenging concept with many manifestations in practice. The literature shows that inclusion processes encounter many conceptual and practical issues, tensions and dilemmas throughout the educational system (Norwich, 2008; Dyson, 2005). In setting the scene for inclusive education, two main points emerged: that most of the existing literature addresses the ideological and philosophical aspects of inclusion rather than its implementation, a point discussed by Dyson (1999) in the justification for inclusion based on human rights rather than empirical evidence; and that the definition of inclusion was confused. Thus it was unclear how far disabled pupils should be included in mainstream schools. I also contend that applying both medical

and social models to disability/learning difficulties polarises individual and social factors and thus misses the complexity of disability.

In order to fully understand the fundamental principles, processes and practices of inclusion, the next section examines the work of Knoster and Ainscow. This should clarify inclusive school development.

2.3 Section Two: Inclusive School Development

The previous review explored inclusive education from the ideological standpoint; however, this section next explores inclusive education from the practical perspective, asking ‘How can inclusion be implemented in schools?’ or ‘How can inclusive schools be developed?’ To answer these questions brings in frameworks, educational policy, school organisation, curriculum, assessment and classroom practice.

2.3.1 Implementation of inclusion frameworks for developing inclusive practice

In the literature on the implementation of inclusion, Dyson (1999) analyses the implementation process on two fronts: (i) political reform to impel the transition from a special education system to an inclusive system; (ii) pragmatic reform at school level, producing practical recommendations for the process.

A number of frameworks have been proposed in the literature to guide the development and implementation of inclusion; those of Knoster et al (2000) and Ainscow (2005) are reviewed here. The basis for this choice is their widespread use, for example, Ainscow’s index of inclusion, and their consideration of the wider social and political context of inclusive education, which relates to the theoretical standpoint

of the current research (see Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, 1979). This will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.3.1.1 Ainscow's framework 'levers for change' (2005)

Ainscow et al (2001) envisaged a framework using six elements in the development of inclusive schools, which connected policies, practices and cultures:

- Starting with existing practices and knowledge
- Seeing differences as opportunities for learning
- Scrutinising barriers to participation
- Making use of available resources to support learning
- Developing a language of practice
- Creating conditions which encourage risk-taking.

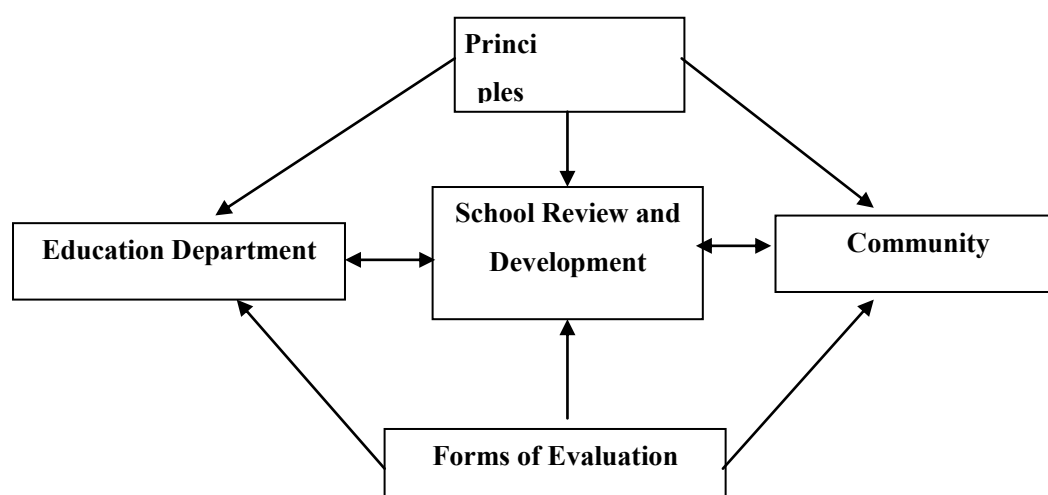
These six elements overlap and inter-connect by *'[reaching] out to all learners'* within a school, the adults as well as the pupils (Ainscow et al, 2001).

More recently, Ainscow refined his framework of developing inclusive schools (2005) (see Figure 2.2) by suggesting high leverage/action to encourage changes within the system. Low leverage tends to make large-scale changes in appearances, not necessarily functions, for example, attending conferences, writing policy documents, developing toolkits and attending in-service training courses. But high leverage efforts may result from putting schools at the centre of this framework (Ainscow, 2005), since they are increasingly able to include and respond to learner diversity. This framework highlights the contextual factors which influence, positively or negatively, the development of inclusive schools (2005, p.112) relating to:

1. The principles underlying policy priorities within an education system;
2. The views and actions of others within the local context, including members of the school's wider community;
3. The staff of the departments in charge of the school's administration;
4. The criteria used to evaluate the performance of schools.

These high leverage changes are presented in the following figure.

Figure 2.2 Ainscow's framework 'levers for change' (2005)



He suggests (2005) that developing strategies and intervention within these four high leverage changes will impel inclusive education development. Hooker (2008) presents some examples of such high leverage from the literature (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 High leverage encouraging inclusive education
(adapted from Hooker, 2009)

<p>1 Principals can have high leverage when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting directions: shared vision, values and group goals • developing people: individual support, intellectual and emotional stimulation, modelling • redesigning the organization: collaborative cultures and structures, building productive relations with parents and the community <p>(Leithwood et al in Fullan 2007)</p>
<p>2 District Services can have leverage when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is co-determination by school and district levels • administrators help principals work with teachers • investment in teacher development strongly emphasises ‘learning in context’ • deprivatizing teaching and motivating teachers to improve as part of a collective action are the focus • the improvement process is monitored <p>(Fullan 2007)</p>
<p>3 Community-based programmes can have high leverage when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guided by holistic and rights-based conceptions of children, beginning with early identification, treatment and child development as important influences on health and well-being, school-readiness • developed along specific coordination plans, including time-lines, designated lead agencies, clear roles and responsibilities • active and targeted outreach activities and IE awareness education permeate the community, parents in particular • Disabled Person’s Organizations and Parent Groups are included as decision-makers and resources at all stages of development • formal parent-training is provided for families of children at risk and with disabilities <p>(Peters 2004)</p>
<p>4 Assessment literacy can have high leverage for enabling inclusive environments when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student assessments measure individual progress in the general education curriculum, with clear standards and benchmarks • multiple forms of student assessments (formative and summative) are used to inform and facilitate teaching and learning • teachers as a group and in subgroups examine together how well students are doing relate this to how they are teaching and make improvements • teachers become ‘assessment literate’ with skills encompassing both Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL) • external accountability is accompanied by developing internal accountability <p>(Peters 2004; Fullan 2007; NCCA 2007)</p>

Table 2.4 provides opportunities to find leverage in the education system in order to bring improvement in the classroom, school and community in relation to developing inclusive education. A closer look at this table illustrates two important points. First,

these high impact levers are related and overlapping. For example, a range of high leverages operative at various levels, such as raising awareness, teacher development and collaborative culture are influenced by principal role, district services and community-based programmes.

Second, this table highlights the wider context and the impact of influential individuals. For example, within the school level, principals and teachers have been identified as key players in promoting inclusive practice through collaborative culture. This table (2.4) expands the high leverages to a wider level to include district and community level that involves policy makers, parents and disabled persons' organisations. Thus, this table enables further analysis, interpretation and the drawing of conclusions with regard to the influential factors promoting inclusive education that will be discussed later within this study.

However, Ainscow's framework has limitations, with its over-reliance on schools and huge pressure on them and insufficient information about the 'school review and development' element for creating 'high leverage' changes. Nor is it clear how these elements are interconnected. For example, Ainscow suggests that the obstructive uncertainty in applying this framework to England stems from the definition of inclusion and the dominance of the standards agenda to measure educational performance. But he does not explain how school review and development can influence these factors positively to ensure more inclusive policies/practice.

2.3.1.2 Knoster's framework (2000)

Knoster et al (2000) present a framework for managing complex change in any organisation. For changing an educational system, in this case, of inclusion, it

basically requires vision, skill, incentives, resources and action planning (see Figure 2.3), interpreting system changing as an additive process, which combines these variables as it must to make changes in a systematic and positive direction and preventing the negative aspects of confusion, ignorance, anxiety, resistance, frustration or the experience of the treadmill (false starts) (Knoster et al, 2000).

Figure 2.3 Knoster's Framework (2000)

Vision + Knowledge + Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan =	Change
? + Knowledge + Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan =	Confusion
Vision + ? + Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan =	Ignorance
Vision + Knowledge + ? + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan =	Anxiety
Vision + Knowledge + Skills + ? + Resources + Action Plan =	Resistance
Vision + Knowledge + Skills + Incentives + ? + Action Plan =	Frustration
Vision + Knowledge + Skills + Incentives + Resources + ? =	Treadmill

Villa and Thousand (2005, p.59) adopt this model to develop inclusive practice in schools as follows:

- Build a vision of inclusive schooling within a community
- Develop educators' skills and confidence to be inclusive educators
- Create meaningful incentives for people to risk embarking on an inclusive schooling journey
- Reorganize and expand human and other resources for teaching for and to diversity
- Plan and take strategic action to present people in schools with an exciting new picture.

Vision is the starting point not only for school reform but also for social reform. As Villa and Thousand (2005) point out, the vision of inclusion should be clear, understandable and shared between school and such different social elements as policy-makers, the community, school staff, parents and students. Topping and Maloney (2005) advocate conceptualisation and exemplification of the vision in practice, avoiding all conflict with the dominant culture. Gradually the new features become accepted and the innovations are regularised. Without vision, awareness rises slowly and the reforms seem confusing. Leithwood (in Fullan, 2007 – see also Table 2.4) emphasises the principal role in developing a shared vision, values and group goals that lead to building collaborative cultures and structures.

Translating this vision into practice requires extra knowledge and skills, in which teachers and practitioners must be trained. Professional development prepares the school and raises staff confidence, which is fuelled by belief and the motivation to move in this new direction. Topping and Maloney (2005) recommend specific examples of good practice, to encourage teachers at work and thus spread the implementation further.

But school reform is hampered, mostly by the lack of the right resources for modifying the mainstream school environment to accommodate children's needs. A collaborative action plan needs support from the wider context and forms the final stage in such changes.

In summary, different theorists approach inclusion differently, but overall they offer a firm foundation for understanding inclusion, its development and implementation.

Their theories helped me to decide on a framework for this study, as the following chapter outlines.

2.3.2 Factors and practices that influence developing inclusive schools

From the previous models (including Ainscow, 1991; Lipsky and Gartner, 1998; Giangreco, 1997), this section identifies the factors associated with effective inclusion in schools. For example, Ainscow (1991) identifies such pre-conditions as an inclusion policy, collaborative teamwork and effective classroom practice. Lipsky and Gartner (1998), too, analyse reports from 1,000 school districts in the US which adopted inclusive education programmes. Their analysis identifies these seven factors for success:

1. Visionary leadership
2. Collaboration
3. Refocused use of assessment
4. Support for staff and students
5. Funding
6. Effective parental involvement
7. Using effective programme models and classroom practices.

These factors are all reported in different studies. For example, Avramidis et al (2002) in his in-depth case study of inclusion at the school level, identifies various obstacles to inclusive practice, commenting that:

- Successful implementation of inclusion requires restructuring of the physical environment, resources, organisation changes and instructional adaptation.
- Ongoing professional development is mandatory.

The literature illustrates widespread agreement about what successful inclusion requires and Florian (1998, p.22) lists the factors on which inclusive education for students with learning difficulties can be built:

- An opportunity for pupils to join the decision-making process
- A positive attitude to the learning abilities of all pupils
- Teacher knowledge about learning difficulties
- Skilled application of specific instructional methods
- Parent and teacher support.

For the purposes of the current research, I focus on factors in primary mainstream schools which appeared to greatly influence the inclusion of children with LD in regular classrooms. Given that its special interest is science classrooms, this research looks at the literature on science education which refers to classroom practice and assesses the influence of the relevant factors.

2.3.2.1 Educational inclusion policy

In education, one part of the entire comprehensive ideal in educational policy should relate to inclusion (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004). Pijl et al (1997) suggest:

...a well-formulated policy statement for inclusion, making it clear to everyone involved what the goals for the education community are. Local policy-makers, school principals and teachers will then know what the government expects them to do. A clear policy statement on inclusion may act as a push for changing the attitudes of regular and special school personnel.

The policy ought also to contain long-term and short-term plans for ensuring inclusion, from early intervention to higher education plans, culminating in equal job opportunities (Campbell and Oliver, 1996). Hence, Corbett (2001) advises discussing

inclusive education within the general educational debates. Inclusive education should be embedded in every aspect of the service. For example, inclusive policy should include early intervention; for Mittler (2000, p.45), inclusiveness *'has to start long before children first go to school'*. Peters (2004 - see also Table 2.4) suggests that the policy programmes should be along specific coordination plans, including time-lines, designated lead agencies, clear roles and responsibilities.

2.3.2.2 Parental involvement and collaborative teamwork

The other source of possible support for the whole education process is parents. Creating home-school links has strong positive impact on children's learning and promotes social and educational inclusion for disabled children and their families (Mittler, 2000; Peters, 2004, see also Table 2.4). Cook and Swain (2001) emphasise that this collaboration will improve disabled children's performance in mainstream schools. Moreover, when parents and teachers share their complementary expertise, the result enriches the experience of schools. In their study, Bennett, Deluca and Burns (1997) used mixed methods to investigate perspectives on parents' involvement and their contribution towards successful inclusion among the parents of children with learning disabilities and teachers in inclusive settings. They find that parental involvement at home appears to benefit children with disabilities in their homework and academic progress. While teachers mentioned the need for support and resources, parents also see positive practices and attitudes towards children with disabilities as essential for successful inclusion.

However, the imbalance of power between parents and teachers produces an unavoidable underlying tension. Norwich (2002) would like to create a better environment of support for children with SEN by moving from professional-

dominance to parent-partnership, with its collaboration, involvement and participation.

Much preparation underpins such partnership; for this, Mittler (2000) suggests that all school staff should be trained to work with parents and that a partnership policy should include specific proposals for better working relationships with them. This policy should let parents describe how they want to be involved in discussions and decision-making for the work of the school (see Table 2.4). Ferguson (2008) even calls for replacing the term ‘parent involvement’ by ‘family-school linkages’, in order to no longer symbolise unsuccessful past attempts to bolster relationships between parents and school. These linkages emphasise school involvement with parents, despite the challenges.

Collaborative teamwork, defined by Thousand and Villa (1992) as ‘what takes place within a group of people who mainly agree to coordinate their work to achieve a common goal, demonstrate parity and employ a collaborative teaming process’ is the key to implementing needed forms of inclusion. Collaborative work has multiple links, e.g. between special and mainstream schools, between teachers and professional staff, between schools and students and between schools and parents. Moreover, a whole-school approach towards the development of inclusion requires constant consultation from collaborating professionals. For example, Hick (2005) picks the role of the psychologists’ contribution to more inclusive education. Paige (1998 in Hick, 2005, p.118) identifies four strands in psychologists’ support for inclusive practices:

1. Facilitating friendships and building social networks for students
2. Person-centred planning for students with disabilities
3. Instructional modifications and curricular adaptations
4. Facilitating systems change at a building or district level

Bayliss (1995), who investigates whole class support in a middle school, comments that working collaboratively led to support for the whole class, not only the children with special needs, which resulted in improving motivation and more positive outcomes.

2.3.2.3 Developing an inclusive curriculum and teaching approaches

This research has been influenced by writers such as Redmond et al (1988) on curriculum; they contend that the curriculum is not merely a description of the subject matter to be taught but reflects the social norms of the culture of a society.

The nature of the curriculum affects the distinction between inclusion and integration. On the one hand, integration implies fitting the student into the curriculum, while on the other, inclusion implies teachers reviewing the curriculum provision to make the curriculum meaningful for diverse students, and adapt class practice to meet all the learners' needs (academic, social and personal). A review of the literature by Jackson et al (2001) concludes that both for teachers and students different barriers block access to the general curriculum, as follows:

Table 2.5 Barriers blocking access to the general curriculum
(adapted from Jackson et al, 2001)

<p>1 Practical issues:</p> <p>Curriculum standards and availability: the focus on improving students ‘achievements leads to reducing the opportunities and the time for teachers to accommodate and adapt instructions for children with SEN.</p> <p>Increased practitioner responsibilities.</p> <p>Issues of time, skills and training: the lack of resources, training and time has been identified as the barriers most frequently facing teachers.</p>
<p>2 Philosophical differences:</p> <p>Differing interpretations of inclusion, lead to a different kind of implementation at the classroom level, until finally children both with and without SEN are taught in the same classroom at different times, in different spaces and with different lessons.</p> <p>Alternatively some schools provide whole-class instruction without the necessary individualisation.</p> <p>Practitioner attitudes to shifting roles and expectations, negative attitudes and special and general education teachers failing to collaborate prevents students with SEN from gaining access to the general curriculum.</p> <p>Teachers’ and students’ perceptions of curriculum adaptation: some studies report that children without SEN, and some teachers, perceive curriculum adaptation for children with SEN as ‘unfair‘.</p>

Here, again, I focus particularly on the science education literature. Richardson (1993) stipulates that science teachers need not only a good understanding of their

subject but also a good understanding of how to teach it, stressing professional development to promote good classroom practice.

Almost all the literature prefers the inquiry or hands-on approach to teaching science to children with learning difficulties, having compared the effectiveness of activity-based, inquiry-oriented approaches with textbook-based science curriculum materials (Scruggs et al, 1993, 1999; Palincsar et al, 2001; Lee et al, 2006). For example, Mastropieri and Scruggs (1994) define hands-on inquiry as student-centred activities designed to encourage student thinking and problem-solving, in order to discover scientific principles. Textbook-based enquiry, in contrast, is defined as a condition providing exactly the same content information and using direct teaching strategies such as group reading, teacher-led drill and discussion, the study of relevant illustrations and independent worksheet activities to reinforce previous learning (1994, p.308). More recently, Pujar and Gaonkar (2008) focused on instructional strategies to accelerate science learning among 122 pupils with mild to MLD, observing that instruction including hands-on activities and peer tutoring is more effective than traditional methods.

Longhorn (in Ashdown, 1991) also suggests a 'sensory curriculum' which blends the sensory and science curricula together to enable students to develop and use their senses. He concludes that this multi-sensory approach helps students with profound and multiple learning difficulties to generalise their learning experience. Sanders et al (2009) in a two year project called '*Nature of experience*' developed a new teaching approach anchored in nature studies which integrates internal and external learning environments, throughout cross-curricular programmes for children with various learning difficulties in special schools. The results recognised the social, emotional

and cognitive benefits for children with LD. This project confirms Malone's research results (2008): that learning outside the classroom has a significant positive impact on children's learning, physical experiences, social interaction, emotional well-being and responses. Yet, despite the potential positive outcomes of hands-on, inquiry-based science, Lee et al (2006) note that many primary classrooms lack appropriate instructional materials and supplies, although the hands-on approach relies heavily on supplies and equipment.

Finally, it should be remembered that one cannot generalise about the best approaches to teaching the science curriculum to students with MLD, partly because science is a vast and diverse content domain which includes different objectives calling for different approaches, and partly because of the lack of empirical evidence of teaching approaches specifically for children with MLD, as indicated by recent reviews of teaching approaches for children with different kinds of learning difficulty including MLD, by Lewis and Norwich (2001; 2005) and Fletcher-Campbell (2005). Rather, there are generic strategies which are useful for MLD children and others without MLD and extends to include others such as low attainers (Dyson and Hick, 2005) and those with severe learning difficulties (Porter, 2005).

Lewis and Norwich (2001; 2005) point out that the variation in teaching approaches reflects a deliberateness and intensive approach. Thus, in order to distinguish the ordinary adaptations in class for most pupils from the greater degree of adaptations required for those with learning difficulties, Lewis and Norwich (2005) introduce the notion of 'continua of teaching approaches' to capture the appropriateness of more intensive and explicit teaching for children with various degrees of learning difficulties as in the table below.

Table 2.6 Provisional framework of continua of pedagogic strategies
(cited from Lewis and Norwich, 2005, p.6)

Examples of pedagogic strategies	Continua of strategies for perceived attainment levels	
	High intensity	Low intensity
Provide opportunities for transfer	Explicit and teacher-led	Autonomous (pupil-led)
Shape task structure	Small discrete steps, short-term objectives emphasized	Larger steps, longer-term goals emphasized
Provide examples to learn concepts	Many and varied, but maximal difference on single criterion stressed	Few examples provided
Provision of practice to achieve mastery	Extensive and varied	Little
Provision of task-linked feedback	Immediate, frequent, explicit, focused, extrinsic	Deferred, moving to self-evaluation
Checking for preparedness for the next stage of learning	Explicit and frequent, teacher monitoring emphasized	Fleeting (by the teacher), self-monitoring stressed

Applying this notion of ‘continua of strategies for perceived attainment levels’ with the influence of the scarcity of research-based evidence of curriculum and pedagogy related to MLD, Fletcher-Campbell (2005) summarises the main conclusions of her literature review (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Findings from the literature review of curriculum and pedagogy related to MLD (adopted from Fletcher-Campbell, 2005, pp. 188-189)

<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls for more intensive and deliberate teaching for this group. • Pedagogy is not affected by location, and has more to do with the ethos in the location. • A dearth of detailed pedagogic studies; outcome studies are not definitive. • Where there are studies, they point to generic strategies useful for others without MLD. <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group is usually seen as needing a small steps curriculum. • Some argue that this is inadequate alone, and problem-solving and interaction are needed. • The group can follow similar programmes to non-MLD groups without aids; no supplementary curriculum is needed. • Differentiation occurs in earlier stages of the learning path, but not different paths.
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In light of these two tables, differentiation seems to require more intensive and deliberate teaching for children with MLD, but not a different curriculum, and teaching methods which relate to MLD only (Fletcher-Campbell, 2005). This is consistent with Stefanich's (2007a) account of research on instructional methods to meet individuals' needs within the science domain, noting that science teachers should become familiar with multi-modality teaching and avoid relying on one method. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994a, p.318) suggest that teachers should:

...combine a variety of instructional procedures from a variety of perspectives, such as behavioural (e.g., attention, behaviour management and persistence of effort), cognitive (e.g., comprehension and memory strategies), and constructivist (e.g., conceptual development and logical thinking).

In summary, developing inclusive schools requires a shift from traditional teaching methods in a rigid curriculum towards a flexible curriculum and teaching approaches that meet individuals' learning needs, as Ferguson (2008, p.144) outlines:

‘when principles of differentiation are combined with meaningful curriculum design, classrooms become busy, productive work environments where learning is the focus as well as the result’.

The conclusions from Lewis and Norwich (2005), Fletcher-Campbell (2005) and Norwich and Kelly (2005) are two-fold: they question the usefulness of labels such as MLD for determining the type of curriculum and teaching methods and they question segregated settings for children with MLD who, on the evidence, need no different curriculum or different teaching methods from other students. This may explain why MLD children are among the easiest groups to include in mainstream classes (Williams, 1993). However, we should cautiously avoid an over simplification of the process of including MLD children in the mainstream as this puts emphasis on placement above participation. Meaningful participation in the class requires a skilled teacher who is able to work on a continuum.

2.3.2.4 Staff development

Lipsky and Gartner (1998) note that systematic staff development is essential for successful inclusive practice. Staff must keep up with the growth in special educational needs through developmental training. All inclusive policies should provide teachers for all pupils diverse enough to support students in inclusive settings. Garner (in O’Brien, 2001) suggests that general training courses should consider inclusion issues, such as the psychology of learning, classroom pedagogy and an understanding of the socio-economic context of underachievement and disadvantage. Fullan (2007) highlights the district services role in teacher development that strongly emphasises ‘learning in context’ (see Table 2.4).

2.3.3 Barriers to inclusion

The literature mentions the barriers to inclusion, e.g. funding, physical factors, school culture and staff attitudes, which mean that some schools may be more capable of inclusion than others. In the study by Evans and Lunt (2002) of the barriers to a school planning full inclusion, they suggest that the obstacles can be classified as:

- Attitudes and beliefs held by staff in schools.
- Resourcing difficulties.
- LEA structure: e.g. the management and organisation of support services; reluctance of health services to organise to support inclusion; lack of clear policy direction from senior management.
- Parental choice (parents who prefer segregated provision) and the decisions of SEN tribunals.
- Social reasons: e.g. lack of a peer group; change in ‘culture’ required; and the social marginalisation of pupils with SEN.
- Limitations of school provision: e.g. unsuitable physical environment in mainstream schools; poor curriculum differentiation/flexibility; lack of staff training.

Rogers (2007, p.63) recently investigated parents’ experience of mainstream education for children with special needs and found that many such children experience ‘segregation’ at different levels:

- *Practically*: they are often removed from the class for one-to-one work in an individual teaching unit.
- *Intellectually*: they often cannot access the curriculum as their peers can.

- *Emotionally*: their difficulties can preclude them from sustaining friendship networks and engaging socially with others.

These barriers should be discussed in depth to appreciate their influence on inclusive practice. In the following section I focus on the school culture, teachers' attitudes and effective education as the most serious barriers to developing inclusion. I also introduce a positive aspect, since in different sections of the system certain factors help to develop inclusive practice.

2.3.3.1 School culture

Each school culture is a reflection of the societal culture, according to Mittler (2000, p.1):

...schools and the education system do not function in isolation. What happens in schools is a reflection of the society in which schools function. A society's values, beliefs and priorities will permeate the life and work of schools and do not stop at the school gates'.

To belong to the school culture, all students have to gain a series of skills, attitudes and abilities. The organisation of the school, if achievement is its primary goal (the discrepancy view), will lead to segregation from the school culture, for some children. This segregation has forced disabled pupils to resist their culture, groups and organisations in order to have their own identity, self-acceptance and the societal acceptance of people with disabilities; for example, the establishment by deaf people of their own community.

Research on school culture in general has focused on the influence of leadership to enhance development, and on school reform and organisation culture (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 2005; Harris, 1992; Sarason, 1996). Hunt and Goetz (1997) analysed 19

research findings on the development and contexts of successful inclusive education and identified two factors, '*morally driven commitment to children*' and '*a consensus of a set of values*' which positively influence the improvement in inclusive school culture. Another study, by Zollers et al (1999), highlights three features of school culture in this regard: an inclusive leader; the vision of a school community; shared language and values. Combining these factors helps create an inclusive school culture. Fullan (2007 - see Table 2.4) identifies the principal role in creating these features through setting direction, developing people and building productive relations with parents and the community.

2.3.3.2 Teachers' attitudes

According to O'Brien (2001, p.42): '*The inside of a teacher's head is the key resource for inclusion because the starting point for inclusive learning begins when teachers reflect upon how they create educational reality.*'

Despite the school's support, e.g. physical, speech and language support, teaching assistants, special units and professional support, teachers' attitudes can vary between acceptance and rejection. Some teachers feel that children with SEN are not their responsibility and in turn inclusion turns into exclusion, by practising isolation inside the classroom (Tilstone and Rose, 2003).

Research into teachers' attitudes has identified some influential factors. For example, some studies have suggested that the more experienced teachers are, the more positive their attitude, e.g. Forlin et al (1996); undoubtedly, teachers with experience of teaching pupils with SEN become more positive and confident, as different studies confirm. Studies by Avramidis et al (2002) and Villa et al (1996) conclude that

teachers' commitment to inclusion results from gaining mastery of the required professional expertise. Similar results were reported in a longitudinal study by LeRoy and Simpson (1996), who investigated the impact of inclusion in Michigan, USA, over a three-year period. The results showed teachers' attitudes changing in a positive direction. A study by Carrington (1999, p.265) found that teachers' and society's beliefs and values affected inclusive education; therefore:

[if] schools wish to move towards inclusive schooling, members of the administration team and external school consultants will need carefully to consider the influence of core values of the local community and collective values, experiential knowledge and skills of the school staff and the traditional values of the school.

Other studies point out the effect of teacher in-service and pre-service training in developing more positive attitudes toward teaching pupils with SEN (Avramidis et al, 2000). A literature review by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) yields the following influences on teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion:

Table 2.8 Factors which influence teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion (adapted from Avramidis and Norwich, 2002)

<p>Child-related variables:</p> <p>Including the types of disability (physical, sensory, cognitive and behavioural). Teachers generally exhibit more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with physical and sensory impairments than of those with learning difficulties and emotional-behavioural difficulties.</p>
<p>Teacher-related variables:</p> <p>Including teacher characteristics such as gender, age/teaching experience, grade/level taught, experience of contact with children with SEN, training, teachers' beliefs about their responsibilities and teachers' socio-political views.</p>
<p>Educational environment-related variables:</p> <p>Including human and physical support services. Teachers' positive attitudes are associated with the availability of human support (e.g. special needs teachers, learning assistants, etc.) and physical support (e.g. resources, IT equipment, etc.).</p>

The key finding from this research is that teachers' attitudes are more influenced by the nature and severity of the disability than by teacher-related variables. In conclusion:

teachers who accept responsibility for teaching a wide diversity of students (recognizing thus the contribution their teaching has on the students' progress) and feel confident in their instructional and management skills (as a result of training), can successfully implement inclusive programmes (receptivity towards inclusion was associated with higher teacher efficacy) (2002, p.140)

The analyses also demonstrate positive attitudes but no evidence of the acceptance of totally inclusive approaches to children with SEN.

2.3.4 Effective education and assessing the learning progress of students with learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom

Effective education is usually measured by the school's results in comparative tests reflecting the academic and ignoring the social performance. This measurement does a disservice to inclusive schools, because of the low scores which result from accepting a diversity of students, some with special needs. Therefore, this policy promotes inequalities and encourages schools to raise barriers against such students. Ballard (1999) traces the results: schools reject and exclude disabled students for the sake of better scores, creating tension between achieving 'excellence' and achieving 'equity', as Lunt and Norwich (1999) illustrate. They investigate in the 1998 GCSE league tables what effect the proportion of students with SEN has on a school's standing and note that schools with a higher proportion of students with SEN had a lower GCSE score.

Rogers (2007) indicates that children with SEN are usually excluded from taking national exams, such as SAT tests, to maintain the school's ranking. This practice prevents students with special needs from exercising their right to receive individual modifications and test differentiations, and puts enormous pressure on families and teachers when the children's exclusion is rationalised, as Ysseldyke makes clear (in Lipsky and Gartner, 1998): *'[w]e value only what we measure and if [students with disabilities] are not in the picture, then people assume that they are not responsible for educating them. Out of sight is out of mind.'*

However, Rouse and Florian (2004) argue that any final judgment on the effect on scores of a proportion of students with SEN is inappropriate, since the lack of research in investigating the effects on students' scores in mainstream schools of the proportion of students with SEN results from the lack of necessary data in England. Such data have not been available until recently and undertaking such research is problematic. For example, 'pupils' starting points' or alternative performance indicators might have produced different results in the research of Lunt and Norwich; furthermore, Rouse and Florian argue that these league tables comparing schools' results led to simplistic and unfavourable judgments about schools, in particular those with unusual proportions of pupils with SEN (Rouse and Florian, 2001).

A more recent study by Rouse and Florian (2006) finds that multi-methods are preferable, depending on the national pupil dataset (NPD) and case studies of secondary schools. The importance of the NPD is that it enables researchers to track the complete school career of individuals with demographic data (such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, first language spoken, special needs designation) from the pupil-level annual schools' census (PLASC). The results show no evidence that a

higher proportion of pupils with SEN in a school lower the performance of other students in the school.

Mainstream teachers face a dilemma over students with special needs, between summative assessment and formative assessment. Summative assessment is a traditional method including pencil and paper tests which ignores the learning environment. Rouse and Agbenu (1998) describe the importance of this approach, saying that it provides reliable results for certification, accountability and evaluation purposes. Formative assessment is concurrently made by teachers in the belief that it will lead to improved teaching and learning.

In spite of the claims about the advantages of summative assessment, Ainscow (1988) recognises the importance of the context in understanding students' learning difficulties. Rouse and Agbenu (1998) also argue that the narrow focus of summative assessment does not allow the outcomes of special or inclusive education to be evaluated. Gipps and Stobart (1993, quoted in Rouse and Agbenu, 1998) summarise this debate as follows: *'[t]he aggregated summative information is there for accountability and political purposes, it is there to evaluate and monitor schools rather than to help directly in the education of individual children.'*

The literature suggests that the form and format of the assessment of children with learning difficulties will influence the outcome (Bell, 2002). For example, McCarthy's study (2005) compared two groups of 18 middle-school students with learning difficulties, who were instructed, over the course of eight weeks, on 'matter' by two different instructional approaches. Students in one classroom received a traditional textbook approach to the science content, whereas students in the other

classroom received science instruction with a hands-on, thematic approach. Data were collected throughout on students' behaviour and achievement. Overall, the students in the hands-on instructional programme performed significantly better than the students in the textbook programme in two of the traditional (multiple-choice and short-answer) and non-traditional (hands-on) performance assessments.

Watkins (2007), examining the assessment for teaching and learning purposes in inclusive primary schools, emphasised moving towards an '*inclusive assessment*' defined as:

...an approach to assessment in mainstream settings where policy and practice are designed to promote the learning of all pupils as far as possible. The overall goal of inclusive assessment is that all assessment policies and procedures should support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusion, including those with SEN (2007, p.47).

'Inclusive assessment' or 'assessment for learning' strongly advocates the use of formative assessment (D'Alessio and Watkins, 2009; Black et al, 2002; see also Table 2.4). Formative assessment occurs before, during and after instruction. In this regard, Black et al (2002) state:

...assessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence.

Stefanich (2007a) highlights formative assessment in correcting misconceptions and enabling teachers to match the instructional decision with student's instructional needs, with different formative assessment methods, such as portfolios, performance tasks, concept maps and rubrics, suggested by different researchers, being used in

inclusive science classrooms (Jarret, 1999; Champagne et al, 1996; Bell, 2002). Enabling an inclusive environment requires multiple forms of student assessments to inform and facilitate teaching and learning (Peters, 2004; Fullan, 2007; NCCA, 2007, see also Table 2.4).

However, these alternative assessment methods provide great challenges to science teachers, notwithstanding their new opportunities for students with learning difficulties. Scruggs and Mastropieri (in Pugach and Warger, 1996) find the serious barrier of shortage of time to their use in science classrooms; they need lengthy development, demand more careful analysis of students' responses than traditional forms of assessment and therefore may sometimes overtax poorly prepared science teachers . Therefore, before creating an inclusive classroom, teachers' preparation and the assessment materials available should be re-assessed.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Inclusion is constantly subjected to barriers. As social factors play a decisive role in inclusion decisions, they should be well considered. Changing the attitudes, values and beliefs which affect special education for MLD children is the foundation on which decision-makers should begin, to make the later stages easier in establishing inclusive schools. Preparing teachers to become more inclusive and changing necessary attitudes are crucial to a school's efforts to develop inclusive practice.

Building the inclusive classroom plays an immense role in this process, leading in turn to the building of an inclusive community, where all children's needs are met and they can access a full life. Such a community will listen to disabled children's voices and identify their actual needs.

From reviewing the literature, it seems that including children with learning difficulties, especially those with MLD, in mainstream schools and specifically in science classrooms, is seen as challenging and complex. However, students with learning difficulties can be successfully included if proper supports are included for both them and their teachers in a whole-school approach, with proper differentiation/modification strategies to meet individuals' needs and proper assessment of students' progress.

2.4 Section Three: Mapping the Field of Comparative Education

The comparative nature of this research is one contribution to meeting my research aims. This section defines comparative education and its importance, to clearly set out where this study is located within this field. The remaining section maps the whole field so as to trace the relationship between comparative education and special/inclusive education. Through analysis of the literature, I introduce the lessons from others' experience which helped me surmount the obstacles facing me in this study.

2.4.1 Understanding comparative education

2.4.1.1 Definition

Among the many definitions of comparative education, Mallinson (1989 in Halls, 1990) defines it as a systematic examination of other cultures and other systems of education deriving from those cultures, in order to discover similarities and differences. It is obvious that comparative research has no clear identifying boundaries; Crossley and Broadfoot (1992, p.102) describe it as:

...a multi-disciplinary field to which educational researchers from all disciplinary perspectives may contribute, be they at heart historians, political scientists, philosophers, psychologists or sociologists. There is no one disciplinary base, no one focus for research; indeed to some this represents the basic strength of the field.

This diversity of perspectives and scholars within comparative education may be seen as enriching and strengthening it. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006) describe comparative education as a ‘quasi-discipline’, which is important in every field of inquiry in different subjects from different disciplines. Therefore, much research in comparative education is done by those who do not consider themselves comparative researchers. For example, many studies of special/inclusive education which adopt comparative research are located elsewhere; these studies will be explored later, to locate special/inclusive education within the comparative education field.

2.4.1.2 Purposes of comparative education

Comparison is part of our everyday life; we are always making comparisons in order to make better choices and gain greater understanding. Comparative research in education can be done for many different reasons. Adams and Theisen (in Thomas, 1990) argue that the importance of the comparative study should not be limited or measured by its immediate impact on education policies; yet comparative researchers can significantly influence educational change by:

- Carefully targeting the intended audience and policy-making clientele
- Examining education from a holistic, cross-sectoral perspective
- Presenting findings in terms of options, written in the context of the political, financial and educational tradeoffs associated with each of them
- Disseminating findings in a manner and with a focus which will capture the interest of decision makers and will inform their deliberations, and

- Providing critiques and assessment of current and past attempts at educational reform.

Among the above purposes, I found that the second and the last are most relevant to the present study. Thus, by examining education from a holistic, cross-sectoral perspective, I can in the light of practice critique and assess current and past attempts at educational reform. This study compares current practice in England with what is done in Kuwait to support inclusion in mainstream schools. From this investigation, guided and enlightened by the relevant experience of one of the most developed countries, I would hope to suggest recommendations for current practice in Kuwait.

2.4.2 Location of special/inclusive research within the comparative education field

This section surveys comparative research in the field of special/inclusive education. Here, comparative perspectives exist for different purposes, and are not only cross-national; therefore different ranges of explicit comparisons can be made in the special/inclusive education field (Alexander et al, 1999). I developed my own criteria for the study, drawing on the options of Rust et al (1999) in their review of the comparative education literature: to review the special/inclusive education literature which has the nature and content of comparative research, as follows:

1. A research study conducted as a multiple-country study.
2. A single-country study, if the researcher analyses an educational system which is 'foreign' to the researcher and has important 'comparative' implications; what should be avoided are foreign education studies which focus heavily on description and explanation.

Firstly, a study by Booth and Ainscow (1998), in collaboration with other researchers in eight countries, set up studies of schools in their national and local context in order to illuminate differences in perspective on inclusion and exclusion. The researchers were asked to write accounts of their national educational system by following the editors' guidelines in relation to sixteen points under three themes: definitions, responses to diversity and recognising differences of perspective. Booth and Ainscow added a critical commentary on each account, and then drew a comparative analysis between these accounts and the national contexts. However, there is a risk in this approach of the editors superimposing a view on the accounts. This risk could lead to misinterpretation of the current local policy and practice.

The analysis shows that under the first theme, 'definitions', some researchers give limited attention to defining terms in their accounts and take for granted that there is a conceptual equivalence. Other accounts, where definitions of inclusion and exclusion are incorporated still need more clarification. Therefore, the editors emphasise that the researcher should try not to assume that there is a universal understanding of concepts on inclusion and exclusion. Under the second theme 'responding to diversity', different models of disability were applied in practice within different case studies. For example, the medical model is applied in the Netherlands and Australia, while the social model of disability is applied in England.

In the third theme 'recognising differences of perspective', the editors identified the significance of national and regional policies and cultural history in providing a framework for the local understanding of inclusion and exclusion. However, in spite of the fact that the editors encouraged the researchers to present their case studies as cases of 'a school in a local region in a country' and to avoid presenting the official

view, some researchers give different amounts of attention to different aspects of the context, with little information that might have helped to give a deeper understanding of the applied practice. For example, religion is considered to be a shaping feature of education, but none of the case studies gave attention to the influence of religion on practice in the school.

In a further study, Meijer et al (1994) emphasise that the goal of a six-country study of integration is to explore the diversity of organisational models, expertise and experiences in an attempt to reduce segregation in education in order to extend the knowledge base on educational integration and to learn from other people's experiences. The study, which focuses on integration in six Western countries – Italy, Sweden, the US, England, Wales and the Netherlands – provides both qualitative and quantitative information and analyses the similarities and differences between integration practices in these countries. Their guiding principle is to consider teachers' behaviour and students' and parents' attitudes as the ultimate factor in deciding the level of integration of students with special needs.

The results show that the three factors which are making an important contribution to the successful integration of students with special needs in regular education are teachers' attitudes, the avoidance of formal labelling procedures as the means of funding special services, a limit on the amount of time spent in special classes and the number of subjects taught in special classes in regular school.

An alternative cross-cultural approach which acknowledges and examines connections and differences between and within societies is to be found in a book edited by Armstrong and Barton (1999). The book is concerned with the rights,

position and experience of disabled children and adults in different societies (Zimbabwe, Tobago, Hong Kong, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Canada, the US, Australia, France, Sweden, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and England). The editors are aware of the lack of uniformity and the diversity of the countries they are surveying, but they argue that all societies have much to learn and that commonly held ideas about values and practices in different social contexts should be challenged.

The editors point out that in order to develop critical discourses and learning encounters, they gave the freedom to the other authors to use whatever terminology and language they wanted in their chapters without interference. However, they draw together some major themes to make comparisons possible, as follows:

- The extent and level of organisation of disabled people which is present in a society and is attempting alternative conceptions through literature, songs, poetry, education, drama and public demonstration.
- The extent to which there is appropriate legislation in place which is informed by a human rights perspective and is centrally concerned with anti-discrimination and equity.
- The extent to which disability studies are an established feature of higher education institution courses.
- The extent to which schools are open and inclusive in terms of their access organisation, pedagogy and curriculum (Armstrong and Barton, 1999, p.4).

The chapters show a number of contrasting perspectives on human rights and disability issues which demonstrate important effects on human rights discourses and practices in different societies.

Another book, edited by Peters (1993), provides an analytical framework for the study of education and disability from a cross-cultural perspective. It includes chapters describing the state of education and disability in seven countries: England and Wales, Hungary, Japan, Iran, Pakistan, China and the US. The authors discuss disability and education within the context of their nation's societal beliefs and practice. The authors depend on the theory of disability which takes into account political, economic, ideological and cultural spheres of influence. Peters argues that by applying an ideological-cultural framework, the analysis goes beyond that of educational systems to the ways in which these systems are used in the different societies.

Peters concludes that students with experience of disability were created by the cultural ideology, structure and practice combined with perceptions of disability. The differences and the similarities of these experiences within different contexts allow the different models of disability to be present to a greater or lesser degree in each country. Therefore, the models of disability can be placed on a continuum from progressive to regressive, not a fixed state. For example, the medical model in developed countries gave a negative picture of disability, but not in developing countries such as China and Pakistan, where carrying a disabled label could offer access to medical care and education. Therefore, the editor emphasises that challenging medical and other negative models will create an opportunity to move away from prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping to something nearer social justice and equality. He endorses an interpretive framework for challenging false assumptions regarding disability and the provision of education.

Another book edited by McLaughlin and Rouse (2000) provides an overview and comparative analysis of the ways in which special education policy is being negotiated within the context of educational reforms in the UK and the US. The editors justified their choice in that the two countries have influenced each other's reforms, and there are individual policies and practices in each which are interesting to compare. However, in spite of the similarities in language between these countries, there are examples of different meanings and interpretations of the same terms. The book documents the following educational reform initiatives in the context of the education of students with disabilities: more rigorous curriculum and content standards; increased performance expectations through assessment; a high degree of accountability for student performance; increasing school and community autonomy in decision making and educational choice; and funding for special education.

The comparative analysis shows that the competitive nature of some of the reforms has created educational barriers for children with special needs and promoted inequalities in education. However, the goal of excellence for all policy has made the needs of children with special needs a matter of policy mandates (McLaughlin and Rouse, 2000).

Moreover, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) has been significant in conducting comparative projects to investigate the inclusive educational practices in different countries. These projects started from 1985; the first project compares practice in Italy, Norway, the UK and the US. It investigates the implementation of integration through case studies, indicating the background of each country as regards historical-cultural, institutional-legal and social factors.

Another project which examines the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream schools was undertaken over the period 1990 to 1996 by the OECD. The project consists of three stages and adopts a mixed methodology. The first stage focuses on describing the context, including the current policy, legislation and practice with respect to integration in the 21 OECD member countries which participated (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK and the US). The second stage is concerned with the development of case studies which could illustrate 'good practice' in this field. The final stage is related to the dissemination of the findings. The editors emphasise the importance of the case studies in presenting obstacles to integration, distinguishing between those which are characteristic of the processes of initiation, implementation, maintenance and evaluation, and consider possible solutions. The guiding areas were the principles and practices of integration; the implications of the organisation of education; statistics, definitions and terminology relating to handicap, disability and special educational needs and the placement of the children concerned; the curriculum; teacher training; the role of parents; resources; and prospects for the future.

Evans and Labon (OECD, 1997) indicate that the variations in terminology make comparison of the data difficult. The findings show differences across countries in recognising disabilities and different practices in dealing with them. The findings reflect different models being applied to children with disabilities. There were variations in the practices anywhere between segregation and full integration which serve as indicators to the dominant beliefs and attitudes within different countries (OECD, 1997). For example, the comparisons shed light on such various aspects of

schools as curriculum, school organisation, teacher training, pedagogy, community support and issues of funding. Therefore, the factors which affect the integration process were considered inside and outside schools.

Two recent studies explore children's attitudes towards disability. Firstly, an explorative study by Nikolarazi and Reybekiel (2001) examines the attitudes of other children towards deaf children, children in wheelchairs and blind children in Greece and in the UK. Quantitative methodology was applied to elicit the children's views. The results show that all children were positive towards the three categories of children and that girls were more positive than boys. However, comparative analysis shows that there are several differences in children's attitudes in the two countries. Comparisons between children in Greece and in the UK indicate that children in Greece are more positive towards such children than their counterparts in the UK. Nikolarazi and Reybekiel point out, however, that the positive attitude was held at a superficial level but not at the level of friendship and interaction.

Secondly, a similar study explores children's attitudes toward individuals with special needs in Greece and the US. However, in this study the researchers applied mixed methodology, using both questionnaires and interviews in order to collect further information. Nikolarazi et al (2005) point out similar positive attitudes towards children with special needs in the two countries. At the same time, comparisons indicate that children attending inclusive kindergartens held more positive attitudes than did children attending non-inclusive kindergartens.

Another cross-cultural study has been conducted to explore the cultural attitudes towards inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities in Egypt, the United Arab

Emirates and England (Gaad, 2004). The researcher applies a qualitative methodology to collect data. The comparative analysis shows that the culture plays a role in affecting beliefs and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special needs in the three countries.

Some common issues emerge from the above overview of the literature in tracing the relationship between comparative education and special/inclusive education. These are:

- The selection of the countries (sampling)
- The methodology
- The equivalence
- Theoretical approaches
- Aims of the study.

First, the countries to be surveyed can be selected for different reasons. The decisions may be based on non-educational reasons, such as membership of the OECD (OECD, 1997). Some projects, however, show the selection to be based on both non-educational and educational characteristics, such as that of Meijer et al (1994) which uses the criteria of existing integration policy; available information; different models of integration and practice; and similar socio-economic and cultural dimensions.

Second, the literature shows that the projects apply different methodologies, qualitative, quantitative and mixed alike and introduce a new method, that of 'country reports' which give the researcher the freedom to use different methods with general guidelines, without imposing the editor's perspective (Booth and Ainscow, 1998).

However, these variations raise questions about the concept of 'equivalence'. This concept has been challenged throughout the literature, which admits that finding conceptual, sampling and methodological equivalence – considered the foundation for comparison between different countries – is difficult (Poppleton, 1992). For example, methodological equivalence has been challenged by the introduction of flexibility in applying different methods, 'country report methods' in particular, which do not require the use of common methods between the researchers. Also, in different parts of the literature, the authors point out the difficulties of finding conceptual equivalence, due to international disagreement over such concepts as integration or inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Meijer et al, 1994; OECD, 1997). However, in spite of this difficulty, the individual details may be considered to yield rich information and greater contextualisation, affording deeper understanding of actual practice.

Furthermore, the literature shows many theoretical approaches. Some projects emphasise the importance of culture in designating disability as a social construct (see Peters, 1993). Thus, using cultural paradigms and cross-cultural comparison leads to richer understanding of the experience of disability. Booth and Ainscow (1998) use background theory to challenge the 'official view' and explore issues of cultural and political context related to the inclusion/exclusion process. Meijer et al (1994), using guided theory, state that successful integration depends on the teacher and on the attitudes of parents and students. The researchers link it to teachers' behaviour, shaped by the availability of resources, which of course relates to such things as legislation, policy, the organisation of special education, teacher training, regulations and conditions. Most of these elements are not covered in the analysis but described by country report.

The previous studies from the developed world take an attitude to inclusive education in their own countries which may not be appropriate elsewhere. Armstrong (2005) argues that inclusive education in developing countries has a different meaning to that in developed countries, where the surrounding debate is related to social justice. As a result he emphasises that *'a discussion of 'inclusion' must be made concrete and understood in terms of both cultural differences and their intersection with the colonial history and post-colonial contexts of countries in the developing world'* (2005, p.4).

Finally, the aims of the studies vary between 'descriptive' studies aiming to shed light on the similarities and the differences between countries, such as studies conducted by OECD (1958, 1997) and 'explanatory' studies, which explore the factors affecting inclusion or integration across countries (Fulcher, 1989; Meijer et al, 1994; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Nikolarazi and Reybekiel, 2001).

The study most relevant to my research on the nature of the background is by Peters (1993). The importance of cultural influences to shaping the disability models is central for Peters and is important to the systematic/ecological framework which my study uses. From Booth and Ainscow, I learnt (1998) that studying schools in their national and local context is preferable to depending on quantitative methods, which must be contextualised. In addition, I learnt the importance of clear guidelines which focus the research on the research aims but do not completely constrain it, as the Booth and Ainscow (1998) and Armstrong and Barton (1999) studies were constrained. Finally, I realised the need to fully establish the research methodology to avoid the weakness of unclear procedures such as Meijer et al (1994) reveal.

Therefore, I discuss in detail each aspect of the research design, providing a clear theoretical framework in Chapter Three.

2.4.3 Conclusion

Locating special/inclusive research within comparative education is not easy because most of this literature uses a variety of theories, methodology and methods, notably ‘country-report’ methods, which by definition are highly individual. Most of the studies also focus on exploring theories of special/inclusive education within different countries by analysing with a comparative framework, which is problematic if we subject it to the demands of comparative research, in particular, the concept of equivalence.

However the importance of comparative research in special/inclusive education should not be ignored. Booth (2003) places the importance of comparative study in its contribution to the theory, policy and practice of inclusion. Therefore, he emphasises shifting perspectives, the development of concepts and improving the practice of studying inclusion in other countries, in order to bring about positive changes in the practice and policy of inclusion in one’s own.

The following chapter discusses the way in which this research was planned and designed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this chapter is to describe the research design in detail. Section one discusses the three major paradigms and their assumptions, together with the implications of adopting these paradigms in research into special education, then evaluates qualitative methods in research on special/inclusive education and justifies the choice of the interpretive paradigm. It closes with a discussion of the issues related to ethical considerations.

Section two introduces the framework correlating the research aims to the research questions, identifying the data collected, the methods of collection and their sources. The third section describes the research design in detail and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach.

3.2 Educational Research

3.2.1 Research paradigms and their implications for research into special/inclusive education

Special/inclusive education has always been viewed through three paradigms: scientific, interpretive and critical. nEach is built on a very different set of underlying assumptions, as Table 3.1 below summarises (Ernest, 1994, p.29) before a more detailed discussion.

Table 3.1 Comparison of the three main research paradigms

	Scientific Paradigm	Interpretative Paradigm	Critical Paradigm
Ontology	Objects in physical space	Subjective reality	Persons in society
Epistemology a. View of knowledge	Absolutist, objective knowledge *	Personal knowledge	Socially constructed knowledge
Epistemology b. Theory of learning	Cognitive	Constructivist	Social constructivist
Methodology	Quantitative and experimental, seeking general laws	Qualitative case studies of particular contexts	Critical action research on social institutions
Interest	Prediction and control of the world	Understanding and making sense of the world	Social justice; emancipation
Intended outcome	Objective knowledge and truth in the form of laws	Illuminative subjective understandings	Intervention for social reform, social justice
Commonly associated pedagogical aims	Subject-centred or social utilitarian	Child-centred	Empowerment and critical citizenship

3.2.1.1 The scientific research paradigm

The scientific paradigm used to define all approaches to research in special/inclusive education. What a scientific approach implies is the emphasis on generalisation, which contradicts the diversity and unique qualities exhibited by the individual (Cohen et al, 2003; Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). Here the research may take a medical model, locating the problem within the child. This image of the scientific paradigm may see the world simplistically, to the extent that it can be examined easily and, if broken, fixed (Maykut and

Morehouse, 1994). In contrast, in special/inclusive education, research may see the world as complex and interconnected: the child within the environment is in dynamic interaction.

3.2.1.2 The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm raises fundamental philosophical challenges for positivism and offers alternative theoretical, methodological and practical approaches. Interpretivism proposes that reality is socially constructed. For example, the concept of ‘disability’ or ‘dyslexia’ is a socially constructed phenomenon, differently interpreted by different people. Such multiple realities have particular implications for special education. First, they affect the methodology by repeatedly changing the research questions. Second, multiple realities and social construction should investigate the perceptions of a variety of people (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). Moreover, interpretivism assumes that the inquirer and inquired-into are interlocked and that social construction produces facts supported by values, which also should be explored and articulated. For example, the debate surrounding inclusion continues – the deaf community still refuses mainstream schooling and maintains restrictive placements for deaf students.

However, according to Cohen et al (2003), despite the power of interpretivism to capture human uniqueness and individuality in the context of individual beliefs, views and feelings, participants can still supply false knowledge, which may reflect only their sector of society; thus, generalisations may be risky unless other measurements are used as well. Interpretivism is also criticised for micro-sociological narrowness.

3.2.1.3 The critical paradigm

This paradigm has developed from critical theory, as seen in the work of Jürgen Habermas (1972). Its proponents include critical theorists, Marxists and feminists. According to Ernest (1994), it is concerned not only with understanding but also with social critique, social and institutional change and social justice.

The critical paradigm, like the interpretative, assumes that the reality of special/inclusive education is socially constructed, but lays greater emphasis on the historical, social and cultural determinants of the definitions in this area. For example, the concept of ‘disability’ here is identified from the standpoint of those in a larger cultural context who have a disability, addressing issues such as discrimination and oppression (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). In addition, the critical paradigm not only emphasises the interaction between the inquirer and inquired-into, but in the research process also critically examines issues of power and control and interprets the result from the standpoint of those with disabilities (Cohen et al, 2003).

However, it is itself open to criticism. First, Habermas’ separation of the three motivating interests is artificial, in view of the multitude of interests and ways to understand these interlocked worlds. Second, though the critical paradigm usually purports to empower the participants and the researchers, power is usually located within the law (statutes) and political power seldom extends to either. Finally, processes of change all face resistance from hidden institutional sources, e.g. teacher and pupil ideologies (Ernest, 1994).

3.2.2 The paradigm followed in the study

Avramidis and Smith (1999) contend that the researcher should be guided by the paradigmatic assumptions, not the methods of investigation required. Thus, the exploratory nature of this study made the interpretive paradigm appear most appropriate. My focus was on understanding at different levels any classroom practice which promotes inclusion for MLD students. The first level involved comparing England and Kuwait regarding issues of feasibility and support for MLD students within mainstream settings. This covered such areas as type of provision, location and challenges at the micro-level; then the study expanded to the macro-level to investigate Kuwait's policies for including MLD students in mainstream schools. I investigated current practice in England and Kuwait from different angles, reflecting group perceptions, e.g. teachers', students', parents' and decision-makers'. Therefore, I sought to understand actualities, social realities and group perceptions before providing generalisable facts. On this basis I rejected the scientific paradigm as the basis for my research, since it fails to take account of the unique ability of '*the individual to interpret his experience*' (Cohen et al, 2003; Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004).

People decide how to act and perceive the world according to their own experiences and their interpretations of the experience and behaviour of others (Radnor, 2002). Thus, I can only understand social reality through my subjective interpretation. From my experience in mainstream school, I have designed my study according to my interaction with different participants, i.e. setting its questions, aims and methods. Epistemologically, the interpretive paradigm asserts that social construction produces facts, supported by values, which must be understood and acknowledged.

In terms of methodology, I sought better understanding of the social world by qualitative approaches, using multiple case studies. This study explores in detail the nature of support and teaching processes and seeks an understanding of them which permits the current practice for children with MLD to be evaluated with qualitative methods. Contextualising this research qualitatively will help to clarify the interaction between individuals and the schooling system within society.

This research does not claim that quantitative methods are inappropriate for special education research, but the nature of my particular research questions must decide the type of methodology and the methods by which they can be answered (Lewis, 2002).

However, qualitative methods are arguably closely related to inclusive education research, because qualitative studies are best able to deal with the nature of special educational needs: the uniqueness of the disabled student's disabling conditions should be reflected in the diversity of the disability programme (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004).

In addition, Peck and Foreman (1992 in Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004) emphasise the importance of the qualitative approach in (a) identifying the fundamental roles of ideology, organisational dynamics and the social/political process in shaping policy and practice in special education; (b) enabling professionals to explore the children, parents and teachers from within, and to develop interventions in special education which take account of cognitive and motivational interpretations; (c) investigating those factors which affect special education practice, such as cultural values, institutional practice and interpersonal interactions (Hegarty and Evans, 1985; Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004).

3.3 Theoretical Framework for Understanding and Researching Inclusion

The present study applied Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which is defined as:

the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate setting in which the developing person lives, as this is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (1979, p.21).

According to this, child development occurs within a dynamic, changing mutual interaction. Therefore, the environment where the mutual influence occurs is conceptualised as a nested arrangement of concentric structures referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner describes these structures, each in its larger setting, as they affect children's behaviour and development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). The systems can influence and be influenced by each other. For the purpose of this research, Odom et al (2004) mention that Bronfenbrenner's model has been applied extensively in research on young disabled children, specifically in relation to the inclusion of children with special needs. They describe these systems and connect them to research on inclusion as follows:

- The biosystem is at the centre, reflecting the characteristics of the child. The literature on inclusion identifies two dimensions of children's characteristics: (a) the type of disability and (b) its severity.
- The microsystem is any immediate setting in which the child is a regular participant, such as the family and classroom. (For my purposes, the microsystem of interest will be the inclusive classroom). This system covers different variables, such as the quality of the classroom environment, environmental arrangements, the instructional practices

followed by teachers, children's participation and engagement, children's social relationships with peers, interventions to promote social competence, the effects of inclusion on other children's perceptions of children with disabilities, teachers' behaviour and beliefs and collaboration among professionals.

- The mesosystem refers to the influences between microsystems. For example, the relationship between parents (the family microsystem) and the teacher (the classroom microsystem). Other mesosystems, such as transitions between programmes and participation in community settings, have different sorts of influence.
- The exosystem consists of influences on the child or the classroom microsystem from settings which do not include any members of the microsystem setting; for example, social policy and administrative issues.
- The macrosystem includes social, political and cultural influences.
- The chronosystem is the time dimension, which changes as variables impact over time and show their influence within and across the levels of the ecological system, developing and gradually redefining the influences between one level and another. This system is important for referring to different points of the academic year; longitudinal studies are also important for investigating the effects of a programme (Odom et al, 2004).

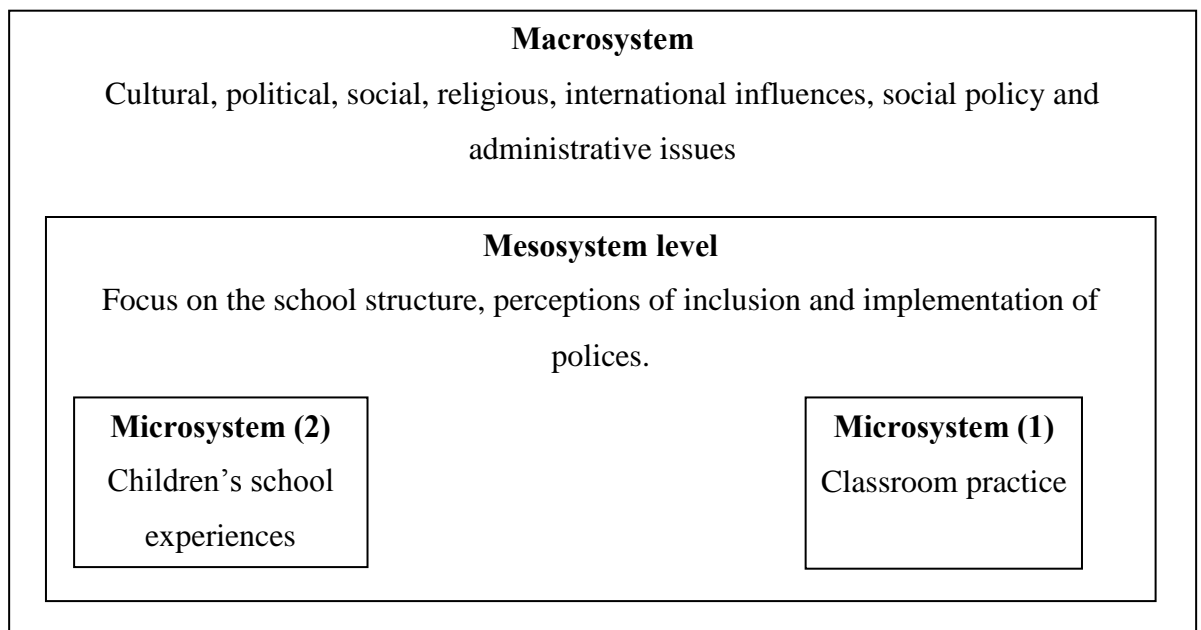
Therefore, applying the ecological theory led to my choosing the method of case studies principally because it accommodated a deeper understanding of the interaction between the individual and the context. In my case studies, I examined those systems which revealed current practice in England and Kuwait at different levels. At the level of the *microsystem* (1) I investigated science classroom settings by using observation and semi-structured interviews,

looking at such features as the quality of classroom practice in child-to-child interaction, teacher-child interaction, teachers' attitudes and access to the curriculum. Second, the *microsystem* (2) was that of the children; at this level I investigated how children's characteristics affected their location and how they were categorised in both countries, parental perceptions of inclusion, participation in the community and the transition between programmes as schooling proceeded.

Third, at the *mesosystem* level I used the same means to investigate issues related to school contexts including staff roles, the inner structure, attitudes and beliefs, resources and facilities, and parent-teacher interaction. Fourth, at the level of the *macrosystem* I looked at issues related to social policy and administration, covered social, political, cultural and religious factors and international and research influences on policy and practice in the inclusion of MLD students in mainstream schools. These variables were investigated through document analysis and literature reviews.

Finally, I hoped to find links from one system level to another, to help identify the factors furthering the development of inclusiveness, without forgetting the barriers to it. The use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory for inclusion in this study is represented below.

Figure 3.1 Ecological System Theory (adapted from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p.866)



The Ecological System Theoretical Framework takes into account the interaction between individuals and their environment. This model combines the positive aspects of the medical and social models, while avoiding the negative aspects, since *'their cooperation and co-existence may be in the interests of the child'* (Mittler, 2000, p.3).

This framework provides a complex, dynamic understanding of needs as multi-interactions in human life. Swain et al (2003) suggest that the negative aspects of the medical/social models are best avoided by promoting the 'ecological perspective', which he places centrally in the social world, applied through the various relationships of people with each other and with the environment.

In education, as Thomas and Vaughan state: *'inclusion...is embedded in a range of contexts, political and social as well as psychological and educational'* (2004, p.i). Therefore, the

Ecological Systems Framework takes an analytic perspective to identify the relationship between micro, meso and macrosystems, clarifying learners' needs and ways to meet them.

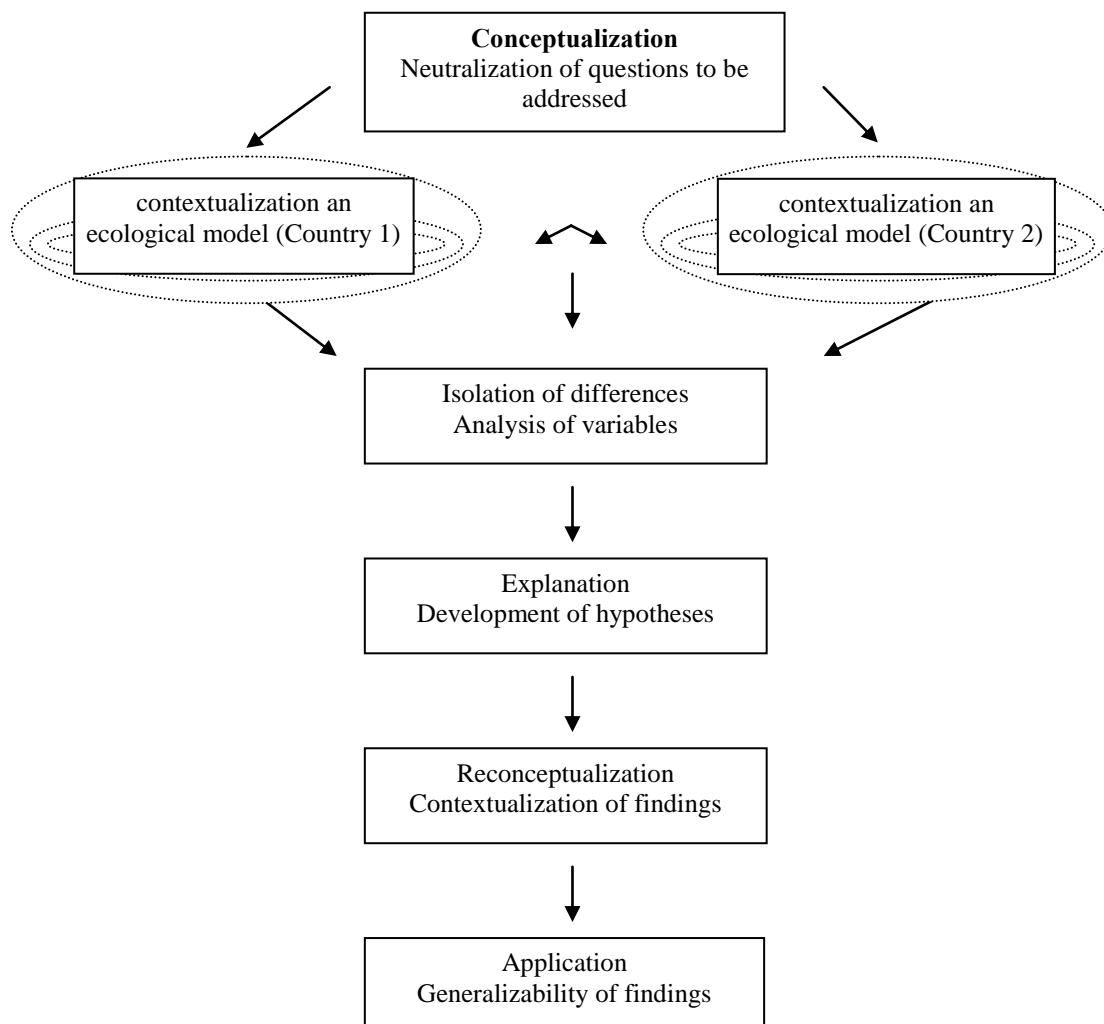
This study takes the Ecological Systems Theory as a practical as well as a theoretical framework. As the former, this theory has methodological implications, which Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.29) identified as '*ecological validity*' since '*...the environment experienced by the subjects in a scientific investigation has the properties it is supposed or assumed to have by the investigator*'.

Thomas (2005) points out that the results from research which investigates individuals in a laboratory setting do not represent their real context, and consequently lack ecological validity. Therefore, I wanted the current framework to let me investigate inclusive education in its natural setting and on different levels of the systems where it is formulated, interpreted and implemented.

After studying both countries separately, I put these ecological models into a comparative framework to establish a strong basis which transcended simple juxtaposition and contextualised the research, to obtain deeper understanding and a broader basis for interpretation (see Figure 3.2). Bereday (1969, in Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006) introduces a model for comparative inquiry whose systematic procedure helps researchers first to define the educational phenomenon and second to set a theoretical basis for analysing in two or more contexts (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). This model has five stages:

- Stage one: conceptualization, which identifies the research questions and ‘neutralizes’ them from particular contexts.
- Stage two: contextualization, which investigates the phenomena with full attention to the local context in terms of their historical, cultural, political, religious and linguistic factors.
- Stage three: isolation of the differences, in which, through analysis, the researcher learns about the relationships between variables.
- Stage four: explanation, because comparisons of explanations will lead to the development of hypotheses.
- Stage five: reconceptualization and application, which test the feasibility of applying the findings to other situations (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Ecological comparative framework (adopted from Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006, p.100)



3.4 Ethical Considerations

The essential elements in ethical approaches to educational research include responsibilities to participants, voluntary informed consent, no deception, right to withdraw, vulnerability of children and others, incentives, detriment, privacy, disclosure and ethical record-keeping (BERA, 2004).

Recognising a participant's role and identity may breach confidentiality; if so, either the teachers who agree to participate risk disapproval from their colleagues and administrators, or

participants, fearing recognition, give false data for safety or display, thus damaging the research validity.

Special educational research involves both adults and children with special needs. The researcher should conscientiously protect the children's identity and their rights. Vulnerable children with special needs, according to Vaughn and Bos (1994), are controlled by adults and bereft of social power; hence they have limited power to dissent. They also suspect that adults control these children's right to withdraw, in particular during intervention research.

Their second principle is not causing harm to child participants. However, in special educational research in non-clinical situations, it is difficult to avoid doing so. For example, by withdrawing them from the classroom or observing them, researchers draw attention to them, possibly leading to feelings of stigmatisation. Finally, researchers have to acknowledge the importance of appropriate methods and of reporting findings correctly, avoiding distortion, bias and harm to the participants.

To ensure that proper established ethical processes were always followed at all times, I gave a completed Ethics Protocol for this study to the School of Education Ethics Committee.

3.5 Research Design

3.5.1 Methodology

Case study is thought to improve our understanding of the social world by clarifying everyday practice in the policy-provision process through exploring the effect of the policy on such

individuals as MLD children, teachers, parents and schools. Creswell (1998, p.15) defines qualitative research as:

... an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting.

The first part of the present research is a country case study. Here, mainly documentary research reveals ways of developing inclusive practice from historical, political and religious standpoints. This part covers the macro level of the ecological model and explores a wider social context, looking for the effects of internationalisation and globalisation. The second part covers case studies of individual schools and children, using different methods to explore actual experiences and assessing the influence of the macro level on the meso/micro level (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Methodology design

An Ecological level	Case study	Issues under investigation	Approach
Macro level	Country case studies	Culture, religion, policy and globalisation	Documentary research (country-report)
Meso level	School/classroom	School factors	Case study research
Micro level 1	Science classroom	Science classroom factors	Case study research
Micro level 2	Children's case studies	Children's schooling experiences	Case study research

3.5.2 The case study approach

Robson (2002, p.89) defines case study as follows: '*Development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a [case], or of a small number of related [cases]*'. I chose this method because it can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory and can deal with a range of evidence: documents, artefacts, interviews and observations (Yin, 1994). Bassey (1999, in Rose and Grosvenor, 2001) argues that there are at least three different forms of educational case study, each with its own purpose, which contribute to the further knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon studied. First comes the 'theory-seeking and theory-testing' case study, beginning with a hypothesis about the case. Second is the evaluative, which estimates the worth or effectiveness of a system, event or intervention. The third, for Bassey, is the 'story-telling and picture-drawing' form, which explores what happens within the research context in order to draw a clear picture which helps in charting the practice. Rose and Grosvenor (2001) find this type particularly helpful in comparative studies, which compel the researcher to consider many variables in the differing situations under review.

This third form seemed most appropriate to my study, which compared two schools under two systems in two cultures and tried to take account of the many consequent variables in understanding both what happens and why.

Robson (2002) suggests that, in designing case study research, a framework consisting of the study purpose, research questions, methods and sampling strategy is helpful. The framework can range between a loose structure, which accommodates all the available information along the way, and something tighter, more selective and pre-structured. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses. The first may accumulate enormous quantities of data which are

cumbersome to analyse, but the second may miss important information by being pre-structured. However, if the study purpose is exploratory, a flexible framework is most suitable, while if the purpose is confirmatory, the framework is more or less pre-structured.

This study sought to keep openness balanced with selectiveness, staying flexible in order to avoid misinterpreting evidence. I made multiple case studies of five children from Kuwait and two children from England, exploring their lives at the micro, meso and macro levels and investigating classroom practice, school culture, family and community culture and governmental policy, among other things. Therefore, I included evidence from parents, teachers, peers and decision-makers in the sample, to augment the evidence about inclusion.

3.5.2.1 Sampling

Sampling is crucial in educational research, serving different purposes for different kinds of research. Here, sampling was hoped to yield richer information and not done for the purpose of generalisation. My choice of case study sample depended on theoretical and practical issues, discussed below.

Theoretical framework of the sampling process

I decided in theory that the case study sample should go through different stages (see Table 3.4). The study sample was for purposive reasons. Choosing a case study of countries and then certain types of school, subject and individual determined the stages. I began by choosing a country to compare to Kuwait, which in some respects is comparable with the wealthiest developed countries in the world in terms of income, as the following table shows.

Table 3.3 Comparison of UN parameters for Kuwait and England (cited from UNDP, 2006)

Country	GDP per capital 2006	HDI 2006	Rank out of 177 countries with high HDI
UK	30,821 (high)	0.940 (high)	18
Kuwait	19,384 (high)	0.871 (high)	33

Table 3.3 illustrates the use of United Nations (UN) parameters (GDP and HDI) to justify the research equivalence sample. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a decent standard of living, beyond GDP totals (UNDP, 2006). Though Kuwait is a developing country and the UK (England) is developed, Kuwait and England both have the same high GDP and HDI.

In addition, convenience played a role, since my study was based at an English university.

The next stage was to make the purpose of the research determine the type of school. It seemed appropriate to choose mainstream schools which included children with MLD; in Kuwait, primary mainstream schools are the only inclusive ones.

In order to focus this research better and probe deeper, with a clearer purpose, I decided to focus on science classrooms, for several reasons. One reason was my educational background, but I also took into account the variety of curriculum modifications and pedagogical practices between subject domains and found that focusing on one subject was likely to deepen understanding and offer greater detail about particular practices, instead of a general survey which might not. Another reason was the gaps in research in science education and other

gaps in special educational needs, as discussed above. The final stage was choosing the type of disability. This choice, of children with MLD, derived from their administrative category; they are the only group to be included in mainstream schools in Kuwait, and as a group they have not hitherto received enough academic attention (Porter and Lacey, 2005). Hence, I needed also to include their parents, teachers, peers, decision-makers and the professionals who work with them, so as to understand the policy-provision process.

Table 3.4 Theoretical framework for sampling

Case study sample	Criteria	Decision
Country	United Nations Parameters	England
School type	Mainstream schools which included MLD children	Primary mainstream schools
Subject domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher's background - Gaps in science education - Gaps in special educational needs 	Science classrooms
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration category - Ecological purpose (understanding the policy-provision process) 	MLD children, parents, teachers, decision makers and professionals

Conceptual framework of the sampling process

To choose students for case study, I used two different techniques to diversify the views of people involved in different ways in MLD student provision in Kuwait and England.

Kuwait

According to the Ministry of Education, four primary schools in the country, two for boys and two for girls, have units for students with MLD (Ministry of Education, 2007). I gathered all

the official educational statistics regarding the number of children with MLD and could therefore depend on accurate figures to create my sampling frame. I chose the case studies at random. The schools contain around 54 students with MLD altogether.

My sources of data were as follows:

- a. A boys' mainstream school and one for girls, in which students with MLD were integrated. I picked seven cases but, for the sake of the theoretical framework, excluded two when I could not interview the parent or child. The sample included the MLD students, their parents, their teachers, the head teacher and other service staff involved with provision in each school.
- b. The Secretariat General of Special Education (SGSE) in the Ministry of Education; this department is a documentary source of circulars, regulations and legislation of the government's policy. I also interviewed one of the main members of the department, but to preserve confidentiality the position is undisclosed.

England

I aimed at equal sampling in Kuwait and England and contacted 19 English schools with my Criminal Records Bureau report, but after six months, despite intensive support from my supervisor and colleagues (see Appendix 2), received only one positive reply. This produced nine participants: the headteacher, SENCO, two teaching assistants, two mainstream teachers, one speech/language therapist and two MLD children identified by the SENCO. But the lack of parental responses removed the possibility of an ecological framework for their views, to contrast with the equivalent in Kuwait. Parents allowed me to interview their children but were themselves unavailable. The following approaches were all unanswered:

- Asking parents to participate at a time and place of their choice.
- The school SENCO's asking parents personally to participate.
- Sending the (modified) interview questions to parents with a prepaid envelope.
- Sending another letter to parents offering a £10 voucher in return for their participation.

I had started with high expectations, not imagining how many obstacles lay within schools' daily practice and parents' situations. Accordingly, I modified my research to shift the focus towards the Kuwaiti context. I collected several UK documentary sources, e.g. circulars, regulations and legislation, which contain information about governmental policy and also governmental electronic publications, such as Ofsted reports. The following table presents the size of my sample.

Table 3.5 Sample size

School constituencies	Number and role of participants	
	English school (One school)	Kuwaiti schools (Two schools)
Managerial staff	1 headteacher 1 SENCO	1 Member of the Secretariat General of Special Education (SGSE) 2 headteachers 2 SENCOs 2 school psychologists
Teaching staff	2 teachers (class teacher who teaches science)	5 science teachers 1 maths teacher 1 Arabic teacher
Learning support staff	2 teaching assistants 1 speech and language therapist	None
MLD Children	2	5
Parents	None	6 (five mothers and one father)
Total Number	9	25

This approach in sampling suited the research purpose and fitted the ecological model.

3.5.3 Framework for the study

The following framework illustrates the relationship between the study aims, questions, instruments and data analysis (Table 3.6).


Table 3.6 Framework for the current study

Aim of study	Subjects	Research questions	Instruments	Data analysis
1. To develop a theoretical understanding of the growth of inclusion policy and practice in England and Kuwait. (macro level)	Decision makers School staff Parents	1. How did the inclusion policy and practice develop in England and Kuwait?	Country report	Documentary analysis
2. Identifying the school conditions which might make it easier to develop more inclusive classrooms. (meso level)	SENCO Professionals Teachers Parents MLD children	2. What barriers confront the development of inclusive practices in mainstream schools in Kuwait and England?	Interviews Observation Documentation	Qualitative analysis
3. To identify barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practice in primary schools in Kuwait in general and with specific reference to science teaching. (micro level)	Teachers Parents MLD children	3. What does examination of the current teaching and learning of children with moderate learning difficulties in science education tell us about the barriers to the development of inclusive primary classrooms in Kuwait?	Interviews Observation Documentation	Qualitative analysis

3.5.4 The duration of the data collection

The following timeline illustrates the duration of the data collection.

School/ Location	2007												2008																
	November				December				January				February				March			April / October		November				December			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4			1	2	3	4	1	2	3
School ‘AM’ Kuwait girls’ school	<div>→</div> <div>- Gaining access permission. - Initial visit.</div> <div><div>→</div><div>Data collection (3 weeks)</div></div> <div>1-Observation: - Classroom observation (duration 4 hr 30 m) - field notes 2- Conducting interviews: - 6 interviews with school staff - 2 interviews with students - 3 interviews with parents 3- Collecting Documents.</div>																												
School ‘ML’ Kuwait boys’ school									<div>→</div> <div>- Gaining access permission. - Initial visit.</div>				<div>→</div> <div><div><div></div></div><div>Data collection (3 weeks)</div></div> <div>1-Observation: - Classroom observation (duration 6 hr) - field notes 2- Conducting interviews: - 6 interviews with school staff - 3 interviews with students - 3 interviews with parents 3- Collecting Documents</div>																
Kuwait Ministry of Education																	<div>→</div> <div>- Interview with SGSE member. - Collecting policy document.</div>												
English school																				<div>→</div> <div>-Gaining access permission</div>		<div>→</div> <div>Initial visits</div> <div><div>→</div><div>Data collection (4 weeks)</div></div> <div>1-Observation: - Classroom observation (duration 56 hr 25m) - field notes 2- Conducting interviews: - 7 interviews with school staff - 2 interviews with students 3- Collecting Documents</div>							

 School holiday/High rate student absent

3.6 Triangulation

Yin defines triangulation (1994) as the use of multiple sources of evidence. The object of using triangulation is its help in countering the threats to the validity of the research, research bias and respondent bias (Robson, 2002). Both methods and sources were triangulated to support interpretations of the data and conclusions. The research methods comprised documentation, semi-structured interviews and observing classrooms (triangulation of method). I used these methods to gain information from different sources reflecting different people's perceptions, e.g. teachers', students', parents' and decision-makers' (triangulation of sources); see Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7 Triangulation of methods and sources

Methods	Sources
Documentary analysis at macro-level	Policy-historical documentation
Semi-structured interview	Science teachers, parents, children, professionals and decision makers
Observation	Science teachers, MLD children and their peers
Documentary analysis at meso-/micro-levels	Case study documents, curriculum materials

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews were among the main methods in my research. The research interview has been defined as *'a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation'* (Cannell and Kahn, 1968, in Cohen et al, 2000, p.269).

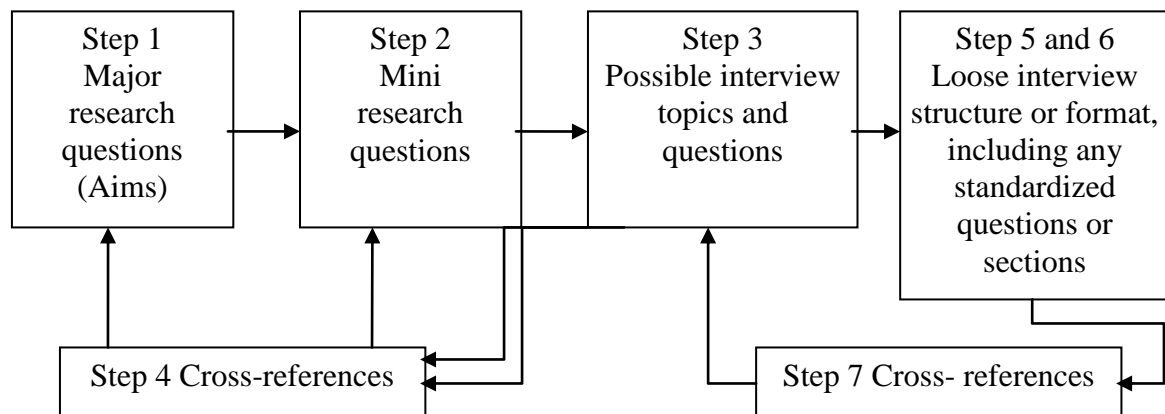
Carol (in Gubrium and Holstein, 2002) notes that the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to understand others' meaning-making, which provides subtly different lenses on the world through lived experience extending into the past and the future. I chose semi-structured interviews for the following reasons:

- Ontologically, I believe that social reality is constructed by people's perceptions and these are what my questions try to explore. Therefore, I sought to understand the experiences which people interpret individually and use accordingly in deciding how to act. Semi-structured interviews are freer than questionnaires to explore such areas (Radnor, 2002), since questionnaires ignore our unique ability to interpret experience.
- Epistemologically, interviews helped me to explore and explain the facts produced by social construction; for example, what do mainstream teachers perceive inclusive education to be?
- I view knowledge as situational. Therefore, I planned to ask teachers questions about their own experience of teaching MLD students, not abstract questions unrelated to practice.
- I can only know social reality through my subjective understanding. I agree with Mason (2002) that we cannot separate the interview from the social interaction between interviewee and researcher. From my experience in mainstream schools and from my interaction with different participants, I have tried to incorporate this interaction in the research design, i.e. its questions, aims and methods. Therefore, semi-structured interviews might give me in-depth understanding of the social changes which promote inclusion, but pre-constructed questions in a structured interview or survey would fail.

- Rapley (2004) states that the usefulness of face-to-face interviews is the insight into subjectivity gained through voice, body language and lived experience.

However, interviews may be criticised for being time-consuming: arranging each interview; travelling; and the dependence of the quality of data upon the quality of the interaction and the quality of the interviewer may all represent time lost. Therefore, to ensure validity and reliability, the researcher must be aware of these limitations. Validity was supported by a carefully-designed structure (content validity); thus, in designing the interviews, I chose to follow Mason's procedure (2002) (see Figure 3.3). I slightly modified this in developing my interview questions, starting with what I wanted to achieve, then thinking how I could reach my aims and with what questions. I wanted to gain some insight into classroom practice and locate this practice within an ecological framework which would reveal the interaction between the environment and the students, including the teacher's perception of the term 'inclusion'. 'Classroom practice' in this sense covers issues such as teaching style, classroom management, planning and curriculum differentiation, and whether or not the school conditions create barriers to inclusive practice (Appendix 3).

Figure 3.3 Interview planning procedure (adapted from Mason, 2002)



Reliability may increase by subsequently restating a question in slightly different form; repeating the interview later can also provide an estimate of the consistency of response (Best and Khan, 1998).

The literature recommends developing certain skills before conducting semi-structured interviews. Mason (2002) notes that these skills are important for handling the social, intellectual and practical aspects of interviews:

- Listening to what people say, whether or not the interviews are being tape-recorded.
- Remembering what people say and what they were asked, in a multi-activity task; this makes it possible to follow up important issues immediately (Legard et al, 2006).
- Balancing speech and listening.
- Encouraging the interviewee to participate by creating a relationship, expressing interest and attention; establishing that there are no right or wrong answers; being sensitive to tone of voice and body language and allowing the interviewee time to reply; observing verbal and non-verbal cues about the social situation are all conducive (Mason, 2002, p.75).
- Using prompts, props and checks, as Denscombe (2003) advises for successful interviewing.

To practise these skills, I asked my peers to tell me how well I handled some pilot interviews. Their feedback was extremely useful, as was tape-recording interviews and, by taking notes, recalling non-verbal cues which a tape-recording could not capture.

The main disadvantages of interviews are lack of standardisation and the difficulty of ruling out bias. Yet semi-structured interviews are still flexible and adaptable sources of interesting responses and clues to underlying motives; in addition they can sometimes modify a line of enquiry (Robson, 2002). Moreover, though children's voices are rarely heard in inclusive literature, Lewis (2000) values the child's perspective in developing inclusive practice. Their views about practice indicate whether educational reform has succeeded. Discovering the children's perspective in this study contributed usefully to the ecological model, which should include every influence on inclusive practice. Children's perspectives can be inferred from methods both direct and indirect: interviews, questionnaires, draw-and-write techniques, photographs, models and observations (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000).

However, understanding the child's perspective is not simple, surrounded as it is by practical and ethical considerations, as discussed above. The challenge is to see how best to do this while serving the research aims and considering ethical issues. In this research, I explored children's perspectives further by interviewing the children. Lewis (1995, p.42) gives guidelines for interviewing people with learning difficulties:

- Use questions which give interviewees scope to develop answers in their own way
- Avoid questions which require yes/no answers
- Avoid questions which require very precise answers
- Be flexible about the wording of questions
- Ask questions in several ways
- Provide a range of responses.

Lewis (1995) observes that what makes interviewing children with MLD complex is the difficulty of obtaining fair and accurate responses, due to intellectual and language difficulties. To meet this difficulty and to maintain the validity of the data, I gave the children concerned the option of answering verbally or through drawings.

3.6.2 Observation

Morris (1973, in Radnor, 2002, p48) defines observation as the '*act of noting a phenomenon, often with instruments and recording it for scientific and other purposes*'. Robson (2002) analyses two dimensions of observation. First, formal versus informal observation depends on the degree of pre-structure in the observation exercise. Cohen et al (2007) describe this dimension in terms of the degree of pre-determination, lying on a continuum from highly structured observation where observers know in advance what they are looking for, through semi-structured observation where they have an agenda of general issues, to unstructured observation where they begin without any clear decision about what they are looking for.

The second dimension depends on what role observers adopt, whether part of the group (participant observation), or detached and purely observing, avoiding notice (direct observation).

In this research, the observation was of two kinds: unstructured observation collected in visits outside the classroom and recorded as field notes (including observation during assembly, open days and break times); and semi-structured observations following a pre-defined format and directed within the classrooms for science and other subjects. This provided qualitative descriptions of behaviour in practice (Radnor, 2002). The semi-structured observations clearly

focused on what I wanted to know and gave me the freedom to note my impressions about it. In addition, I preferred to use direct observation because I could then attend to describing the classroom practice and learning environment accurately without interfering with or upsetting students.

I designed a three-part observation sheet (Appendix 3), related to: (1) the classroom environment; (2) MLD students' participation; and (3) teachers' practice, including curriculum modification and pedagogy. Each of these parts revealed patterns, which meant that I used qualitative content analysis to determine the categories containing these issues. The Following Table (3.8) illustrates the data collection duration of the classroom observation.

Table 3.8 Data collection duration of the classroom observation

School	Classroom observation number only	Duration
Kuwait school (ML)	6 lessons (45 minutes each)	4 hr 30m
Kuwait school (AM)	8 lessons (45 minutes each)	6 hr Total in Kuwait school: 10 hr 30m
English school	12 Morning sessions (2 hr 50 m each) 11 Afternoon session (2 hr 35 m each)	34 hr 28 hr 25 m Total in English school: 56 hr 25m

3.6.3 Documentation

Yin (1994) finds documentation an important data collection method, used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. She warns that documentation may be partial or biased in its selection and reporting but also mentions its strengths: its stability, unobtrusiveness,

exactness and broad coverage. Therefore, documentation as a data collection source often plays a valid role in case studies. My research included documents related to national policy and historical documents (country report).

Another source of documentation is administrative, comprising documents on the students and their schools, such as medical and psychological reports, statements of need, individual education plans (IEPs), annual reviews and documents related to the school case study. In this case such documents clarified case histories, learning progress and social participation. In short, they included child- and school-related material within the ecological macro-level framework.

3.7 Data Analysis

The principles underlying high-quality analysis are that it should (a) rely on all the relevant evidence; (b) include all major rival interpretations; (c) address the most significant aspects of the case study; and (d) demonstrate the researcher's prior expertise before the case study (Yin 1994).

3.7.1 Interview analysis

Turning interview interactions into data depends on epistemological issues. Mason (2002) points out that the crucial decision before adopting an analytic approach is whether to read the data literally, interpretively or reflexively. I interviewed teachers, headteachers, professionals, children and parents. Therefore I received data from different standpoints. I was interested first in the linguistic content, for example, in the words and language used by teachers in defining the term 'inclusion' and their descriptions of teaching children with MLD as reflecting their attitude to this task. Secondly, I read through and beyond the data

interpretively to infer what I could and tried to construct what I thought these data meant or represented. For example, I was concerned with teachers' versions of their understanding of inclusion as a process, their classroom practice and the way in which they located themselves within the school culture. Finally, reading in a reflexive manner located me as part of my data, subjectively constructing social reality. My experience in mainstream schools and my interaction with different participants helped to form my interpretations, which led to cross-cultural analysis as an insider in Kuwait and an outsider in England, seeking explanations for the impact of the social context on the interviewees.

For data analysis I used categorising indexing, applying 'Radnor's analysis technique'; it let me present my interpretation with careful analysis (Radnor, 2002). This technique comprises six steps, beginning with 'topic ordering'. Some topics are clearly stated through the interview schedule, embedded implicitly in the responses which emerge from reading the data several times. The next step is 'constructing categories' under each topic, which helps to access the data in a manageable way. Then 'reading for content' allows the content to be coded to topic categories, locating each statement in a specific category. 'Completing the coding sheets' begins by inserting the codes in the correct places. 'Generating coded transcripts' is then possible by 'cutting' a given statement from the transcript and 'pasting' it into the appropriate category of the coded sheet. This finally leads to 'analysis to interpretation'. A short written statement should accompany the data organised within individual categories to summarise the findings in each category after their interpretation.

However, this approach has its limitations. It may not be possible to compare or connect more than two texts because semi-structured interviews do not have a standardised layout

(Mason, 2002). In my study, for example, I compared not only different texts but also different contexts; for example, I compared teachers from Kuwait with teachers from England. Therefore, in order to overcome this limitation, I applied another approach, called 'non-cross-sectional, contextual or case study forms of data organization'. This approach is different from categorising indexing, because it views and sorts the data differently, whereas categorising indexing sees all data in the same way. This approach showed me the particular data in its context, not common features seen holistically (Mason, 2002). I think that using these approaches together helped me to build distinctive explanations, allowing me to explore the relationships in an ecological system which shed light on the impact of the culture on teachers' practice. I analysed the interviews by using the tool of NVIVO software to screen the transcripts in order to develop the themes.

3.7.2 Documentation analysis

Country report documents and schools'/children's case study documents were the types of document to be analysed. I followed the same categorising system to feed the themes which emerged from analysing the interviews, in order to outline the case history clearly, focusing on learning and social participation.

3.7.3 Observation analysis

Observations were either field notes or semi-structured. I used the categorisation system applied in the interviews to determine the main categories. The semi-structured observations embodied the following issues: (1) the class environment, (2) MLD students' participation, (3) teachers' practice. These issues were related to the research question on the science classroom. I started by putting in order the main issues of concern regarding classroom

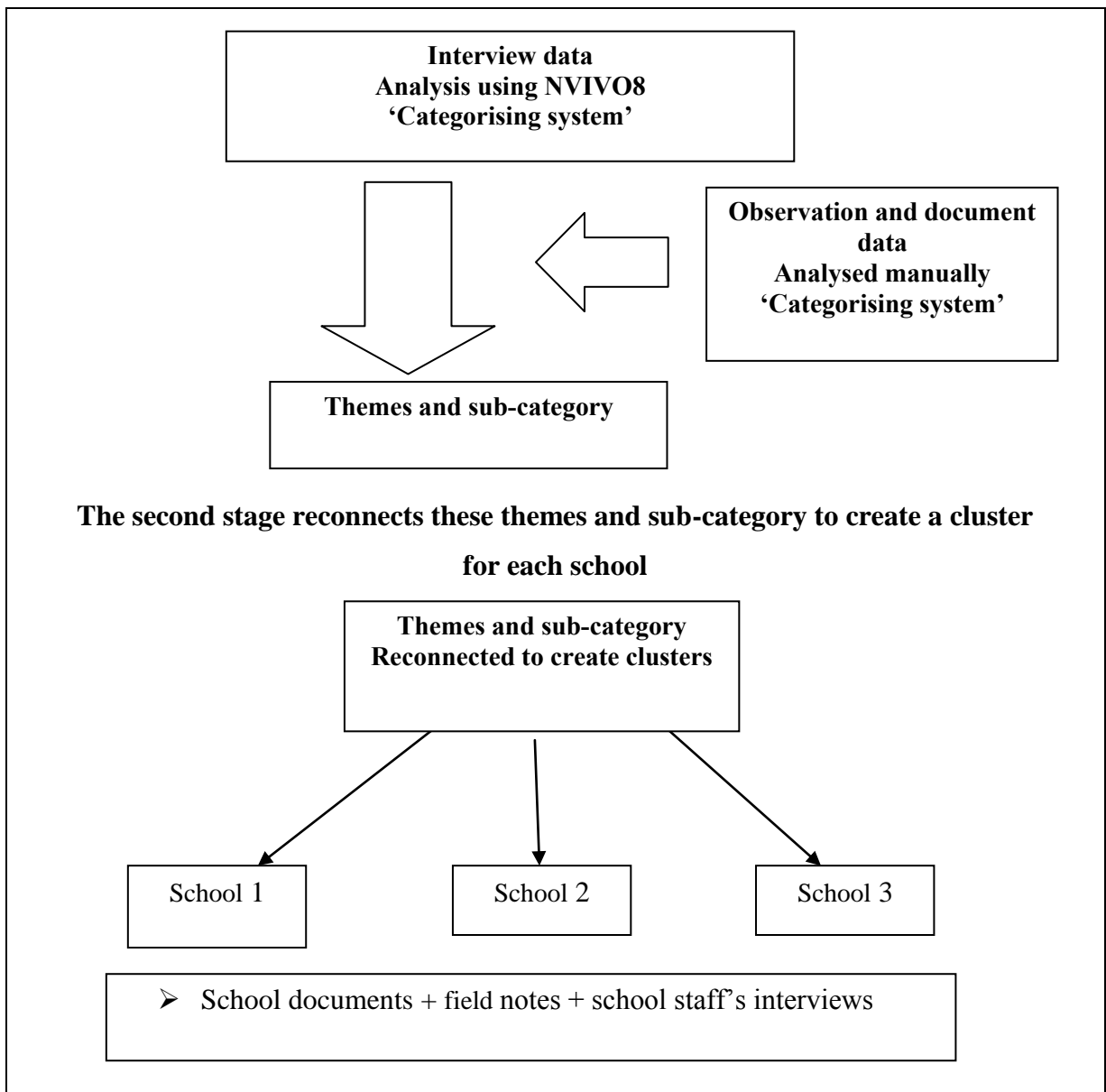
practice, then decided the patterns in each category and noted my general impressions of each category so as to start filling in the patterns. I used a different observation sheet for each case.

3.7.4 Developing themes

The triangulation of research methods led to the collection of a vast amount of data, which had to be interconnected and organised in order to develop themes. This approach is recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995) to help to *'build toward a broader description or an overall theory'* (1995, p.234).

I applied different stages to analyse the qualitative data coming from the semi-structured interviews, semi-structured observations, field notes and documents (Figure 3.4). All data were first transcribed and imported from a word-processing program into NVIVO8, a text-sorting program designed to aid qualitative data analysis. Following this, the data were coded and analysed according to the 'analysis technique' introduced by Radnor (2002) and presented in detail above. After identifying these themes, the observations (field notes and semi-structured observations) and documents were analysed by manually applying the same categorisation system with these themes to obtain additional support from the data. As a precautionary measure and for the purposes of maintaining the validity of the data, I followed Cresswell (1994), in constantly referring to the data concurrently collected using different methods.

Figure 3.4 Data analysis stages



During the third stage of data analysis, while producing descriptive data, I was able to sort through the text to identify similar phrases and relationships (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I identified patterns, distinct differences between sub-groups of the data collected and, where appropriate, related the data to the main themes. I classified these themes as either:

- School level (meso-level) or
- Classroom level (micro-level).

The final stage of data analysis was focusing on children as case studies. The findings were strengthened by triangulation. Data from the interviews, observations and document analysis created a detailed description of each case and added more validity to this research.

The data were analysed using the multiple-case analysis approach suggested by Yin (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994). This approach applies two stages of analysis:

- Within-case analysis, and
- Cross-case analysis.

At first, the data were separated and analysed case by case to get a comprehensive idea of the contextual factors of each case and those connected with the theoretical framework (ecological mode). Then I applied a cross-case analysis, comparing and contrasting the themes emerging from each case in relation to the research questions presented. As Herriott and Firestone state (1983, in Yin, 1994, p.45) *'The evidence from multiple cases is often more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust'*.

3.8 Limitations of the Case Study Approach

3.8.1 Generalisability

The familiar question facing case study researchers is *'How can you generalize from one case?'* (Bassey, 1999). Yin (2003) replies that case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions, if not to populations or universes, since there are two types of generalisation:

'statistical generalization ...aiming to create theory', which is unsuitable for case studies and *'analytic generalization'*, aiming to expand and generalise theories; this can be appropriate to case studies. Moreover, case studies separate the significant few from the many insignificant instances of behaviour by replacing quantity with quality and intensity (Cohen et al, 2003). Golby (1994) points out that case studies are concerned with intelligibility; hence, they allow the study of particularity, but not of uniqueness.

3.8.2 Subjectivity

Many writers are concerned that the case study solution lacks rigour and follows no procedures (Yin, 2003; Denscombe, 2003; Bassey, 1999). Indeed, Burns (2000) contends that subjective bias may be more likely if the researcher influences the direction of the findings by equivocal evidence or personal views. However, he concedes that subjective bias has unknown effects even quantitative designs, for instance, in questionnaire design. However, Stake (in Freebody, 2003) believes that triangulation offers ways of offsetting apparent subjectivity without losing the richness, uniqueness and contextuality of case study data.

3.8.3 Time and information overload

The other concern about case studies is that they take too long and end with a mass of unreadable data. Yin (2003) argues that this concern results from mistakenly confusing case studies with ethnography, which requires long periods of time and emphasises detail. Burns (2000, p.475) suggests solving this problem by:

- the initial proposition
- identifying the essential – choosing a manageable focus/theme/topic
- specifying succinctly the setting and/or interviewees
- analyzing data promptly, not leaving it to the end.

3.9 Quality of Case Studies

To be valid, case studies and qualitative research, like all empirical social studies, must meet the methodological criteria of reliability and validity, (see Mason, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that trustworthiness in qualitative research is sustained by discussing these and kindred issues. Seale (1999) argues that it is crucial for trust to examine reliability and validity: *‘Trustworthiness [in] ... a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability’* (1999, p.266).

3.9.1 Reliability

Robson (2002, p.551) defines reliability as *‘The extent to which a measuring device, or a whole research project, would produce the same results if used on different occasions with the same object of study.’* Yin (2003) adds that reliability aims to minimise the errors and biases in a study. Therefore, the research procedures in a case study must be well documented by developing both a case study protocol, which contains the procedure and rules to be followed in the study (Yin, 2003; Burns, 2000; Golby, 1994) and a formal, presentable database of ‘audit trails’ so that other researchers or the reader can draw independent conclusions by reviewing the evidence directly. Burns (2000, p.466) lists the components of the former:

the purpose of the study, the issues, the setting, the propositions being investigated, the letter of introduction, review of theoretical basis, operational procedures for getting data, sources of information, questions and lines of questioning, guidelines for reports, relevant readings and bibliography.

Reliability is increased by processes such as ‘member checks’ (i.e. the process of asking research participants to confirm that their experience accurately described) (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.147).

3.9.2 Validity

According to Bassey (1999, p.75), validity is ‘*the extent to which a research fact or finding is what it is claimed to be*’. Validity can be analysed in several different ways, summarised below.

3.9.2.1 Construct validity

Yin (2003, p.34) defines this as ‘*establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied*’, and listing three ways to improve it. Researchers can: use multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate a concurrence of data from all sources; establish a chain of evidence which links parts together; and offer a draft of the case study report for peers and participants to review (Yin, 2003; Burns, 2000).

3.9.2.2 Internal validity

This is concerned with cause-and-effect relationships (Bassey, 1999). Burns (2000) states that it can be improved by using such strategies as triangulation, re-checking with participants, peer judgment and long-term observation.

3.9.2.3 External validity

This refers to the generalisability of the study's findings to other cases. Golby (1994) doubts the fairness of judging a case study by alien positivistic criteria; hence, a case study's results can be generalised qualitatively to an idea, even if they cannot in principle be quantitatively vindicated by quasi-legal pronouncements. Yin (2003) suggests improving external validity by the tactic of replication logic. This tactic tests theory by replicating the findings in multiple case studies until the result provides acceptably strong support for the theory. This is why this study uses multiple case studies, whose findings, I am confident, endorse the theory as would further cases in future studies.

The following issues were considered with the aim of maintaining the authenticity of the research design, the data collection, the analysis and the interpretation process, as suggested by Cohen and Manion (1994); Robson (1993); Yin (2003); Maykut and Morehouse (1994); and Creswell (1994, 2005).

Phase one: research design

Multiple case studies

The validity of qualitative research is enhanced by studying more than one social context and thus makes meaning through holistic analysis of social phenomena (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al, 2003). I attempted to grasp an authentic understanding and world-view of features of educational systems which bore on the inclusion process of MLD children, by adopting a case study approach and working towards external validity within an ecological framework of focusing on different contexts (international/national), different settings (school/class/family) and different sources (policy-makers/school staff/teachers/parents/children). This approach

was strengthened by a comparison, which deepened understanding by reflecting Kuwaiti findings in an English mirror.

Phase two: designing data collection methods

Triangulation

To strengthen internal validity I used triangulation of both method and sources, to support interpretations of the data and my conclusions (see Table 3.7).

Content validity

I made the method of data collection clear and well-defined. For example, I used Mason's procedure (see Figure 3.3). Moreover, since the interview questions were developed in English they required translation into Arabic, the mother-tongue in Kuwait. I checked the content validity of the Arabic version; I asked a colleague from Kuwait University to revise the interview questions to ensure their accuracy and clarity. Moreover, children's interviews were conducted verbally and with drawings, and, aided by Lewis's guidelines, they could capture authentic voices. For validity and reliability, all interviews were face-to-face in neutral locations and transcribed later. All participants had a chance to view their interview transcripts to confirm their accuracy.

Applying non-participant observation

I was able unobtrusively to collect in-depth and authentic data about participants in their natural settings.

Documentation sources

I used different document sources, including child/school-related materials and documentation related to policy and culture, with which to cross-check the findings.

Phase three: analysis/interpretation

Analysis by using cross-checking evidence

I compared data from various sources gathered in different ways to widen my view of what was going on, in terms of the influences on inclusive education in the sample schools. Matching the data collected by these methods lessened the likelihood of researcher bias.

Rich description

Triangulation enriched the detail of the findings; for example, data management involving case study files to identify commonalities and variation between cases (see Chapter Seven).

Member checking

Participating in academic activities introduced me to other researchers and the literature to validate my findings and interpretations. I presented two papers (Aldaihani, 2008a; Aldaihani, 2008b) in England and three research posters, including one in Abu Dhabi (Aldaihani, 2008c). These activities enabled me to view my findings from English and Arabic perspectives.

3.10 Fieldwork Reflections

In spite of my efforts in the research design to focus on English and Kuwaiti contexts equally, the obstacles in schools, the English ones in particular, shifted the focus towards Kuwait. These obstacles appeared from the outset. More than six months were spent trying to gain

access to schools, and despite extensive support from the School of Education at Birmingham University, only one school agreed. Moreover, some of the teachers, as well as the parents, were hard to contact. As noted above, parents allowed me to interview their children but not them, which affected the depth of the English child case study. At the same time, the only documents open to me on these children were their IEPs. For these reasons, an equivalent sample was in practice problematic. This lack of response from parents and some teachers may, I think, stem from the pressures and workload within school, the disadvantaged background of these children and concerns about data protection.

In Kuwait the challenges were mainly associated with language and translation issues. Comparative researchers acknowledge the problems of language when they want equivalent concepts across different cultures. Educational concepts do not have international agreement; for example, to translate 'inclusion' from English to Arabic changes the meaning; in Kuwait, it means a limited kind of educational inclusion. Theisen and Adams (1990) suggest that a comparative researcher should identify an acceptable level of conceptual equivalence across cultures regarding the ideas, institutions or processes being studied. The problem of language arose again when translating the names of different methods. To ensure accuracy and reliability, Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006) suggest using 'back translation' in constructing of interview schedules and questionnaires.

However, no research is ensued exactly as planned (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). I needed to modify the research design in order to answer my questions. In this research, the aim was to understand school situations, not generalise findings or recommend transferring policy and practice transference.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research methodology and linked it to the theoretical framework of the research which correlated the aims to the questions, identifying what data would be collected, how and from whom.

This chapter, by justifying my paradigm and methodological approach, enabled me to contextualise the research through an ecological framework, for deeper understanding. The importance of applying an ecological model in examining special education led to the building of this research design. To this end, the literature review and methodology were linked to improve the coherence of the study. In Chapters Four to Seven, its findings are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATIONAL CONTEXTS: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the place of special/inclusive education policy within the wider society in England and Kuwait. Fulcher (1989) emphasises that studying policy requires a wide model of social life, which produces policy. To meet this requirement, I adopt Bereday's model (1969, in Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006) which contextualises the research concepts seen against a historico-cultural background.

The chapter starts with the relevant documentary research from national reports which present policy developments in a wider context, covering the key aspects of SEN/inclusive policy development in England and Kuwait. It goes on to summarise the comparative variables obtained from the findings on each country, with a view to identifying similarities and differences between the two, according to Bereday's model. This facilitates the fieldwork in the next stage and provides a background for current practice.

It is worth admitting the historical continuity of perceptions of disability, through cultural concepts, Kuwaiti in particular, are hard to reconstruct from hindsight without evidence. Thus, these accounts are not definitive, but I try to understand the complexity of both contexts.

4.2 The English Report

4.2.1 Introduction

Contextualising the English policy system, as an overseas observer trying to understand inclusive education in England, tries to make the strange familiar. As the second stages of Bereday's model emphasise contextualisation, I decided first to examine some of the social, cultural and political factors which underlie the present needs of special education and inclusive education in England.

Special education in England has a long history that goes back at least as far as the nineteenth century, but I concentrate here on the first seeds of inclusive/SEN education in England, from the late 20th century to the present.

4.2.2 General background

4.2.2.1 Social and economic background

The UK, after waves of immigration, is a multicultural country, demonstrating multiethnic, multilingual and multifaith diversity. In the last years of the 19th century, in particular, immigrants first provided cheap industrial labour after the Industrial Revolution. After the post-war boom, English manufacturing industry declined in the 1960s, and service industries became the main source of national income. Lindsay (2003) shows how this change led to increased unemployment, increased working flexibility, declining male participation in the workforce and high levels of industrial unrest. These repercussions drove the development of the welfare state in England to protect its citizens from poverty and illness and enhance their well-being (Howarth, 1999).

4.2.2.2 Politics and governance

England is a post-imperial and post-industrial Western European liberal democracy. It controls public services on the national and strong local level. Central government introduces the national agenda within a general framework and local government has to interpret this framework to accommodate local needs. This explains the variation in the SEN provision between LEAs. However, central government can deal directly with schools through regulations, inspections, restrictions and through its financial support for local government (Kavanagh, 2006).

Therefore, to describe the English educational system as either decentralised or centralised is too simplistic; it bears features of both. Bullock and Thomas (1997), in analysing the English and Welsh systems after 1988, find four functions in education: curriculum and assessment; human and physical resources; finance; and access. They designate the curriculum and assessment as more centralised than decentralised, through the National Curriculum and the Standardised Assessment system; but the other functions have devolved to the school level and parental choice. Thus, a number of academic researchers agree that New Labour preserves the main features of previous Conservative governments such as grammar schools, the National Curriculum and league tables (Whitty, 2002; Ainscow et al, 2006).

4.2.3 Approaching SEN/inclusive education

4.2.3.1 Historical account of policy development – from integration to inclusion

Good omens appeared in the 1970s, when the Scandinavian principles of ‘normalisation’ and community care first influenced policy and legislation in the UK. First, the 1971 White Paper *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* advocated a move towards community

provision and reducing hospital beds from 90% to 40% of the residential provision for the mentally handicapped. However, the principle of community provision was not fully accepted, because the government failed to make radical changes. For example, health, education and social services were not unified, nor were funds allocated to help community provision become adopted (Montgomery, 1990).

Despite this disappointment, in the same year the Education (Handicapped Children) Act transferred responsibility for them from health authorities to education authorities (Montgomery, 1990). It was the first move to include mentally handicapped children in education and extended a new type of provision to children with learning disabilities. Children who were termed 'educationally subnormal (severe)' became entitled to special education, with new schools opening for them. Most of the children in hospital were moved, albeit slowly, to family homes, foster homes or small children's homes, leaving only a few, for medical reasons (Porter and Lacey, 2005).

More progress followed the publication of the Warnock Report (1978), which influenced the next decade and still the SEN provision today. Armstrong et al (2010) note that this report began the shift of focus from children to schools, where learning difficulties might be created. This report suggested avoiding stigmatising labels and made integrated education a key issue. Terms such as 'moderately' or 'severely educationally sub-normal' were replaced by 'with moderate' or 'with severe learning difficulties'. In 1981 the Education Act charged local authorities with assessing needs and ensuring that students with special needs received special educational provision. This Act also compelled Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to educate pupils who needed special education in ordinary schools, on condition that parents'

views were considered and the schools could provide the service (Montgomery, 1990). This Act introduced the principle of integration to UK policy, which led to a positive climate change (Clarke et al, 1985).

However, this Act was not beyond criticism. First, Warnock (2005) admits that it failed to include dyslexia and social deprivation as creating special educational needs. The justification behind this limitation was to avoid labelling those with dyslexia and to make social services responsible for socially disadvantaged children. Williams (1993) links children with MLD and social deprivation; these children's parents are mainly in low-paid jobs and poorly educated, forming a weaker parental loop than other types of disability reveal. Moreover, this Act was described as weak in failing to oblige the LEA to move towards integration/inclusion (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004).

Before continuing to explore the history, another important influence on policy should be noted: the development of the disability rights lobby. Such movements as the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 and the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (UKDPC) in 1981 constituted a force which led to the development and adoption of the social model of disability (Ellis et al, 2008). This significant development brought people with learning disabilities into the public gaze by its debates on 'quality of life' and the growth of the movement for citizen advocacy and self-advocacy, which has influenced the current policy on learning disabilities through the White Paper *Valuing People* (DoH, 2001 in Porter and Lacey, 2005). The most important change since the White Paper of 1971 was that people with learning difficulties joined its advisory group. It is considered the basis for changes in policy for people with learning disabilities which enable

them to live in the community, not imprisoned in institutions. The number of people with learning disabilities living in hospitals fell from 59,000 in 1971 to 1,500 in 2001 (Porter and Lacey, 2005). These developments were influential in changing the thinking about policy – from medical and charitable ways of thinking to a way clearly informed by social and human rights and by the emergent social model of disability.

In legislation, The Education Reform Act of 1988 introduced the National Curriculum and national testing and assessment procedures into the educational system. These accompanied marketplace policies, encouraging competition and parental choice by publishing education standards and league tables (Dyson, 2001; Lloyd, 2000, 2008). Rouse and Florian (1998) juxtapose the 1981 Act, promoting equity, social progress and benign professionalism and the 1988 Act, promoting academic excellence, parental choice and competition. The latter challenged mainstream schools to raise educational standards in league tables while developing inclusive practice for students with special educational needs who could not participate in such pursuits.

The 1990s saw more development, stressing mainstream school capability. The Education Act of 1993 led to the introduction of a Code of Practice (DoE, 1994), which outlined the identification and assessment of special education needs in mainstream schools. The Code involved assigning needs on various levels of school action and procedure, such as statutory assessment and issued statements. Moreover, it called upon mainstream schools to name their special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO), working to ensure that mainstream schools followed all the procedures of the Code to meet the special educational needs of its students through a five-stage model and the writing of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (Ellis et al,

2008). The Education Act of 1993 introduced the legal obligation to ensure that LEAs and schools followed the Code of Practice.

An important aspect of this Code was its appeal system whereby parents could complain and dispute with LEAs if they felt unable to secure the best type of school for their child. Moreover, the Code of Practice highlighted collaborative partnerships between parents and school, which depend on parental knowledge and rights.

In addition, international influence, notably the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), catalysed the widespread developments in inclusive education in the ensuing period. Ellis et al (2008) suggest that the UN linked inclusion to a human rights perspective which has greatly influenced the debate in England subsequently. In 1997, the Department for Education and Employment released the first White Paper *Excellence in Schools*, which emphasises the government priorities for raising standards. This White Paper commissioned a National Advisory Group on SEN to develop a Green Paper outlining how commitments on SEN could be met. This Green Paper, *Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs*, established the government's commitment (DfEE, 1997) to raise standards for all children including children with SEN. In turn, the Green Paper revised various areas of the Code of Practice, in particular on the early identification, intervention and prevention of learning difficulties and a clear structure for teachers' professional development.

The shortcoming of this Green Paper, in spite of the verbal changes from individual needs towards school effectiveness and improvement, were not tackling such issues as the

institutional or social discrimination facing ethnic minorities and the function of education in promoting the principle of inclusiveness (Armstrong, 2005).

4.2.3.2 The new era (2000 onwards)

The new era of SEN/inclusive education policy is revealed through the most recent documents and guides. In 2001, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) was introduced to provide a framework for inclusion and this Act offered extended protection against discrimination, obliging schools to treat children with SEN equally with other children and to make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs. It also strengthened the rights of parents of children with special educational needs to choose their preferred type of schooling. Following this the government issued guidance in *Schools: Achieving Success* to LEAs on how best to fund inclusive provision in their area (DfES, 2001a) and introduced the new Code of Practice to schools to clarify the new legislation (DfES, 2001b). This revised Code placed a stronger emphasis on including children in mainstream schools with key ideas of working in partnership with parents, pupil participation and partnership with other agencies (Ellis et al, 2008).

In 2004, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004b) was introduced, to protect and promote learning opportunities for children with SEN through early intervention; embedding inclusive practice in the early years setting in every school; and improving teachers' skills and practice to meet the needs of children with SEN, raise expectations and achievement and promote parental partnership (Ellis et al, 2008). This strategy was meant to transcend the limited effectiveness of previous legislation by the collaboration between different government departments, in particular, local government, health, social services and

education, in serving the interests of children; its main purpose was to break down the organisational barriers between professions. However, Warnock (2005) sees a serious weakness in this legislation in that this Act lays no statutory duty on schools to cooperate with agencies for children's well-being.

Armstrong et al (2010) argue from the statistics that these policy changes in England are limited in impact. For example, the children who were placed in mainstream schools declined from 71% in 1997 to 69% in 2007. Lloyd (2008) critiques the simplistic view of inclusion here, which failed to recognise its complexity: *'... no attempt is made to address the exclusiveness of the curriculum, assessment procedures, and practices of mainstream provision and that the strategy is founded on notions of normalization, compensation and deficit approaches to SEN'* (2008, p.221).

Therefore, Ellis et al (2008) describe the changes and developments in policy in England as an 'additive model' which repeatedly adds new strategies and new philosophies to existing practice, in lieu of transformation. The existence of special schools in the current system is evidence of this, despite the move during the 1970s and 1990s to close them.

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) note that these changes failed to promote full inclusion which was seen by some as a positive step towards an effective inclusive educational system which promoted 'inclusion by choice'. In the new initiative, as discussed below, the government moved to praising special schools.

This study found that most children with SEN attend mainstream schools. The question to me as an outside observer is: how are these children's needs being accommodated there? This question will be explored in the second (empirical) stage of this research.

The focus of the next section is more directly related to the present research; it covers the new trend in the English system which relates to children with MLD, the 'flexible continuum of provision', in order to trace changes in educational policy.

4.2.3.3 Flexible continuum of provision

A study of the current policy for inclusive education in England reveals the government attempt to escape the dilemma over defining inclusion which produced internal contradictions in its policy. An understanding of inclusion beyond merely mainstream placement evolved until it included all types of provision for meeting children's needs. As Tutt (2007, p.2) comments, *'the concept of inclusion has moved on from meaning all pupils being included in mainstream schools to the much more productive idea of all schools working together as part of an inclusive education service'*.

This new concept led to several changes in government policy. Tutt (2007) sees the obvious change in this era as the new terminology. For example, terms such as 'SEN' in 1970 and 'SEN and Disability' which have been used in Ofsted reports (2003, 2004) are used to describe all children in England who are identified as having special educational needs due to the difficulties they experience in school, not only on the basis of disability (Dyson, 2005).

Recently, these terms have been replaced by ‘learning difficulties and disabilities’ (LDD) in the recently published report *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* The object of using ‘LDD’ (Ofsted, 2006, p.21) is:

... to cross the professional boundaries between education, health and social services and to incorporate a common language for 0-19 year olds. In the context of this report, it replaces the term special educational needs.

Moreover, in 2004, the SEN strategy in *Removing Barriers to Achievement* was to clarify this confusion, by saying that inclusion does not mean including all pupils in mainstream school, but rather including all types of specialist provision and all schools within an inclusive education service. This idea was supported by Warnock (2005), who wants redefining inclusive education to mean something which gives special schools a role in accommodating special educational needs: ‘*Let it be redefined so that it allows children to pursue the common goals of education in the environment within which they can best be taught and learn*’ (2005, p.54).

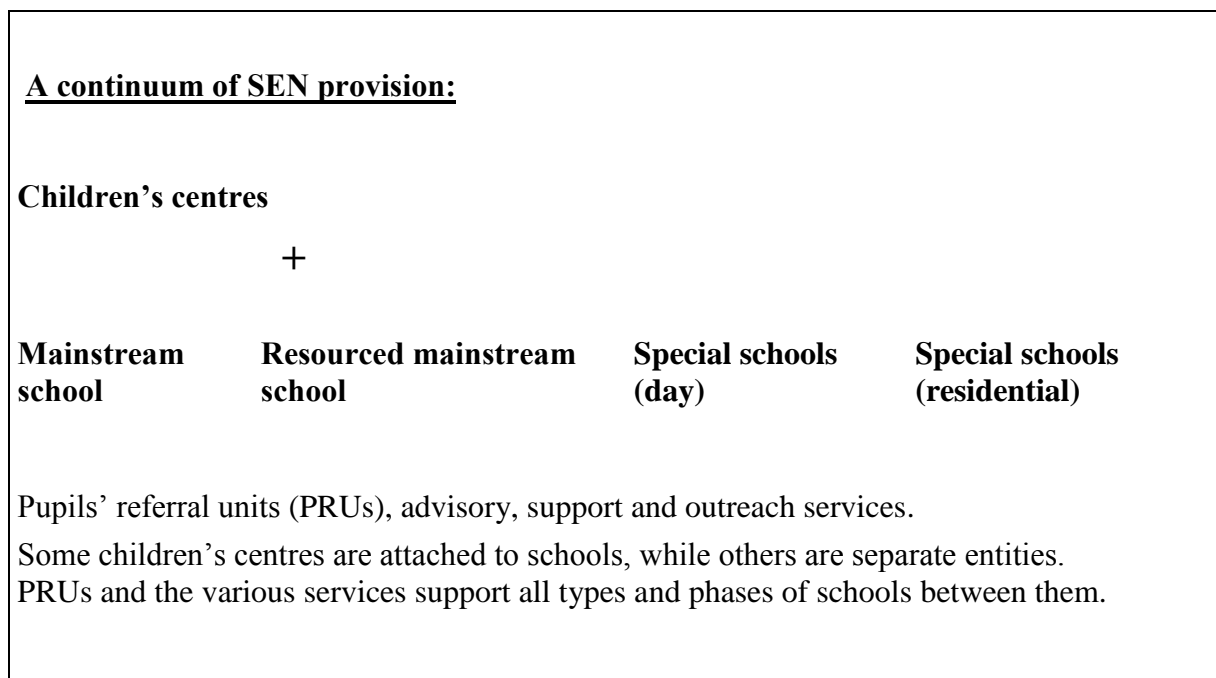
This orientation has influenced the debate to move from the type of placement to a ‘flexible continuum of provision’ within all types of school and service, in collaboration. Adjustments should be made by mainstream schools and special schools to meet a more diverse range of needs. The changes are listed by Tutt (2007, p.13):

1. Designated schools being adapted to take, for instance, pupils who have physical disabilities.
2. Bases or units where pupils with SEN may go for part of the school day, either to receive specialist teaching or to be supported in other ways (learning support units).

3. Special classes in which pupils with SEN are placed, where smaller numbers receive additional attention.
4. Special schools having bases or units for supporting pupils with particular needs.

The following figure illustrates the five stipulated elements of a flexible range of provision:

Figure 4.1 The five elements of a range of provision (Tutt, 2007, p.14)



However, Tutt (2007) notes that the idea received too little publicity to make it clearly recognised and easily accepted. In addition, this new orientation from the government to re-evaluating the role of the special schools was belittled as a 'U-turn' from inclusive education by the radical advocates of full inclusion (Barton and Armstrong, 2007). For example, the Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education (CSIE, 2005) considered any type of separate

provision in special schools to be a desecration of children's rights. However, Norwich (2000) in order to resolve the tension between the 'radical inclusive' set and the advocates of 'responsible inclusion' advocates a position which recognises some 'ideological impurity' and the complexity of policy values through bargaining.

Finally, the challenges to the government in promoting this model are not limited to opposition from the 'radical inclusion advocates'; it must also provide the basic resources, funding and training for the model to succeed.

4.2.4 Educational policy and provision for children with moderate learning difficulties

4.2.4.1 Terminology

Exploring the history of learning difficulties reveals an attempt to avoid stigmatising terms while keeping a degree of clarity about the nature of the difficulties and choose the most suitable provision. Thus, terminology changes over time. Table (4.1), below, summarises the earlier terms for children with learning difficulties set out by Montgomery (1990, p.241) to illustrate the continuum of mental impairment.

Table 4.1 Changes in the terminology associated with children with learning difficulties (adapted from Montgomery (1990, p.241)

17 th -20 th Centuries	World Health Organisation	Pre-Warnock	Warnock (1978)	Clarke and Clarke (1978)
Idiots	Profound IQ 0-20	ESN (S)	Slow L. (sev.)	0-5 yrs Gross retardation needing nursing care. 6-21 yrs Obvious delays in all areas, a few learn to walk or have simple speech. Adult Incapable of self-maintenance.
	Severe IQ 20-30	ESN (S)	Slow L. (sev.)	0-5 yrs Marked delay in all development. 6-21 yrs Some understanding of speech. Adult Can perform simple daily tasks but needs constant supervision.
Imbeciles	Moderate IQ 30-50	ESN (S)	Slow L. (sev.) 0-55	0-5 yrs Noticeable delay in motor and language development. 6-21 yrs Can learn simple communication skills and safety habits. May read but with little understanding. Likely to remain very childish in behaviour and interests. Adult Needs supervision to carry out simple tasks. Can travel alone in familiar areas. Usually capable of self-maintenance.
	Mild	ESN (M) IQ 50-75	Slow L. (mod.) (MLD) 55-70	0-5 yrs Often not noticed as retarded until goes to school. But probably slow to walk and more probably slow to talk. 6-21 yrs Can acquire practical skills and may become literate. Adult Can usually maintain self, although guidance and support may be needed, especially over financial matters.

The reasons behind the introduction of the term moderate learning difficulties (MLD) following the Warnock Report (1978) were to avoid the labels associated with stigma, as Warnock (2005, p.17) states:

...we thought we should try to move away from the medical model of diagnosis, that is of identifying a child as having a certain named condition such as 'mental subnormality' or 'maladjustment'

However, Norwich and Kelly (2005) argue that 'MLD' has been used loosely to distinguish groups of children with SEN, without any sense of the type of provision, due to the lack of clarity and consistency in this identification. Unlike other groups of SEN children, such as those with sensory impairments or severe intellectual disabilities, they are often identified only after starting formal schooling, which raises questions about the part played in creating their difficulties by mainstream school curricula and teaching. The vagueness of MLD as a term has often been reported. Male (1996) says that a sample of 54 special schools for children with MLD recorded children with associated difficulties – sensory, physical, medical, emotional and behavioural – and autism. Associated difficulties were frequently of language and behaviour or emotional. Similarly, Crowther et al (1998) investigate the costs of schooling for children with MLD in special and mainstream schools, finding that the English system is unclear at the official level about the criteria for determining which pupils should be regarded as having MLD.

More recent research by Norwich and Kelly (2005) confirms the complexity of MLD. In their research sample identifying MLD students in mainstream schools, they found that students with MLD are usually recorded as having MLD with additional difficulties, such as language and communication difficulty (LCD); emotional and behavioural difficulty (EBD); sensory and motor impairment. But the complexity within special schools increases when MLD students are recorded as having further difficulties such as epilepsy and autism.

4.2.4.2 The current definition

The 2001 Code of Practice identifies four areas of need and introduces 11 areas of SEN in the areas where the term 'MLD' is used. It is classified under cognition and learning needs as a distinct group from specific learning difficulty (SpLD), severe learning difficulty (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD). The current official definition of MLD is as follows:

Pupils should only be recorded as MLD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at School Action Plus or have a statement.

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum.

Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills (DfES, 2001b).

This definition expands to cover the various former categories, such as mild learning difficulties, slow learners; backwardness, low attainment and underachievement (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). This definition also includes criteria for identifying children with MLD whose needs cannot be accommodated within regular differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum; therefore, it covers children recorded at School Action Plus and children who are the subject of a Statement.

4.2.4.3 The current provision

The current provision for pupils with MLD varies between LEAs. The pupils with MLD are currently placed in different schools between special and mainstream schools, each LEA determining whether a given student should be included in the mainstream or segregated in a special school (Crowther et al, 1998; Costley, 1996). The evidence for this comes from different studies. Crowther et al (1998) in a large-scale project identified the placement of children with MLD in eight English LEAs. The placements were classified as primary/secondary special schools; all-age special schools; primary/secondary mainstream schools; and primary/secondary mainstream schools with a unit. However, this survey did not compare the percentage of the MLD students in each. A survey of all LEAs in England and Wales asked for their perspectives on the provision for children with MLD (Norwich and Kelly, 2005), which are reflected in these variations in practice:

1. The large majority of responding LEAs reported using the term MLD, while some did replaced it with *learning difficulty*, *complex learning difficulty* or *cognition and learning difficulty*.
2. The data indicated a decline since 2000 in the proportion of pupils with statements for MLD in special schools. Most of the pupils with MLD were taught in mainstream schools with no SEN statement.
3. The provision for MLD pupils mixed special schools with mainstream schools.

Norwich and Kelly (2005, p.166) explain that this variation between LEAs' provision results from the fact that '*LEAs tended to take up Government concepts and definitions in this area (MLD), but as there has been variations in the Government's position over the years, so LEAs have selected those aspects which suit their own policy positions*'.

This variation, according to Meijer et al (1994, p.119), is the main feature of England's educational system, described as 'multi-track' in policy; *'these countries offer a flexible system of education to special needs children'*.

4.2.4.4 Critique of the current policy and practice in England

The present state of SEN/inclusive education in England has been critiqued in several parts of this report (Armstrong et al, 2010; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009; Ellis et al, 2008; Lloyd, 2008). However, this section introduces another view, which confirms other critiques through the most recently published documents. In spite of the government initiative, the House of Commons Educational and Skills Committee (2006) in its inquiry into SEN during 2005-2006 and the Conservative Party report (2007) identified some of the difficulties and called upon the government to undertake a major public review of its policy on SEN. The difficulties were grouped under major themes:

A national framework linked to minimum standards

- The government should introduce a national framework which places a statutory requirement on LEAs to maintain wide-ranging provision, including different special schools, specialist units and services for low-incidence special educational needs.
- The government operates a separate system for SEN, which has led to a gap between the SEN agenda and the mainstream school agenda (The Audit Commission, 2002; Conservative Party, 2007).

Equipping the workforce

- A Conservative Party report (2007), Audit Commission reports (2002a, 2002b), the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2006) and MacBeath et al (2006) have found that many teachers feel ill-equipped to include SEN children in class and there is little government attention on equipping them to teach these children.
- The lack of clarity of SEN policy appears also in defining the responsibilities, the appropriate training and the appropriate authority of the Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). The report identifies the misuse of a SENCO job by appointing a non-teaching member of staff to fulfil this position, which made it seem something involving the administration of records and making of appointments. This misuse prevented the appointee from fulfilling the major requirements of the role, in particular to increase multiagency working.

A radical review of statementing

- The Audit Commission and Conservative Party have called for a review of policy on the issuing of statements. They highlight these difficulties in statementing: rising demands for statements; costly and bureaucratic statutory assessment; stress on parents and inadequacy of statements in meeting children's needs; the inequitable distribution of resources and failure to support early intervention and inclusive practice.

These critiques, however, demonstrate more the active, dynamic nature of the English system than a weakness of current policy. In my opinion, these critiques reflect a mature democracy

which reveals the government's genuine commitment to improving education and standards of life for children with disabilities. The English policy development requires an unending process of review and evaluation and is not static, unlike the Kuwaiti system; this will be highlighted below.

4.2.5 Summary

While it documents significant advances in inclusive education, it also points to manifest problems related to creating policy and implementation. As Armstrong et al (2010, p.96) summarise:

...the Labour government in the UK has pursued a vigorous agenda around the issues of social and educational inclusion. At one level it has challenged traditional views of special educational needs as individual deficit by focusing upon the role of schools in achievement of opportunities for all children. Yet, this new approach to inclusive education has been led by a discourse of children at risk which has done little to scrutinize the values of educational inclusion and how its outcomes may be re-thought.

The main dilemmas surrounding inclusion are summarised in the following points:

- The coexistence of medical and social models leads to problems, above all in identifying SEN. Ellis et al (2008, p.39) present this coexistence as the processes of identification and assessment applied in the new Code of Practice which encourage a 'within child' view.
- The existence of two contradictory policies: the standards policy with its marketplace approach and the inclusive (Dyson et al, 2010). This puts pressure on schools and pupils. Black-Hawkins et al (2007) argue that this pressure results from policies which present a narrow interpretation of achievement, one associated with educational outcomes across a range of curriculum subjects which are judged against absolute or

comparative criteria. Using empirical evidence, they state further that this tension can be resolved by a deeper understanding of these concepts, educating four school case studies which apply a range of ways to resolve the tension and have '*led to conceptualisation of inclusive schools as those that meet the dual criteria of enrolling a diverse student population and constantly seeking to improve the achievements of all their students*' (2007, p.29).

- The lack of definition of concepts such as equality of opportunity, inclusion and MLD leads to variations between LEAs and schools.

At first sight, I agree with Barton (1998) that the main challenge facing inclusive education is cohesive links between educational ideologies (medical model vs. social model), policies (the standards policy vs. the inclusive policy) and practice and the wider social and economic context of society.

4.3 The Kuwaiti Report

4.3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this section is to illuminate the embedded beliefs and practices in Kuwait. This addresses the question: 'What factors shape and influence Kuwait's culture and consequently its current policy and practice in special/inclusive education?'

4.3.2 Background

4.3.2.1 Educational development in Kuwait

In its early stages, traditional education usually took place in either mosques or houses. This type of education, called 'kuttab', taught groups of boys or girls Qur'anic recitation and basic

writing and arithmetical skills (Bahgat, 1999). The early schools in Kuwait were founded and financed by its people. When they realised that local kuttabs were insufficient for their needs as traders, education started to change. In 1912, the first private school, Al-Mubarakiya, was established to teach Islamic history, jurisprudence, the Arabic language as well as the Qur'an and basic mathematics (Safwat, 1993). Other subjects such as commercial correspondence, book-keeping and English language, were added later to meet local market needs. Another school, named Al-Ahmadiya, opened in 1922; the same curriculum was offered, together with science, mathematics and English.

After the economic improvement following the discovery of oil, Kuwait invested generously in education and social programmes (Bazna, 2003). In 1973, its total expenditure on public education was almost \$120 million (Al-qazzaz, 1981). Consequently, in 1977-8, many intermediary schools and 56 secondary schools employed over 19,500 teachers and specialists for over 252,000 students of both sexes. University students in 1977-78 totalled 9,375, including 1,000 graduate students.

This brief history gives the reader an idea of the rapid transformation of Kuwait's education from informal, traditional kuttabs to a more modern formal system, demanding modern Western models, including facilities and education for individuals with disabilities.

4.3.2.2 Special needs education

Special needs are catered for by a number of government and non-government bodies. The role of the government bodies relates best to this study, as it focuses on inclusive education in public schools. Special education is administered through the Ministry of Education, the

Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Public Health. Their roles are outlined in turn below.

Ministry of Education

The current organisational structure of the Ministry of Education is described in Figure 4.2 (Ministry of Education, 2008).

This figure highlights the position of special educational needs/inclusive education within the broader education system. The separation between these two education programmes is evident in the separation of departments. In 1965, the Assistant Undersecretary for Special and Quality Education in the Ministry of Education was charged also with providing special education for disabled children. This department licenses the educational programmes of up to 15 special education schools for children with visual or hearing impairments, mental retardation or physical disabilities (the terminology reflects Kuwaiti usage). This department also provides disabled children with various services and therapies.

The great expansion and improvement of the educational system in Kuwait was accomplished through oil revenues, which allowed free schooling to be offered, including provision for individuals with special needs, such as boarding schools in hospitals, schools in other institutions, special day schools and classes in ordinary schools. It also provided additional free services including transportation, school meals and uniforms. The special schools have separate curricula, focusing on vocational development.

Children with severe disabilities whose IQ scores are below 50 are offered day care and residential units administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (Al-Muhareb, 2007). Pupils in special schools whose IQ scores range between 70 and 50 study an academic curriculum adapted from the primary level of the general educational programme. After finishing this stage, students transfer to vocational rehabilitation schools to study leather-work, bamboo-work, tailoring, dressmaking, bookbinding or embroidery. Moreover, the Department of Special Education is responsible for the implementation of policies and objectives for special education provision.

In the 2002-2003 statistics, the total number of disabled students was 2136, with 873 teachers. The cost of special education was \$26 million per year, making the unitary cost \$14,225.25, whereas the cost of a non-disabled student was \$5801.25 (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Second, in 1993 the General Secretariat of the Council of Special Education took responsibility for three groups of students:

1. Talented students
2. Slow learner students – inclusive classrooms
3. Down's syndrome students – inclusive classrooms.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

The Disabled Welfare Department provides residential medical care and rehabilitation for both children and adults. The Disabled Care Homes cater for those severely mentally or physically disabled.

Ministry of Public Health

The Ministry is concerned with the early detection, diagnosis and treatment of disability, through a number of centres, divisions and hospitals.

4.3.2.3 Legislation related to the individual with disabilities

The legislation for individuals with disabilities is outlined in Law 1965/11 and Law 1996/49. Legislation is based on fundamental principles advocated by the United Nations and on humanitarian concepts derived from Islam and its moral/ethical heritage (Barr, 1983; Bazna, 2003). These general principles can be found in the Kuwaiti Constitution (article 40), and the Mandatory Education Law no 1965/11 (article 4) and include:

- The right to equal access and treatment by others regardless of handicap.
- Special schools provided under the 'Compulsory Education' Law (1965), for children with physical and sensory difficulties or mental retardation, licensed by the Ministry of Education.
- Recognition that the disabled are not responsible for their condition and should not be penalised for it.

Barr (1983) concludes from these articles that special education in Kuwait has advanced; it guarantees the right of disabled people to access education, rehabilitation, training and employment. However, these articles provided no clear blueprint for planning and delivery (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007).

A second Law, 1996/49, was passed to update previous legislation. This emphasises the government is commitment to providing services including medical and social welfare,

education, transportation and employment. The advantage of this law is that it authorises the Higher Council for Disabilities (HCD) to fund private tuition for some disabled children who cannot be included in Ministry of Education programmes.

But this law has many limitations; it was designed for people with severe disabilities and emphasises physical disability. Thus, it misses those with special educational needs, for it imposes no legal obligation on mainstream schools to include disabled children; it does not even give their parents any choice. Therefore, this recent law is as limited as its predecessor, 1965/11. Brown (2005, p.260) argues that these laws emerge from a charity ethos, not a human and civil rights ethic '*associated with compassion, recreation, cleanliness, custodial care, dependence and freedom from many of life's challenges*'. He suggests the way to overcome the limitation is to adopt a more human/civil rights ethic which promotes independence through better opportunities within education, the workplace and society.

As a result of these limitations, the Educational Indicators and Assessment report (CKEIAP, 2007) indicates that 53% of all students with special needs are placed in public special schools and around 33% in private special schools. About 7% are enrolled in public or private mainstream schools. This means that 86% of all students with disabilities are in special schools in both sectors, while 7% of students with disabilities in public mainstream schools are taught in separate special classes. This evidence shows that special education policy continues to be oriented towards segregated provision.

Further signs of this rhetoric in legislation can be found in the League of Arab States *Arabic Statement to People with Special Needs* (2004), which aimed to promote and protect the rights

and dignity of its people with disabilities. This Statement gives guidance to member states in building strategy for disabled people under the headings of legislation, health services, work and rehabilitation, education, transportation, media and increasing public awareness, leisure and sport. Under the education heading, the statement stresses equal opportunities for all people with disabilities in all educational institutions in mainstream classes, or special classes if necessary. To achieve this, the countries should aim to provide educationalists trained in educating children with disabilities under policies of inclusion; provide the resources and aids for their education and make families and communities aware of the value of inclusion; and rehabilitation for children. Kuwait, as a member of this League must annually report its progress in implementing the recommendations of the Statement.

However, the government documents give only vague indications of its response. The only documents which refer to the recommendations come from Kuwait's Parliament and Higher Council for Disabled Affairs. Articles were suggested by both these bodies to expand the financial support and work for equal employment opportunities for disabled people. However, these articles suffered from the same limitations as Law 49/1996: they lacked the inclusive education policy to support planning, delivering and empowering the right to inclusion in mainstream schools. Kuwait also faces criticism from the Gulf Disability Society for not joining and signing the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (Al-wasat Newspaper, 28.04.2009).

Therefore, the tension between local and global influences affects special education in Kuwait and makes it hard to gauge the tendency of later legislation. Al-muhareb (2007) questions whether legislative changes were made:

... within a framework of a uniform set of goals, definitions, coordination, and expectation in mind, or ... just an arbitrary and isolated response to the pressure for change and the need to assimilate the powerful international movement of inclusive education? (Al-muhareb, 2007 p.29)

4.3.2.4 Educational provision for children with learning difficulties

The subject of learning difficulties was introduced in Kuwait when a psycho-educational diagnostics centre was established in 1984 by professionals and parents who had studied in Western countries. Accordingly, the centre adapted a Western model by applying American-standardised, English-language evaluation measures to Kuwaiti children to ascertain their learning difficulties (Bazna and Reid, 2007), such as the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities and Wechsler Intelligence Scales for children; they were applied without allowing for the differences in local cultural and social systems (Bazna, 2003).

Moreover, Kuwaiti laws concerning special education followed, to some extent, the same guidelines as the American *Individual with Disabilities Education Act* (Barr, 1983). Consequently, the certification system starts by formal diagnosis depending on Western tests, then the label 'LD' and a Disability Certificate for the child. Parents may then transfer their child to a special school or, if the child's IQ is between 70 and 84, take the inclusive option (as defined in Kuwait) of joining special classes in mainstream schools. It is noteworthy that Kuwait has this imported legislation unchanged for more than 40 years; thus, the similarities between US legislation and the Kuwaiti legislation have not lasted (Al-muhareb, 2007). A Secretariat General of Special Education (SGSE) member confirms that the position '*... has not yet been regulated by clear laws and definite regulations because there is fear of issuing such laws, as if these laws are not considered well, they will be confusing and will cause problems.*'

4.3.2.5 Approaching inclusion

Kuwait was the first country in the Arabic Gulf area to introduce inclusion in public education, at least rhetorically (Barr, 1983). It joined UNESCO in 1960 and signed the Salamanca Statement in 1994, the Cairo Declaration in 1999, the Dakar Declaration in 2000 and Beirut in 2001; these all confirm disabled people's right to be included in the community, its educational system in particular, and, without discrimination, to be treated as well as their non-disabled counterparts. The first initiative in applying inclusion was taken in 1981 at the personal initiative of a Minister whose child had Down's syndrome. However, this failed through poor implementation arrangements and was discontinued in 1984, when children with Down's syndrome were transferred to a special school.

In 1989, the Ministry of Education established a committee to consider how soon inclusion could be successfully re-introduced. As a result, 15 children with mild hearing loss were the first to be included in public education. Soon 86 students were included, including children with visual or physical impairments and those with Down's syndrome.

The scarcity of studies investigating inclusive education in Kuwait makes it difficult to understand current practice and the situation of disabled students in mainstream schools. AL-abdulghafoor (1999) explored primary teachers' attitudes to the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. He finds that:

- Inclusive education faces generally negative attitudes.
- Teachers' attitudes vary according to type of disability. Physical disability and visual impairment have been more acceptable than hearing impairment and mental disability.

- Mainstream primary schools are not equipped to include children with special needs. The obstacles include inadequate medical services, rigid curricula, no teacher training and limited educational resources.

The qualitative study by Al-rishidy and Al-meely (2003) to explore the attitude of visually impaired students toward inclusive education finds that in Kuwait such students after finishing middle school can choose between a special and a mainstream high school. The findings indicate that half the sample of visually impaired students who finished the intermediate stage at special school chose a special high school, but the others believed that they had gained many personal and social benefits from joining public school. However, they complained of some learning problems, such as limited resources, few Braille books and unsuitable buildings. The annual report of the Ministry of Education (2002b) on mainstream schools which include children with sensory or physical disabilities discusses:

1- Disabled students

- Most disabled students show such behavioural aspects as shame, unsociability, aggressive behaviour and low self-esteem.
- Their academic performance is below average.

2- Teachers

- Expert and efficient teachers who can use sign language and properly deal with learning difficulties and behavioural disorders are scarce. Public school teachers, lacking the required knowledge and motivation, refuse to teach disabled children.

- Teachers complain of the unsuitable curriculum, which encourages no individual thinking, plans or projects.

3- School administration

- School organisation and management cause difficulties for disabled students, notably in timetabling.
- School administration and parents do not sufficiently appreciate disabled children's needs and requirements and this may eventually isolate them in school.

4- School buildings

- Most school buildings are unsuitable for disabled children, in particular, those with physical impairments.
- Most schools lack the educational materials and aids which would help disabled children improve academic performance.

This report shows that the medical model still delays the successful implementation of inclusion for children with sensory or physical disabilities. The shaky basis for inclusion, as Brown highlights (2005), leads to more exclusion practices and negative attitudes to the concept of 'inclusion', as an impossible ideal.

There is no sign of moving towards inclusive education practices, such as a curriculum developed for inclusive education or preparation for teachers in this official document (Albustan and Al-abdulgafore, 2002). For example, the Ministry of Education Committee for Developing Primary Education (2002c) recommends changes and improvements for such

aspects of primary as leadership, educational aims and evaluation. However, it includes no recommendations for children with special needs, such as improving the curriculum, suitable teaching methods or resources. This report raises doubts about how far the Ministry of Education is committed to this cause. The SGSE members condone the vagueness of the policy: *'I cannot convey to you the trends of the Ministry of Education ... the policy established in the Ministry is not definite as they sometimes want inclusion and at other times they want segregation'*.

Another survey of the perceptions among mainstream primary teachers, social workers and psychologists of learning difficulties such as dyslexia, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and dyscalculia in kindergarten and primary school showed that:

1. Teachers' and social workers' familiarity with learning difficulties was low throughout, but slightly higher for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
2. Better qualifications led to being more familiar with LD.
3. The response varied according to the type of job. Social workers have higher results than teachers and psychologists, while psychologists have higher results than the teachers (Almesaad, Alholi and Aldawood, 2004).

This survey brings out the importance of professional development, training teachers and school staff. It was found that professional development focuses on subject knowledge, such as science, maths or language, without any kind of professional development in pedagogy to accommodate the diverse needs of students.

4.3.2.6 Inclusive education for children with MLD

In 1996 special classes in primary mainstream schools began for 41 children with MLD as a step toward inclusion. This project started in three schools, increasing in 2002 to 200 students and 104 teachers in five schools (Ministry of Education, 2003). The procedure for transferring eligible children – with an IQ of 70–84 or above 85 if they have severe academic difficulties as a result of social disadvantage – is as follows:

- Agreement forms should be signed by the children's parents before transfer to a special class.
- After entering the special class, teachers recommend that the students should be able to return to general classes if there are also social and psychological reports to provide evidence of their ability.
- Student should not have severe behavioural or mental disabilities.

The criteria for enrolling are based on IQ tests and academic achievement. Brown (2005) describes this programme as 'proximity integration' or '*location in or near other regular educational programmes*' (p.262). In Kuwait, these special classes are called inclusive because they are located inside a mainstream school, not a special school. The purpose of this programme is highlighted by a member of the SGSE:

'To me, as a representative of the SGSE, [it is]... the only programme that represents the State's inclusive policy toward those with special needs. We try to let in and integrate the student from the special group into the normal environment. So, we made sure that inclusion is made in the mainstream schools in special classrooms suitable for their capabilities with special textbooks and teachers for this group.'

Alseed, (2003) evaluating this initiative, points out the following challenges to this project:

- Lack of human resources – special teachers/teaching assistants.
- Poor collaboration between school staff and project organisers, leading to isolated MLD students and consequent failure to attain an inclusive environment.
- Low motivation to participate among teachers.
- Few special advisors able to supervise, guide and support teachers.
- Little understanding and collaboration from parents.

Through qualitative research, I hope to be able to confirm, reject or supplement Alseed's observations. I will also, five years on, be able to investigate the government responses to his report, in improving this initiative and surmounting the obstacles identified by him.

4.3.3 Factors shaping the local culture and current practice of special/inclusive education in Kuwait

The dominance of the medical/charitable model was obvious in the above discussion. Exploring Kuwait's history and culture identifies the important factors shaping the cultural perception of disability and current practice. Culture has been defined in different ways, but for the present purpose Hofstede's definition (1991) applies: *'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'* (1991, p.5).

From reviewing the official documents and literature, and combining the findings from this review with my inside knowledge and experience, I found the following factors the most

important in shaping cultural perceptions of disability and consequently of inclusive/special education in Kuwait:

- The Islamic perspective
- Tribal culture
- Colonisation and the effect of discovering oil

These factors both interact and clash, creating a contradictory situation for disabled people.

4.3.3.1 Islamic perspective

This section attempts to provide a deeper understanding of the factors which shape Islamic practice towards the focus of this study. It examines the main sources of Islamic teaching, the Qur'an (Muslims' Holy Book) and the Sunnah (the life/example/practices of the Prophet Muhammad). The narratives of the companions of the Prophet, who were the closest in time and place to him, will also be discussed in order to explore Islamic attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the Word of God. To them, it also bears strong relevance to the needs of all societies in all times and places. In accordance with this belief, Muslim scholars refocus on the interpretation of the Qur'an within each social and historical context (Saeed, 2006). Saeed emphasises the linguistic criteria, as well as the socio-historical context of the Qur'an, in determining the meaning of a given text within Qur'anic discourse. To achieve this, a critical reading of the Qur'an must be attempted, because this improves our understanding beyond linguistic limitations of the Islamic perspective on disability. Moreover, attempting to combine Qur'anic texts relevant to the theme of disability with other

sources, such as different researched interpretations of the Qur'an seems necessary for a sound understanding of the overall concept of disability, at least in the main sources of Islamic belief.

It is argued that the concept of 'disability' in the conventional sense is absent from the Qur'an. However, there are terms related to disability, such as blindness, muteness, deafness, lameness, orphanhood, destitution/need and wayfarer (Bazna and Hatab, 2005). In order to explore the Islamic perspective, I interpret these terms within linguistic and social contexts, to avoid misinterpretation. The findings from the Qur'an, Sunnah and Islamic history will be collated under major themes related to disability studies, such as perfection, diversity and equity, labelling, causation and inclusion. These terms are influential in shaping Islamic attitudes to and perspectives on disability. Due to word limitations, I focus only on the Islamic perspective on inclusion. For other concepts (e.g. labelling, disability, diversity, perfection) which give a more detailed account of the Islamic perspective, see Appendix Four.

Pre-Islamic society used to prevent disabled people from eating or living with them and even from marrying (Bazna and Hatab, 2005). In contrast, Islam advocates their inclusion. This is manifested by the following verses:

[All of you, o believers, are brethren: hence, no blame attaches to the blind, nor does blame attach to the lame, nor does blame attach to the sick [for accepting charity from the hale] and neither to you by others, whether it be food obtained] from your [children's] houses or your fathers' houses... (24:61, Al-Nour Chapter).

True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west – but truly pious is he who believes in God and the last day and the angels and revelation and the prophets; and spends his substance – however much he himself may cherish it – upon his near of kin and the orphan and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for the freeing of human beings from bondage. (2:176, Al-Baqara Chapter).

The effect of these passages is to boost the sense of solidarity of the Muslim community expressed in a call to support all individuals, irrespective of condition, disabled and disadvantaged by society equally (Bazna and Hatab, 2005). From a Qur'anic perspective, Muslims form an inclusive community judged by support and kindness between members, where education should embrace disabled people. In this sense, the Qur'an removes any type of discrimination, whether physical, mental or social, against disabled or disadvantaged people.

Islam not only emphasises equality between disabled and able people as a right, but also stresses the special needs of disabled people, relieving them from certain commands and requirements: *'God does not burden any human being with more than he is able to bear: in his favour shall be whatever good he does and against him whatever evil he does'* (2:286, Al-Baqara Chapter).

Miles (1985, 2002) reveals that Islam benefited from the early discussion of civil rights for people with mental disabilities, arising from a Qur'anic text which prescribes guardianship for the 'feeble-minded'. Islamic law also recognised the right of deaf people to use sign language, long before 1880, when the West accepted this communication method (Zapfen, 1998). Furthermore, El-Hessen (2006) introduces reports by Western observers, such as Bon (1608), Dalam (1599) and Rycart (1675) that education and training for deaf people were well established towards the end of the sixteenth century. El-Hessen (2006) introduces another example of inclusion debates in the Muslim world over a thousand years ago: Al-Jahed (776-868 A.D.), in the famous book *Kitab Al-Bursan*, arguing for full inclusion of disability in society.

Moreover, Islam sees as a crime the abortion of a foetus diagnosed with future disability (Al-Ghazali, n.d). The only permissible condition for abortion is danger to the mother's life. The Islamic principle of inclusion is also found in the Sunnah (Julaybib's story). Julaybib, one of the companions of the Prophet, was rejected by the Muslim community because of his severe physical disabilities and lack of any tribal ties. When he was killed in battle and no-one was prepared to give him decent burial, the Prophet himself dug the grave and buried him, proclaiming, *'this man is of me and I am of him'*. The Prophet teaches his followers to respect and include such people. As another lesson in inclusiveness, the Prophet Muhammad in the early years of Islam when tribal ties, power and appearance were still important, put Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum, who was blind, in temporary charge of Medina. The most important features of inclusion in Islam are that the Prophet's companions were rarely labelled by their disability, which suggests that disabled people have no role in Islamic history. My interpretation of this avoidance is that Islamic history emphasises their abilities, not their disabilities.

Further evidence from the inclusive Muslim community in the 'golden age' of Islam is that the caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab instituted a monthly grant for every disabled person and the caliph Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz ordered a carer for every physically disabled person and a guide for every blind person to help and care for them. The first school for children with learning disabilities was founded in 707 in Damascus by the Amawit ruler, Al-waleed Ibn Abdul Malik (Nasrawi, 1982).

The above examples show how illogical it is to blame Islam for the negative attitudes and practices in some Muslim countries. However, Miles (2002) asks why, in spite of the religious principles prompting favourable attitudes to disabled people, most of them are oppressed or disgracefully neglected. The reasons behind this contradiction in the developing countries may include lack of knowledge of Islam, derived from misinterpretation; poverty; harsh political systems; and the influence of colonisation.

Miles (2002) argues that the economic situation of developing countries is the major influence on negative attitudes toward disabled people. In communities where most people are poor and live under dictatorships, disabled people's needs are neglected and they cannot defend their rights. A similar argument in Britain, introduced by Oliver (1990), sees an intrinsic link between poverty and disability. This link led to focusing on '*the poverty of disabled people*' rather than on what causes '*the oppression of disabled people by society*' (Oliver, 1990, p.109). He argues that the negative attitudes led to segregating disabled people and underestimating their ability within a productive society.

The stereotyping and generalisations among Muslims and non-Muslims in this area result from ignorance about the Islamic perspective on disability. Ingstad (1999) argues that Western European history holds stories about disabled people who were hidden, neglected and abused, without counting the present-day abuse of disabled people. Such cases are mainly treated as unfortunate exceptions, implying nothing about the general behaviour in Europe or the US. But when stories about similar practices come from developing countries, these stories are seen not as exceptions, or relegated to history, but presented in documents from authoritative sources, such as WHO (Helander, 1984), as general and current problems, resulting from the countries' beliefs (Ingstad, 1999). Forgetting local cultural knowledge and

adapting the ‘modern ways’ of Western experts perpetuate the misunderstanding of the Islamic perspective on disability.

Many practices can be interpreted differently when we look below the surface. For example, Turmusani (2001) reports negative practices such as discrimination against disabled people which he interprets as resulting from Islamic beliefs. However, he does not consider other factors which prevent families from coping with the care of disabled relatives: not religion but poverty, lack of support and ignorance of the improvements available. Moreover, we interpret people’s beliefs about what causes disability to find a therapy, not to determine whether disability is acceptable.

Different social influences and personal experiences from childhood, Miles continues, are responsible for shaping people’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards disability, whereas ancient religious texts play a small and distant part in this. Thus, the researcher should clearly understand and properly interpret local knowledge, culture, current practice, beliefs and attitudes to disability. Miles (1985) finally suggests using religious resources to stimulate changes in attitude, rather than to spread myths which lead to conflict between disabled people and their communities.

Finally, the Islamic perspective, based on equal human rights, is orientated towards adopting and promoting inclusion. However, the charitable nature of some Islamic practices could interact with other cultural factors in complex ways, encouraging the adoption of medical models of disability (Brown, 2005; Turmusani, 2003).

4.3.3.2 Tribal nature (collectivism)

Pre-Islamic culture still exists, illuminating the tribal nature of Kuwaiti culture. The modern history of Kuwait started with the coming of Islam in the 17th century CE. For a thousand years, Kuwait was occupied by Arab tribes. The influence of tribal culture in Kuwait today clearly shows a collectivist society. Extended families exemplify collectivism, which locates power with the group. This collectivism can be viewed in the extended family structure, caring for and including all the members as a duty. For example, if a family includes a disabled child, it is the task of the whole family, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, to provide care for her/his needs (Abd El-Khalek, 2004). As Hofstede reminds us, loyalty to the group is an essential element of collectivist principles and sharing. It is a mutual obligation of protection and loyalty extended to the national level. To me, this reflects community-based inclusion.

The negative aspects of this culture, however, create a charitable, overprotective environment which emphasises dependency. It underestimates children's abilities and extends support into adulthood, as noted by researchers who study south Asian families in Britain (Hussain, Atkin, and Waqar, 2002; Hussain, 2003, 2005). Another survey (Westbrook and Legge, 1993) reveals that in individualist cultures disabled children are treated as much as possible like others, whereas in collectivist communities disability is seen as shameful for the family and stigmatising for its members. However, generalising these results is inappropriate, because different studies reveal both attitudes in both communities.

Another negative issue of the collectivist communities is the concept of the 'wholeness' of the ideal person, who, in Arabic culture, can embody the values of honour, courage, hospitality,

generosity and active participation in family and community affairs (Brown, 2005). Westbrook and Legge's study (1993) demonstrates the influence of this 'wholeness image'. They asked 665 Australian health practitioners about men's reactions to becoming disabled. In the individualist communities, the disabled tended to remain optimistic, while in the collectivist (Arabic-speaking) communities stigmatisation and shame were more prominent. I believe that the feelings of shame or pessimism may result from the pressure of their role in the community or duty to incorporate the ideal. If so, identifying an 'undesired differentness' is likely to lead to feelings of stigmatisation and local culture can impose the pressure of stigmatisation itself (Coleman, 1997).

Being less than whole implies separation and segregation. The indicators of wholeness these days have changed and sometimes depend on higher educational achievement (Brown, 2005). In contrast, when the wholeness indicators laid less emphasis on educational achievement, as in Kuwait's past, disabled people were shown to be included and attained high positions, for example, the famous Kuwaiti poet Fahad Alaskar, who was blind. In the early period, moreover, blind people and the physically disabled were learners and teachers.

It is undeniable that Eastern communities stigmatise, as Western communities do, wherever factors of social and economic depression interact. My interpretation is that behaviour there relates more to personal values than to the community culture: what is acceptable in Kuwait, for example, women driving cars, is not accepted in neighbouring countries with similar family structures and culture. Therefore, treating all Muslim or Arabic-speaking countries as homogeneous is not reasonable. As noted above, culture is also not static but dynamic, and communities undergo experiences which transform their attitudes.

In my view as an insider, the other negative issue of collectiveness which results from the tribal nature of Arab society is the subordination which it creates in its members. This produces passive behaviour and attitudes, and the acceptance of leaders' views, by families, students, the community and the nation. In Kuwait, this is illustrated by the unquestioning acceptance of the segregated schools which entered the system as a modern, developed initiative; this initiative harmonised with the culture and challenged no Islamic values. This may have occurred in other countries too, depending on different contextualising factors (Armstrong et al, 2010).

Subordination, the negative of collectiveness, is unacceptable in Islamic belief. The evidence comes from the following Qur'anic verse: '*... those who hearken to their lord and establish regular prayer, who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation*' (42:38, Alshura chapter).

Muslims must follow the Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon Him) in all matters pertaining to religion, but in secular matters one is free to act on one's own opinion, as evidenced by his saying '*I am a human being, so when I command you about a thing pertaining to religion, do accept it and when I command you about a thing out of my personal opinion, keep it in mind that I am a human being*' (Sahih Muslim, 1971, p.1259), also, '*You have better knowledge in the affairs of the world*' (Sahih Muslim, 1971, p.1220).

Accordingly, the Qur'an relies on 'shura' (consultation), equivalent to democracy, for developing society; however, this generally conflicts with tribal culture and the subordination of blind traditionalism.

4.3.3.3 Colonised period and oil discovery

Kuwait's history exposes two main influences on current practice: the colonial period and discovering oil. These factors led to massive changes in Kuwait's intellectual and cultural life and its economy also. The oil industry has had huge repercussions on all the Gulf States. Oil exports have financed the development of social health and education services. With the radical growth of the economy, demands to modernise have led to significant changes in the educational system, not least in special education.

Well before this, Kuwait's strategic location drew the interest of Ottoman colonisers, among others. Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah, the ruler, sought British help. The resulting treaty ensured British military protection for Kuwait, in return for British control over her foreign affairs, continuing until Kuwait's independence in 1961. This interaction produced a change in the local culture. Therefore, as the local culture modernised, local beliefs and behaviour were modified by the adapted Western culture (Alzaidi, 2003). Commentators contend that these dramatic and rapid changes provoked a conflict between tradition and modernity; a change in ethical and moral standards; and an imbalance between material achievements and social and spiritual values (Bazna and Reid, 2007).

The colonisation period led to the permeation of Western values. Miles (2007) ascribes the dominant influence of Western European and North American countries (WENA) to ignorance of the local history and traditions of developing countries. He says that advisors from WENA countries between the 1960s and the 1990s, in their efforts to help developing countries to plan disability and rehabilitation services and conditions, often assumed that there was no substantial domestic history of meeting special needs.

In Kuwait's case, the historical influences of the colonial period are neglected, but by exploring the literature the reader can deduce the social transformation. Its influence becomes obvious from the special educational system which developed over the history of Kuwait; and it led to policies and practices from Western countries imported without considering local cultural values and knowledge.

Regarding these changes, Barr's study (1983) points out that in the second half of the 20th century, the Arabian Gulf countries were greatly drawn to Westernising trends, such as materialism and capitalism. They imported pre-packaged educational philosophies for special education, school curricula, instructional methods, teaching practices and assessment tools developed in Western countries (Barr, 1983). Several researchers (Benzahara, 2002; Bazna and Hatab, 2006) maintain that little attention was given to the inconsistency of the imported packages with local conditions, values and culture or their impact on people identified as disabled, which was largely negative. For example, in the 'kuttab' (Madrasa) period, before oil was discovered and pre-packaged ideas imported, the children with special needs who were included would also have been taught by disabled teachers. The first initiative to include children with visual impairment in a modern school was in 1943; Mobarakya School taught Islamic studies to blind students before they moved to the Islamic studies college. However, afterwards, special schools were built and these, with other disabled students, were removed from mainstream schools, supposedly in their best interests, and in the name of modernisation (Bazna and Hatab, 2006). Tanaka (2005) describe this process of policy borrowing as 'authoritarian importing/exporting'; imposing educational policy and practice on locals whether or not the locals understood them.

The imported Western model was reshaped and reconceptualised by the local culture, according to Al-muhareb (2007). This stage of policy borrowing is called ‘transformation’ (Tanaka, 2005; Cowen, 2006), produced by transferred educational policies interacting on local factors. It explains the ‘static policy’ situation which cannot keep up with the developments of Western countries which exported them.

4.3.4 Summary

A wider context to link the documentary and empirical findings in my study is essential for understanding what produced the obstacles and will surmount them. This report is a quest to examine myself, my religion and my culture from a different angle. I do not see it through Western lenses, but Western and Eastern. These blended lenses identify the hybridism between tribal culture and the colonised period as the dominant factor shaping current practice in Kuwait. The main characteristics of the educational system of Kuwait are:

- A welfare state, highly influenced by a tribal collectivism culture, adopting a charitable medical model.
- A highly centralised system, imposing a unity and commonality approach through adapting policies such as the National Curriculum and a standardised assessment.
- Inclusive/SEN education related only to children with disability.
- Inclusive education interpreted as ‘location’, which is related more to physical ‘integration’ than ‘inclusion’, which requires adaptation and modification within mainstream schools.
- The development of the educational system in Kuwait reflecting the tensions between local versus global and modern versus traditional. These tensions delayed

the move towards more inclusive policy and practice and misinterpretation of the imported educational models.

One can question whether the Islamic influence was too weak for consideration by the policy-makers. The answer, from my standpoint, is embedded in the economic and social background. Kuwait was radically transformed from a poor, primitive and conservative country to a modernised, Western-influenced, rich country. As Hourani observes, *'To be modern was to have a political and social life similar to those of the countries of Western Europe.'* (1991, p.344) The lack of knowledge of the Islamic perspective on disability led to adopting segregation as a modern idea which benefited disabled people, without thinking of its negative aspects. This was enhanced by the collectivist culture which embraced the adoption of the medical model of disability (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007; Bazna, 2003).

Moreover, the West has moved on to more inclusive policies and practices, while the Kuwaiti 'borrowed segregation' policy stands still. In this situation the 'borrowed policy' has changed to a 'recycling policy'. This 'static situation' is investigated further throughout the empirical research; the following chapters address the present obstacles to inclusive education in Kuwait.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The questions determining the present research concentrate on certain issues and possibly say too little about others; for example, the role of the UN, policy development in England in earlier periods and Islam's perspective on disability. The comparative approach taken, however, identifies some similar and different variables in the two contexts (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Summary of the main comparative variables

Compared variable	England	Kuwait
Socio-economic background	Multicultural country as a result of immigration, which is hard to accommodate; this has led to the expansion of the SEN policy to include disadvantaged individuals.	Homogeneous culture where the majority are Arab and Muslim. This is advantageous, because fewer issues need to be tackled.
	Liberal Democracy (welfare state)	Islamic/Democracy (welfare state)
	Both Kuwait and England are considered democracies. However, the degree of democratisation is different. In Kuwait the voice of disabled people struggles to be heard, while the political system in England, taking the human rights approach, empowers disabled people and their families.	
Definition of SEN	Inclusive education extends beyond special needs arising from disabilities, and includes other sources of disadvantage and marginalisation, such as gender, poverty, language and ethnicity.	Mainly focuses on children with disability, emphasising most severe cognitive disability and physical disability.
Definition of inclusive education	More accurately called 'inclusive education' in the English context than the Kuwaiti, because in England it is based on the beliefs that all children have a right to attend their local school regardless of difference and that the school should be part of the community.	Inclusion is confused with integration, which more accurately describes not so much a policy as a set of technical and administrative arrangements to relocate children with certain types of disability into mainstream schools without modification.
The target population of inclusive policy	Not limited to disability, it is expanded to include the disadvantaged in society as a response to the multicultural nature of this society.	It is limited to two groups: slow learners (MLD) and children with Down's syndrome.
Inclusive policy	- Multi-track system	- Dual system
Inclusive debate	It is active at levels from policy down to schools. To this debate parents, children, disabled people, teachers, schools, organisations, academia and government make contributions and help in developing and driving communities towards inclusive education.	Not established at the policy level or the practical level of schools. The delay in starting this debate results from being unaware of the importance of inclusive education as a human right for everyone. Therefore, policy development is slow, if not static.

This table summarises the similar and different aspects of inclusive education in England and Kuwait. The similarities between the two contexts are limited to the international influence, which has been one of the main factors that promoted and introduced inclusive education to both contexts and the same tensions and dilemmas surrounding inclusive education within both educational systems.

Differences outnumber similarities, as the table reveals. The differences are explained by the main theme of this chapter, showing how the concepts, policy and practices from one context to another went through local filters of cultural, social, political and economic influences which lead to ‘transformation’. For example, when inclusion reaches Kuwait, the concept is interpreted and applied in contradictory ways and transformed from inclusion to integration. The process of moving educational ideas around the world can be described in three key terms: ‘transfer’, ‘translation’ and ‘transformation’ (Cowen, 2006; Tanaka, 2005). Applying these to inclusive education in Kuwait, we can see the following:

1. Transfer: this started with discovering oil and the colonial period and led to looking abroad to transfer educational policies, including special educational policy.
2. Translation: this phase reconfigured the transferred policy, neglecting the inclusive nature of the society. Inclusion was understood as ‘integration’.
3. Transformation: this means profound changes within local culture which could lead to transformation and re-interpretation of ideas.

The documentation research highlights the first two of these phases at the policy level which could extend to the practice level as explored in the following chapter.

Exploring the different perspectives of inclusive education in England, from the Conservative Party's announcement (2007) of *'Inclusion: A failed ideology'*, Warnock (2005) introduces the idea of a u-turn in inclusion policy. Equally, the obstacles identified in the House of Commons report (2006) raise doubts about whether inclusive education in England is indeed right or wrong. Furthermore, is it working or not? However, further reading and reflection on the model adopted in the present research has helped to produce a more balanced view and expand my understanding of inclusive education. Dyson (2005) sees inclusion as a global agenda covered by locality, a view which presents inclusion as a slippery concept whose meaning changes according to the socio-economic and cultural context.

My central argument is that, despite the contradiction between policies, some schools were evidently able to develop more inclusive practice in the tension between these policies (Dyson, 2001; Ainscow, 1999; Skrtic, 1991). Many argue for more practical solutions to this tension in order to develop more inclusive practice. For example, Norwich (2008) justifies this dualism in the current policy as a way of resolving the tensions between different ideologists. Researchers such as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004, p.16), moreover, recommend a shift of focus from the tension towards the inclusive aspects of the current policy:

We suggest that the focus of efforts by academics and other inclusion advocates in helping to reshape national policy, might not simply rest on the radical critique of the current settlement... Rather, we might concentrate on trying to expand the inclusive aspects of current policy and on showing how 'inclusion' and 'standards', understood more broadly than has hitherto been the case, have much to offer each other.

In this report, the English educational system emerges as not perfect or free of obstacles, but certainly with examples of better practice from which to learn.

Finally, comparative studies have practical concerns, in particular for teachers, parents and policy-makers, which cover school development and classroom practice. The following chapters will address this practical side of the comparative study. A critical analysis of the current situation of special education/inclusive education based on empirical research will enable us to focus on the influences determining policy and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FINDINGS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOLS

5.1 Introduction

Based on fieldwork in Kuwait and England, this chapter addresses the research question:

‘What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream schools in Kuwait and England?’

This chapter presents findings from the schools in the two contexts, starting with Kuwait and continuing in England. The chapter ends with a summary identifying the major differences between the two contexts.

5.2 Kuwaiti Schools

5.2.1 School background

The present research was conducted in two Kuwaiti schools, one for boys and one for girls chosen at random from the 4 primary schools offering the MLD inclusion programme. The first (ML) was opened in 1965 in Kuwait city. It is a primary mainstream state school occupying a three-storey building, with 391 pupils from 7-12 years old, 22 with MLD. It has 65 teachers altogether, 24 of whom teach special classes.

The second (AM) opened in 1936. It is a state primary mainstream school with 338 girls of 7-12, 20 with MLD. The teachers number 63, 16 teaching special classes. The table below summarises the background information.

Table 5.1 School background information in Kuwait

School Characteristics	School ML (boys' school)	School AM (girls' school)
Total number of teachers	65	63
Teachers of special classes	24	16
Total number of classes	19	16
Number of special classes	4	4
Total number of students	391	338
Number of students with MLD	22	20
Type of provision for children with MLD	Special classes; included with other students only during assembly, playtime and extra activities.	Special classes; included with other students only during assembly, playtime and extra activities.
Building structure	Three floors, large building, special classes located in separate wing on the second floor near their teacher's room.	Three floors, large building, special classes located in separate wing on the third floor near their teacher's room.

This table pinpoints the degree of similarity between the schools, which would indicate its centralised educational system, covering more than these two. Indeed, this high degree of similarity is a reason for the qualitative research. It was considered appropriate, allowing a deeper exploration of actual practice in schools and the identification of differences in practice which revealed whether and how individuals were resisting the centralised system.

In mainstream schools the special classes for children with MLD have their own teachers. They share only the location and the management staff. Both schools locate the MLD classes

in a separate wing away from the main school. They are on the third floor and the second floor of the girls' and boys' schools, respectively, some distance from the school facilities and the management supervision.

However, there are also some differences between these schools, in particular at management level. These differences are highlighted in the next section, which shows the themes which emerge from analysing the data.

5.2.2 Inclusive education discourse in Kuwait

Here I explore the views, perspectives and understandings of the school staff on the concepts of inclusive education. The following table introduces the participants and their jobs.

Table 5.2 School staff information

School Staff (Pseudonyms)	Job Description	School
LI	Science Teacher	AM (girls' School)
AH	Science Teacher	AM (girls' School)
NJ	Science Teacher	AM (girls' School)
SR	Science Teacher	ML (boys' school)
HS	Science Teacher/SENCO	ML (boys' school)
BD	Science Teacher	ML (boys' school)
TT	Math Teacher	ML (boys' school)
KH	Arabic Teacher/SENCO	AM (girls' School)
HTB(ML)	Headteacher of boys' school	ML (boys' school)
HTG(AM)	Headteacher of girls' school	AM (girls' School)
PSB(ML)	Psychologist of boys' school	ML (boys' school)
PSG (AM)	Psychologist of girls' school	AM (girls' School)

This stage of data analysis is important because their perceptions influence the implementation of the inclusive education practised in the schools. From the data, four themes emerge, as discussed in turn below.

5.2.2.1 Understanding inclusion

According to the interview data, the school staff had differing personal concepts of inclusive education, depending on previous exposure to this concept. The first issue to highlight is the uncertainty about the meaning of ‘inclusive education’ among the programme’s teachers and the host schools’ staff:

‘What do you mean? Do you mean the ‘special classrooms’? (HTB, ML)

‘What do you mean? ...It can mean, for example, including the special classes with the normal classes, namely, including the slow-learner children with normal ones’ (BD, ML).

This vagueness and confusion over defining inclusion leads to very different interpretations, as the psychologist at ML states:

‘No! I do not support it (full inclusion) ...Because their level (MLD children) is a little below the level of a normal child ...So, if we put them with those children who have other disabilities, this will have an effect on them and, thus, they will regress and imitate them and that is why inclusion is very difficult’ (PSB, ML).

Other teachers define and understand inclusion under certain conditions, for example, HS (ML):

'It is the inclusion of students who have learning difficulties with normal students but with a special programme of teaching skills in a special manner for such children'

Her view of the conditions was shared, for example, by the ML school psychologist:

'It is including students in the environment of general education and not making a distinction between them and other students by separating them in special schools or special classes ...It is just to have teachers especially for them and to only put them in special classes where their number is small but still inside the normal school.' (PSB, ML).

Significantly, only two teachers acknowledge that there are different perspectives on inclusion. KH distinguished two definitions of inclusion, based on her practical experience in the MLD programme:

'There are two definitions of inclusion...the theoretical definition of including disabled children in normal classes, while my personal definition, which I acquired from my actual experience, is the existing partial inclusion which I prefer; in that, a student is included in non-basic subjects, such as music, sports and activities where partial inclusion is the best means to achieve individual education, which is hard to achieve in normal classes.'

KH introduces the dilemma, between radical inclusion advocates and other forms of inclusion, which schools encounter when they try to include children with SEN. In contrast, TT opposes the current practice of special classes on the basis of experience as the mother of a child with SEN:

'What I know is that inclusion is to include the student with learning difficulties in the normal class together with normal students...this is wrong as what we have is not inclusion, is not inclusion, because we are still isolating them in special classes alone. Inclusion is to include the SEN student with normal students.'

Seeking more explanation, I asked in turn, 'Do you mean the theoretical definition of inclusion?' She replied:

'True inclusion is to include the student with normal students. I have a daughter with special needs and she is included in a normal class with normal students.'

Her strong belief in this model of inclusion comes from her personal history and from her participation in different courses and seminars to find support for her child. These factors have shaped a positive attitude to inclusive education. Yet KH's practical experience, equally, is the main factor shaping her understanding and attitude to inclusive education and her preference for proximity inclusion. In summary, the attitude to inclusion among teachers and school staff in this fieldwork varied from uncertainty, through advocacy of proximity inclusion to advocacy of full inclusion. As stated earlier, 'proximity inclusion' is related to location only, without social or academic inclusion. In practice, it is keeping these children in

their special classes, separate from others in the mainstream school. In contrast, advocates of full inclusion demand no boundaries in the mainstream class and modifications in order to accommodate children with special needs.

5.2.2.2 Purpose of inclusive education

The school staff responded to the question ‘What is the purpose of inclusive education?’ in varying ways: normalisation, avoiding stigma, socialisation and meeting educational needs. Both headteachers agreed that the purpose of inclusion is to ‘*normalise*’ children with SEN:

‘The student does not feel there is something wrong with her... I do not mean it is a disease...I mean that she does not feel she has an imperfection that makes her different from her other schoolmates’ (HTG, AM).

The other purpose highlighted is the need to ‘avoid stigma’, as TT reports:

‘So, if they are asked “where does your child study?” they answer with the name of a mainstream school, which is a governmental public school and not “He studies in special classes or special institutes....”’

She explains that to be included in mainstream schools is to avoid stigma; for this reason parents and children hide the fact that they are in special classes, separate from the mainstream school and others. This point is explored further in the children’s case studies. Other staff also believe that inclusion’s main purpose is to ‘socialise’ this group of children:

'It means...it aims at having no gap between them... There is a humanitarian aspect here as if I were in a special education school and went out into society, I would be isolated; but, when I am in these classes, I will have friends and know my society' (SR, ML).

Meeting the educational needs of those with MLD was viewed as an important purpose of the special classes/proximity inclusion, not necessarily served by including them in mainstream classes. KH responded to my question on the purpose of inclusion by talking about the importance of special classes:

'It aims at enhancing the student's self-confidence and ensuring that they will not be introverted. When a student starts to join special classes, she is afraid and does not have self-confidence because of the stress of being compared with other students; but, once she settles down and feels stable, her self-confidence is reinforced and she becomes more capable.'

Interestingly, TT is the only teacher who criticises the current 'programme of special classes', as follows:

'First of all, it is a psychological goal for the student in that he is included with his peers and those of his own age so that he will not feel inferior to them because every child is smart and has inside a social if not academic intelligence.'

She advocates including these children within the mainstream classroom, to avoid their feeling inferior:

‘So, I would like him to be put into the mainstream class and receive there some kind of intensive support.’

5.2.2.3 Criteria for inclusion

Interviewees all had strong opinions about which children can be taught in mainstream classes. The major factors in shaping their attitudes were the severity of the disability, the presence of cognitive delay and the child’s physical appearance. The headteacher of the girls’ school made it clear that the severity of the disability was decisive in determining the ability of a mainstream school to include it:

‘No!... They are difficult...and I do not support it (inclusion)...unless it is applied according to the degree of disease...If the difficulties are severe, it would be better for the student to be in a special class.’

Mental capacity was another factor in the participant’s attitude to including children with disability. Most of the participants preferred to include a child with physical disability so long as s/he had normal cognitive ability:

‘I do not think that children with any kind of mental disability have the ability to be included in the public schools; but those with physical disabilities, such as paralysis and not with sensory disabilities are the best for inclusion. It only requires the provision of special approaches and they do not need any change to be made to the curriculum or the instructions and they will not be a burden to the teacher’ (KH, AM).

The SGSE member agreed with school staff:

'Inclusion should be fundamental unless the retardation case is above the average or severe.'

It appeared that school staff preferred including physically disabled children without cognitive delay, since these do not require any changes in classroom practice. But, these quotations reveal that for my respondents, children with physical disabilities could be excluded too unless they could prove that they were mentally able to participate.

The only objection to including children with physical disabilities came from teacher TT. She noted the limitations of their surroundings, without mentioning any condition to do with their mental ability:

'I expect the group with physical disabilities to be hard to include... The buildings are not ready yet' (TT, ML).

Inclusion was also limited by the children's physical appearance; they should look 'like' the others, as PSG observed:

'... No! No! It is hard even for physical disabilities...because there is bullying by students (non-disabled)... Laughing and embarrassing questions such as "Why can't you walk?" will negatively affect the psychology of disabled students' (PSG, AM).

In fact, admitting children with sensory impairments faced more opposition from school staff:

'We tried hearing disability once; but it did not work... I did not feel he could accommodate himself in the classroom' (HTB, ML).

Therefore, children with MLD were regarded as easier to include in mainstream school but not necessarily in mainstream classes:

'They just have an IQ below the average, namely they are normal and have no physical disabilities nor are they mentally retarded... There is nothing wrong with them as their IQ is just variant' (PSB, ML).

This point supports the decision in this study to focus on the inclusive education offered to MLD children. As explained above, this group was considered to be the easiest group of children with SEN to include in Kuwaiti mainstream schools.

5.2.2.4 Drawing boundaries for inclusion

The results indicate that all the participants attached conditions to their list of those who could be included, holding strong opinions about what type of inclusion space they should have. To avoid misunderstanding of 'inclusion', whereby a respondent could confuse meanings, given the current provision of special classes, I rephrased the interview question as follows: 'What do you think about teaching children with and those without special needs together?'

I did this to avoid any misunderstanding of the term 'inclusion' whereby a respondent could confuse meanings, given the current provision of special classes. The idea of teaching children with SEN and other children in the same class was unanimously rejected:

'No! They will be lost... They will feel as if they are living in another world' (BD, ML).

'It is very difficult... No! I do not support inclusion...' (PSG, AM).

This opposition to such practice is justified, for the Kuwaiti participants, on the basis of different sets of factors: those to do with MLD characteristics in children and those to do with the features of mainstream schools. First, children's characteristics evidently influence the attitudes of school staff to full inclusion:

'I put aside the idea of including them into general classes with normal children because this category needs special care' (HTG, AM).

'The student feels some sort of frustration because they cannot keep pace with the other students' (HS, ML).

To me, what comes over clearly from such perceptions of inclusion is the influence of the medical model, which locates the problem within the child. In the above quotations and throughout this chapter, the language of the deficit/medical model recurs everywhere in the interview transcripts, in such terms as *normal*, *abnormal* and *IQ*. Moreover, the professionals never mentioned any limitations within the classroom or the surroundings which might have presented barriers to including these children.

However, the school staff did mention the type of inclusion they believe to be best for children with MLD. Most of them preferred proximity inclusion, the current form of provision, as NJ states:

'I prefer the existing [form of] inclusion, in that they are taught in special classrooms inside the normal school.'

It is significant that interviewees emphasise the deficit within the MLD child, rather than imagining changes to undesirable aspects of the mainstream school whereby its classes could include MLD children. Next, I present the results of my attempts to shift the focus from the child to the school context.

5.2.3 Barriers to the development of inclusive practice in mainstream schools

Analysing the Kuwaiti data required much attention, due to the overlap in the participants' responses. These participants tended to talk about current practice as if it offered the only model. Therefore, my task as a researcher was to find different answers to the research questions. I tried hard to make them 'think out of the box' – about other possibilities and types of inclusive practice.

5.2.3.1 Challenges facing the current practice in Kuwait

Challenges associated within the host school

Including MLD children in the mainstream school demands more of the school management team in carrying out their task. During the interviews, much information was obtained from the school staff about the influence of this leadership on inclusive practice. Therefore, I

examine the relationship between the MLD teachers and those at management level, to identify its influence on current practice.

Management level preparation to accommodate the MLD programme

Findings indicate the unpreparedness of the host schools, which made no preparations to ease the integration of the programme by introducing it to staff. For example, the headteacher of the girls' school had been appointed only two years before. She spoke of her unexpected discovery of the children with MLD:

'When I started at the school, I was surprised to find special classes and of course I did not have any experience in this field.'

Her only source of information was the teachers of the special class:

'So, I held a meeting with the teachers of the special classes and asked them to explain to me the nature of their work, how students were selected and how they found out they were MLD.'

In the same way, PSB talked about her experience when the MLD programme started in her host school:

'The programme was new, only just started, and they did not understand what was going on. Even teachers (mainstream teachers) did not know who those students were and why they had been transferred to the school and why they had been rejected by some schools and accepted

by others, depending of course on the school management. In the beginning, there was a lot of fear between us' (PSB, ML).

The regulations attached to the MLD programme determined the relationship between MLD programme staff and the headteachers. The regulations gave the latter the right to close MLD classes at any time and accordingly the school was considered a 'host school'. These regulations were confirmed by the head of the MLD department and the programme staff. PSB (ML) described the effect of this rule:

'...the principal of the previous school rejected the programme because of one of our students who had behavioural problems; so we moved to this school. This is because a school principal is entitled to reject the programme.'

She described other experiences with an authoritarian headteacher:

'...it depends on the nature of the management... There is a principal who likes to know and understand the nature of the work; so, she asks, gets involved and supervises. There is another kind of principal who considers us guests; so, they isolate and leave us alone to work in whatever way we like without any intervention or involvement.'

The SGSE member highlighted the lack of regulation to coordinate the relationship between the programme and the host school:

'...we have rules that show how to deal with students; but, there is nothing that can regulate dealing with schools.'

The kind of authoritarian practice which the rules allowed was disapproved of by the headteachers of the schools under study. Taking this issue further, I asked the headteachers what they thought of these rules. HTG rejected them:

'No! No! This is very bad... I would never support using such a word (host school); they are not guests' (HTG, AM).

Although rejecting the concept of 'host school', the school management should overcome the sense of isolation which these rules create. It was evident that the headteacher of the girls' school made efforts to mitigate this sense among the MLD students and their teachers, through encouraging the teachers to communicate and feel that they belonged to the school:

'In the past, they were unnaturally neglected; so, when I asked the teachers "What are your needs?" they answered "We are not used to such treatment". I told them "The reason I am here is to be responsible for you and the rest of the students under my supervision and there is no problem". They replied that they were used to being turned away by the previous management and hearing just the word "No". I told them that the word "No" is not included in my vocabulary.'

This report implies a lack of supervision from the previous headteacher. The current headteacher took the lead by setting up, for example, collaborative teamwork between teachers as a way of ensuring professional development:

'When I entered the classroom with the teacher (name) in it... I noticed that her teaching level was poor though I did not of course tell her that... She asked me "Is my teaching good?" I said "Yes! But you need experience". She was very delighted and I coordinated with the Arabic Department for her to attend lessons and participate with them in preparing.'

Her ability to transfer teacher expertise where it is needed is another mark of her approach as a headteacher:

'...the (Arabic teacher)... I thought of making use of her experience, as she had knowledge and experience of learning difficulties with Arabic... when a student came...whose special circumstances...resulted in severe weakness in Arabic...I asked the Arabic teacher (NAME) to teach her...one week later, the mother came and told me that [the student] had started to read; so... The experience and activity of [the teacher] led to a change in the psychology of the student.'

Nonetheless, the field notes and interviews show variations in practice between the headteacher of the girls' school and that of the boys' school. Despite the brief, positive and diplomatic answers from the boys' headteacher, there was a noticeable lack of engagement in the school. For example, she admitted the difficulties with curriculum:

Headteacher: 'There are also problems in terms of the curriculum.'

Researcher: 'Do you discuss with teachers their own views of the curricula?'

Headteacher: 'No! But I feel how difficult the curricula are.'

The headteacher of the boys' school did not go into detail about her relationship with the teachers of the special class. She summed it up as follows:

'Thank God! I have an excellent relationship with them and they are cooperative with me.'

She did not specify what kind of collaboration. After spending more than three weeks in this school I could establish only the type of collaboration related to administrative work, as carried out by teachers; this is explored below.

In addition, the field notes show that the headteacher of the boys' school entered 10 minutes before an English class ended, to evaluate the teacher's practice when I was observing. The shocked class teacher became nervous, changed her lesson-plan and started to repeat the material again. After the lesson had finished and the headteacher had left, the teacher began to complain about the headteacher's approach to evaluation:

'How come she came in the last 10 minutes to evaluate me? This is not fair.'

This issue of the headteacher's ability to evaluate teaching practice fairly was problematic, in particular because she was writing the teacher's evaluation report throughout the interview. These two incidents make one wonder about the role of this headteacher in improving

practice, and compare her leadership approach with that of the headteacher of the girls' school.

School culture

The findings revealed that another issue affecting staff within the MLD programme was the school's lack of awareness. The teachers of the special classes underlined this lack of awareness among the mainstream teachers, despite their efforts to enlighten them about the MLD programme. For example, KH (AM) says:

'There is no motivation (from the mainstream teachers) to be introduced to this group. I have distributed pamphlets explaining the nature of our work and the classes we teach as an attempt to communicate...but nobody cares.'

Similarly, this finding exposed the existence of what seems here like prejudice:

'...some teachers think that our students are mad and some teachers use that word to describe them, to the extent that some normal children won't walk past our wing... For instance, more than once when I was on my shift, they used to come to me and complain "Miss, this mad person hit me" or they might use other descriptive words, such as "vampire"' (SR, ML).

'Teachers call us "teachers of the slow-learner students"... In some cases, they say to us "Why have you become a slow learner like your students? It's because you keep teaching them that you have become like them"' (TT, ML).

Some attempts, however, were made to overcome this prejudice: PSB (ML) said that she was tired of trying to raise awareness among mainstream teachers when only some showed interest. Also, the participants highlighted the role of the headteacher in raising awareness:

'It depends on the management... If management is interested in this aspect, the awareness will be greater' (PSB, ML).

This name-calling culture included all the mainstream students. In the boys' school in particular, name-calling was clear during break-times, as I could clearly observe. For example, during one break-time, Sami (an MLD student) who was described by his teacher as a trouble-maker, was standing outside his classroom when some mainstream children started to call insults after him, such as 'mad'. Soon a fight started and the teacher took Sami to the staffroom to calm him down. She blamed him for mixing with such students but the ones who were responsible went away, without being scolded. HTG (AM) directly blamed a lack of interaction for such behaviour:

'I expect that lack of awareness is due to the lack of contact and interaction with them because their inclusion in general classes is not acceptable.'

The interaction between MLD students and mainstream students, who were obviously separate within the host school, was another issue raised by the participants and mentioned in the field notes. In both schools, MLD students avoided mixing with the others, preferring to stay in their own classrooms/wing. However, the responses from the schools to this issue were different.

The girls' headteacher opposed this kind of isolation and spent much time in encouraging the MLD children to feel that they belonged to the school, should take more part in the school's activities and make friends:

'... I included them in the morning assembly. They were so overjoyed and when they asked to participate in the activities, such as "scouts blossoms", I did not object but encouraged them to join the group...until I made them salute the flag.'

In spite of these efforts in the girls' school, the psychologist admitted that there was contention between the students:

'Sometimes... they use insulting words (such as insane).'

Similarly, the MLD boys preferred to stay in their own classrooms during break-time to avoid mixing with the others. The headteacher and other staff referred to this as behavioural difficulties:

'No! They don't [mix with the others] because they stay with each other in the break period, but there are cases that need continuous follow-up and should not be left alone...so we draw up a surveillance schedule for teachers to watch such cases so that they will not cause problems' (BD, ML).

The boys' school did not encourage the groups to mix during break-time. From the field notes, I observed a special class teacher pushing and shouting at a mainstream student to make him leave the MLD wing. When I asked why she had done that, she insisted that this was the way to avoid any bad behaviour or bullying of one group by another.

This lack of interaction was highlighted when the nature of the programme changed for reasons supplied by PSG:

'... according to the instructions from the Ministry, it was intended that the inclusion [of the MLD children] in the non-basic subjects should have been full inclusion, that is, for them all to be in the same classroom. However, in some schools such as ours, they have a special teacher for music and art subjects; so they do not mix with other students except in sports when the special teacher for sports was transferred to another school; so they are included now.'

But even when they were included in non-core subjects, they did not join in:

'And they do not follow any activities or do not get involved in the class period. They [the teachers] just make them sit by themselves' (TT, ML).

Another confirmation came from SR (AM):

'At least, they should include them in these subjects as this is a chance for them to make new friendships and increase their self-confidence. ... [Now] there are no new friendships. They

are alone and I do not see them playing with other students and it is very rare for me to see them mix with each other. There are also the problems of violence and using inappropriate words to describe them, such as “you are mad”’.

PSG (AM) responded that this issue reflected the lack of clarity from the policy-makers in conveying their vision to the school staff:

‘I do not know whether the Ministry is trying something or it is due to a teacher shortage... [the MLD children] can be included in these subjects because they excel in these fields. ...but... as there is no stable inclusion of students in these subjects...if there is a special teacher, they will be separated and if there is no teacher, they are included’ (PSG, AM).

However, this refusal to mix with the others was not limited to the mainstream students but also extended to the MLD students, who viewed themselves as a group, as AH (AM) mentioned:

‘No, there is no inclusion, as the remaining mainstream students have a preconception that they are people to be afraid of... They do not associate with them. (Researcher asked whose fault this was.) The fault lies with both. For example, the MLD children like only to play football but the mainstream teacher has a curriculum related with general education... Also, I have to remark, when a sports teacher likes to make up teams, she cannot make up a team of five students versus a team of 20 students...’

This confirmed the comments of the maths teacher (TT) on the type of participation when the MLD students were included in non-core subjects in the absence of a teacher of special classes.

Physical location

The first critique expressed by the headteacher of the girls' school was the physical location of the special classes:

'When I started my work, I was surprised to find special classes and the first thing I criticised was their location, isolated on the third floor, which made me upset.'

She suggested therefore that future planners should avoid such isolation, not mixing them totally, but not having a special wing for MLD students; and accommodating their teachers with other teachers in order to exchange expertise. In the short term, however, this solution is not possible:

'...as there is no place for them close to the rest of the school, what I'm trying to do now is to provide them with everything I provide to normal classrooms, in order to achieve equality.'

Also, the field notes indicated a different approach in the responses of the two schools to the location of MLD classes. On the one hand, as discussed earlier, the headteacher of the girls' school deplored the location of MLD classes on the third floor and their being labelled 'sunshine classes'. On the other, the MLD classes in the boys' school were on the second floor in a separate wing called 'special classes'. This variation in dealing with the MLD

programme shows the influence of the management team, namely, the part played by the headteacher in mediating the centralised policy.

Challenges within the MLD programme

Efficacy of the staff in the programme

The interview data revealed the way in which the staff perceived each other. The school staff questioned their colleagues' efficacy in teaching children with MLD. All the teachers including one headteacher (AM school) agreed that the lack of training and qualifications in SEN teaching is a major challenge. When their school joins the inclusive programme, teachers can join one course which lasts a month provided by the Ministry of Education. This is explored in Chapter Six.

Staff highlighted the efficacy of the MLD teachers. Concerns about their efficacy became a challenge within the programme, which raised issues about the criterion used for selecting teachers to join it.

'It needs amending, because the programme teachers should be specialised; they complain about their need for training' (PSG, AM).

Their views are supported by some teachers themselves, for example, TT:

'...the way they accept teachers in the programme is not efficacious ...the basis should be the teacher's activity, ambition and dynamism, so that they can truly give something to this group.'

This teacher gave more details on the inefficacy of some of the programme teachers:

'...my heart breaks for this group when some teachers address them with such remarks as "you're stupid, don't you understand"they tell them "thank God I am teaching you" ... Should we treat them this way? Were they brought here by their parents to be treated by us this way? Or always reminding them of the favour we do in teaching them?'

But she could appreciate the reasons behind this kind of behaviour from some teachers:

'Why... It is due to the pressure on them of having many things to do, such as administrative work; school activities; records; class periods – class period tables; requests from the supervisor; requests from the headteacher; requests from the deputy headteacher.'

She also noted that the lack of supervision and inspection has led to the teachers being complacent and not pursuing their own professional development:

'Do you know why there is this kind of teacher? It is because there is no supervisor to oversee them. The supervisor visited us only once in the first course (semester) and once in the second course. There is no supervisor in the class period and the headmistress is not willing to do it. She is waiting for the supervisor to show up, in order to have someone with her in the same class period.'

Also, teachers have their own view of the psychologist's efficacy. For example AH (AM) stated:

'...from my own experience, there was communication and effectiveness in my previous school... The psychologist used to work even after school... She was always with the students at various times and in break-times and she encouraged them in all subjects.'

But the psychologist at her current school was not the same:

'There is no care ...when you say that a certain student needs help, she (the psychologist) does not care....she just takes administrative action and nothing more...'

These views of each other within the programme and within the school in general raise questions about the teamwork which should make inclusiveness easier.

The process of diagnosis

The process of diagnosis starts when a child is struggling in mainstream education and is referred to the school psychologist to have an IQ test. If the child's IQ score in this test is 70–85 s/he will be eligible for the inclusive (MLD) programme. However, the validity of the diagnostic process was questioned by the staff of the MLD programme, who indicated that it had problems. Incorrect diagnoses are ascribed to different causes such as problems in conducting the test; the disadvantages of some social backgrounds; and inappropriate mainstream teaching. First, incorrect procedures in conducting IQ tests were highlighted:

'Diagnosing has caused problems for us. Sometimes, I am shocked by the diagnosis results... The problem lies in some of the specialists who conduct the test... Some of them cannot master the procedures...and some of them do not take into account the environment in which

the test is conducted; for example, the calmness and stability of the child, the noise and the temperature during the test...as all these factors affect the performance of the student... All these details that affect test results should be written down... There is a problem with marking the test, because a test results in a set of marks... Sometimes, I find an arithmetical mistake in adding or in the results or in giving the marks... ’ (PSG, AM).

Second, social problems could underlie incorrect diagnoses:

‘...a teacher found out that a student was very intelligent; but, due to his family problems, he was transferred to this programme. Also, there was another case of the reverse, in that a student was severely mentally retarded.’

TT spoke of her experience of such problems:

‘We had a smart student who had very poor hearing; so his problem was that he did not respond because he could not hear well ... he was returned to general education after this discovery and they gave him a hearing aid.’

Other reasons for excluding children from mainstream classes were inappropriate treatment from a mainstream teacher, which sometimes kept children back. They might miss promotion until they were excluded from mainstream classes and joined the programme:

‘There is family break-up and (anonymous) students who are sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and also there are several problems in general education such as violent

teachers who yell all the time without taking into consideration the psychology of students’
(PSG, AM).

The SGSE member highlighted another issue in this regard; that four authorities might diagnose: the Ministry of Health, the Secretariat General for Special Education, the Supreme Council for the Affairs of the Disabled, and the Department of Private and Special Education. This led to variations in diagnosing the same case:

‘I always receive four reports, each one is very individual and all are different from each other... They (parents) come to me every day and they even cry, saying “Which report should we believe?”’

This point is further discussed in Chapter Seven, which explores the MLD children’s schooling experience.

Parental involvement

In both schools, many mentioned the lack of engagement from parents. More evidence came from the field notes: none of the parents of the MLD students attended the parent-teachers’ meeting. NJ elaborates:

‘We distributed invitations to attend the meeting and only three parents among the 16 students’ families attended the meeting, in addition to the fact that they do not follow up the progress of their children and there is always the excuse of being busy. However, when there was an ‘open day’, the mothers attended for the recreational activities.’

Exploring further this question of attending such meetings, it seems to me perhaps an indicator of other issues, not wholly a lack of parental involvement. I think that, for parents trying to avoid stigma, it would not be attractive to attend a meeting in a big hall where the teachers were divided into two sections, general classes and MLD special classes, with signs on the tables. It would indeed be hard for a parent to cross the hall to reach the MLD special teachers' table. Such parents may well avoid this meeting, preferring an 'open day' without a label being attached to their child.

However, generalising this issue to all parents is unjust. The MLD teachers are more precise:

'...my relationship with the parents who care and attend the meetings is good; but the other remaining parents who number more than the first group think that the responsibility for teaching their children is ours only and they treat us as if we were private teachers especially for their children; so, they do not ask anything or follow it up... Sometimes, the social status such as the old age of parents, some of whom are non-Kuwaitis, and the break-up of parents may have a role in the students being neglected' (HS, ML).

This issue is discussed in more depth, from the parents' point of view, in Chapter Seven.

Staff shortages

In both schools there were complaints about the shortage of staff, in particular, among the psychologists and social service staff, as a challenge for the programme. Staff emphasised that their need for the services of these professionals relates to the circumstances of the MLD students. TT referred to the shortage of psychologists and social specialists:

'In all schools, there is only one psychologist and no social studies specialist. There is only one psychologist who works alone under all the pressures from the entire school. We have a shortage.'

However, the same situation existed in the girls' school; AH pinpointed a shortage of speech and language therapists:

'... Last year, [the speech and language therapist] ... used to come over twice a week... There is supposed to be one speech and language specialist for each school. But this year she came only once at the beginning of the school year when she made her assessments. Now, more than two months have passed and she has not come back.'

The teachers in the girls' school expressed their need for social services support, not because of behavioural difficulties such as the boys' school shows, but because of the social circumstances of the MLD students:

'There is no social specialist to help identify the social condition of the students and relieve the burdens of the teacher' (NJ, AM).

The staff shortage extended to the curriculum supervisor, as HTG (AM) revealed:

'We suffer a severe shortage. You can imagine that, since the start of the school year, the supervisor came only once and when I asked why she did not come so often, she said that she was the only supervisor for special classes in all the schools in Kuwait.'

Challenges within the educational policy

The challenge within these schools started at the policy level. Some problems were not easy to overcome, in particular when the headteacher was dealing with the Ministry of Education. The headteacher of the girls' school expressed her frustration with this Ministry because coordination between the general education department and special educational department was poor, which led her into a bureaucratic trap:

'When an engineer came from the Ministry to put in lockers for students, I told him that I had 20 classrooms, not 16 as was mentioned in the report, and I insisted on them getting their rights, just like my students [in the mainstream]. I was surprised to receive a phone call from the official telling me that he had provided lockers for the special education classrooms after having had a struggle with the general education official, so that I could provide them with advanced facilities.'

Another example of poor coordination, according to the girls' headteacher, was as follows:

'Unfortunately, when we say that we have special classes and request anything for them, I do not know why the officials in the Ministry refuse our request. For example, when we requested tables they refused to add these classrooms [to the list] as if the Special Education Department is isolated from the rest of the Ministry... the Ministry has not yet acknowledged their existence [sc. the SEN students'] in my school. I found this very strange and it made it difficult for me to coordinate.'

Similarly, HTB (ML) mentioned the same difficulties with the Ministry of Education at policy level:

'...with the change made to primary education in the introduction of the 'achievement portfolio', we encountered difficulties due to the difference in skills, as the skills of the normal student differ from the skills of the slow-learning student and this caused a problem with the evaluation process.'

She noted that the new policy took no account of the presence of the MLD classes within mainstream schools, which made it hard for these schools to fit these students into the new educational initiative. More evidence of the separation between inclusion/SEN education and mainstream education came from within the Ministry of Education; the SGSE member's response regarding current trends in Kuwaiti policy was:

'I cannot convey to you the trends of the Ministry of Education; but, I can convey to you our trends as the Secretariat General, in that we try to provide our students with the best learning environment that suits their abilities.'

The schoolteachers shared the same problems. They pinpointed the lack of understanding at policy level:

'They should make teachers free, not so burdened and relieve us of administrative burdens...with no understanding of the nature of our work and the fact that our students are not normal ones so that the teacher can teach the lesson and that's it. When we teach the

same lesson on the following day, we find out that the students have completely forgotten the content and so we have to repeat every word. But there are directions to assign administrative work to us to keep us occupied!’

This interaction between the macro (policy) level and the meso (school) level influenced current practice in, for example, the failure to prepare the headteacher to supervise the MLD programme and the poor coordination between the general and SEN departments. More evidence was provided by the SGSE member, who had reservations about the SEN system structure:

‘The pyramid structure we have is extremely complicated as there is more than one entity representing special education...this is the biggest negative aspect we have... There is the Secretariat General for Special Education, the Supreme Council for the Affairs of the Disabled, the Department of Special schools and also the Department of Private and Special Education. All these entities provide special education and this is the problem... Thus, special education is so lost in Kuwait... The problem of special education here is in the several departments and each wants to be the dominant one..., the existing situation is complex and each of these departments has its own management and trends.’

These difficulties created by a bureaucratic system affect the headteacher’s development plans for the school. In addition, the influence of the meso and macro levels on the micro (classroom) level is addressed in detail in Chapter Six.

5.2.3.2 Challenges to the expansion of inclusive education

This section addresses the challenges in crossing the barrier to ‘full inclusion’; including MLD children in mainstream classes. Within mainstream schools the challenges were varied. Teachers and staff had a negative attitude to this practice. All the participants for different reasons argued that it was not feasible in Kuwait. The findings reveal that making major changes in schools is the best way to advance inclusive education:

‘If the situation in the schools is changed...it will be possible for some students to complete their education [in inclusive classrooms]’ (PSB, ML).

The girls’ headteacher indicated that if the challenges were not overcome:

‘I expect that it will be at the expense of the student herself because she needs special care in the classroom.’

These challenges are classified according to level, starting at classroom level and going through school to the wider society. TT summarised the extent of these challenges:

‘It is a daring idea [full inclusion]; it requires effort and people with integrity and a live conscience.’

Challenges at school/classroom level

The participants point out different challenges at classroom level. These challenges can be grouped under the following headings, listed by KH:

'These are providing teaching aids and the importance of a flexible curriculum, as well as individual teaching. I call for a special room to be designated and the working out of a fixed timetable to support those students individually, so that they can remain in normal classes.'

Class size in mainstream schools

All the participants agreed that huge class sizes were a major obstacle to full inclusion in mainstream classes:

'In general education, the classes are huge ... how can so many students be followed up?'
(AH, AM).

Extra support inside the classroom

The participants agreed on the value of having more support than the teacher when including MLD students. The results showed that these teachers saw the importance of working with professionals, a teaching assistant (TA) and a special teacher. For example, they stress the need to support the mainstream teacher by TAs:

'First of all, there must be the assistant teacher ... if the teacher teaches 30 students and slow learners... So the student needs special attention to be able to understand the piece of information, and thus by putting him in the normal classroom, he will be lost' (PSB, ML).

However, the teachers had reservations about the role of the TA, due to their experiences in the special classes, as NJ explained:

'We went through the 'assistant teacher' experience as the official in charge of the programme stressed in the beginning that the assistant teacher should stay still in the classroom, that is, they should not move but just sit on a chair at the back and should not talk to or help students... So, how can they be assistants? They attended the class periods more than once and I was the one who used to move and help students read the work papers and they criticised me because they refused to do this, since I should not move or help students either. So, what is the use of my being there? However, in my view, I do not need an assistant teacher of science but I need the teacher of Arabic to be my assistant.'

The poor implementation and misunderstanding of the role of the teaching assistant led to a negative attitude to the function of TAs in the MLD classes. However, despite their negative experiences, they valued the presence of TAs in mainstream classes, with their high numbers.

In addition, the answers from these teachers gave no indication of a collaborative sharing of the same framework as a TA. For example, teachers limit the work of the TA to supervising children with SEN, but not working as an equal partner with the mainstream teacher:

'...there should be an assistant teacher in the classroom...It is to monitor this group and not intervene with the teacher's work' (TT, ML).

Changing the classroom approach

SR indicated that creating an inclusive classroom requires changing the classroom arrangements from the traditional teacher-centred approach to group work and a student-centred approach:

'Classrooms should be well arranged, enlarged and adapted to group systems. They should be large enough to take in an assistant teacher and also the teaching aids... The most important thing is that classrooms should be on the ground floor and be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities such as computers and TVs.'

Preparing mainstream teachers

The mainstream teacher's efficacy in accommodating the children's educational needs within mainstream classes was one of the concerns highlighted by the participants:

'...the class teacher must have experience and a background with these students so as to deal with them as normal students' (TT, ML).

The suggestion was to raise the teachers' ability to teach inclusive mainstream classes through continuous training:

'...teachers must be aware of ways to deal with individual differences...there should be 'on the job' training courses...even earlier, in the university, there should be subjects taught to them' (PSG, AM).

Teachers added that their commitment and personalities are important to the practice of inclusion for children with SEN:

'Teachers should be qualified and they should not only be well qualified but should also love this group of children from their hearts, so that a teacher will not be cruel to them and resent and be evil to them...' (SR, ML).

National Curriculum

The general curriculum was seen as '*... not well planned for inclusion*' (HTB, ML).

The respondents suggested several changes to be made to it before including children with SEN in mainstream classrooms. The rigidity of the curriculum was highlighted by the participants as one of its challenges:

'Curricula must be flexible... Teachers are under pressure and these curricula do not give a teacher any chance to be creative and take care of the special cases, instead of being always preoccupied with their relevant supervision' (PSG, AM).

Furthermore, the results showed little evidence of providing differentiation within mainstream classes. The centralisation of the education system may be to blame:

'In general education, I am committed to the entire curriculum and there is no way to make any change' (NJ, AM).

Moreover, the amount to be taught in the mainstream curriculum should be modified to consider individual differences:

'...the curricula are so wide-ranging and ... There is a lot of stuff in our curricula ... that does not take individual differences into consideration' (SR, ML).

'A teacher is required to teach a new skill every day and the disabled students cannot keep pace with other students; thus, the curriculum is not fair to such students ... We also need curricula that suit the requirements of all categories of student' (HTG, AM).

As parts of this chapter and the next highlight, the element of teamwork is at present missing. The only working relationship with professionals was with the school psychologist, but this involved reporting, not planning; hence, collaboration and sharing frameworks were never found in schools.

Assessment system

In Kuwait, the respondents wanted to change the examination system to acknowledge individual differences:

'In general education, they are required to frame questions ... such as "Give reasons (explain why) ..." and "What do you expect ...?", i.e. indirect questions: IQ questions ... Such questions require writing skills that are difficult for slow-learner students' (AH, AM).

PSG (AM) showed how the complexity of the primary education system imposed difficulties for inclusive education:

'Now, there are three systems in the primary stage... From the first grade to the third one, it will depend on the 'achievement profile', so the student will succeed anyway... But, in the fourth grade, it will be the 'achievement profile' in addition to examinations and here flunking begins... And in the fifth grade, there will be no 'achievement profile'; that is, it will be the same system as the intermediate stage.'

Members of staff, such as SPG (AM), opposed these initiatives; she stated that, under the current policy:

'Students under the evaluation of 'poor' will pass... this should be an 'unachievable' profile not an 'achievable' one... Positive aspects include the fact that there will be no fear of flunking... and this gives parents a sense of ease, but its negative aspects include the fact that its examinations will be unexpected, so, parents cannot follow up on their children.'

She mentioned the risk of delayed identification of a child's educational needs, which consequently delays early intervention, adding that the negative influence affects parental involvement:

'Take, for instance, parents, they have become careless and they no longer care about their children as long as they can pass and "succeed anyway".

Challenges within the educational system

Early intervention

The results showed the need for an effective intervention system to identify SEN children so as to alleviate the effects of their disability:

‘There is also the early detection of cases so as to deal properly with them as we find that a student with a poor level is left to constantly fail until he is transferred from normal classes’
(KH, ML).

This issue will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

The culture of the society

At first glance, the participants sometimes contradicted their own views of society’s awareness of disability and MLD children. On the one hand, the headteacher (AM) noticed a lack of awareness in the education system:

‘Honestly, I do not feel there is any awareness... I have been working in the Ministry of Education and public schools for 25 years and I have never been introduced to this category nor found a school with special classes. Therefore, when I was appointed the headmistress of this school, I was very afraid and confused.’

On the other, she conceded that Kuwaiti society is to some extent aware of the disabled:

'I expect there is a remarkable awareness... because there is a high rate of disability in Kuwaiti society. In addition, it is an educated and mindful society. But there is somehow a group with some sort of ideas, but the majority has awareness...'

The contradictions in the thinking of this headteacher may suggest that public awareness of disability in general is not consistent; it is not always necessarily sensitive to certain types of disability, such as MLD in children, as she went on to say:

'Kuwaiti society's view of the disabled is either being mentally retarded or crippled and in a wheelchair. This is the perception of our society and people do not understand that there are other different disabilities, such as being a slow learner' (HS, ML).

'At the time, there was no idea about slow learners and ... no explanation of their difficulties. For instance, when I first moved to the slow-learner programme, I was faced with opposition by everybody ("Are you going to teach mad students?") ... Can you imagine? When I started I was pregnant. My friend used to say "Be careful... You are pregnant... [lest the embryo should be damaged by seeing them] ... I said to her "Why?". She said "I'm afraid. They look frightening"... I said to her that there was nothing wrong with the girls... Another thing, my niece was in the second elementary grade at this school. When I asked her why she did not go up to where our classes were, she said "I'm afraid of your students" (AH, AM).

This reflects a culture of prejudice and discrimination against children with MLD, adopting the deficit model of disability. TT attributed the lack of awareness of such children to the ineffectual way in which the media discuss them:

'I told you why...because there is no media that can talk about this group... Actually, I think that society accepts, loves and feels more for the Down's syndrome group and those with a more serious problem than it accepts and loves the MLD students. My friend who teaches in a school where there are students with Down's syndrome tells me the headteacher likes to play with our students in all their activities. For example in the elections lesson, she picked up a student to vote with other students, hailing him and walking around him so as to get him elected. And when that boy enters the school, a teacher hugs him while another welcomes him.'

She compared the MLD children and their parents with groups who have other disabilities, whose lobbying has some influence on general policy and media which smooth their route in society. This parallels the experience of MLD families in the UK (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). The SGSE member confirmed this point:

'The Down's syndrome group exists in society and they are known in society and everybody knows the Down's group. But, as for the slow-learning group, its concept is not clear and this group is not known in society.'

Also, TT pointed out that discrimination and prejudice compel the parents of MLD children to join the programme, to avoid stigmatisation. She even saw the lack of parental acceptance of the disability as reflecting society's attitude as a whole:

'If a parent does not accept his/her child, do you want society to accept his/her child!!?'

Therefore, the lack of awareness sometimes caused participants to find a general awareness of disability, but a lack of sensitivity to children with MLD; partly, however, the lack of awareness of disability in general was emphasised:

'Here in Kuwait, we have no respect for the disabled!!...there is no awareness because if we are in the market and our children see a disabled person, they will deny their existence and may say an inappropriate word... There is no respect for people with special needs... What is the reason for this lack of respect? It's because, in the past, when our parents had an insane or disabled person, they used to lock them up and hide them from other people. For example, it was discovered that one family had a disabled member only after that person had died...he was mentally handicapped...they put him in a cellar with the maidservant till he died. They never took him out of there, hidden away from people' (SR, AM).

In order to analyse the factors underlying this negative attitude I explored the influence of Islam on attitudes to disability. The participants believed that, in practice, the Islamic religion has no role:

'It is the society's negative view of the disabled ... it has nothing to do with religion... It is a matter of awareness, since teachers do not understand 'slow-learner children'... I do not know! ... It may be a double view as it could be an expression of conceit – “we are better than them” or it could be an expression of pity... ' (PSG, AM).

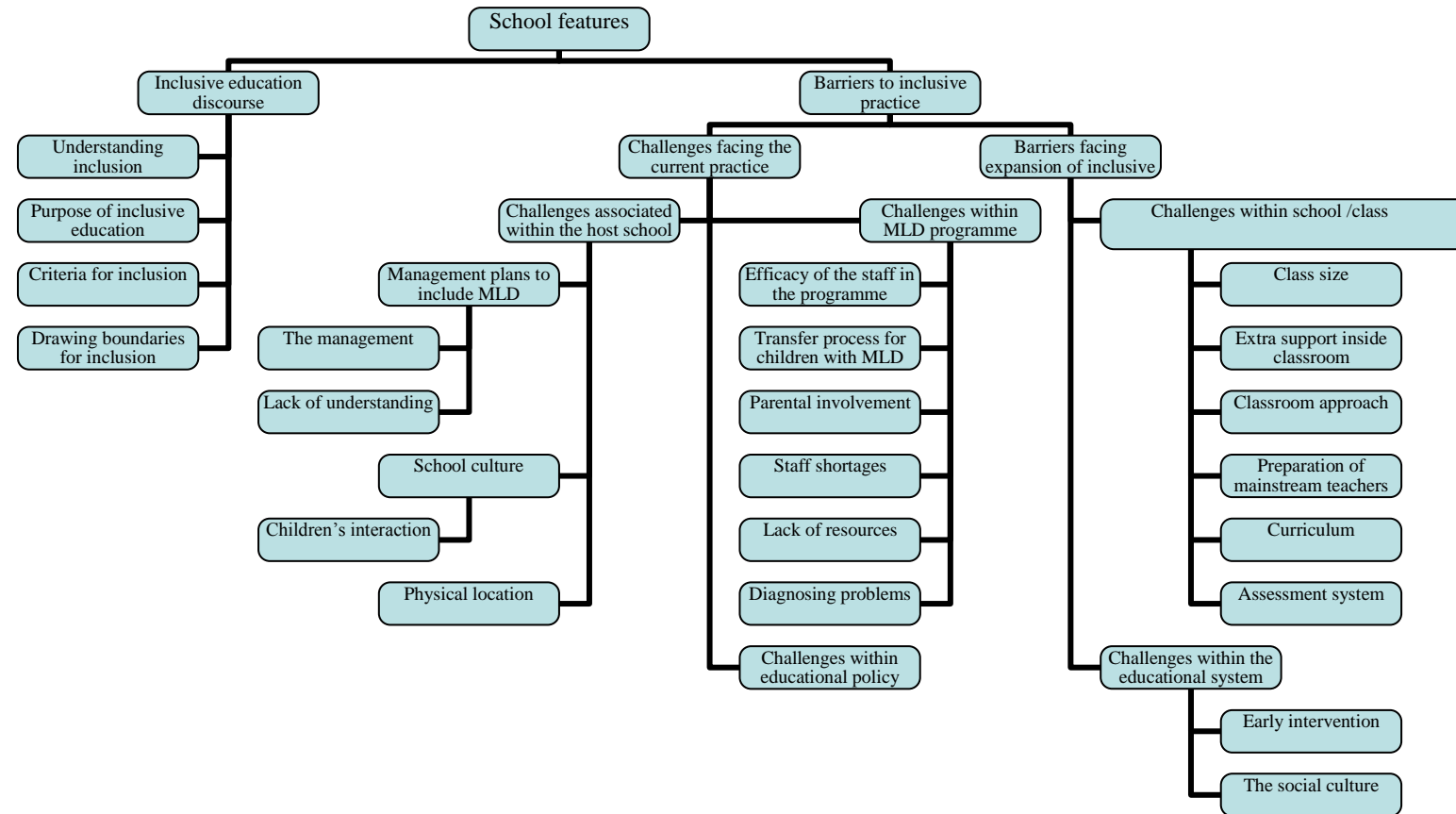
...on the contrary, Islam refines people... It is of course a perspective of love and respect as the Prophet (PBUH) says “Have mercy on those on earth so that He in heaven will have mercy on you” and Islam taught us how to help others’ (SR, AM).

Despite emphasising this positive perspective, however, they could not give a clear account of it. However, solutions to raise awareness were contributed. For example, SR mentioned the media’s role and collaboration with institutions such as Kuwait University in this task:

‘Enlightening students, teachers and the school management about the nature of our students...through cooperation with Kuwait University...and... It is the media that have to work on increasing public awareness through TV.’

Finally, Figure 5.1 illustrates and summaries the complexity of the nature of the Kuwaiti schools as shown in the findings, which are further discussed in connection with others from different parts of this research under the ecological model in Chapter Eight.

Figure 5.1 Conceptual schema of the relevant features in Kuwaiti schools



5.3 The English School

As noted in Chapter Five, English schools were hard to access, obliging me to modify this research. I had to re-focus it towards the Kuwaiti context and use the comparative aspects of this research to introduce new perspectives by which to understand current practice and the possibility of improving the Kuwaiti educational system.

However, though it was disappointing not to extend the school sample, I found the English school which I visited useful in reflecting the range of provision offered to children with SEN, including children with MLD. In addition, through applying a triangulation approach to the data, I was able to make connections between the different levels of the ecological framework.

5.3.1 School background

This is a mixed gender school for children from the age of 3 to 11 years. The distinctive feature of the school is that it includes resourced provision for 20 pupils who have special educational needs including autism, communication difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. All of these pupils have statements of special educational need. Therefore, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs with a statement is well above average.

The school serves an area which has high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Most of the pupils have white British backgrounds, but the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is high. The school's mission statement reflects the inclusive nature of the school:

We are committed to giving our children every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards. This policy helps to ensure that this happens for all the children in our

school – regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment or background...our school aims to be an inclusive school. This means that equality of opportunity must be a reality for our children (School Inclusion Policy)

This school is open to children with SEN, including:

- Girls and boys
- Minority ethnic and faith groups
- Children who need support to learn English as an additional language
- Gifted and talented children
- Any children who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion.

The following section presents the findings, triangulated by documentation, from the empirical research, which aims to explore the inclusiveness claims of this school, to ascertain how far its daily practice endorses them.

5.3.2 The current provision offered to children with MLD

I believe this school well reflects current practice in England, described as having a ‘multi track system’ (Pijl et al, 1997). This school has resources for 20 children between 4 and 11yrs who have one or more of such special needs as moderate learning difficulties, speech and language delay/disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, emotional and delicate health problems, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Its staff comprise a SENCO, deputy SENCO, one SN teacher, three TAs, two speech and language therapy assistants and a speech and language therapist. Accommodating this variety of needs required a multi-approach, as illustrated below.

Table 5.3 A multi-approach provision for children with SEN

· Children from the junior classes are integrated into the mainstream each afternoon with the support of a teaching assistant.
· Children from the KS1 classes may be integrated for short periods in the mainstream as and when appropriate to the individual.
· Some children are integrated full-time in mainstream classes when appropriate.
· Integration is monitored and evaluated termly by the head of the resource base. Opportunities for further integration are regularly explored by the headteacher and head of the resource base.

This table shows that flexibility with dealing with children's needs led to including them in mainstream classes for half days or full days. During observations, I found that some children in year five were included in year three, which is unusual, but the SENCO indicated that it responded to their needs. This is similar in some ways to the 'repeat year' system in Kuwait. However, the SENCO explained that the two children in question had severe learning difficulties which left only two options: either to keep them within the resource unit full-time, or part-time with the chance of being included in mainstream classes for other subjects. These particular children spent their mornings in the unit where they were taught numeracy and literacy and received physiotherapy; in the afternoons they were in a year three class, where they were taught such subjects as science, social studies, religion and P.E. Other children who stayed full-time in the unit were autistic children, in particular a younger one, and only one autistic child in KS2 was sometimes included.

To reflect this range of provision, I introduce three case studies of children with MLD who were identified by the SENCO. Their parents allowed me to conduct interviews and have a

copy of their IEP. The following table summarises the main background information on these children.

Table 5.4 English children's case study

Name (Pseudonym)	Areas of Need	Type of placement	Support services
Kevin (aged 9)	Cognitive, learning, gross/fine motor and social development (with statement)	Year 5 based half-time in the unit (mornings only for numeracy and literacy)	From SENCO/SPLT asst, TA within the unit, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Literacy/numeracy support · Social skills session
Carla (aged 8)	Cognitive, learning and social development	Year 4, fully included in the mainstream class	From SPLT asst. and TA (withdrawal sessions from class): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Literacy support -Social group -Maths intervention From class teacher: curriculum support through differentiation
James (aged 10)	Cognitive, learning, gross/fine motor, and social development (with statement)	Year 6, fully included in the mainstream class. (James stayed full-time in the unit from years 2 to 4, half-time in year 5 and was fully integrated in year 6)	From class teacher/TA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Support in literacy includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- guided reading 2- guided writing 3- daily support by differentiated work for more opportunities. · Support in numeracy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate differentiation and support. · Gross motor/fine motor development through practising in Art and Design & Technology. From unit, TA and SPLT asst.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social skills session

Key: SPLT asst: speech and language therapy assistant; TA: teaching assistant; Sp t: special educational teacher.

The presence of the resource base unit enabled this school to take a multi-approach in response to individual needs. Given the nature of the educational system in England, generalisation is limited, due to different practices within schools and within different LEAs. This school, serving a disadvantaged area, was fortunate in receiving much support from the Local Authority.

To explore the current practice in this school through these cases and identify the role of the unit in supporting children with MLD, I started with Kevin. He spent the mornings in the unit studying literacy and numeracy. In the afternoons, he joined mainstream classes for other subjects. The unit consisted of three big rooms, one a classroom, another a library and the third used for different activities, such as speech and language or social skills sessions.

Once a week the day started with a physiotherapy or social skills session. Then the children went to their unit (rooms 5B and 3B). I spent most of the time in 5B, where Kevin was taught. The teaching practice in this unit has the following conditions:

Table 5.5 Teaching practice at the unit

Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The teaching team consisted of the SENCO and two TAs, so the student/teacher ratio is low.
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A multi-sensory approach is taken (relying on concerted hands-on activity, for example, using letter cards, magnetic models and using the library), accompanied by precision teaching. · The work is mostly done independently with supervision, except by one girl who needs close supervision due to severe language difficulties. · The lesson starts with a clear objective and the children know their personal targets from their own card.

The school SENCO outlined the range of support within the unit, starting with the teaching methods:

'...if it's children in the resource base...that is their extra support, because they are in a very small group and they are doing work very specifically to their needs...it's mainly precision teaching, ... the assistant SENCO does a lot of that'.

The unit provided other services, such as social skills sessions and speech and language therapy:

'...if it's children that have got social skills problems, ...if it's children that have got some sort of speech difficulty, then we have got the part-time speech therapist that will take them out and do work with them; and we have got three teaching assistants that are trained to deliver speech and language programmes' (SENCO).

In addition, the unit staff seek support work from outside agencies:

'...if we think it's necessary and if we need it...we will ask other outside agencies to come in and support us or...not necessarily work with the children, but to give advice...' (SENCO).

Not only the resource unit but also the mainstream school has links to external support. The following services are available within the school:

Table 5.6 Range of outside support services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pupil support service · Educational psychology · Speech and language therapy · Physiotherapy · Occupational therapy · Specialist support service · Educational social worker · Social care and health · Links with other local schools and communities · School nurse · Partnership with parents and carers

Following Kevin's case helped me to understand the unit's role and its similarities to or differences from special classes in Kuwaiti schools. I observed him during literacy; he was able to express and develop a discussion with the SENCO's help. He was struggling mainly in writing, where he needed more support from the TA, though in numeracy he mostly worked independently. After lunch, Kevin played only with his friend from the unit. However, he was also engaged in chatting with other children. With two other students from the unit, Kevin joined the afternoon mainstream class; they all sat together in the classroom. They seemed to be less engaged than the other students, perhaps because they had missed part of the curriculum, so it was very hard to follow and to catch up. For example, the history topic was 'Dr. Barnardo's Charity'; the fact that these children did not participate in the discussion may stem from missing the morning part of the lesson.

In addition, in ICT, the teacher asked them to work in pairs; Kevin was fully dependent on his partner, without supervision from the class teacher. This issue raised questions over the relations between the child from the unit and his mainstream class teacher, but I could not interview his class teacher to investigate this issue further.

In Carla's case, she was fully integrated in the mainstream class with some support from the unit in a 'one-to-one' session, which mainly supported her reading; she joined the other session for the social skills group. There she sat at the front with an SEN group. The teacher pointed out that this setting allows more monitoring and supervision. I observed her during literacy, numeracy and science classes; she was generally independent, compared to her group. She took part in different activities and engaged in discussions, mainly working in groups or pairs. In numeracy, teachers gave the class a worksheet to work through in pairs. The teacher visited Carla's group first, explaining the instructions in detail, and then moved on to the next group. The school SENCO described the role of the class teacher in Carla's case:

'The teacher will very often use their PPA (preparation) time...it isn't just about planning, it is also about pupil progress and assessment; so they will very often use part of that time to work with children individually...as individual tutorials or a chance to assess where they are at or what they have achieved...' (SENCO).

The worksheets used by Carla's teachers sometimes varied between groups. For example, in science, Carla's group had a worksheet which involved a cut-and-paste picture. In literacy, they were asked to search a text to locate a subject, verb and adverb. In maths they all used

the same worksheet. The worksheets used by the teacher function as an indicator of the degree of differentiation. Carla's teacher told me that she can follow the same instructions as the others and does not need a high degree of differentiation; the differentiation mainly concerns the outcomes.

I then observed Carla in the playground, where she was playing with her classmates (non-SEN children). In addition, Carla joined her class in the Christmas play; she read the transcript clearly with confidence and expression. Carla joined the dancing club after school and she seemed to be happy.

James, in year 6, remained in the unit from year 2 till year 5. His inclusion was gradual, starting in year 5 for half a day and ending with full inclusion in year 6. The decision was made by the school SENCO that James could benefit from a mainstream class with outside support from the unit to prepare him for transition to the high school in year 7. I observed him in the classroom. He was generally quiet, following the instructions with close supervision from the TA. He sat at the front with a group of SEN children. Most of the time, he was involved, but seemed to be shy. His teacher encouraged him to engage in discussions with groups or a partner. James was described by his teacher as academically and socially a bright and caring boy:

'...academically, he's just working below the national expectations for a child of his age; he's got very good knowledge... I would say the problem with James at the moment would be his pace; he needs time to take things in, he needs time to analyse them and... I really think about him, he's a thinker...he struggles with time, in particular in year 6, when it's a very pacey

environment... Socially, he's very polite, very caring and he's building up friendships; though, I would not say he has got very strong friendships in the class at the moment; basically because he was in the unit for a very long time.'

My observation confirmed this teacher's comments. James appeared to be quiet in both classroom and playground. He stayed with his friends from the unit. This finding reveals that children's interaction may depend on placement. If they spend most of their time in the unit they are attached to their peers, as the cases of James and Kevin show. In contrast, the child who spends much time in the classroom, like Carla, tends to have friends from the mainstream class. The issue of isolation between children with SEN and other children is less emphasised in this school than in Kuwaiti ones. The following quotations from school staff shed light on the school culture:

'...as long as I have been here, there has never been any... problem with kind of... children treating other children differently, they are just part of the group...children argue and children fight and things like that,...this is one of the main things, that they spend lunch times and break times in the same playground and they are perfectly free to join in with anybody...'
(M, TA).

This type of children's interaction appears, from my fieldwork, totally different from that which I obtained in Kuwait's schools.

In addition, the type of provision in this English school was characterised by the role of the unit as the main source of support and guidance. Its importance was stressed by different participants:

'Everybody works very much as a team..., we all support each other basically; so, we got a good team working together... the teaching assistants are all very experienced and they have regular training, and we have got a lot of different resources' (SENCO).

The unit's role was not restricted to the school but also included planning its support and connecting with outside agencies, for example:

'...there is quite a lot of involvement from different agencies and different people are coming and work with particular children... it helps a lot... we do our best to do whatever we can for the children' (M, TA).

However, only one teacher pointed out the limitations of outside agencies such as the psychologist and speech and language therapists:

'It's available, but it's hard to get...resources are there but rather stretched very thinly... like psychologists and speech/language therapists, it is not enough...it's more funding to train, there are not as many jobs available' (RE, teacher).

In addition, the staff promoted a 'teamwork' approach in the unit, as explained earlier, or with the class teacher outside it:

'I liaise with the class teachers, and they have their IEPs, and I have highlighted the bits that I think that they particularly need to focus on when they are in that particular setting...the classroom...they come and ask advice' (SENCO).

This teamwork was not limited to the unit staff, but extended to include the relations between class teachers and teaching assistants (TAs), as they themselves described:

'she (teacher) introduces lessons and I help her to get resources ready... If it's literacy and numeracy, it depends, we swap around so that we have time with the low ability....move around... I do work with the children of the lower ability a lot...the children of high ability are sort of left to work alone a lot of the time, but they are always monitored' (F, TA).

However, relations between class teachers and TAs are not as simple as this. From observation, I found the TA's role in the classroom to be varied. For example, in year 2, the class contained four children with behavioural difficulties and the TA's role was to monitor this group for potential disturbance. Thus, in addition to cleaning the tables and preparing resources, she was mainly keeping an eye on this group without real engagement in the teaching process. In years four and six, however, the collaboration between the class teacher and the TA was more obvious in their joint teaching. This is confirmed by a TA:

'...it's different in every classroom...if somebody is teaching, sometimes they don't want somebody sort of interjecting with their point of view or their ideas, whereas other teachers will throw something over to you and say "what do you think?"...all the teachers who really

apply this kind of relationship... they are open minded and they are happy to collaborate with the TA...I think it's down to the teacher, ... and it also depends on how many children need support in the class, because this year there is not as many as I have had in the past; I mean other years I have had sort of 10 or 11 children that need extra work' (M, TA).

The TA's role was mainly exercised with children with SEN, as confirmed by interviews and observation data. The role of the TA in the classroom is explored further in Chapter Six, under the heading of class practice.

In addition, the school policy to encourage parental involvement was highlighted by the participants:

'We have a governing body which the school has made – would make sure that under the governing body we have parents of children in the special unit so they are strongly represented in the governing body... We do negotiate and sometimes there are differences... Parents are in the main... quite willing to listen to the professional opinion and we do actually pay attention to what parents are saying. I mean there have been cases where perhaps somebody has been integrated and then the parents felt that this made the child upset, so that the integration is modified in some ways.' (headteacher).

This gives another point of comparison with the type of parental involvement in Kuwait, which was limited by the culture and the centralised system, which locates authority and power at a higher level. It resembles Kuwait's system in that relations between school and parents are varied:

'That is on a case by case basis; some are very supportive, really want to help; others seem to think it's the school's responsibility and they are not that interested' (RE, teacher, Y4).

In addition, as in Kuwait, parents can be a major support to their children by putting pressure on the school, as the speech and language therapist (SPLT) stated:

If their parents can speak out and they are able to put pressure on, they will get more help; I mean it shouldn't be like that ... I have seen that happen' (SPLT).

5.3.3 Inclusive education discourse in England

The staff in the English school agreed on defining inclusion as including all children, not only those with disability, in mainstream school and providing suitable support to enable them to participate effectively, as the following quotations reveal:

'Inclusive education is allowing individual children with their individual needs to be able to take part and function within the school and it is important that the children we have here are where they are able to meet their needs and the needs of everybody else... Inclusive education has to benefit all parts of it...' (headteacher).

'...helping children to fit in, it's making sure they are involved, making sure that they are included and they are not pushed out in any way...just bringing them to be part of the class' (F, TA).

In addition, in their response to the interview question they agreed that the purpose of inclusive education was to serve the aim of socialisation. The socialisation is aimed at children with SEN but also wants children without disability to be more tolerant of other people's differences, as these quotations highlight:

'...it has to be for the children with the special needs, [they] have got to be cared for effectively so that they are able to progress socially, fitting in with the other group who are obviously going to be encouraged and we think in this school that they, the children with special needs, add a perspective and a wealth of experience to the school... so it is good for life as well... To be part of society, not to be shut away... everybody to show the width of human experience... you don't exclude people? It is an experience of life' (headteacher).

The interesting point is that some participants see inclusion as more important socially than academically:

'Sometimes I think the children who we integrate into mainstream benefit socially more than they do educationally...sometimes they will go into a mainstream class and the work, they are not understanding it... and when I bring them out and ask them what they have been talking about they can't tell me. Well, they tell me at a very basic level, but then the children have really severe problems' (SPLT).

'I suppose that the purpose is to make sure that everybody has to be included in the whole general teaching environment, I find inclusion is kind of more important socially than I do academically; which is probably wrong for a teacher to say...' (BJ, teacher).

These views concur with Ofsted's Inspection Report (2008), which states that children at the end of KS2 are well prepared socially and personally, but not academically, to start secondary school.

In addition, the English participants, unlike the Kuwaiti participants who had different attitudes to the varied types of disability, are mostly more welcoming; they include children with disability without reservation. The findings suggest two conditions for including children with disability in mainstream schools; success here mainly depends on the school's ability to accommodate children's special needs and the severity of the behavioural difficulties:

'...children that have got very, very severe learning difficulties, ...this would not be the right kind of setting for them, because, you have to sort of think...have you got the facilities? Have you got the staff to cope with it? I mean, if you go to a special school, they take the very severe cases where you have got children that are...teenagers that are not toilet trained and they have got very severe disabilities. Well, a mainstream school would not be the right place at all, because we just haven't got the staff or the facilities to cope with it' (SENCO).

It seems that the English participants in this study were influenced by the severity of the disability, but not the type of label. Thus, the criterion for inclusion is the school's ability to respond to the individual's needs; the headteacher introduced an example:

'...I can think of certain people who it would not be suitable for them to be in this setting because it wouldn't benefit the children or the greater society... I mean certainly, you can't just have inclusive education just for the sake of it... It's got to enable the children to make

progress. We have children in this school who we've decided...in conjunction with their parents, that there is a better setting for them because we are not able to meet their needs ... they are not able to make progress...we are not able to do the best for them.'

In the last two sentences from the above quotation, the headteacher pinpoints that the child or the school justify exclusion from the mainstream school. She gave a further example:

'...an example would be that we have a child with Down's syndrome who had been here for quite a lot of years and things went well; but, then became... her progress didn't continue so well ... the plateau went down... Then as she got older, the gap between her and her classmates widened and we did an experiment to take her part-time to a special school and she [blossomed] in that setting. So it would be incorrect to keep her here. So it is dealing with the individual, isn't it? It is making sure that the individual is doing well in the setting. I can think about the things that if somebody has behavioural difficulties, which are, you know, damaging for other people, then it is obviously not applicable to have them in this kind of setting. Some children with behavioural difficulties we manage them, but we have had children where there have been... Their difficulties have been such that it is not possible for us to deal with them effectively in this setting' (headteacher).

The second criterion, which influences the English according to the headteacher, is the presence of behavioural difficulties. The staff tended to be less tolerant of severe behavioural difficulties, as follows:

'I think in many cases it can work really well; in some cases it's not appropriate, particularly those big behavioural issues... I think sometimes it's just too disruptive for the other children; however, if it's that they are not achieving what they should be or if it's a speech/language issue then they ought to be included' (RE, teacher).

The interpretation of this point, if related to behavioural difficulties, seems to depend, as explained earlier, on the view that inclusion should benefit both groups, as the SENCO explained:

'...it's the ideal situation that you want them to be able to access the same curriculum and the same kind of things as everybody else...there are certain things that it becomes very difficult...one of the things that is difficult is children that have got very severe behaviour problems...we have experienced it here, that we have had children like that and we try to do everything possible...try and make them fit in and conform, but at the end of the day...you have to consider the other children as well and when it starts to really disrupt the other children in the class... ..they have to find them somewhere else...a special school...that does happen but very occasionally...special schools' existence is quite important' (SENCO).

Thus, if including a child will negatively affect the majority of the children, this child should be excluded. To further understand this perspective on inclusion, the school speech and language therapist emphasised such effects:

'...this particular child, I think it is doing him good (to be included), but he stills needs support from specialists...but I find a lot of problems with it (inclusion)...and a lot of children

suffer...and they all go under because of it; they just don't survive...it will depend on the school...and the child of course...it depends on how they are dealing with the child's difficulties...and how supportive they are; if they are willing to listen to all the advice and they can carry it out, because they don't always have the time or the resources... I mean there is a child who I have here now, who is in the resource base, but up until she was eight, she was in a mainstream class...and then she came to us and her language level is so low that she's been sitting around colouring pictures, you know, for five years!...Because she wasn't disruptive, and she appears to cope; if you assess her, you know she is not understanding...and she's quite friendly and chatty, but it doesn't always make sense... So, she wasn't referred to any specialist place until she was older.'

This perspective is similar to the Kuwaiti view, but this participant was laying the blame on 'inclusion' as a policy and not with missed implementation, notably the early identification of children's educational needs. However, this point should not be over-generalised, as the speaker emphasises in a more successful example:

'But in terms of other children I have known who have had severe speech problems, and then they have integrated full-time after a long time in a unit; they have got into the mainstream and I felt "she is not going to cope, because they won't understand her"' and all of a sudden, her speech developed and she's fine, and she's a really happy child' (SPLT).

To summarise, the English school's view of inclusive education is that it is important to include all the children who can benefit from a mainstream setting, which offers facilities to accommodate their needs and when their inclusion will not negatively affect the majority.

School staff adopted a perspective which advocated ‘responsible inclusion’ as against ‘radical inclusion’.

Therefore, there is some harmony between the school staff and national policy to adopt ‘responsible inclusion’ and the current English policy for children with special needs, which celebrates the role of the special school by a ‘flexible continuum of provision’ as explored above.

5.3.4 Barriers to the development of inclusive practice in England

5.3.4.1 Contradictory policies

The findings highlight tension and pressure in the school to adopt two contradictory policies at the same time. This point was discussed above in connection with an English report which sets out inclusive education policy. In its Ofsted report, the achievement and standards of the current school were described as follows:

In Year 6, standards are well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics’ (Ofsted Inspection Report, 2008, p.5).

The school staff’s view of this judgment is as follows:

‘...one of the problems I have here in this school is that SAT results are affecting us...on the one hand, the government keeps saying you’ve got to get certain SAT results and on the other hand I have been told and directed to have children who aren’t always able to take these tests...I am very angry and have been very angry about the fact that it is not recognised that we have this special unit... So what we sometimes end up with and have had to in recent years is perhaps six children from the unit in the year six class and you could imagine that has a

potential to make an enormous problem with their results... But, if they were acknowledging the special nature of the school more openly, it would be a lot fairer' (headteacher).

The headteacher summarised the tension which the school experienced in balancing the two policies. The reputation of this school results from publishing league tables without considering special circumstances. In addition, as the headteacher said, the policy of publishing 'league tables' does not reflect the school's effectiveness, because it takes no account of particular conditions:

'There is an enormous pressure on schools and I don't know what the solution is...I do think that there needs to be certain things to be set down but I think that people in changing circumstances are very much suffering under these league tables...the idea now is it doesn't matter what school you are in, you've still got to get a high result in SAT... It is not fair... ...and the same judgment goes across it and that is not fair and it is quite soul-destroying sometimes and you always feel as if you are having to make excuses' (headteacher).

This tension brings up the 'Raising Standards Policy' and the way in which teachers view the influence of SAT exams on students in general and students with MLD.

'...there is extra pressure on the teachers to increase SATs results...which is a shame...because they are teaching to the test...these children in year 6 have been, are being given test after test after test. They have become bored with it, and they are learning how to answer questions in a test, but in the big wide world, how useful is that?' (SPLT).

The situation for children with SEN or MLD is worse, for, after the differentiation and support process, as they must face standard tests which do not consider individual differences:

'...that's a difficult situation, because obviously you can differentiate work only through certain children, but then at the end, they all do the same exam which kind of...makes a mockery of kind of differentiating for them, because, it's a pretty self-destroying thing for them to have to do an exam that essentially is beyond their abilities when all the way through they have been kind of helped with and supported with different things; but that's how the system works' (M, TA).

This point is linked also to the National Curriculum as inseparable from the education system. School staff pointed out the limitations of the National Curriculum, as follows:

'...that's difficult, because obviously the National Curriculum is aimed kind of towards the middle and the top end of the ability group; it doesn't cater so well for low ability children;
(M, TA).

However, to my mind, in spite of the high standards of the National Curriculum, there is always space for teachers to differentiate the work 'in order to provide access to the curriculum'. This level of freedom is not available to Kuwaiti teachers, as Chapter Six shows in more detail.

As the school inclusion policy states, the National Curriculum is the starting-point for planning a curriculum which meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of children.

The children follow the National Curriculum, which provides targets for pupils in each subject and sets out what pupils should know, understand and be able to do. The basic requirements under the National Curriculum include religious education and three core subjects: English, mathematics and science. Governors ensure through their Monitoring and Evaluating Policy that the school fulfils its responsibilities. The school's Special Education policy promises:

'The Education Reform Act (1988) stated that the National Curriculum was expected to be balanced and broadly based, relevant to the full range of pupils' needs. In order to cater for Special Needs, adaptation of teaching styles and materials used in teaching components of Programmes of the study are essential. Many children will be working outside the levels of the majority of children in their age group. It must be ensured that all children are working at a level where they can achieve success.'

Accordingly, the school aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for children with SEN and to ensure that the National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled. To achieve this, the school adopts a cross-curricular approach, which is topic-based, expecting each class teacher to provide adequate resources through greater differentiation of the child's work or through the provision of additional learning resources. Another approach to accommodating children's needs under this policy is that the school has the right to decide upon a modification or a disapplication after detailed consultation with parents, the LEA and the governors. This takes place through a statement of special educational needs.

5.3.4.2 Daily challenges to the school in implementing inclusive practice

Time and coordination

The results showed challenges in finding time for the class teacher and the other staff to coordinate the support of the children who are included in mainstream classes:

'I would have a timetable and the teacher also has her own timetable; so at the beginning of the year or the term we will decide if that's okay for me to take the child out of that lesson... Sometimes it is not; so, I have to be quite flexible...which is tricky, because there is a few of us who have to coordinate our timetables...definitely difficult... It can be different from teacher to teacher... Some are very, very flexible...and others I think are under pressure and they feel that they can't let them out of science because they are doing the SATs test in science or the same with maths' (SPLT).

The shortage of time to coordinate is attributed to the workload of teachers.

Workload

The heavy workload created pressure on teachers in responding to individual needs, as follows:

'The fact that...the things you've got to put in place, a sort of, like, physically, academically, the differentiation, and sort of knowing each child's issues; and then it's maintaining a class environment, when also having to deal with individual people and their abilities and their needs. So, it's a lot of work...it's more of an exhaustion of trying to make sure that everything is happening right, everybody is being included; so, there is a lot of stress' (BJ, teacher).

The result of the workload has led to a lack of flexibility to respond daily to all the changes. The speech and language therapist (SPLT) pointed out that workload impacts on the teamwork as identified by the unit staff, since teachers are always too overloaded to be able to listen and discuss the SEN children, including children with MLD needs.

Misunderstanding

Another challenge identified by the unit staff, SENCO and the SPLT, is the lack of understanding from some mainstream teachers. The SPLT pointed out that the type of disability and the teacher's awareness of individual need can affect the degree of collaboration:

'...it can vary, because it can depend on the child's difficulties and how aware she is of those...I think some children with autistic spectrum difficulty can appear to be brighter or more fluent with English, if you like, than they really are, because the comprehension is often lower than their expression...so, it's misleading...so, she will think a child is doing really, really well and will put them in for certain tests or have high expectations' (SPLT).

In the same way, one teacher confirmed that the main barrier was lack of understanding of children's individual needs:

'I suppose if there is a barrier...of understanding truly, fully their needs' (BJ, teacher, Y6).

Space limitations

The headteacher points out the school's limited space which restricts the ability to include other children, such as those with a physical disability:

'I think that we are providing reasonably for this mission. Sometimes, we are limited by space...that is one of the things...the building is too small for all these things you want... I mean you don't think of the main isolation because we've got children with special needs in the classes' (headteacher).

This point has been confirmed in the school document, which states that the school cannot include all children with physical disabilities.

Staff perceptions

An interesting point highlighted by the year six teacher is the influence of teacher perception on including children with SEN and accommodating their needs:

'Barriers from developing more inclusive practices... I would like to say it depends on the perception of people who are teaching SEN; I think if you already think that having an SEN child in your class is going to be a problem, then problems will probably occur. The attitude is very important, I think' (BJ, teacher, Y6).

This sheds light on the influence of teachers' labelling; however, this teacher adopted more inclusive thinking, as someone who felt responsible for children whatever their label, and tried her best to accommodate them.

'Me personally, I tend to think, where there is a will there is a way, and no matter what problem it is, we will sort it out and we will get over it; because if you are a teacher, you are changing things anyway; every child is different, every child has got different needs..., just because they have not been labelled...this is what we have to do to help them; you tend to sort of work around it anyway..., I think you will only find barriers if you look for them hard enough... we will do our best no matter what and hopefully we do the best we can for them; and if you look back and you just come and say, "Well maybe I could have done something different", then...you don't regret it, you learn from it and you go and find something else to help the next child who comes along and the next child who comes along with the difficulties that they have got' (BJ, teacher, Y6).

She admitted that one can always learn from experience and always have space to improve. This attitude, to me, links to seeing 'inclusion' as a process of improving schools to accommodate children's needs. However, generalising this perspective among English school teachers would not be appropriate, in particular to the findings from the unit staff that some teachers misunderstand and fail to collaborate.

5.3.5 Factors facilitating the work of inclusive education development

Building teamwork

The school SENCO pointed out the importance of building strong relations based on support, trust and collaboration between the different parties. First, the relation between the child and the teachers is vital in building suitable support:

'...relationships are very important, starting with the relationship of the teacher and the children...that is really the underlying feature, whether things are going to be successful or not...building those relationships, building trust, a good sort of pastoral scheme, where pupils feel they can go to somebody to talk about things that are worrying them' (SENCO).

In addition, the school seeks to encourage parental involvement thorough building collaborative relationships between school and parents.

'...also relationships with parents...so that you have got that kind of partnership, letting the parents feel that the school is approachable to discuss their problems or concerns, and it might not just be about their children...it might be sort of the bigger picture...because schools these days, the idea is that they go out more into the community...' (SENCO).

The school SENCO highlighted the role of the school in responding to the community's needs, in disadvantaged areas in particular:

'...it's building a good team spirit...because when you talk about inclusive schools, it's not just about the pupils, although they are the main thing, but... it's also about the adults at work, they are as well...you are trying to include and...get children to understand how different people live ... to try and empathise with different strata of the community; whether it be...different types of religion, cultures or basically just different people, whoever they might be' (SENCO).

In addition, as the SPLT pointed out, this approach is important for creating a communication channel in order to plan support for the children when they go to mainstream school:

'...the most effective [is] I think if we have got ongoing discussions about a child, for instance, a child who I have assessed, she has a speech need, but as ... yet, we have not arranged anybody to carry out a programme...because I think partly it's organising it and getting down to doing it...I think communicating between staff, and making time for that; I'm seeing it as quite a high priority, because sometimes I feel special needs isn't a priority, because they are seen as...well, they drag down the statistics, don't they?... They lower the averages...shouldn't be seen like that' (SPLT).

She attributed this view to the 'Raising Standards Policy', which has affected the communication process enabling the support staff and class teacher to support included children inside the classroom.

Training and the availability of support

As in Kuwait, the teachers highlighted the value of training to enable them to accommodate children with special needs:

'...training... Training and more time... More time for getting to know children with special educational needs... Training and more resources probably and more parent involvement would be really nice' (BJ, teacher, Y6).

She gave an example of the effect of lack of training on her ability to accommodate James's needs in her class:

'I mean, poor James, has been frightened of me, and you know, it's a new teacher, a new environment and new everything; so, it would be nice to just sort of maybe just have time before we are both pulled into a situation' (BJ, teacher, Y6).

She indicated the shortcomings of the system, which like Kuwait's prompts to ask for more communication between them and the policy makers, in order to respond to the practical demands of inclusion, or other educational initiatives.

However, the unit's role was to provide guidance and support to overcome the lack of training:

'...the most essential thing would be to have staff that are completely familiar with all ranges of educational needs that children might have... I think the thing with this school is it works well. It's because we do have a special needs unit...it's just having people with the expertise... that's essential in any workplace... communication between people and a good sharing of ideas and difficulties as well...and in terms of resources...essentially we can get anything that we need. If you decide that you need a specific thing then it will be provided for you...this is a thing obviously different, children have different requirements' (M, TA).

5.4 Summary

In this chapter the focus has been on identifying the barriers to developing inclusive education within mainstream schools. The results showed the complexity of the situation within Kuwaiti

schools. The main finding is that the participants justified exclusion, or in other words indicated the barriers faced by the proponents of full inclusive education, mentioning these factors:

1- Child-centred factors

- Capabilities to cope with the mainstream education
- Severity of the physical disability
- IQ level
- Physical appearance

2- School-centred factors

- Challenges within the classroom
- Challenges within the mainstream school

3- Policy level factors

- Lack of awareness
- Separation between general education and SEN/inclusive education
- Educational bureaucracy.

In addition, the findings indicate a lack of vision in the Kuwaiti schools of the meaning and purpose of inclusive education. This lack of vision was perceptible in the lack of understanding of the nature of the teaching required and the dominance of the deficit/medical model among the school staff. Therefore, the barriers within the schools were interconnected: on the one hand, including barriers of classroom practice from a lack of training, a rigid

curriculum and a lack of resources and support from management; on the other, barriers within the general educational policy context.

However, exploring the English school indicated different issues from those in Kuwait. First, as explored under the ‘inclusive education discourse’ theme, the English participants agreed that inclusive education meant including all children, not only children with disabilities, regardless of ethnicity, gender and social disadvantage.

Second, they agreed that a main purpose of inclusive education, in addition to academic reasons, was socialisation, both for those with and without special needs. However, the English participants draw boundaries around inclusion on the criteria of:

- The school’s ability to include some children, which depends on the severity of their disability;
- The severity of their behavioural difficulties, since, once included, any child affects the majority.

This theme may be compared with Kuwait’s schools, which were dominated by the ‘medical model’. Kuwaiti teachers were influenced by labels and they held different attitudes toward different disabilities. In contrast, the English school appeared to adopt a qualified version of ‘social model’ which kept school access open as far as it could respond to individual needs. This use of social model is linked to Norwich's tension and dilemmas approach as discussed in Chapter Two. This school reflected a commitment to equality of education, regardless of need, but with conditions on those who have challenging needs. At the same time, the school

believed that it could make a positive difference, which points to the social model. Therefore, the tensions between the medical and social models are found at both macro and meso levels.

The difference between the advocated models of inclusion in the two contexts is that the English school advocates and practices 'responsible inclusion', which depends on acknowledging its ability to accommodate the children's needs. The Kuwaiti participants, however, advocate and practice 'proximity inclusion', which means integration in the same location only but not necessarily including these children with others in mainstream classes.

The next theme, 'barriers to the development of inclusive education' shows a similarity between the two contexts. The similarity is in the barriers at policy level from imposing two contradictory policies: 'raising standards' versus 'inclusive education'.

The differences appear at school level in the barriers which present each context with its own challenges as a result of different backgrounds and educational/cultural/social contexts. The English school applied a multi-approach provision and had long experience of including children with SEN.

In the following chapter, I explore the influence of these findings on classroom practice. This chapter will investigate further the barriers within classrooms and the factors behind such challenges.

CHAPTER SIX

INSIDE THE SCIENCE CLASSROOM: UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PRACTICE (MICRO LEVEL 1)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the micro level, presenting science classroom practice. The findings reported here came from interviews with pupils with MLD and teachers, and through observation of science classroom practice and field notes taken in Kuwait and England. In the chapter, the findings relate only to MLD children in the science classroom.

6.2 Presenting the Findings

In Kuwait, interviews were conducted with five science teachers, two from the girls' school and three from the boys' school. Interviews focused on teachers' practice in the classroom and their understanding of inclusive education in general. I observed six science teachers for 11 lessons and 3 test lessons. The lessons observed are summarised in the following table.

Table 6.1 List of observed science lessons in Kuwait

Science Teacher	Interviewed	Experience	Lesson	Place
LI (School G)	No (Teacher refused)	3 years – general education 4 years – inclusive programme	Finding differences between objects Characteristics of materials Rainbows	Laboratory Laboratory Classroom
AH (School G)	Yes	13 years – general education 7 years – inclusive programme	The stem function of plants Crops of agriculture Test	Laboratory Laboratory Laboratory
NJ (School G)	Yes	8 years – general education 7 years – inclusive programme	Sunlight analysis Lamplight analysis Coloured object recognition	Classroom Classroom Classroom
SR (School B)	Yes	20 years – general education 5 years – inclusive programme	Benefits of water	Laboratory
HS (School B)	Yes	12 years – inclusive programme	The parts of the egg	Laboratory
BD (School B)	Yes	3 years – general education 4 years – inclusive programme	Sources of heat Test Test	Laboratory

I also interviewed three boys and two girls to explore their schooling experience.

6.2.1 Inside the Kuwaiti classroom

6.2.1.1 Science curriculum offered to MLD children

Under this theme, I explore the teachers' views of the science curriculum offered to MLD students. Kuwaiti teachers have specific views with regard to the science curriculum; their job description states that they should teach science only. In Kuwait, the curriculum is limited to a series of textbooks, owing to the centralised education system. Therefore, the findings acknowledge textbooks as the only source of curriculum materials. Science teachers rely on them to determine what and how topics and ideas are to be taught. Textbooks are published by the Ministry of Education and follow the framework introduced by the subject supervisors, who decide on the topic order, number of lessons for each topic and timescale.

All the science teachers opposed this degree of centralisation, as the following quotations indicate:

'I myself try to practice an open activity, play movies or do some art work, but if a supervisor shows up, he will object to my practice... They could not understand that I need to be flexible in curriculum delivery, by doing this I am actually taking the students' circumstances into consideration... This is a dictatorship dealing with us' (AH).

All the science teachers interviewed agreed that the rigid curriculum was inappropriate for children with MLD, for various reasons. First, teachers highlighted the lack of connection between the curriculum topics, which affects their cohesion. HS elaborates:

‘... the problem of the unconnected topics as we move from a life cycle subject to that of “what do you like to eat”. What is the connection between the two subjects? I do not know.’

Teachers highlighted that the lack of cohesion between the textbook topics affected the in-depth understanding of these topics. The teacher also pinpointed the dilemma between quantity versus quality: preference has always gone to the quantity of information a student can learn by heart, not on quality and depth of learning, as SR acknowledges:

‘There was complete confusion of their thought, causing them to learn by heart a quantity of stuff without understanding.’

In addition, curriculum planning between different grades was inadequate. Teachers recalled the fourth grade had no textbook, creating confusion and uncertainty among teachers about what they should teach.

The teachers’ objection to the curriculum textbooks was not limited to the quantity of topics but also included the quality of the activities and topics, which failed to consider the shortage of resources and limited time. SR, who teaches third grade, went into this:

‘...in the third grade curriculum, there is an activity that contains a table in which the student is required to raise seven chickens and weigh them every day to make sure they are healthy ...all that in a class period of 40 minutes... In the first place, livestock were banned in schools and it is prohibited to raise animals in the school... So, these are activities that cannot be applied.’

Teachers pointed out that the level of difficulty was inappropriate for students and they gave an example of lessons deleted from the fifth grade but inserted in the fourth grade textbook.

The level of conceptual and linguistic difficulty in some textbooks was a real challenge for MLD students. This highlighted the inability to differentiate the curriculum in order to allow access to the children with MLD. NJ gave examples of difficult concepts from the fifth grade textbook:

'There is this lesson 'light refraction' like, for example, putting a pen in a glass of water, I have to explain to them two refractions; the refraction from air into water and then, the refraction of water into air, as this is a complex concept too difficult for them to understand.'

She went on to explain the difficulties with language and how she tried to overcome them:

'They also use difficult terms for them such as 'carbohydrates'...and fats with their sources, whether animals or plants, everything with all its details. However, when I taught them this lesson, I cut it short to the three major materials (carbohydrates, fats, proteins) and I highlighted them in their textbooks in red. I asked them to memorise only these materials as even the students in the general education can hardly memorise these details. What about students in special classes?'

In their interviews the teachers raised questions about the curriculum planning process. Therefore, in the following section, I explore this process in Kuwait.

Investigating the reasons behind the inappropriateness of the science curriculum is not straightforward because they were complex and interrelated. The findings showed that the curriculum planning process in Kuwait held many challenges.

Excluding teachers' views of the curriculum planning process

Teachers agreed that curriculum planning was inappropriate because their views had been ignored and the responsibility for curriculum development lay with the general education supervisors. Teachers pointed out that the Ministry supervisors could not develop an appropriate curriculum for varied reasons. First, as BD noted, supervisors lacked the required experience in special education:

'...textbooks are developed by supervisors who do not have experience with MLD students and who have not taught students; so, we find contradictions in the lessons. Curricula should be developed by teachers who have lived the experience and taught the students, as they know students' levels and requirements and what is best for them.'

All Kuwaiti teachers in this study insisted that the problem of ignoring their role was connected to the bureaucratic system, which they thought devalued and was deaf to teachers' opinions.

BD emphasised:

'I wish they gave us some choice to choose the topics, as we can determine what is suitable for the student' (BD).

This quotation implies that teachers ask for understanding of their demands and appreciation of their role, as the everyday experience is theirs. They suggested that, in order to solve this problem they should take part in developing the curriculum as they viewed themselves as experts in what does and does not work for children with MLD.

However, the teachers' ability to develop an appropriate curriculum is in question, as none of the science teachers whom I interviewed had a clear understanding of objectives and how to deliver them or what a curriculum is. Their only concern was the textbook, as the sole source of learning; none of them suggested using any other resources. Thus, there is a need for careful consideration of such factors as negative attitudes and low expectations, which contribute to shaping teachers' capacity to introduce an appropriate curriculum. These factors will be considered next.

Kuwaiti teachers' perceptions of children with MLD

Teachers' perceptions of students with MLD were explored in order to investigate their influence on curriculum planning. All agreed on the low academic ability of students with MLD, except for a few victims of incorrect diagnosis or social disadvantage. The type of language used by teachers to describe the MLD students' academic performance revealed the dominance of the medical/deficit model, which locates the problem within the child:

'Academically, they are slow learning and with a low IQ' (NJ).

'Their abilities are less than those of other students, so they cannot understand lessons' (AH).

'Healthy children are faster in comprehending more information and deeper activities' (BD).

According to the ecological model, the children's characteristics affect the teachers' attitudes and practice. In Kuwait, the type of difficulties which these children presented and the inability of schools to accommodate their need meant that they could not cope in the general educational system. Consequently they were excluded and offered a separate programme within mainstream schools with an inappropriate curriculum, taught by traditional methods, because they could not respond like students who had a high IQ, according to the teachers.

Curriculum modification process

The findings pinpointed an important aspect of curriculum development in Kuwait: the only modification of the curriculum was equivalent to deletion. The findings indicated that the deletion strategy was the first choice of teachers who faced challenges with the current curriculum. There was flexibility to delete some topics if teachers decided that they did not correspond with a student's level. For example:

'I deleted the lesson 'kinds of optical packages'...because the words are difficult for them and...it is hard for them to understand the meaning and it is not useful to use painting or signals. There is no use and there is no understanding. So, when we informed the supervisor, she just asked us to omit it' (NJ).

Cancellation was sometimes related not to a student's level but to a lack of resources, as NJ states:

'Also, this is another lesson that was deleted (regular and irregular reflection)...the laboratory is not dark, the experiment would not be successful and then it would be difficult to make them understand' (NJ).

However, this deletion could have been avoided if other facilitating factors had been employed. These could be as simple as using a dark room or hanging curtains to ensure the experiment's success. The deletion process continued even with important topics which affect everyday life, such as the human biological system and first aid:

'You always find the last chapter (first aid) deleted and I have never taught this chapter...there is no time as the school year comes to an end and we have not completed teaching the curriculum.'

The justification of deletion was based on the students' inability to understand and the textbook's inappropriate preference for quantity over quality.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) was highlighted in the literature review as an important tool to modify the curriculum in order to accommodate MLD children's needs. In this section I explore the view of IEPs in Kuwaiti schools. The findings indicated that IEPs were not used, due to the pressure on teachers, as it was perceived to be useless at responding to individual needs. For this, teachers blamed poor implementation and unclear objectives in using it for this purpose:

'In the past, there was a special form that we used for all students and all subjects... But, it was useless as it was just padding, unnecessary information. It is useful when required for one student, not for all' (AH).

This indicated the stereotype which can threaten this student group in 'inclusive classes', masking ignorance of their individual needs. In this situation, teachers assumed that every child in the class has the same needs because they share the same label, so there was no occasion to respond to individual needs. SR presented the teachers' view:

'The individual plan is useless... We used to fill out papers and write down objectives and aids on papers which are of no use and you can imagine the effort exerted in handwriting as photocopying is not permissible... Can you imagine that you have to handwrite 10 identical pages and no photocopying... What for? I know my study plan and I wrote it down in my lesson preparation notebook' (SR).

Transferring the concept of an IEP to Kuwait has been re-conceptualised, no longer responding to individual needs but to group needs. To me, this transference is not a 'cut and paste' process, but it is affected by the kind of collectivist culture in which group unity outweighs individualism. Thus, teachers and policy-makers assumed that a homogeneous group of MLD students constituted their classes.

6.2.1.2 Teaching methods used in teaching science to MLD students

As discussed in Chapter Two, the two main teaching approaches in science education are direct instruction and hands-on learning. Each of these can effectively transmit the nature of a

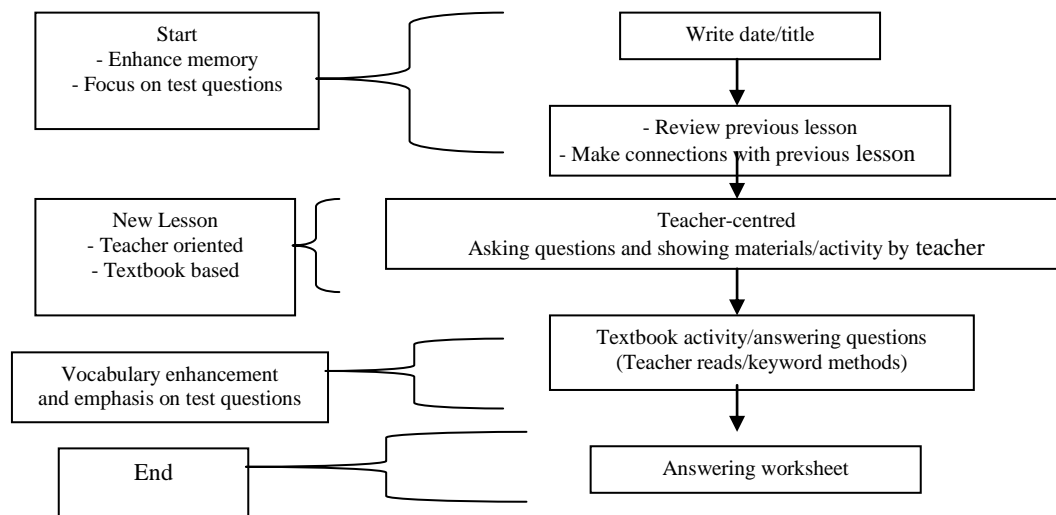
subject. Direct instruction is used in the area whose objective is to use tools and equipment and learn certain processes, such as measuring or writing reports. Hands-on learning is more useful for complex concepts (Howe and Jones, 1998).

In order to locate Kuwaiti science teachers' practice to these approaches, I link data from interviews with the observation data. The consequent findings indicate contradictions between what teachers say in interviews and what is observed in practice. On the one hand, teachers recognized the importance of hands-on learning, linking the curriculum to everyday experiences in order to help students understand the concepts. For example:

'This chapter 'light' is good because it has a lot of experiments and also the lesson 'shadow' is nice too where they go out of the classroom and make experiments under the sun...notice that whenever they do experiments themselves the information will be firmly established and it will be easier for them and will be more fun so you find them excited and working actively... [or]...you can notice that making circuits is wonderful... they enjoy making electrical circuits because they themselves do these experiments.'

However, I identified a pattern of teacher practice which was common to the 11 lessons observed in Kuwait, with few differences; it revealed several issues regarding science teaching nowadays in Kuwait.

Figure 6.1 Structure of science lessons in Kuwait



Teachers began by writing the date and the lesson title. Then the previous lessons were revised through reciting test questions, indicative of the exam-oriented educational system. This observed pattern was confirmed by the teachers themselves:

'I always try to make each lesson start with refreshing the memory, reviewing previous lessons, and doing activities of action or competition so that they can feel comfortable, as once they feel comfortable, they will respond well, even if it is about something different from the lesson subject. After that, I start explaining the new lesson only for 10 minutes and not more because they will not understand a lot of information all at once' (AH).

The observations showed a limited application not only of the hands-on approach but also the direct-instruction approach. The direct-instruction methods used here lacked important elements which make them more effective: listing the lessons' objectives, motivation, guided

practice, independent practice and closure. Some examples of the activities were conducted at a very naive level, relying on the children observing the teacher and reciting facts without any real engagement in such intrinsic scientific skills as analysis. For example, in the lesson ‘food groups’ the teacher brought different samples of food and asked classes to organise them into food groups, without exploring why. I came to these conclusions because, in a class of seven students, I observed two copying a classmate. The teacher should make sure that every student is learning and developing concepts through applying scientific processing skills, in particular organisation, classification and reasoning to justify decisions.

I observed lessons where the teacher was at the centre, marginalising the MLD students’ capacity to engage in activities. I noted a teacher who had prepared the experiment the previous day and then relied on the textbook to explain what she did. This happened in one lesson about the function of a plant’s stem, when the teacher showed a plant with white flowers which had changed colour from standing in a pot of coloured water. When she asked them about the function of the stem, most were not sure.

As stated in Chapter Two (Sanders et al, 2009; Malone, 2008), MLD children require a high level of engagement; they should be involved in experimentation, encouraged to talk about their observations and supported in their language difficulties by illustrations at each step. This helps MLD students to develop more scientific skills, expanding their ideas and their vocabulary. The more stimulation teachers can use, the more positive outcomes result from active learning.

Bell (1999) and Richardson (1993) advocate exploring MLD children's ideas and prior knowledge and linking the curriculum to their lives in order to meet their educational needs. In Kuwait, teachers realised the importance of these strategies in accessing the curriculum:

'...notice the lesson 'lens' was wonderful, as they explained it themselves to me because they have previous ideas about lenses as there are lenses in every household' (NJ).

The positive effect of exploring children's prior knowledge and sharing ideas was clear, though rarely observed in lessons. However, asking children about their prior knowledge is not the same as using this knowledge to influence the learning process. For example, in the lesson 'food groups' the teacher (SR) began had the following dialogue:

Teacher: *'What did you have for breakfast today?'*

Student 1: *'Milk and egg sandwiches.'*

Student 2: *'Nothing.'*

Student 3: *'Cereal.'*

Teacher: *'Okay, can you give me an example of healthy food?'*

This dialogue shows the teacher not responding to the students' answers and not explaining what linked the first question to the second one, but taking for granted that students would understand the link between what they had for breakfast and whether it was healthy or not. Using prior knowledge aims to deepen understanding and make learning an easier process by starting with what children know and building beyond this. However, another example of a

teacher's ability to develop a balanced high-level dialogue between students and the teacher was better. In 'coloured object recognition', NJ started with easy familiar facts related to a previous lesson:

Teacher: *'Why do we see tomatoes in the colour red?'*

Student: *'Because they reflect the colour red?'*

(Teacher keeps giving examples of coloured objects and the students explain why)

Teacher: *'But why is my T-shirt white?'*

Student: ... (Silence)

Teacher: *'Why is the sunlight white? Does it contain the colour white?'*

Student: *'No.'*

Teacher: *'So why don't we see all the colours without using the 'prism'?''*

Student: *'Because it mixed all the colours together and reflected them in the white one.'*

Teacher: *'Excellent, so if we link what (ST) said to my first questions, why is my T-shirt white? What is the answer?'*

Student: *'Because it reflects all the colours.'*

Teacher: *'Well done, so who can explain why in summer we wear bright and white coloured clothes?'*

Student: *'To feel cool.'*

Teacher: *'Why?'*

Student: *'It reflects the lights away from our body.'*

Teacher: *'Excellent, so if we reverse the question, why do we wear dark and black coloured clothes in winter?'*

Student: ... (Silence)

Teacher: *'Try to think about the colour white and the colour black, if the colour white reflects all the light colour, what does the colour black do?'*

Student: ... (Silence)

Teacher: *'Do you think it is the same or different?'*

Student: *'Different.'*

Teacher: *'How?'*

Student: ... (Silence)

Teacher: *'The colour white reflects all the light's colours [teacher gives a sign to all students to say the sentence with her], while the colour black ..., Who can complete? ... What is the opposite of reflection?'*

Student: *'Absorption.'*

Teacher: *'Well done, so the colour black absorbs all the colours so we see it as black.'*

Another issue in teachers' interviews was linking the content of the curriculum to the local context and everyday life in order to improve children's understanding of science topics. Teachers appreciate the relation of science to life and can easily encourage students to share their ideas. The importance of this link, as one teacher pointed out, was that these children come from socially disadvantaged areas with limited experience.

AH emphasised that the curriculum must relate to the local context and suggested teaching specific topics:

'We are an oil producing country... it is very important that they learn about oil. There is also the cloth industry. It is useful for them to know where we get clothes and colours from... As

for space, I do not think it is so important to them compared with traffic and transportation, which are useful and important daily matters...’ (AH).

However, such linking is limited, for two reasons. First, as discussed above, the curriculum is limited to textbooks which deal ineffectually with this link and exclude such extracurricular activities as school trips. Second, the limited resources and poor laboratory equipment do not match the local culture. For example, SR showed her class a Western black-and-white movie about water resources. Afterwards she showed them pictures of water resources, including an old pump (Picture 1), which has never been used in Kuwait. The students were unable to recognise the Western-style image, never having seen one. As usual, the teacher was frustrated and angry next she brought a design model of a traditional Kuwaiti well (Picture 2), and immediately the students recognised what it was.

Figure 6.2 Visual materials of water resources



Picture 1



Picture 2

This raises the question why she did not find more appropriate, attractive resources to match the local context and capture the attention of the electronic games generation. I wondered why she showed an old black-and-white film without considering that these children are attracted to colour television; even to me the movie was boring and worn. While she translated the words (from English), the children looked at her instead of the movie.

Therefore, after her lesson ended I sat with her to discuss her reflections on it. To my surprise, she said, unprompted:

'Do you see how difficult they are to teach? I could not have imagined that after showing them the documentary film about water resources they could not recognise the pictures; sometimes they are really stupid.'

It was clear that the low expectations of this teacher have affected her ability to evaluate her practice, including checking the appropriateness of the resources. Even when discussing this with me, she clung to her opinion that the same movie had been used for years and it was useful. From this incident it was clear that from the teacher's standpoint the deficit lies within the child, not within her practice.

Yet observation yielded various instances of good practice where the teacher actively improved and overcame the limitations of the curriculum. For example, some teachers were more able to develop process skills such as recognising feature objects, classification and grouping. For example, LI the lessons (changing state) taught the characteristics of each state (gas, liquid and solid) through comparing concrete objects (table, orange juice, balloon filled with air), as illustrated in the dialogue:

Teacher: *'Can you see the air?'*

Student: *'No.'*

Teacher: *'Can you hold/catch the air in your hand?'*

Student: 'No.'

Teacher: *'Can you pour air into a glass?'*

Student: *'NO, it is not liquid.'*

Teacher: *'So air or gas is different from a solid and liquid. Let's write in the table in front of you the characteristics of gas.'*

The differences in Kuwaiti teachers' practice within the same context should in future research be explored further to identify the factors which enhance teachers' effectiveness.

6.2.1.3 The assessment and evaluation process for MLD children in science

Another important aspect of the classroom, beyond the curriculum and teaching methods, is the type of assessment of students' performance. The MLD classes in the inclusive programme had an advantage lacked by mainstream classes in that assessment in them had been modified to overcome students' difficulties. For example, teachers simplified the questions and avoided complicated language:

'It varies as there is flexibility in selecting the types of questions... I develop easy questions for third grade students and I do not focus on the language due to the poor level; however, in the fifth grade I start to focus on the language so as to encourage them to express their opinions and qualify for next stage.'

In addition, teachers offered support to overcome language difficulties by helping children with reading the questions and spelling:

'I had a student who did not know how letters look and does not know at all how to write... I relied upon examining him orally by reading the questions to him and taking his answers orally. I used to bring him the real objects and ask him for example "point with your hand to the parts" and I rely on touching...on even pointing at least in part... By feeling and touching, I helped him reach the answer and I marked it as a correct answer' (SR).

In this account, this teacher highlighted the flexibility allowed to MLD classes. However, this flexibility was not official and could end at any time if it clashed with the view of the supervisor or headteacher:

'Unfortunately, there is no understanding as the supervisor insists that a student should write while they do not know how to write. She does not acknowledge any alternative. I wonder how this can be done ... the student is not prepared in the first place' (SR).

I observed two test periods. One, at the end of the day, was for year five. During the exam the teacher read out the instructions and all the questions then she read each question in turn and gave students time to answer it. She gave them many clues and hints to remind them of the answers. The students were calm and gave no sign of anxiety. The test included multiple choice and true/false questions, linking and labelling, using simple language and drawings.

In their interviews, science teachers emphasised the flexibility exercised in the special classes, which the general classrooms lack. However, this flexibility was ineffective, because both classes assessed only the quantity of information recalled in the test, not the quality of knowledge:

‘I diversify it by way of drawing and colouring, making sure to train them in answering the questions that would be repeated in the examinations in order to help them get high marks in the examination...that is to say you should repeat the same questions to train student how to answer, knowing that the new applied system does not allow a student to fail because repeating the questions helps the student get higher marks and thus increase confidence...’
(AH).

Such assessment pressurises all teachers to focus on preparing students to pass standard tests, making their students learn certain questions by heart in order to succeed. This is noticeable in all lessons: teachers always repeated the same questions and asked students to repeat the answers, a practice based on recitation. The evidence also comes from worksheets which repeatedly use the questions from the textbook, not a variety of diverse, challenging questions.

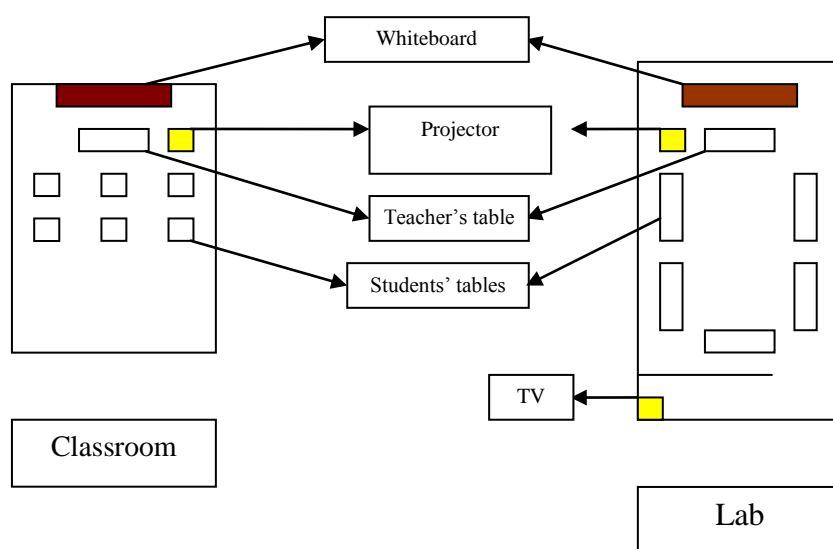
6.2.1.4 The classroom environment in Kuwait

One purpose of the observation was to study the surroundings of the lessons, in order to understand the interaction between MLD students and teachers and the quality of the learning process. Their class environment included the arrangements for seating, the materials, resources, walls and how easily they were changed. Having briefly described the classrooms in the two contexts, I explore the similarities/differences of the learning space and its two-fold influence on teacher practice as:

- a learning environment for enhancing the learning process of MLD children
- enhancing a pattern of behaviour among teachers and MLD students.

In Kuwait, science teachers can conduct lessons in either laboratory or classroom. I observed 14 lessons, 10 conducted in the laboratory; what guided the choice was the nature of the lesson. If experiments were required, they usually preferred the laboratory where everything was to hand. Below, the layout of the classroom and the laboratory in both Kuwaiti schools is illustrated:

Figure 6.3 Layout of the classroom and laboratory in both Kuwaiti schools



This figure shows the similarity of both layouts, revealing the teacher-centred teaching culture. Also, both had a traditional seating arrangement with desks in rows facing forwards. This helps prevent cheating in tests and exams, but not facilitate peer collaboration and group work. The walls were dull in colour with a few old, worn posters.

Although during the interviews the teachers underlined their preference for the laboratory, observation found no difference between the use of the laboratory and the classroom regarding the availability of resources, except the TV and video equipment, which I saw used only once. Thus I doubt the effective use of laboratories in a hands-on approach to assist

learning for these MLD students; as noted above, hands-on activities in the curriculum are limited.

Similar findings regarding the effective use of laboratories were reached in a study sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), which reviewed the research on US high school science laboratories as affecting science teaching (Singer et al, 2005). This suggested that teachers and curricular materials do not connect laboratory activities with the science content presented in class; most students thus do not experience effective laboratory work.

Despite the differences between primary and secondary school, these reasons still apply to my cases, as teachers' interviews and observation highlighted. The heavy reliance on textbooks described by teachers is inappropriate for students learning through laboratory experiences. Moreover, other factors such as scarce resources, emphasis on written tests and not many teachers who valued laboratory experience were obvious. Laboratories were used in similar ways to classrooms, limited to showing objects and lecturing with the whiteboard. This practice indicated an approach in Kuwaiti schools which over-emphasised traditional methods of whole-class teaching, without linking science lessons to laboratory work to develop other scientific skills.

6.2.1.5 Kuwaiti students with MLDs' perceptions of science

The significant result reached from interviewing Kuwaiti children was that they could compare their experiences in the general classes in their previous mainstream schools with their current classes in the inclusive/special programme. The major themes of comparison were teachers' practice, class size, resources, textbooks and examinations.

These students often mention their teachers' practice. They identified that teachers' demeanour influences their ability to learn, for example:

'Here, it is better, because she is lovely and kind, but, in the previous school, they used to yell at me very often' (Reem, Y5, girls' school).

'[in mainstream school] teachers do things I can't see ... I can easily see everything [current school] ... [now] everyone can do the experiments' (Asad, Y4, boys' school).

Also, Heba highlighted other issues related to classroom management:

'Now, it is easier and that is why I love it more... We have a teacher whose way of teaching is simple and there are fewer students... I pay attention to her and she knows us by now... She knows the naughty student... She controls the classroom... In the past, I could not see or concentrate because of so many students... I did not participate in the practical applications... I was even the tallest student in the classroom so I used to sit down in the back of the classroom and thus I could not see any instructional aids...'

This quotation pinpoints different issues, not only regarding science classrooms which stress hands-on activities; it focused also on the student's experience in the general classroom. Heba referred to different obstacles not only in science, but perhaps different subjects, such as class size, behaviour problems and class management.

Students raised issues regarding teachers' practice in mainstream schools, such as behaviour control, class size and teachers' handling of their difficulties, which confirmed the results of

the teachers' interviews regarding the challenges to full inclusion. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven; however, I mention it in the context of science education because of its importance for all children in its practical aspect (hands-on) and that of linking science to everyday life (e.g. learning about animals).

Asad mentioned his preferences regarding textbooks. His year used the same textbooks as the general classes, but with most of the topics deleted:

'...it is the same textbook, but ...shorter... I don't like it as much as the [current] shorter one'
(Asad, Y4, boys' school).

Another issue highlighted by these children was the influence of the examination system on their schooling experience, as in the following:

'There, [the previous mainstream school] she [teacher] did not give us activities, but, here she makes experiments for us such as measuring mass, she brings a scale and solid object...'
(Abdul, Y5, boys' school).

'Now, it is better [in science], because I got a good mark in the exam, but, there [in the mainstream class] my grades were just 5 or 6.'

These show the impact of the exam-oriented system on students' confidence and progress. Students, like teachers, focused on passing exams and made it their priority but did not necessarily relate it to learning. All students favourably viewed the exam system in force in

their current school (special classes) as they got better results now than in their previous mainstream classes.

These significant results come from their experiences in mainstream classes and special classes in different schools, which enabled them to make clear comparisons between these two types of class. The following table summarises the comparisons:

Table 6.2 Kuwaiti children's comparison dimension of science in general and special classes

Comparative dimension	Science classroom in previous school (general classes)	Science classroom in the MLD programme
Teachers' demeanour	Teachers always yell and are bad-tempered	Teachers are kind, friendly, supportive and tolerant of mistakes Teachers give more time to read
Textbook	Hard	Easy to follow
Classroom/Laboratory	Untidy and crowded	Tidy, clean and with more resources
Class size	Big class size prevents them from participation	Small size allowing them to pursue activities

An important point to clarify is that this comparison is not limited to science classrooms but relates to all subjects, as these children noted.

6.2.2 Inside the English classroom

6.2.2.1 Science curriculum offered to MLD children

English teachers' perception of the science curriculum offered to MLD children in the inclusive classroom differed totally from the Kuwaiti teachers', for various reasons. First, the English classroom included children with MLD, other SEN and children without SEN, while the Kuwaiti classes contain MLD children only.

Second, English teachers in primary schools were not attached to certain subjects, while the Kuwaiti teachers were subject teachers. Moreover, the national context is different. In Kuwait subjects are taught separately and rely heavily on textbooks from the Ministry of Education. The English National Curriculum is independent of textbooks and primarily a *'framework for teaching and learning across a range of subjects and the associated assessment arrangements, laid down by Statute for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) attending state schools'* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA/DfES), 2001).

For these and possibly other reasons, the English teachers saw science not as a discrete part of the National Curriculum but taking a cross-curricular approach, as one teacher analysed:

'We like to have...fast curriculums everywhere... we tend to link a lot of science throughout the subjects; so they get a whole broad range of knowledge in different aspects rather than just certain facts...' (BJ, Y6).

This general framework allowed English teachers to choose and differentiate the materials and treat the curriculum as topic-based according to the year 6 teacher:

'It is not science in itself; ...it's sort of more like a topic base ...that's the topic, and then we put the subjects in, it makes it look more like having a whole theme... it seems to work better actually than just saving it as individual lessons...' (BJ, Y6).

Interestingly, English teachers also complained of the centralised system (the National Curriculum) which they had to follow:

'Everything is too regulated, everything is too strict, there is not much room for a teacher to put their own stamp on anything; you have to stick to a timetable, you have to teach these lessons, these lessons have to have this much time, you've got to do it in this order; and whereas some children just need to be a bit more flexible; I think there is not enough room for flexibility' (RE, Y3).

To some extent they were similar; however, the degree of centralisation was different, to the extent that the English education system seems to be decentralised in comparison. For example, English teachers had the right to choose the type of textbook, materials, timing and approach to teaching the topics prescribed in the National Curriculum, while the Kuwaiti teacher had no such right. English teachers used different resources, such as ICT and trips, to fulfil the National Curriculum requirements, while Kuwaiti teachers were confined to the sole resource of the Ministry of Education's textbooks.

Another interesting difference between the classes was the teachers' perception the suitability of the science curriculum to their MLD students. The Kuwaiti teachers, for various reasons

judged their curriculum appropriate for MLD children, whereas the English teachers could broadly contrast the science curriculum provided for children with MLD and for those without. Therefore, I was challenged as a researcher to keep the English teachers focused on MLD children and the science curriculum.

'I mean in general, and when you talk about SEN or MLD I still...what I'm saying really, I always think I mean the whole class, because I think they are all...all of them have one special need one way or another, I have special needs of my own' (BJ, Y6).

I asked this teacher how the presence of one particular child in her class influenced the science curriculum:

'It's an advantage to think of different perspectives, because I know (name) and this is why we are very practical, and I know a lot of other children do; so, when you tend to think about how I'm going to teach (name) in science, by getting him to do things with his hands; the way they learn, they would learn the actual concept of what we are trying to teach...whereas if he wasn't in there, maybe all of this would be less practical.'

The data obtained from observations on the English staff's teaching methods generally emphasised this more practical approach in delivering the science curriculum to MLD children.

RE (Y4) concurred with a Kuwaiti teacher about the difficulties which science presented to MLD students:

‘They just find things more difficult to understand, they won’t remember things from one lesson to the next...that certain words are very difficult for them too...there is quite a lot of abstract words in science, and it’s quite difficult for them...such as oxygen...the others will just be accepting of oxygen it’s just in the air; whereas for a child with MLD it can be more difficult for them to understand what is oxygen and I think some words can be quite abstract.’

The effect of including children with MLD in mainstream classrooms encourages teachers to adopt a more practical hands-on approach in order to improve access for everyone. Clearly, the English teachers held more positive attitudes to teaching children with MLD in their classroom. The language they used is tolerant, unlike the strong opposition in the Kuwaiti classroom. This language indicated the adoption of a more social model than the deficit/medical model of the Kuwaiti teachers. The Kuwaiti stance strongly opposing the inclusion of MLD children in mainstream classes is justified by the participants in Chapter Five.

6.2.2.2 Teaching methods used in teaching science to MLD students

The teaching methods in English classrooms were distinguished by different strategies, which were seen in the classes from years two to six. These strategies, interestingly enough, extended beyond science to all subjects, including literacy and numeracy.

Hands-on activities

Different parts of this chapter highlight the English teachers’ application of more practical hands-on activities in teaching science to MLD children:

'They need more things to be more concrete, and sometimes they might need more physical hands-on activities' (RE, Y4).

The English teachers confirmed that the presence of MLD students required a more practical approach in teaching science. For example, in year three, during 'objects' characteristics', the teacher set the activity of making a 'box', as an example of an 'object'; all the students started assembling their boxes, including the children with MLD who were excited, like the others, but needed help from their teacher and teaching assistant.

Clarity

In observed lessons, the clarity of these teachers' practice was noticeable. For example, the teachers began by clearly describing the timetable of each day. The learning objectives, equally, were written on the board and introduced at the beginning of each lessons and then at the relevant stages. I observed that, before each activity, the teacher gave clear instructions, timing and whether to work as individuals or in groups.

I asked the year four teacher about this specificity. She explained that some students preferred the security it gave and disliked uncertainty; the children with autism in particular. However, this clarity was observed in all lessons, with or without children with autism.

Differentiation

The English teachers emphasised that differentiation was part of their teaching for all children, regardless of whether they had SEN or MLD:

Researcher: *'Do you make any changes in your teaching to accommodate pupils with MLD?*

RE, Y4: *'... No, I have always differentiated my planning anyway; ...it means I differentiate three ways; so, normally it's higher ability, middle ability and lower ability.'*

'I just differentiate; I say I know this child's ability and I know how they work and I know what special support they need, and I don't do that just with the SEN children, you tend to do that with all the children...if a child struggles to see the board at the back you put them at the front, you know, if they have hearing difficulties you put them at the front or if they fidget, you are aware of that and try not to put them close to somebody else they might fidget with. So, it's not just...I don't look at just the SEN children, I just say... I don't really look at just the SEN when I am planning stuff' (BJ, Y6).

In addition, they differentiate not only the materials but also the areas, for example, as a year four teacher explains:

- Differentiation of the outcome

'I tend to do it more when they are doing the same work as everybody else, but what is expected of them at the end of it is different... I don't expect them to answer the question in as much detail.'

- Differentiation on the level of support

'I have the same work but I might give them more support.'

- Differentiation on the level of difficulty

'Or I have the same work but, slightly different questions that are easier.'

Interestingly, English teachers had a similar view regarding IEPs:

'For me personally, the paper work is ridiculous; in your head you already know that a child has got individual needs, and writing on a piece of paper what you do, and when you do it is a complete waste of time; but you need proof, and I understand why we have got to do it, and this evidence has got to be there and you can show the parents and... I understand all of that; but personally, it would be a case for me [of] ... I know that child has... special educational needs or behavioural needs; I know what I'm doing in class to help them and do I really need to write it all day to prove that I know what I'm doing?' (BJ, Y6).

Their responses raise questions about the efficient use of the IEP in differentiating the curriculum and teaching methods in mainstream schools.

Peer assistance (collaboration)

Working in groups or in pairs was a feature of English classrooms. Teachers tended to organise activities for groups to do. This kind of work is supported by the physical appearance of the English classrooms, the seating arrangement in particular. Observing children with MLD working in groups highlighted different patterns of work. While the children were able to work equally through splitting responsibilities, they also relied on the group or their partner to complete the activities.

Using technology

ICT and technology were among the classroom facilities. Teachers used the ‘smartboard’ for some activities; for example RE in ‘the food chain’ lesson used it to log on to an educational website and let her students participate. All the students, including the MLD children were excited and engaged by the lesson.

Also, ICT clusters were used to enhance the science curriculum. In years four and six I observed the use of an ICT room in teaching science. The children located a password to access the internet and were asked to collect information connected to the science topic. For example, the year six teacher asked the class to choose one animal and collect information to design a page about it. Once, the teacher took her students to the ICT room and asked them to use an educational website for activities related to the science curriculum, such as forces and plant anatomy.

Extracurricular activities

Their extracurricular activities enhanced the science curriculum. The English school had a ‘science club’ after school, where children could broaden their knowledge in a more appealing way. I found that one of the MLD children was a member. Trips were used, too, to enrich the curriculum, such as a year six weekend camping trip to the countryside, exploring nature. In addition, teachers encouraged guest speakers and workshops as further strategies to broaden children’s perspective on all National Curriculum subjects.

Emphasising scientific skills

English teachers encouraged students to apply scientific skills such as observation, classification, collection of data, inference and prediction. For example, in year four, the teacher wrote up the learning objective ‘to plan an experiment’ through discussion.

She asked ‘what did you notice about our science objective today?’ ‘What are the main parts of the experiment?’ She always gave them two minutes’ group discussion before asking for answers. Afterwards she gave them an activity which mainly involved the question, ‘What do plants need to grow?’ She drew a concept map to organise their answer. She developed their scientific thinking with these prompts:

‘...so you think that leaves make food for the plant...to be sure we need to do an experiment first... can you think of ways to design this experiment?’

Again, she let the class discuss this in groups. First, they developed an experiment question, decided on the equipment needed, predicted the outcome, decided how to read the result and discussed the conclusion. The students were able to develop this experiment through discussion, led by their teacher. At the same time, children with MLD had been engaged in the discussion within their group and received more support from the teaching assistant. Their discussion questions were:

‘How can we know which one grows more?’

‘How can we measure its length?’

‘So I will measure after one week first? Why is this wrong?’

‘When should I measure the length? Why?’

‘Is it a fair test?’

‘Can you explain the meaning of a fair test?’

The teacher used the whiteboard to record their ideas and the experiment design. Then she brought two plants, cut the leaves off one but not the other and measured it with one of the students. The children recorded the measurement on their worksheet. Finally, she asked them to measure the two plants after a week and record any changes.

In addition, I observed a lesson with the learning objective of classifying animals by different criteria. The teacher sat the class in pairs and gave them animal pictures to classify into four groups. Children discussed the criteria and the reasons behind their choices. The teacher recorded their answers on the whiteboard and discussed them with the rest of the class. In this activity, they were introduced to a range of ideas, such as types of habitat, nutrition and the physical appearance of the animals.

Role of others in the classroom

A feature of the English classroom was the presence of teaching assistants (TAs). Employing teaching assistants is one way to make the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream class easier. However, the use of teaching assistants varied. In my observation of different classrooms, I found that the role of TAs was either to join in the learning process by playing an active role in planning lessons and be involved in the discussion of different issues regarding class practice, sharing in explanations, taking part in class activities and working with all the pupils in the same group without focusing only on children with SEN.

Alternatively, TAs in other classes were seen as an ‘extra body’ merely to manage the class without affecting its learning. They were assigned to certain pupils who had behavioural difficulties.

The school SENCO provided more evidence that the TA was mainly responsible for children with SEN and for linking the unit and the included child, as discussed in Chapter Five. This could lead to heavy reliance on the TA. The interesting point revealed by the two TAs was that they had no degrees nor training to manage children with SEN, which raises questions about the teaching quality of TAs working with children with SEN.

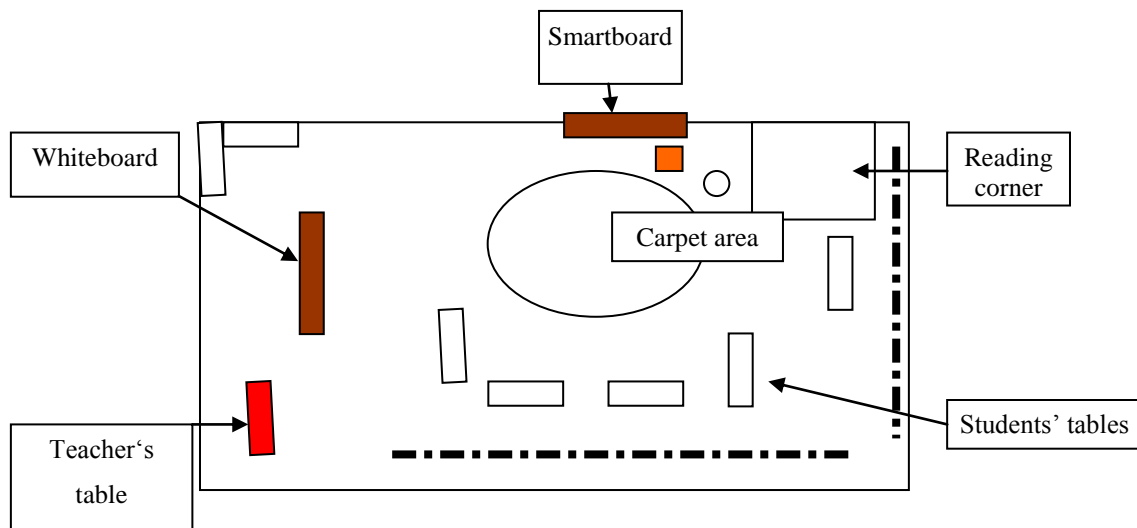
6.2.2.3 The class environment in the English classroom

Primary schools in England have no laboratories. However, English teachers’ use of the classroom in developing a scientific environment resulted in different conditions as described in various parts of this chapter, for example:

- Overlapping and a cross-curricular approach
- Using different resources for knowledge, such as ICT, trips to provide concrete activities
- Well-prepared and attractive classrooms
- Emphasising students’ knowledge
- Less centralisation, which provides scope for teachers to plan the activities and differentiate the curriculum.

The following figure illustrates the structure of the English classroom, for clarity.

Figure 6.4 Layout of the classroom in the English school



The English classroom was divided into sections for different learning objectives; for example, a space for reading, a large whiteboard, the smartboard - an interactive tool to enhance the learning process, the sitting carpet with small whiteboard and the students' tables organised for groups of four to six children. Unlike that in Kuwait, this classroom's organisation enhanced peer collaboration and group work. The significant difference between the two classrooms was the dynamic movement in the English classroom as a result of its different sections. The English teacher and students constantly changed the classroom arrangement to suit the type of activity to be performed. In contrast, the Kuwaiti classroom was characterised by little movement, with the teacher always in the centre next to the whiteboard, faced by the students sitting at individual tables.

The English classroom encouraged a sense of belonging among the students by covering its walls with students' artwork and poems to strengthen their connection to the class and the school, as well as developing their self-confidence. They could hang their photos on the wall and beside the coat hooks, as part of the positive behaviour management strategy and had

drawers labelled with their name. English classrooms were also more attractive because of the availability of books to read, toys, computers and electronic equipment.

In England, the cross-curricular approach also promoted a different type of classroom, filled with bright posters, artwork, toys and resources. This overlapping and cross-curricular approach helped to foster the learning process, as a teacher emphasised.

Notwithstanding these differences, similar patterns of behaviour were observed in both classrooms but different approaches in England, such as the teacher's positioning and drawing up of classroom rules but with students' participation throughout the discussion. The English teacher always asked other students' views of misbehaviour and the right response to it. However, both systems expect students to raise their hands when volunteering to answer a question.

6.2.2.4 English students with MLDs' perception of science

I explored English students' perception of science with the same methods that I used with the Kuwaiti students. I interviewed two: James from year six and Carla from year four. Interestingly, the results revealed that English students, like Kuwaiti students, preferred science because of its practical aspects. For example, when asked, 'Which subject are you really good at?' James replied:

'Science, maths and geography.'

Despite the language difficulties (shown in his short answers), James identified science among his favourite subjects; he joined the science club because of its many activities:

'It is really good because... [we] ... fly rockets' (James, Y6).

I observed James in one of the science lessons, also, where he worked independently. He was using a computer to design and collect information about animals. Similarly, Carla in year four, preferred science:

'Because it's...we do different things...we like...we have these science books that we write every day.'

I observed Carla in a science class. She was working in a group, classifying animals according to their habitat. She was able to justify her choices with confidence and worked equally with her group.

6.3 Summary

In this chapter the focus has been on understanding the practices adopted by teachers of science for children with MLD. Since the main focus of this research is on the Kuwaiti classroom, I use the English findings to reflect on the Kuwaiti context from a different perspective in order to identify the challenges and possibilities of teaching science to MLD children.

The differences between teachers in the two contexts were due to the characteristics of their respective education systems. It is important to acknowledge the difficulties facing Kuwaiti teachers within the schools, as discussed in the previous chapter; these shaped each teacher's attitude and practice. In sum, the main findings were:

Kuwait had inadequate classroom/laboratories environments which reinforced the teacher-centred approach and certain patterns of behaviour, leading to passive learners. This kind of environment hinders MLD students from reaching their potential. In England, the classrooms were well equipped to facilitate the learning of all children, including children with MLD.

In Kuwait, teachers pinpointed the inappropriate science curriculum which presents the dilemma of quantity or quality. This curriculum focus on quantity alone enhanced the teacher-centred approach and discouraged the hands-on approach which responds to MLD students' needs. English teachers meanwhile approached the National Curriculum more holistically, giving them access to more hands-on methods.

The Kuwaiti teachers show negative attitudes to inclusion and have low expectations of children with MLD, while English teachers show more understanding and accepting attitudes towards them.

In Kuwait, the response to the needs of children with MLDs, added to a lack of knowledge, led to misunderstanding that deleting large areas of the topics counted as modification/differentiation; this affected the quality of the curriculum.

In Kuwait, exploring teaching methods highlighted a dilemma between traditional and hands-on methods and differentiation approaches versus whole-class approaches. In contrast, the strategies applied by English teachers encourage differentiation and individualisation.

Both education systems are considered to be exam-oriented, reflecting the dilemma between formative and summative assessment. However, the influence of exams on MLD children was variable. In Kuwait, the system of failing could lead to exclusion from mainstream classes, while the English classroom included MLD children despite their exam performance.

The MLD students in both Kuwait and England recognised science as a favourite because of its practical nature. After exploring classroom practice, the following chapter focuses on parents' and children's schooling experience. The findings from the different parts of this research are then brought together to draw a full picture of the inclusive education offered to MLD students.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEYOND THE SCHOOL

(MICRO LEVEL 2)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter further analyses the interaction of the case study children and their parents with other levels in the ecological framework (system/society-school-classroom). As formulated in Chapter One, I use the ecological framework as a template to understand and identify the relevant findings about the research question among the various cases.

I integrate within- and cross-case analyses to better understand the experiences of children with MLD within Kuwait's educational system and ensure the validity of results thus generated. The aim in combining analytical strategies is to identify commonalities and variations among cases, exploring the research questions from the parents' and children's standpoints. After data collection, my first analytical step was to organise the voluminous data from the different sources for better management. I applied a data management strategy in giving each case a separate file of experiences. In each file, I connected, ordered and organised the data from different sources (children's/parents' interviews, documents and observations, field notes) to remain focused on the unit of analysis: each MLD child's experiences within the educational system. This step was necessary to manage the quantity of data and to make it easier to triangulate the findings in each case. The next step was to code and sort the data to identify the themes, as experienced by individual respondents.

In the next stage, I followed the ‘family case summary’ techniques described by Ayres et al (2003) and Knafl and Ayres (1996), which work as follows: *‘Family case summaries enable the investigator to reduce a large qualitative data set in a way that preserves the family focus of the research’* (Knafl and Ayres, 1996, p.352).

For the current study the focus is the schooling experience of each child with MLD; I adopted this technique and called the files ‘child thematic profiles’. In each profile I summarised the main themes underlying the educational experience, from the perceptions of the children and their parents, as shown in the table below.

Table 7.1 Child profile format

<p><u>Child's Name</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pre-school experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Birth - Early identification - Early intervention · Mainstream primary school experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School role in identification/intervention - Classroom support - Friendship - Parent/teacher relations - Psychologist's role - Diagnosing - Ministry of Education's role - Cultural influences · Transfer to special classes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer decision - Preparation for/procedure of transferring - Acceptance - Advantages - Disadvantages - Host school approach - Future plans - Inclusive education

Completing the 'child profiles' proved to be an intense experience requiring transcripts to be read many times and demanding considerable effort in organising and summarising the materials without sacrificing the depth of the data. The next step used cross-case analytical strategies. I considered in what areas many cases suggest the same points, where they differ

and where they conflict. By identifying similarities and differences, I sought to provide further insight into issues concerning the quality of inclusive/SEN education in Kuwait.

7.2 Analysis within the Case

To investigate these cases in further detail, I took a triangulation approach, combining data from different sources: parents' interviews, children's interviews, documentation, observation and field notes, comprising teachers' comments.

In the following section I introduce the following individual accounts in more detail (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Case study details

Child's Name (Pseudonym)	Age	School
Reem	11	Girls' school (Y5)
Heba	10	Girls' school (Y4)
Asad	12	Boys' school (Y4)
Abdul	11	Boys' school (Y5)
Khalid	8	Boys' school (Y3)

Due to word limits, I present two accounts only; Appendix Five contains the other three.

7.2.1 Case study 1: Heba

Heba, in year 4, was 10 years old. She had one sister and four brothers. The psychologist's report stated that her family was stable and secure, giving her love and support. Her mother

identified her main difficulties as reading and writing Arabic, as her reports confirmed. The psychologist's report showed an IQ of 75, which led to schooling delays and language difficulties. These were pinpointed by her Arabic teacher's assessment of her great difficulties in reading and writing.

Her two years in kindergarten passed smoothly without any concerns, except that she was shy, nervous and had a minor stutter, according to her parents. Heba confirmed that she used to be afraid and nervous. I asked her why, but she could not remember. Her school records indicated the three primary schools that she attended (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Summary of Heba's performance according to the three school reports

Core subjects Marks	Mainstream school 1		Mainstream school 2		Mainstream school 3 with MLD classes
	Y1	Y2	*Y3	*Y3	Y4
Arabic	20/11 (+2)	20/10 (+1)	50/15 fail	Weak	100/73 Good
Maths	20/12 (+3)	20/10 (+1)	50/23 fail	Satisfactory	100/85 Very Good
Science	20/16 (+6)	20/15 (+5)	30/18 (+3)	Weak	100/78 Good
English	20/12 (+4)	20/8 (+1)	50/23 fail	Weak	100/80 Very Good
Comment	Weakness in languages and maths	Discretionary marks added by teacher to ensure a pass	fail	Transfer to MLD class	Overall 85.75%

This table summarises Heba's schooling experience. She went to two primary schools before joining a mainstream school with special classes. In the first, she spent two years supported by teachers' giving her extra marks to avoid repeating the grade. As a result of moving home, she transferred to the second school, where the teachers pointed out her difficulties, leading her to repeat year three. She passed upon being transferred to the special classes. Finally, she joined the MLD classes where she obtained good marks, quite unlike those earned in previous schools.

Apparently, then, in Heba's first years in school her difficulties were not identified; this prevented early intervention, as her father states:

'Heba has been promoted to the third grade and she cannot write? ... Whose fault is it? ... She does not know how to write in the third grade! ... In the first grade, we can say that she is still young; but in the second and third grades, she used to draw the word only. At least, she should know the alphabet, sounds and the articulation... Why didn't they speak up and tell the parents?' (Heba's father).

These comments led me to investigate the relations between school and parents in communicating concerns about students' progress. Heba's mother confirms a problem:

'Teachers did not draw my attention as a mother to any problem with Heba... She used to do her homework normally. She used to transcribe words but read slowly. I believed this was due to the fact that she was young but would improve.'

For me, this communication process between school and parents can be interpreted in different ways. First, it may be a denial process, which touches not only parents but also teachers. Second, it may be a dilemma for the school in dealing with particular difficulties: no interventions are available for Heba's support, and how can one tell parents that their child must be excluded from mainstream classes due to learning difficulties or 'mental retardation'? Therefore, the school may give the child a chance to survive in the first grade in the hope that s/he can cope with the work or until the parents face the fact that the child cannot work in mainstream classes and must be excluded. Though her parents recognised that Heba had difficulties, they thought that, since the school raised no issues, there was no need to take action. Her father added:

'We as parents did not care if she got excellent marks... but the problem lies with teachers and school psychologists, who should inform the father and mother that their child has a problem so as to find a solution. But nobody cares, in the first place.'

Her father stated clearly that, regardless of Heba's results, she was promoted to the following grade. This reveals the type of education system which focuses, not on the learning process, but on exams. Heba's experience in this school was explored in an interview. She stated that she had no problems and the teachers tended to support her.

In grade three, Heba transferred to another school when the family moved. The first identification of her problem was at this school:

'...this school... noticed that she was slow to understand' (Heba's mother).

However, the identification process used the deficit model, locating the problem with the child, as her parents stress:

‘I really talked with her [psychologist] but it was no use... They responded that it was my daughter’s fault and “Just transfer her to special classes”...even her father tried to make them treat her nicely... and they responded by saying they were not free, for the sake of the many students... I used to plead with them to give her extra time; but they refused, so as not to do wrong by her’ (Heba’s mother).

Her mother described the school’s reaction to Heba’s difficulties:

‘The school is responsible for Heba’s case ...teachers were so strict with her that it went as far as beating. She used to cry and be very afraid ... That was in the third primary grade. But in the first primary grade, they used to love her very much...teachers destroyed her...they always addressed her as “You stupid”... She often came home crying...particularly the teachers of Arabic and mathematics, to the extent that she stopped writing and taking part.’

These quotations support my interpretation that no intervention exists in the school to support children with learning difficulties. Despite her mother’s support at home, Heba failed third grade. This constant failure, in her mother’s words, made her:

‘ ... suffer from psychological symptoms... She was disappointed by her teachers and she lost self-confidence.’

Heba added that her friends turned hostile when she had to repeat a grade:

'It was just when I failed, the girls used to ask me "Why did you fail?" ... They [her former classmates who had moved up to fourth grade] used to pick on me' (Heba).

I asked her why she failed; she put it down to Arabic language lessons and that:

' [the teacher] ... didn't help me ... that is why ... '

This kind of help (giving extra marks) was accepted by parents, teachers and students themselves as a way to avoid failing. In this culture, failing and repeating the year was much criticised in the educational system, as it stigmatised both child and parents; hence, a new initiative replaced the standard examination system with teacher assessments and no repetitions in the first three grades of primary school.

However, this policy was enacted after Heba transferred to special classes. The legislation insisted that the child must fail the course before transferring to the special classes; but this angered parents, who believed that it wasted their child's time, withholding proper support. Therefore, Heba failed year three and repeated the year at this school so as to qualify afterward for special classes:

'... and when she succeeded and was promoted to the fourth grade, I told them to help and make her succeed so that she would not be affected psychologically, since I had agreed to

transfer her to the special classes after the third grade... They said “No! She must fail first”’
(Heba’s mother).

I asked them about the process of deciding to transfer Heba to special classes. The school gave the parents no choice but to transfer. Her father continued:

‘We did not think... Rather, they forced us to transfer her because her comprehension is low... They told me that in the fifth grade she would not be able to complete and I should transfer her to the special classes’ (Heba’s father).

The school advised them that these classes had the advantage of small student numbers, which would help Heba to learn better. The mother’s reaction was to ask:

““Why didn’t you tell me before about her need to transfer to special classes”... You know what she [the school psychologist] said?... “I wanted to tell you. But some mothers do not accept this truth”. I asked for the teachers’ opinions and they assured me that there are students whose case is just like my daughter’s but whose parents deny it. Why is my daughter to blame? They wasted these years of hers... Can you imagine that it was me who felt there was a problem and asked them to find a solution for it?’ (Heba’s mother).

Therefore, when I asked them what Heba’s teacher had said at the parent-teacher meetings about Heba’s struggles, they replied:

Father: *‘At the primary level, they do not care about these meetings.’*

Mother: *‘The focus is always on excellent students and when my turn comes, she says “Your daughter is so-so ...” What should I reply to them... [they] just complain about the parent...*

Father: *‘This is the case with all schools in Kuwait and if I make a complaint, all the blame will be put on my daughter, who doesn’t understand’.*

Her father emphasised that this relationship is the same throughout Kuwait and that the deficit model dominates its educational system. However, this generalisation should not be taken too far. Heba’s interview reinforced her parents’ version. She stated that she faced difficulties in school, in particular in reading; she hated the Arabic teacher because:

‘When I couldn’t read a little, she used to scold and yell at me... She used to say “Why don’t you know how to write?”’

However, despite her negative experience in this school, Heba remembered the friends she made there. In order to explore the cultural perspective, I asked them about how the extended family and her siblings had reacted to her transfer to special classes:

‘There is an objection to transferring... when you talk to her you find nothing wrong with her and so they object to her transfer’ (Heba’s mother).

Families tend to view special classes negatively and could be considered a stigma, as highlighted in Chapter Five. Finally, Heba transferred in year four to her third primary school with special classes. Her father described the procedure:

‘Transferring her to special education required us to follow many procedures, including getting reports from the Child Evaluation Centre, the specialist and the Supreme Council for the Handicapped. I put all these reports together in a file and took it to the Ministry of Education and this school was determined for her.’

The parents pointed out that Heba had no preparation to ensure her smooth transfer to special classes and hence, her mother strongly denied that she was happy there. However, leaving aside Heba’s feelings, her parents pointed out the positive results of transferring:

‘There is a great improvement of her level, as she speaks with her teachers as if she were friends with them... She feels comfortable with the programme and its teachers do really care; for if she was absent they’d understand and take her psychology into account’ (Heba’s mother).

‘And now in the examinations, she answers well and gets high marks; but in the past, she used to get nothing. So, I feel she is doing better in these classes in terms of reading and writing’ (Heba’s father).

Heba agreed with her parents that she performed better and she loved her current teachers because:

‘They teach us...they love me and teach me slowly... The current school’s better because my teacher teaches me slowly but the previous teacher of Arabic often got angry with me as she

used to ask me to write a sentence and I told her to give me just one minute to read it first and then say it aloud; but she wouldn't'.

To triangulate, I observed Heba in two classes: science and Arabic. In both, she was confident, expressing her ideas and asking questions. She showed inappropriate behaviour in both periods by chatting with her peers, which led to being singled out a few times and having to move. In science, she was not fully engaged, perhaps due to forgetting her textbook. But she seemed confident in answering the activity paper. In Arabic, she was struggling badly in the spelling test, compared to her classmates. Despite this she asked for support and help without hesitation. This may explain her response to her classmate, as follows:

Student 1: *'We wrote a lot today...we are clever.'*

Arabic Teacher: *'Yes... all of you are clever today.'*

Heba: *'NO ...we are not clever.'*

Arabic Teacher: *'NO ... you are clever.'*

After the Arabic class finished, I asked this teacher about Heba's performance in class. She said that Heba tended to perform better than she had this time; my presence may have affected her. From the field notes, her other teachers (in social studies and English) commented that Heba has settled well in the special classes, despite concerns about her absence due to health problems (diabetes). They remarked that she was sometimes careless and often forgot her homework.

A few aspects of these special classes are negative for Heba and her parents. First, her father saw that they must raise the quality of learning:

'I am somehow dissatisfied with these classes... I want them to have more activities and higher standards.'

Her mother repeated that Heba missed her former friends, as she herself confirmed:

'She wants her friends and asks to go back to her previous school... Maybe she made friendships in her previous school, as she spent two years there; so, she longs for them' (Heba's mother).

Her mother gives another reason for Heba's dissatisfaction with her current school:

'She wants to get back there because she feels at a disadvantage in this school... The main reason is that when I take her from school, she says, "I want to go back to that school because I'm not like them." I say to her "Those students do not have anything wrong. They just need special care far away from the crowded classrooms".'

This feeling of not belonging results from not fitting in these special classes, according to her father:

'There could be a big difference in the classroom in terms of intelligence level and the others' IQ is not like hers; so, she feels the injustice... For example, as if she is put beside... excuse me...a mentally retarded student' (Heba's father).

The type of language used indicates the dominance of the deficit model, not only within school but when extended to include the parents of children with SEN, who tend to categorise their children under different labels. This point confirms the previous chapter's conclusion, that MLD children do not mix and make friends outside their special classes. Heba, for instance, stated *'I don't like to know them'*. When asked, she did not explain the reasons behind this dislike. In break-time, she stayed with her classmates in their own wing.

Therefore, as a result of seeing Heba as different from her classmates in the special classes, her parents' plan is to transfer her back again after primary school to general education:

'I am not happy with the programme level! I don't want my daughter to be like this... She is smart everywhere you put her. She is very good at using computers and she learns English words by heart, first time... She is like her brothers... She is smart and intelligent... I want her to get the proper schooling... I want her to complete her education and I do not want her to feel inferior' (Mother).

Heba cited her feeling of loneliness as the main reason for wishing to go back to her previous school, despite her mistreatment there. However, despite their wishes, Heba's parents face no choice and cannot control their child's educational path:

'Frankly speaking, I do not know the solution to Heba's case... there is no alternative to completing this programme till, who knows, the system may change... I could transfer her to general education now, but this is not in her interests' (Heba's father).

Heba's schooling experiences serve as a basis for deeper understanding of her parents' perceptions of inclusive education, which is explored in the following section.

I asked her parents about implementing full inclusion in Kuwaiti schools; they replied:

Mother: *'No way! Believe me, it is teachers! Teachers... are the obstacle.'*

Father: *'This is hard. This process requires qualified persons and professional teachers... Persons who can deal with all kinds of capabilities.'*

I took this point further to explore the barriers to inclusive education from their standpoint. They located the barriers within school and the educational system, which can be interpreted as part of the social model of disability. Heba's parents raised doubts about the school's capacity to adopt an inclusive policy:

Father: *'It lies in schools... when I was in the primary stage we used to have good teachers. I could not leave the classroom. I had only to know the lesson, in particular Arabic and mathematics. But the problem now is that some graduate teachers and teachers just want to pass the time... there are thirty students in the classroom; is it reasonable that they are all intelligent and excellent? There must be some students of average IQ whom the teacher should focus on.'*

Mother: *'You know teachers and their psychology... If one of them has a problem, she will put more pressure on children... There are pressures exerted by the principal and from the curriculum...'*

In previous quotations, Heba's parents mentioned the need for teachers of inclusive classes to accommodate the full range of children's needs. They also pointed out the challenges in Kuwait's educational policy and administration:

Father: *'There is the new system of the 'achievement profile', which gives the student a pass grade and promotes them to the fourth grade without them exerting any effort till they proceed to the fifth grade and still do not know how to read and write... Just be patient and you will see that, within three years, the number of slow learners will increase.'*

Mother: *'The problem is with the Ministry in Kuwait ...take, for instance, my son in the tenth grade, who studies fourteen subjects. There was a meeting where parents told them that there should be a day off between every two examinations. But the problem in Kuwait is that they don't listen to parents' opinions and do not adapt anything. So, what is the use of such meetings?'*

Therefore, the parents confirmed the school staff responses, which previous chapters have highlighted, about the barriers to the introduction of inclusive education policies. However, despite them, Heba's father believed that:

'If the situation does not change, there will be no hope... Don't you ask yourself why wealthy people enrol their children in private schools?... But nothing is impossible if the Ministry just asks for the help of an institution able to establish proper inclusion... There must be experienced teachers.'

Given these barriers, Heba's father stated clearly that the main responsibility for change lies with the Ministry of Education.

7.2.2 Case study 2: Abdul

Abdul was 11 years old. His primary schooling involved much struggle and failure. His major difficulties were in maths, as he failed in year three and repeated this grade (see Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Summary of Abdul's performance according to the two school reports

Core subjects Marks	Mainstream school						Mainstream school with special classes
	Y1	Y2	*Y3	*Y3	Y4	Y5*	Y5
Arabic	20/12 (+2)	Report missing	22/50 just passed	35/50	35/50 (+5)	25/50	38/50
Maths	20/10 just passed		16/50 fail	35/50 (+5)	28/50 (+2)	21/50 Fail (-3)	39/50
Science	20/19		15/30 just passed	22/30	20/30 (+5)	24/30	28/30
English	20/19		32/50	33/50	33/50 (+5)	26/50	43/50
Comment	Weakness in languages and maths	Pass	Failed and repeated the grade	Weakness in languages and maths	Pass	*First semester *Transferred to special class	Pass (Very Good)

His psychologist's report indicated only that Abdul's difficulties are mainly with maths, describing him as having:

' ... practical skills ... more developed than verbal skills ...He has better comprehension than ability to count or do numerical activities.'

His diagnosis was delayed schooling and being a slow learner. This report was delayed and written at his mother's insistence. As she said later, she put all her efforts into arranging this process of diagnosing Abdul, so as to make him eligible to transfer to special classes.

Abdul's story was similar to other cases; but Abdul had three siblings with learning difficulties. Through his story we gain a deeper insight into the educational system and the parents' influence on their children's education. As noted above, parents invariably put pressure on the school not to let their children fail. Abdul's case is unique for his mother's efforts to enrol him in special classes. Consequently, he was offered a place on the special classes programme on condition that he was re-assessed after a year to check his suitability for it; if unsuitable, he would return to general education, as his weakness in maths alone did not justify his exclusion.

His mother's persistence may be explained by her experience as the mother of four children with learning difficulties. Expecting Abdul's problems in mainstream classes, she became concerned. It is impressive to follow her struggle to bring up these four children. Her oldest son, through her efforts and determination, managed to finish the intermediate stage; he enrolled in the applied courses and qualified for a job.

'I got very tired of getting private tutors for him till he completed the intermediate stage and then I enlisted him in the courses of the Applied Institutes... Thank God he graduated, got a job and got married ... he has a daughter now.'

Abdul, second brother, had similar experiences:

'His schooling process started to get harder, with Arabic in particular, which he failed. Then I found him private tutors and discovered that the problem lay in those teachers, whose basic occupation was not teaching. One of them was a house painter and another was a labourer... etc. When the Arabic teacher felt that I was worn out, she let him succeed. I was also very tired seeing to him in the intermediate stage and I learned that support was provided for slow learners; so I started to try to get support for him; but in vain, as I was told that I was too late and you know the bothering routine. So, I struggled with him till he completed the intermediate stage...afterwards... I enlisted him in the Info Centre at our own expense, because he is smart at computers. Thank God, he graduated and got a good grade and was employed at the Ministry of Health.'

I asked her about the system at the Ministry of Education and she responded:

'They gave me a hard time and they did not understand his case because specialists do not understand their work.'

After seven years, she gave birth to a daughter, who also has learning difficulties:

'She could not hold a pen at the kindergarten stage and did not participate in any activity... They told me about her case and that they had coloured notebooks, and she rarely got involved.'

The experience of this mother, in common with others, is that, despite identifying learning difficulties at an early stage (pre-school), the response from the educational system was only

to inform the parents, but take no further steps in early intervention. Her daughter moved on to primary school without any intervention to support her:

‘When she joined the primary school, she used to write her name in reverse. At this point, I became aware that the case needs support; so I asked them and I was told to try to train her, “Because the solution is with you (the mother), not with anybody else”.’

Putting the onus on the mother without guidance and support from the school was a common theme among these cases. This, to me, is to some extent a blaming process and passes the responsibility from schools to parents. I explain this situation as stemming from the lack of foundation policies to respond to children’s needs through early identification and appropriate intervention. Without these policies, schools and parents are abandoned to deal with the situation themselves. This conflict is described by the mother:

‘When I got her in the first primary grade, a good teacher said “Why did you take her out of the kindergarten so fast?” As for the psychologist, she did nothing and told me to beat her. What logic can be in beating my daughter? I dealt with this psychologist for three years and she drove me mad during this period...’

Her attempts to support her daughter, to try to help her survive within the mainstream system, led this mother to effectively bribe the school in order to save the child from repeating the grade:

'What annoyed me most was that I was very cooperative with them and I spent a lot of money on the school; I got the maths classroom painted and re-decorated, made a sunshade for them for about KD 500, painted my daughter's classroom for KD 100 and fixed tables for KD 150... So, I found that I had spent about KD 2000 in vain, for [my daughter] failed.'

Reaching an impasse, their hopeless situation led these parents to avoid meetings and react by blaming the schools, as she recalls:

'In most cases, I used to meet the psychologist as the teachers were busy and once I met the English teacher, in a hurry and in a bad mood, but she advised me "Focus on her and teach her at home".'

Afterwards, she decided that her daughter could not survive in mainstream classes:

'As for Aisha, I took her to the slow-learners' group in the third primary grade after she had repeated the year; so I took her to the Ministry of Education, where I met some officials and I explained my daughter's case and she said "God willing, it will be OK"; but it was no use, she failed the fourth primary class.'

As this mother said, her daughter remained in mainstream classes without support or transfer to the slow-learners' programme, due to the bureaucratic system and inefficient employees in the Ministry:

'Nobody paid me any attention; so I went to the psychologist, as I now had two cases: Aisha and Abdul, who both have learning difficulties and their condition has not been recognised.'

She highlighted the obstacles set for her children in two areas, teaching practices and the curriculum:

'The problem lies in school, not my son..., it is the fault of teachers and the curriculum, which is hard to understand... our curricula are not good and very demanding.'

She also highlighted the limitations of the exam system in admitting Abdul's special educational needs:

'Abdul failed maths because the exams were very difficult... There is no acknowledgement of individual differences. They want too much information in the examinations. I don't like the way examinations have developed because the distribution of questions and marks in the same examination takes no account of individual differences.'

She adduced the lower expectations of Abdul's teacher:

'I attended a model lesson in maths for Abdul... She picks smart students who she knows will answer and she ignores other students, including Abdul. But she felt embarrassed about not asking my son in my presence. So, when she came to a certain maths problem, she asked him and he answered. She said "Wrong", though he'd answered correctly, so much so that the parents murmured; so she felt the mistake she made and quickly cleaned the blackboard... I

patted him on the back and said “Don’t get angry, darling. You solved the problem correctly” He said “Mama, I swear my performance is good. I am smart”. I said “Yes! Your performance is good and I saw you raising your hand. You are smart”.’

She went on to show how this negative expectation shaped students’ progress:

‘The other fault is that when teachers meet with each other, they speak about students, including my son, and get a general impression that he is at a low level.’

This mother highlighted the challenges, which are not limited to teacher practices alone, but extend to the educational policy in emphasising a rigid curriculum:

‘I honestly excuse them [(teachers)] as...they really do not have enough time and the truth is that teachers have a huge workload and do not have any spare time...I asked [the class teacher] what I could do for them. [She said] “I have a resolution issued by the Ministry that this is the curriculum and I have to finish it in the specified time...”’

She spoke of the final stage before transferring her children to the slow-learners’ programme:

‘After Aisha had failed Arabic three times and the violent arguments which the psychologist had with them [teachers] and the pressure I put on there, she proceeded to intermediate school in the sixth grade. In the first term, she failed two subjects: maths and English, while in the second term she failed religion, maths, English and social studies; so, she failed the

sixth grade... When I hug her, she hides and cries and says to me “I can’t, mummy. I can’t do any more.”

For Abdul, it was the same process of repeating grades:

‘He succeeded in the first and second and he failed in the third primary grade; he failed maths... I told the maths teacher “You should not have made him fail for being only two marks short.” But it was useless. I also went to the educational district and filed a complaint with them... They told me that the clemency committee can help by granting five marks only. So, if they granted him these marks, he would get a mark higher than a pass; but they did not help him... ’

Abdul himself listed the difficulties that faced him in the previous school:

‘They let me succeed; but in the fifth grade, I got discouraged and my marks started to go down... There were problems in the previous school, as children there used to beat me so often and tease me a lot... ’

Like the other children, the only thing he missed about their previous school was his friends, together with the chance to take part in activities such as football. Having a playground and a chance to join in football with other students are highlighted in Chapter Five, which emphasises the school culture and sense of belonging.

The influence of repeating the year had a negative effect not only on his parents but on Abdul.

'They often speak about me and call me "You failure" ... I feel very sad and angry.'

Reaching this stage with her two children forced Abdul's mother to go back to the Ministry of Education, to challenge the bureaucratic system and report the mistreatment of her children which had added nine years to their schooling:

'I was referred to Mr. (name) who is in charge; so, I went and talked to him and explained my daughter's case in detail. I said that I had received no support from the Ministry for my children in about the last nine years and told him about how much I and their father suffered in particular, as we had two other children before these two. While I and their father managed to help the first two children, now we are very tired and need help and support from the Ministry, as we cannot afford private education for them.'

After this step, a resolution of her children's case seemed to be forthcoming:

'He immediately took the required action...afterwards...the psychologist told me that the Ministry takes an interest in the question of my children and then I said "Thank God" and I cried for joy, because I was worn out with my son and daughter as I had two problems at the same time and our situation is hard.'

Her children were both transferred to the special classes programme and they are happy.

'I pray to God their joy will continue. They were so happy that they almost tore up their old textbooks.'

Though she accepted their enrolment in special classes, she faced family antipathy:

'Let me be honest with you. My relatives objected and my father used to say "It will be your fault – how can you take them to a school for the mad?" I said to him "I swear it is not a school for the mad. It is a normal governmental school. But instead of studying the whole complete curriculum, they just study part of it". However, my sister says to me "I am angry with you. Give me your children to raise instead..."'

This negative attitude extended from the whole family to the surrounding community:

'Look, it's the idea that society has about them. It is the most important thing...my neighbours' daughter was...Aisha's age and at the same school, but she moved to a special school some years ago. It happened that they once arrived home at the same time as we did. When our neighbours' daughter saw her, she said "Are you still in the sixth grade? Are you still a child?" My daughter now hates to see her coming along when she leaves or enters the house. That is one of the disadvantages of having different uniforms for various stages. In the past, it was one uniform.'

Therefore, to avoid the cultural stigma, she and her children kept their situation secret from others:

'No! I have never told anybody... In the first place, my relatives didn't accept this idea from the very beginning, so how about people who do not know the nature of these classes?'

'One of Abdul's friends from his previous school once called him and said "Why don't I see you in our school?" He said, "I was transferred to the slow-learners' classes"; so we said, "Why did you tell him such a thing?" He said "Mummy, I forgot". I like this system and I am comfortable with it. '

Even she pointed out the negative effect of using the 'slow-learner' label:

'I wish that this group could be called 'dyslexic' not 'slow learning'... '

If her children were offered the right support, she said, they could cope with mainstream classes. She advocated inclusion and refused to put her children in special schools:

'No! I want them to be open-minded about others.'

I observed Abdul in four classes: science (2), English and Arabic. He showed higher engagement and performance than his classmates. He was confident in answering and asking questions. For example, on the subject 'heat sources', he asked his teacher why the friction between two stones creates fire; but the teacher ignored him. In English, he was reading and writing so well that his English teacher commented that he should not be in this class but in a mainstream class. Her comments confirm what was said at first, that Abdul was more able to

join general classes, but his mother's lack of trust or confidence in the mainstream school's response to her son made her prefer to keep him in special classes.

7.3 Cross-case analysis

At this stage, after presenting two child case studies, I want to compare all the case profiles in order to identify the commonalities and differences, so as to understand more deeply the current educational system in Kuwait and families' experiences of it. Through this journey of five case studies, I have explored the hidden voices of parents and their children, which clarify the hazards of the educational system. These case studies provide an oversight of the wider context where different features interact to shape the individual's experiences. I introduce these factors grouped under some major themes emerging from the cross-case analysis.

7.3.1 Themes

- Pitfalls of the educational system
 - lack of early identification/intervention
 - the process of diagnosis
 - conditions in the mainstream school
- Parental choices 'between the hammer and the anvil'
- The experience in the special classes programme
- Parental perceptions of inclusive education

7.3.1.1 Pitfalls of the educational system

Through the cases, the inadequacy of the educational policy in Kuwait has been highlighted as follows:

Lack of early identification/intervention

At policy level, through documentation analysis, it is seen that policy fails to deal with the early identification of children with special educational needs and consequently with developing early intervention. At school level, the staff highlighted this limitation of current practice, which delays the right response to children's needs.

All five cases have shown difficulties since their early kindergarten years. However, this realisation did not prompt the process of assessment and the opportunity of early identification was missed. It is noticeable that in all five cases the children went through kindergarten and the first two primary grades as a result of two factors: discretionary marks added by teachers and parental pressure to avoid repeating a year. To visualise this process, see Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Summary of the schooling experience of five case studies

	Kindergarten	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y5
Reem	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	
Heba	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	
Abdul	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	
Khalid	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Asad	Pass	Pass		Pass	Fail

This table presents the opportunity which starts in kindergarten and ends by year two. After this, the child enters the ‘failing zone’, where s/he and the parents fight to survive until they face the prospect of exclusion. The only child not given such an opportunity was Khalid, because of his severe speech and language difficulties. Asad managed to survive in year three because of his mother’s pressure and eventual undertaking to the headteacher to transfer him to another school, so long as he achieved promotion to year four. However, his ‘failing zone’ was simply deferred for another year before transferring to special classes.

This situation can be interpreted in two ways. According to the parents’ account, the school staff’s inefficiency, carelessness and indifference to children’s needs (see the cases of Asad, Heba, Abdul and Khalid) is to blame for delays in identification and intervention. To the other barriers may be added the school’s negative culture, which stigmatises children who cannot cope with the mainstream and punishes them by making them repeat the year (see the cases of Reem and Heba).

Parents, however, understood teachers’ inability to accommodate children within the current system, due to its centralisation; Abdul’s mother pointed out that the usual reply from teachers about the lack of support for her son was:

“What do you want me to do for him?... I have a resolution issued by the Ministry that this is the curriculum and I have to finish it in the specified time” (Abdul’s mother).

As stated earlier, there is no policy to equip schools with professionals to respond to children’s needs.

The process of diagnosis

After entering the 'failing zone', the process of justifying exclusion started. The procedure first relied heavily on IQ tests which diagnosed in terms of the deficit model. It can be seen that this approach had its limitations, as parents agreed. They pointed out that this kind of diagnosis ignores other factors which may lead to children's struggling in mainstream school. For example, Reem's diagnosis was made at a very hard time for her, soon after her father's death. Furthermore, this type of diagnosis was rejected by parents themselves.

The conflict and tension between parents and schools reached a peak. On the one hand, parents refused stigmatising labels (mental retardation; insane; slow learner) and emphasised the schools' inefficiencies, which accumulated academic weakness. On the other, schools strongly defended their situation, justifying exclusion by relying on professional judgments (IQ tests) and the children's failure in standardised exams. This could be interpreted as tension between the medical (deficit) model and the social model. Schools located the deficit within the child, who could not survive in mainstream education. Parents insisted that the lack of support from the school had led to their children's failing.

Conditions in mainstream schools

The experiences of the mainstream schools in all the cases before their exclusion can reveal the reality of practice from parents' and children's standpoints. The data shed light on the incapacity of mainstream schools to accommodate special educational needs. The previous section identified some of the barriers, such as lack of early identification/intervention and diagnostic limitations.

In addition, cross-case analysis confirmed and provided more evidence of the identified barriers which have been described by school staff in previous chapters. These barriers were large class sizes, a rigid curriculum, a standardised examination system and negative attitudes among school staff and children without disabilities.

7.3.1.2 Parental choices ‘between the hammer and the anvil’

Finally, when the parents realised the nature of the educational system and had exhausted all the expedients, from discretionary marks added by teachers, to begging and sometimes bribery to keep their child within mainstream education (see the case of Reem, Appendix Five), they had one option only: to transfer their child to a different school.

The parents were in a dilemma, between the inadequacy of mainstream school to accommodate their child’s needs and the cultural stigma of labelling him/her a ‘slow learner’ to be taught in special classes/schools. Parents under pressure from both sides were forced to transfer the child and then faced community disapproval (see the cases of Heba, Abdul and Khalid). Therefore, to avoid the latter cultural stigma, parents kept the placement secret from the community.

7.3.1.3 The experience inside the special classes programme

Cross-case analysis showed some variation in the views about special classes. For example, Reem and her mother had the most positive attitude towards them. Her mother emphasised that Reem had greatly improved, academically and psychologically. Reem herself confirmed her happiness over her relations with teachers and friends. The other cases were more

ambivalent. On the one hand, parents highlighted the positive academic changes in their children due to smaller class sizes, a modified curriculum, less exam pressure and better teaching methods, psychologically raising their confidence as their exam grades rose. Relations between parents and school also improved, with more understanding and acceptance of their child's situation and less tendency to blame these schools than the previous ones.

On the other, parents identified some of the limitations of the special classes programme, such as staff shortages and the omission of some subjects, such as sport and IT. Parents such as Heba's emphasised the low quality of the programme, which is not demanding enough to enable their daughter to return to general education, still less complete higher education, as in Asad's case. Therefore, they were anxious about their children's future in this programme, which ends with courses likely to lead to low-paid employment.

From the children's perspective, all except Reem disliked these classes because they missed the friends from their previous school. In the boys' school, in particular, the label 'student in special classes' provoked bullying and discrimination from fellow-students.

7.3.1.4 Parental perceptions of inclusive education

Cross-case analysis showed some variation too, in the perception of inclusive education. Two cases, Reem and Khalid, seemed to oppose inclusion, while the other three favoured it. The following section seeks the reasons behind these perceptions.

In Reem's case, she and her mother refused to go back to mainstream classes, preferring special classes. This attitude could be used as evidence against inclusion. However, this is to my mind inappropriate, because this perception is based on their experience in two previous schools, which could be described as involving mainstreaming/integration but certainly not 'inclusion'. There, Reem was located physically but had no kind of support to accommodate her special educational needs.

Her mother refused to let Reem return to the general education where she struggled and was finally excluded. Therefore, unless the barriers and challenges within general education are surmounted, Reem and her mother would not change their attitude.

Khalid's mother felt the same, rejecting inclusion and preferring to keep her son in special school to avoid any harm from others. This protectiveness on her part was the main reason behind her rejecting inclusion, which went against her son's wish to return to his friends.

So far, parents' reservations about inclusion were for two main reasons: the present barriers in general education and their protective attitude. These findings support those from the schools in Chapter Six.

However, the three cases which supported inclusion did so for different reasons. First, Heba's parents felt positively toward inclusion. They and Heba planned to return to general education, for the following reasons. The low level of the 'special classes programme' had not allowed Heba to complete her education or prepared her for a good job. Heba and her parents also emphasised that she was 'different' from her classmates on the programme.

This sense of not belonging to these classes may reflect the tension which the parents show. On the one hand, they emphasised the role of the school in creating difficulties for Heba. This position is considered to follow the social model. On the other, the deficiency (medical) model appeared in their language and their attitude towards ‘other’ children, which betrays the ‘cultural stigma’, their main reason for rejecting special classes.

Despite this positive attitude toward inclusion, Heba’s parents doubted the feasibility of developing inclusive schools:

‘This is hard. This process requires qualified persons and professional teachers... Persons who can deal with all kinds of capabilities’ (Heba’s father).

Their doubts concerned not only the teachers’ ability to accommodate individual differences as the key to successful inclusion. They also pointed out the failure of the Ministry of Education to provide the appropriate policies:

‘Just be patient and you will see that within three years to come, the number of slow-learning children will increase.’

Despite these doubts, Heba’s father believed that determined action from the Ministry of Education would remove all obstacles:

‘There is nothing impossible if the Ministry just asks for the help of a qualified being, to apply the proper inclusion’ (Heba’s father).

This statement reflects the parents' realisation of the nature of the country's centralised system. The SGSE member confirmed this point:

'It is just talk [developing more inclusive practices] because there are other things more important to the Ministry than special education as when we ask for any development they always respond ... "Continue with the system you use as long as things are OK with you..."'. As such, there is not much attention paid to it and we are always looked down on, in that they say "Don't compare your problems with the problems of general education as you are just a drop of water in the education ocean".'

Asad's mother, too, advocated inclusion and rejected special classes so as to avoid stigma and to 'normalise' her child. Asad himself agreed with Heba in wishing to return to his previous schools for friendship's sake. This point supports the importance of 'social inclusion' in children's lives within their local community.

Finally, Abdul's case is similar to Heba and Asad's, except that Abdul's mother advocated any degree of inclusion ('partial inclusion'), as in the current programme, or 'full inclusion' and totally refused to consider 'special school'. The main reason for this is her desire that the children should *'be open-minded to others'*. This acceptance of the current arrangement of special classes was not shared by the other children, who would prefer to return to general education (see Asad and Heba). The reasons behind advocating inclusive education from the parents' standpoint can be summarised as avoiding stigma, normalisation, better chances for a complete education and better employment prospects.

7.4 Summary

In this and previous chapters, the reader can trace the complexity and interaction of different levels within the ecological model. The cross-case analysis highlights issues which reflect the interaction between the local culture and international influences in shaping the current policy and practice in Kuwait.

The five cases showed more commonalities than differences. The same experiences within the mainstream schools confirmed and augmented the evidence in previous chapters of the barriers within mainstream schools. These experiences shed light on the tension between the social model adopted by parents and the medical model adopted by schools. However, the limited parental choice has helped the medical model to dominate. The cases, moreover, show similar experiences within the special classes which confirm the advantages and disadvantages highlighted by the school staff in earlier chapters, such as lack of interaction between students, staff shortages, bullying and the limitations of the curriculum.

Finally, parents' attitudes towards inclusive education were mainly positive, since the main aim was to avoid stigma and to secure a better education. However, parents doubted the feasibility of creating inclusive schools within the current system. They emphasised the teachers' role and the curriculum and examination systems as the main barriers to inclusive education.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

The preceding four chapters highlighted the complexities involved in understanding and implementing inclusive education at various levels in the contexts of England and Kuwait. Each aspect of the study has revealed a piece of the whole, developing an understanding of inclusive education in the wider context, covering policy and practice in the school/classroom, extending to the children and families. Significantly, no level is separate from the others, nor can it individually provide a holistic understanding of the way in which inclusive education has developed. Therefore, I now identify what links the different levels, to help understand how inclusive education as a whole developed in these countries.

This chapter, which addresses in turn each of the research questions from Chapter One, draws on the data collected from the case studies of primary school children, with reference to my earlier theoretical framework and literature review.

8.2 An Overview of the Significant Findings of the Study

To recall the findings of this research, before discussing the study as a whole, I summarise them below in the light of the research purpose.

Table 8.1 Summary of the main findings

- The findings indicate that certain policies, concepts and roles have a unique meaning in Kuwait. This may be part of the transfer and translation processes which obtain wherever policy moves around the world. As highlighted in the literature review (Armstrong et al, 2010; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009), transferring educational policies and practices is not straightforward but becomes influenced by cultural-political factors which lead to re-interpreting them to match the new context. Such re-interpretation has been evident in the findings in Kuwait, in its areas of tension, such as inclusion versus integration; a differentiation approach versus a whole-class approach They extend to include, e.g. job descriptions for SENCOs and TAs and methods such as IEPs.
- Empirical and documentary findings in this research highlight external and internal barriers to the development of inclusive education within mainstream schools. This is consistent with the reviewed literature, which concedes that inclusion as a process facing many challenges and barriers at different levels. It should acknowledge that these barriers are interconnected. For example, the barriers erected by lack of acceptance and negative attitudes to inclusion in Kuwait are linked to the lack of enough knowledge and skills to effectively implement inclusive education.
- Despite contextual differences, a similar dilemma faces Kuwaiti and English educators connected with the tension between inclusion policies and those for raising standards. This may partly result from defining educational effectiveness under policies to raise standards in response to economic competition worldwide.

8.3 Adapting the Framework to Make Sense of Inclusive Education in Kuwait and England

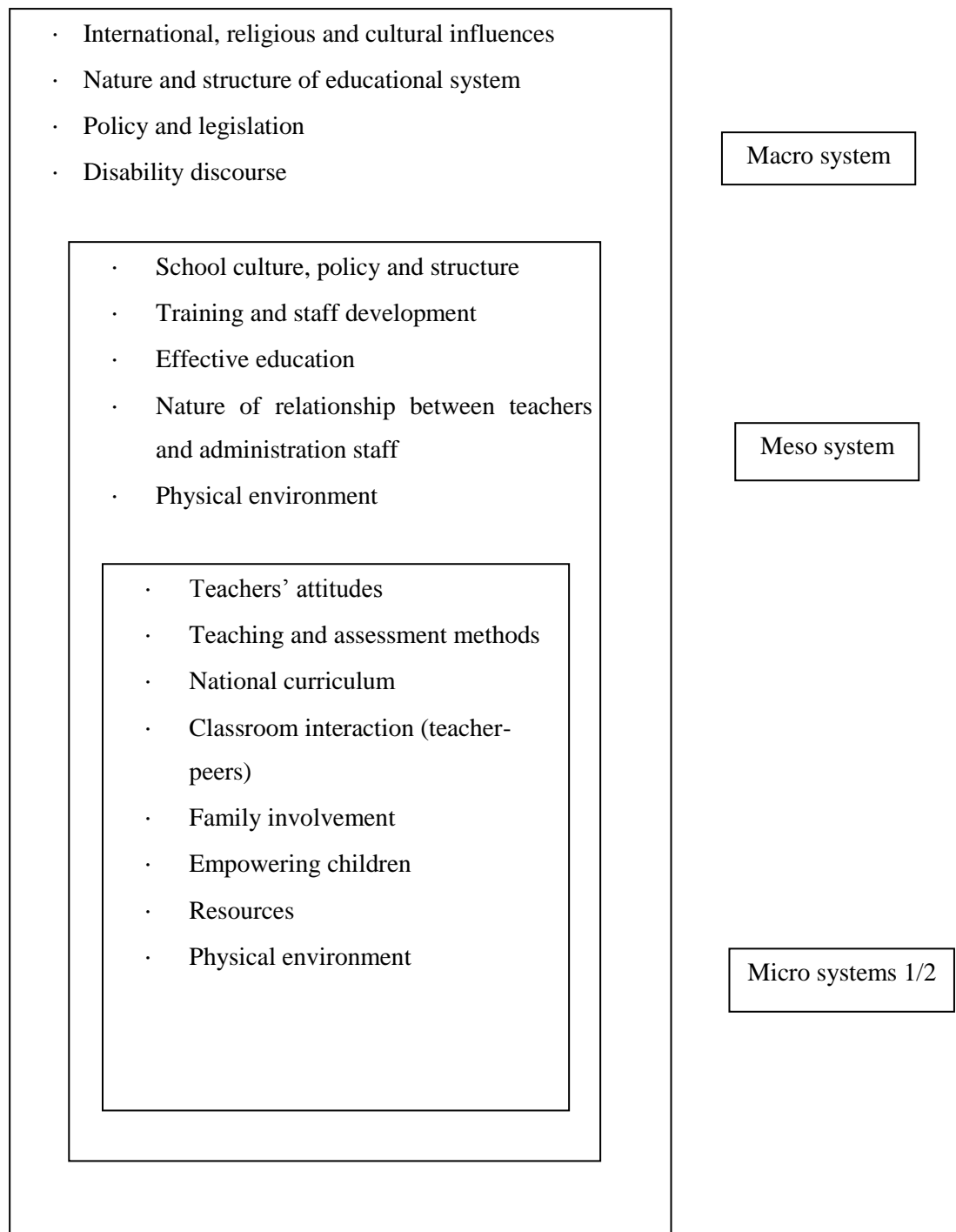
To recall the analytic framework described earlier, the study merges two models so as to widen understanding and broaden the basis for interpretation. This model is Bereday's umbrella model, which provides a systematic procedure to first define educational phenomena and then establish a theoretical basis for analysis in two or more contexts (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). In the second stage of Bereday's model, I apply an ecological framework consisting of a multilayered investigation (into the findings) of inclusive provision for children with MLD at primary mainstream schools, to highlight the fact that the progress towards inclusion is dynamic and systemically connected at all levels of practice: international, national, school and classroom. Bray and Thomas (1995) mention the importance of a multilevel analysis framework combining macro and micro levels in amplifying and balancing the understanding of the research focus. This poses challenges for the researcher, for as Bronfenbrenner (1997) confirms, different forces of international policies and local culture impact on each person.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system framework distinguishes a nested set of layers (see Chapter Three) denoting the various forces, both immediate and more remote, which affect individuals. Development within these systems is not static, but dynamic and overlapping. For example, a range of factors operating at various levels (such as the economic situation, or international and cultural attitudes towards disabled people) influence the development of inclusive education in Kuwait and England, in policy and practice. Therefore, an ecological framework best reveals the development and implementation of inclusive education at all levels.

In discussing the findings, I follow the same sequence as in previous chapters (macro, meso, micro 1, micro 2). Micro 1 and micro 2 merge, since they overlap when I focus on MLD children's schooling experience. For example, investigating MLD children and parents' and teachers' experiences of mainstream school and MLD classes shows some overlapping between classroom practice and the relationships between teachers and school staff, on the one hand, and MLD children and their parents, on the other.

Figure 8.1 provides an overview of the range of identified influences and barriers at different levels in the system.

Figure 8.1 Conceptualising the ecological framework in understanding inclusive education in Kuwait and England



8.3.1 The national context: macro system

The macro system addresses the first research question ‘How did inclusion policies and practice develop in England and Kuwait?’ This system holds the socio-cultural factors and political and government structures which have influenced the development of inclusive education in both countries. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system framework helps to identify these influences. The findings chapters indicate that internal and external factors shape the adoption and nature of both countries’ inclusive education. The contexts are somewhat similar, in having shared factors and distinguishing elements. Chapter Four presents the political, social and cultural internal factors of both contexts to trace the orientation towards or against inclusiveness.

In Kuwait, internal factors favour segregated provision for children with SEN. These factors share such good intentions as ‘modernisation’ and such negative effects as ‘stigma’. In its early stages, Kuwait’s educational development chose the fashionable SEN provision of segregation in special schools and then failed to keep up with developments, as Chapter Four suggests, due to the nature of its political-government system and collectivist culture.

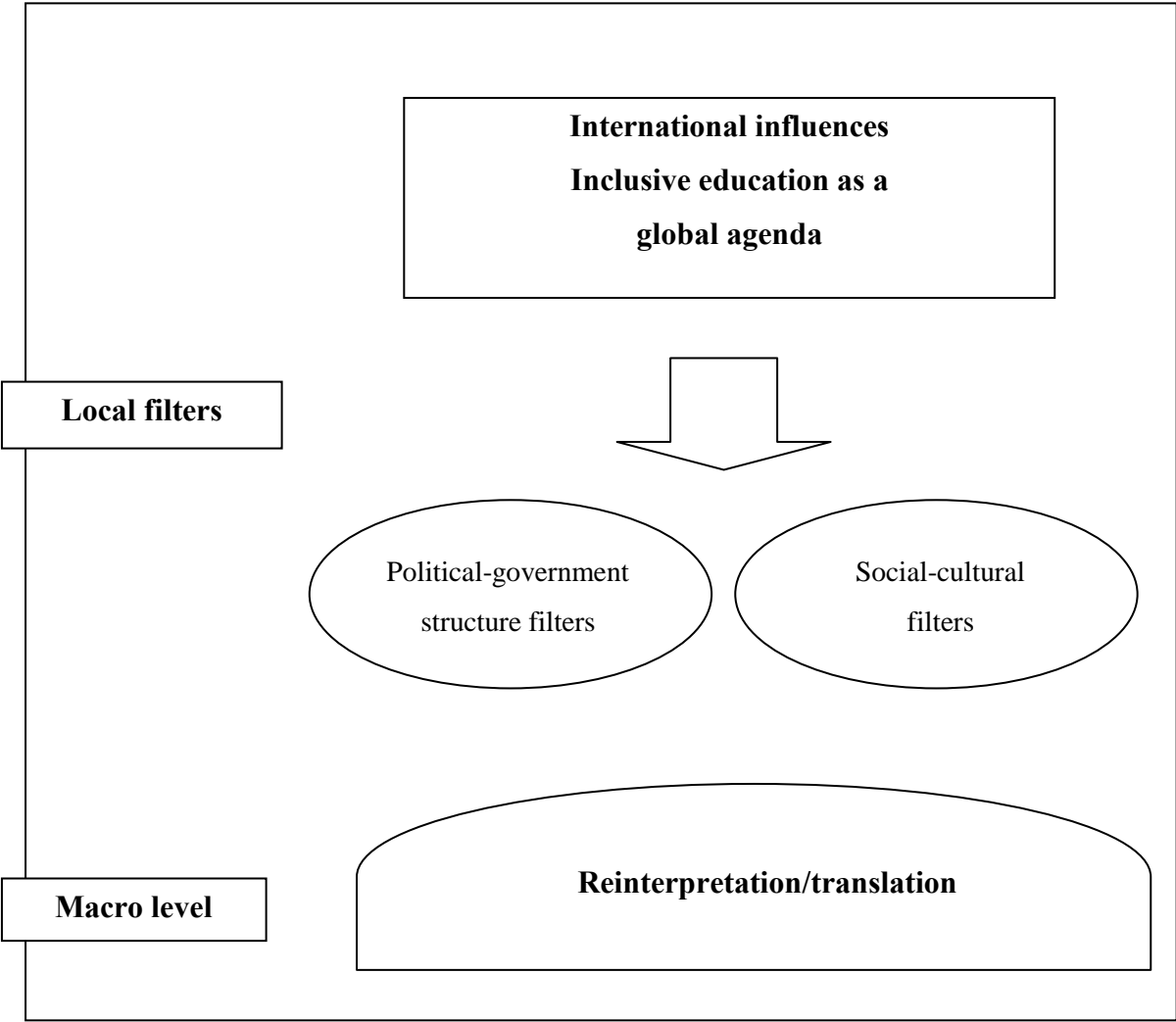
Now, after many static years, another factor has begun to change this provision. Documentary findings suggest that inclusive education as a global agenda is coming to Kuwait via the international influence of the UN and the tendency to look abroad for solutions. The influence of international policies in both contexts is evident in the findings. As Chapter Four discusses, the Scandinavian principles of ‘normalisation’ and the ‘Salamanca Statement’ (UNESCO, 1994) led in England to more established policy and practice and influenced the debate (Ellis et al, 2008). However, these international influences have so far had less effect in Kuwait,

despite such recent regional catalysts on the development of inclusive education as the Arabic Statement (Arab Regional Meeting, 2004). The different responses to international influence may be attributed to different contextual factors.

In reference to Kuwait, the tendency to look abroad for solutions at individual and government levels is noteworthy. For example, the government evaluated the potential of inclusion through collaboration with Western experts, for example through a committee in 1989 which included several external Western consultants. Some parents in Kuwait also sought help and support from the West, for example, through establishing the Kuwait Centre for Autism and the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching.

However, without a framework of goals, definitions, coordination and expectations, inclusion remains a matter of rhetoric; this is evident in this research and confirmed elsewhere (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007). As identified by SGSE respondents and from the approved official documents, a blueprint policy for inclusive education is missing. Therefore the factors which once promoted segregated provision have led to a translation of the transferred inclusive policy. The following figure illustrates these factors as they influenced the macro level.

Figure 8.2 Adopting inclusive education at the macro level



These factors/filters led to reinterpretation of the ideology, policy and practice of inclusive education. As Chapter Four manifests, the Kuwaiti context differs from the English system, as Table 8.2 summarises:

Table 8.2 Contextual factors in the Kuwaiti and English systems

Filter/Factor	English system	Kuwaiti system
Cultural-social influence	Human rights social model, to some extent coexisting with the medical model, which aligns with the Norwich model of 'tensions and dilemmas'	Charitable/medical model of disability, leading to conflict between modern demands and traditional culture.
Political-government structure influence	Democratic political system which empowers disabled people, taking a human rights approach.	Limitations of the democratic system weakens the voice of disabled people.
	Coexistence of centralised and decentralised aspects within the educational system, leading to some flexibility of response to individual special needs. Individualisation/differentiation approach.	Centralised education system which emphasises the separation of general education from special education and led to a unity/commonality approach.
	Additive model of policy development.	Static model of policy development.

This summary draws on interpretations gained from documentary and empirical analysis. Arguably, these above characteristics are responsible for shaping the policies and provision that relates to children with disability in general, including children with MLD. Inclusive education continues to be shaped by the influence of national filters, which affect the interpretation of these global and international influences. Next I discuss these contextual filters/factors and their influence on the development of inclusion policies.

8.3.1.1 Cultural/social filters

Its history reveals that the development of SEN/inclusive education is a social process shaped by such factors as culture and economic conditions. I draw on findings from the data and the wider research literature to discuss the influence of these factors in transforming international initiatives.

In both contexts, history shows the complexity of cultural influence and social power. In Kuwait, the tribal society and colonisation promoted segregation and located social power with professionals, spreading the fallacy that disabled children always need different schooling. This assumption has developed under the influence of the charitable/medical model and has powerfully affected current provision and policies.

Despite the Islamic concern for equal rights, the charitable practices of religion and the collectivist culture have more clearly shaped current attitudes towards disability. As Kelleher (2007, p.37) states, *'At issue is where religion ends and culture begins.'* The dominant tribal cultural elements of wholeness, subordination, overprotection and stigmatisation led to the charitable/medical model of disabled people, encouraging segregation and negative attitudes to children with MLD (Chapter Four). Also, influences from the colonial period and the wealth from oil enhanced previous cultural factors through the adoption of pre-packaged educational systems from Western countries in the name of modernisation, which at this time segregated disabled people following the medical model. Brown's study (2005, p.253) of inclusive education in some Gulf States including Kuwait observes:

Having few of the precursors associated with inclusive practices emerging from Western countries, the effort to translate rhetoric into action involves confrontation with the bedrock values and beliefs of the region. While many of the basic cultural values and sentiments toward the disabled provide a wellspring of potential support for inclusive thinking, deeply rooted cultural beliefs and traditions pose obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

My respondents seemed unable to adopt more inclusive thinking with a human rights approach. This is consistent with other research undertaken in Kuwait (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007). The participating teachers, school staff and some parents have a negative perception of disability and of including MLD children, which is justified by protectiveness, the distracting ‘wholeness image’ (characterising an idealised perfect person: see Chapter Four), and stigma, as evidenced by other research in similar cultures (Hussain, Atkin, and Waqar, 2002; Hussain, 2003, 2005; Brown, 2005; Westbrook, Legge and Penny, 1993).

It is agreed that international inclusive education, imposed with an ‘authoritarian approach’ (Tanaka, 2005) without preparing the national context to adopt this new initiative, led to undesirable re-conceptualising by contextual factors. For example, the empirical findings indicate that the participants understand inclusion to cover location alone and use criteria influenced by the medical model to judge which children to include in mainstream classes. This re-conceptualising led to inclusion being enacted as integration, as others corroborate (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007). These issues of provision are further discussed at school and class levels.

In England, however, historical development and debates over concepts of disability, SEN and inclusive education continued and are well documented (Fulcher, 1999; Ainscow, 1991; Dyson, 2005; Lloyd, 2000, 2008; Armstrong et al, 2010). They produced fundamental

changes in policies and practice. For example, during the early educational history of England segregated provision was preferred, under such influences as the developing eugenics movement and the scientific classifications applied to mental development; for example, Binet and Simon's tests, which claimed to measure intelligence level. In England, Burt, the British psychologist best known in education for advocating and developing mental testing, played a major role in regulating and guiding practices and policies for children with learning difficulties. These influences led to the segregation in charitable asylums of people who were labelled mentally deficient (Race, 1995; Porter and Lacey, 2005).

As evident in Chapter Four, the development of the educational system in England is dynamic, while that in Kuwait has been slow to develop and change. What catalysed its debate to promote inclusion was not only the international influence of the UN/UNESCO but something which accompanied Kuwait's development through educational professionals and parents (e.g. Warnock, 1978) supported by self-advocacy from the disability lobby and movements which empowered disabled people to fight for their rights (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). This brought about changes in terminology and practice and a move from the charitable/medical model towards the human rights and social models. In England, also, the dominant medical discourse and the notions of professionals were challenged by inclusive education, as embodied in the ideals of comprehensive education and notions of civil rights and equity derived from international emancipatory struggles in the 1960s (Barton and Armstrong, 2007).

The motivation for inclusion, then, is not limited to moral intention and human rights but is rooted in economic, professional and political vested interests. As Barton and Tomlinson (1984, p.65) remark:

The motives behind integration, just as those behind segregation, are products of complex social, economic and political considerations which may relate more to the 'needs' of the wider society, the whole education system and professionals working within the system, rather than simply to the 'needs' of individual children.

At the same time, the English government, like its counterpart, strongly advocates a 'raising standards policy', justified by a market-driven ideology to improve national competitiveness in a globalised economy (Armstrong, 1999; Ainscow et al, 2006). The influence of marketisation prompted the introduction of the National Curriculum and league tables (the centralised function of the English system) driven by the principle of competition (Armstrong, 1999). Thus, parents' consumer rights under this agenda have grown, putting schools under pressure to be 'successful' in the league tables, in order to attract powerful consumers and state funding. This policy contradiction challenges the development of more inclusive practice.

8.3.1.2 Political-government structure filters

This section addresses the influence of the role of political and government structures in re-interpreting inclusive education in Kuwait under a global agenda.

Government structure

The influence of the Kuwaiti government's structure on the development of inclusive education at the macro level is two-fold: the policy-makers structurally separated the general education agenda from the special education agenda, leading to underdevelopment in the

latter, despite the right to inclusion and the international commitment to encourage it; and the special education structure in the Ministry of Education, where four departments serve children with disabilities, as Table 8.3 summarises.

Table 8.3 The structure of special education in Kuwait's Ministry of Education

1	Department of Special Education: responsible for private, independent education and general administration issues in special schools for disabled children.
2	The Special Schools Department: responsible for all the state's special schools.
3	The Secretary General of Special Education (SGSE): responsible for the inclusive programmes in mainstream schools.
4	The Educational Building Construction Department: controlling the resources and construction.

The findings from documentary and empirical research (Chapters Four and Five) identify that this separation, as an SGSE member confirms, throws light on what ails the Kuwaiti education policy: poor collaboration, co-ordination and rare co-operation between general education, special education and the special education departments themselves. This is reflected in the separate parallel mainstream education and special education systems, with no unified comprehensive one for all. For example, the participating headteachers in Kuwait argued that this separation led to challenges within schools, in particular over funding and resources for children with MLD in mainstream schools.

The same point is emphasised by the Ministry of Planning report on the early childhood disabilities programme in Kuwait (2006, p.7). This highlighted most of the problems for local initiatives to improve disability provision, as follows.

Table 8.4 Problems faced by local initiatives (Ministry of Planning, 2006, p.7)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient (if not non-existent) inter-agency, inter-programme coordination and information exchange at local level. Agencies work in isolation. - insufficient inter-ministerial collaboration – this is critical, if planning and service delivery are to be effective as well as efficient. - inadequate solid-ground dialogue system between ministerial, non-governmental, academic and private authorities.

These problems are highlighted in this study by the participants. For example, parents struggle for their children's right to be educated in the mainstream despite its lack of support and guidance from the Ministry of Education. The lack of early intervention prevents children and their schools from preparing strategies to accommodate their needs. Teachers also list the lack of communication between them and school management, the supervisors and the Ministry, in particular on curriculum development.

Inclusive education has no clear policy or strategy, time-frame or method obliging the Ministry of Education to move towards fulfilling its commitment to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). This confusing situation results from the lack of clear vision at the policy macro level, a finding supported by Brown (2005, p.255), who states: '*... the concept has become associated with legislation, regulatory and legal processes, such as in the US and UK ... In the Gulf of Arabia there is no historical or normative precedence for inclusion.*'

Even four years after Brown's study, implementing inclusive education in Kuwait is extremely difficult, for these limitations at policy level still exist, preventing the foundations of inclusive education from being laid. In my view, current policy and practice are more

accurately named 'integration'. Kuwait's inclusion 'policy' exists in no form except as a group of administrative roles, as several researchers confirm (Al-muhareb, 2007; Brown, 2005). This has led to the rights of disabled people being ignored and to low awareness of the importance of inclusive education among disabled people and their families. It is interesting that Kuwait has not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) (Article 24 Education). Peters (2004 – also see Table 2.4) emphasises the importance of community-based programmes in promoting inclusive education awareness.

The recent report on the development of education in the State of Kuwait (Ministry of Education, 2008), outlining the strategy of educational reform in Kuwait 2005-2025, reveals the rhetorical status of inclusive education. First, the report uses 'inclusion' and 'integration' loosely, as if they were interchangeable, reflecting little clarity about fundamental concepts. Second, in-service teacher preparation does not prepare teachers to teach students with diverse needs. Third, the only forthcoming project of 'integration' and 'merging' relates to transferring children with physical disabilities from special to mainstream schools. Readers will recall that this has been the strategy for 20 years.

In addition, this report reveals a self-contradictory educational programme for slow-learner students (MLD); for example, the type of inclusive education offered to them. This report describes the experimental use of two such types:

*1- **Partial integration:** the integration into their regular schools of special needs students in special classes.*

*2- **Inclusive – Holistic integration:** integration of special needs students in regular classes of students by merging 5 students with special needs with 15 normal students.*

This merging does not apply to all disabilities, but only to ... learning difficulties and slow learning; ... severe disabilities ... are taught in special classes in their school.

(Ministry of Education, 2008, p.89)

Slow-learner students, according to the above statement, should be in regular classrooms; however, in the same report and on the following page the type of programme changes from '**Inclusive – Holistic integration**' to '**Partial integration**'. Page 92 states that, according to ministerial decision (issued in 1996), 'special classes' would be opened for slow learners in mainstream schools, which has been described as 'partial integration' (Ministry of Education, 2008). Therefore, '**Inclusive – Holistic integration**' is not applied, nor does it exist. This contradiction in policy documents is discussed below, at school level.

The contradiction may be attributed to several factors: first, the lack of conceptual definitions of 'inclusion', 'integration' and 'slow learner'; second, the lack of engagement and understanding of inclusion as many developing countries practice it. Consequently, children with special needs are included within the public education system but inequitably treated and poorly served, as a result of new theories and ideology being imposed without considering the nature of each context. As Armstrong et al (2010) say:

Unfortunately, the majority of theorists from the developed West apply Western theories to the entire world without due consideration of the economic situation, cultural heritage and composition, and without truly listening to the voices and experiences of those who have experienced colonization as part of their history and have day-to-day experience of the challenges of educational and economic development (2010, p.120).

Another reason for this contradiction is that the Ministry of Education report (2008) was written jointly with UNESCO and lacked local knowledge or filtering information. This

appears in other countries' national reports, not only Kuwait's, and reflects the difficulty of monitoring local, deeply-rooted concepts such as inclusion.

The same report acknowledges the challenges to inclusive education:

... we are still, despite being in the twenty-first century, facing major challenges in the educational integration of people with disabilities. How can we ask for educational integration when Kuwait still has special education schools established in the fifties ... and providing educational services for students with disabilities in an isolated school environment? (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.94)

The report summarises the challenges as follows:

Table 8.5 Obstacles to inclusive education in Kuwait (Ministry of Education, 2008, pp.94-104)

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of special education, reality and future plans to develop its institutions. Implementation of renewal project to build schools for complex special education and re-construction, which include all disabilities and will delay the integration project for further years. • Some official educationalists engaged in decision-making who are not convinced that the time has come for the merger of education and preparing for it. • The opposition of some people to disabled students in regular schools. • Fear and hesitation to take such a decision for fear of future negative consequences and the criticism of others. • The opposition of teachers in regular classrooms and lack of desire to include the disabled in regular classrooms because of the increase of the burden of teaching and teachers' efforts exerted for the disabled students. • Social attitudes towards integrating people with disabilities in regular classes. • Reality of curricula of general education, and the demands of modifying and updating to meet the needs of different groups of learners. • Reality of environments of general education schools, and the demands of adapting them to suit the circumstances of all students. |
|---|

These obstacles are confirmed by this study and others (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007; Alseed, 2003); they appear interconnected and their policy-social level overlaps their school-

class level. This emphasises the suitability of studying inclusive education in Kuwait by applying ecological frameworks.

In England, documentary findings (e.g. the continuum of SEN provision (Tutt, 2007) indicate a more flexible system which has led to a well-established inclusive education policy, based on experience and a more human rights approach. The flexibility of this system called for a comprehensive multi-agency approach, including support from the education, health and social services directly involved with mainstream schools, as indicated in Chapter Five. The school in the current study provided a range of services and provision to the MLD children.

However, the English system is not immune from criticism. Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009), in their analysis of the government policy documentation and legislation, conclude that, despite strong commitment to the principle of inclusion it has become defined and controlled by accountability and standards policies. Thus, 'raising standards' is perceived by many to be the most serious policy challenge yet to inclusive education. This point is confirmed by my English respondents and the headteacher; league tables and SAT test pressure hinder them from developing more inclusive practice. Dyson (2005) finds that, despite the policy rhetoric, progress towards increased inclusion in England is slow because of the way in which education is administered. Macro and micro levels work at different speeds; for example, policy is developed faster than implementation at the level of the LEAs and schools. LEAs must apply an inclusive policy, including identifying pupils and providing for those with SEN, but the speed with which they apply an inclusive agenda takes no account of central government policies. Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) also believe that the complexity of funding arrangements can prevent mainstream schools from signing up to inclusion which they cannot afford. Thus, LEAs meet SEN differently.

Finally, the current situation can be interpreted as England's flexible system versus Kuwait's unity and rigid system, reflecting national factors.

Decentralised/centralised systems

In Kuwait, the policy model is rigidly centralised, applying a linear and top-down model of policy development. Barton and Armstrong (2007) note that this type of policy can provide a misleading and inadequate perspective; for one thing, policy makers never hear the voices of parents and children, schools and teachers. The fieldwork records the emphasis of all participants, staff, teachers, parents and children, on the disregard which marginalises their right to express their views. The influence of such centralisation extends to the effects of practices within schools promoting an authoritarian approach, which limit the staff's ability to adopt new initiatives to respond to children's educational needs. This point is explored later at the school level.

In England, the policy process is judged to be decentralised compared to that in Kuwait, as central government introduced the national agenda within a general framework and local government's task is to reshape this framework within their communities. This explains local variations of SEN provision. Bullock and Thomas (1997) illustrate a decentralised approach with human and physical resources, finance and access. This aspect of the English system led, to some extent, to flexibility with the diverse needs of students and engagement with various stakeholders in developing inclusive education. For example, in comparison to Kuwait, English teachers have some freedom regarding teaching methods and modification of the National Curriculum, although they complain of the lack of autonomy. Schools, also, have direct access to support and financial systems in developing more inclusive practice.

This flexibility has allowed English schools to develop more inclusive practices in response to their local communities, which reflect the wider definition of inclusion, encompassing social deprivation, gender, ethnicity, religion and learning ability needs, as shown in the English school case study. But it should be remembered that the English school studied here cannot be generalised everywhere. As discussed in the English context report (Chapter Four), the variation in MLD provision between LEAs, confirmed by several studies, minimises the generalisation process which is beyond this study's scope (Crowther et al, 1998; Norwich and Kelly, 2005)

However, the centralised nature of the National Curriculum and national assessment (Bullock and Thomas, 1997) are considered by other researchers and the participants as conducive to standard policy and obstacles to more inclusive practice (Ellis et al, 2008; Ballard, 1999; Benjamin, 2002; Lloyd, 2000, 2008). Peters (2004) argues that, despite the positive influences of decentralisation in creating local flexibility and initiatives at the school level, it admits inequity through wide variations in services which central control over allocations would prevent. Therefore, she suggests:

Decentralization that supports IE [Inclusive Education] must be accompanied by central government policies that provide incentives for innovative and promising practice and build on local strengths, ... [but] safeguard and ensure that universal rights of access and participation in IE are applied equally to SEN learners (Peters, 2004, p.38).

After exploring the wider context of policy, the following section discusses further the influence of contextualising factors in promoting or hindering inclusive education development at school level.

8.3.2 Conditions within mainstream school: interpretation and implementation of inclusive policy – meso level

The meso system links to the second research question ‘What are the barriers which impede the development of inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Kuwait?’ Here I focus on the way in which schools interpreted/implemented the policies on inclusive practices for children with MLD. In this section, I want to explore the impact of policy on provision for such children in mainstream schools in Kuwait and compare it with the English experience, to improve the provision by clarifying the barriers and possible solutions. The findings of the current study are consistent with Jha’s (2002) findings: that mainstream school systems face both internal and external barriers. External barriers, as discussed in the previous section, exist before children even enrol in schools; for example, social stigma, negative attitudes and a lack of policy and legislation to lay foundations for inclusive practice. The following section will discuss internal barriers, those within schools.

In Kuwait, where foundation policies such as early identification and intervention are missing, mainstream schools are the first to identify those children who show moderate learning difficulties without any kind of physical or sensory impairment. The findings indicate that these difficulties become challenges once children enrol, when schools discover that they are unable to accommodate such children’s needs in several ways. Schools, under social pressure to avoid stigmatising parents, then have the difficulty of notifying them of their child’s disability. School staff, including the psychologists, state that revealing a child’s disability is often met with parental denial, being associated with stigma. Thus, the only solution for this dilemma has been to give these children a chance to try to survive in the conditions of mainstream school and, if they fail, to use this failure to convince parents that excluding their child is the best option. It is at this stage that the tragedy of these parents and their children

starts. The situation in Kuwait led to MLD children being left to their own devices in terms of assimilating into mainstream schools. As indicated by the current research and acknowledged by researchers, many barriers in Kuwaiti primary mainstream schools impede the inclusion of children with MLD and SEN children in general (Alseed, 2003; Almesaad, Alholi and Aldawood, 2004). The Ministry of Planning development report (2006), too, mentions '*inefficient educational policy in regard to placement, testing and measurements, and remedial services within the context of regular school settings*' (2006. p.7). In the following section these internal barriers will be discussed in more detail.

8.3.2.1 School culture: difficulties in embracing the inclusive education discourse

As discussed, discourses or models of disability vary (see Chapter Two). Fulcher (1989) points out that disability discourse informs the practices in modern welfare states and variously competes or combines in legislative decisions, report writing and educational and other practices. The findings highlight the influence of different models in both contexts. It directly affects the school culture, which, as the literature review identifies (Evans and Lunt, 2002; Bayliss, 2003; Mittler, 2000), is an important aspect of inclusive education.

In Kuwait, the medical discourse is undoubtedly dominant at several levels. The language used in Kuwaiti documents and policies, and by the participants, is dominated by physical cure and rehabilitation. This language reflects the notion which professionalises disability, considered as a major theme of medical discourse, where medical expertise allows technical judgments to control educational practice. For example, the certification system, based on Western tests, empowers the professionals and deprives the children and the parents of the right to choose a type of school. Under the identification system in Kuwait, which depends

on IQ tests, children may either enrol in the 'slow-learner' programme (the inclusion programme) if they score between 70 and 84 or in the special school for 'mentally retarded' students if they score between 50 and 70. The notion of professionalism, which dominates the policy, practice and language at different levels, has been used to convince policy-makers and the parents of the greater benefits of segregation than inclusive education. For example, although Heba's parents indicated their rejection of the special classes, MLD classes were made by school staff and the Ministry of Education, as in the other cases, to seem the best and only learning setting for their daughter. An IQ test was the tool used to determine Heba and other children's suitability for mainstream school or special classes. The resulting contradictions and compromises led to inequalities of opportunity and provision. The next chapter discusses 'quick fix/symptomatic solutions', in the absence of MLD special schools; parent pressure to avoid stigma; and international influence to promote inclusive education, through opening MLD special classes within mainstream schools.

The case study approach gave more insight into the influence of the medical model in creating a culture of prejudice within mainstream schools which featured a negative attitude towards MLD children and a lack of awareness among mainstream teachers and non-disabled children. This was confirmed by the Ministry of Planning's development report, which mentions:

... Lack of awareness (at all levels) regarding perceived problems/difficulties ...the peculiarity of learning disability cases and limited current approaches to fulfill ... needs... critical awareness to be focused on attainability of integration of LD students within normal school settings/context) (2006, p.7).

This culture of prejudice hinders the inclusion of children with MLD. Thus, in Kuwait, school culture is identified as one of the barriers to inclusion. I argue, through the experiences

of MLD children and their parents who were included in the case study, that the current practice in mainstream schools applies integration rather than inclusion. The evidence in the findings about the way in which the mainstream schools approached children with learning difficulties before excluding them indicates that such children are required to adapt to the dominant school environment without any support, rather than having an environment modified in response to their needs.

In England, at the macro level, there are obvious government attempts to move from the deficit model (within-child) – for example, no longer using the term ‘mental retardation’ – to a focus which strengthens the inclusive agenda against the institutional and social barriers to it. These policies pave the way for English schools to adopt inclusion with a more welcoming and accepting culture, acknowledging students’ diversity, including their cultural, social and ethnic difference, and not solely their academic ability. This could be explained with reference to England’s heterogeneous society and the presence of a strong democracy movement. As evident in Chapter Five, staff in the school under consideration, including teachers, revealed a commitment to inclusion by working collaboratively, and expressing a positive school ethos.

However, this positive approach, whilst important, requires some qualification. Daniels and Porter (2007) note, for example, that *‘in practice tension between the policy agendas of raising standards of pupils’ attainment and achieving inclusive schooling can give rise to considerable difficulties within the school’* (2007:2). This observation concurs with evidence in the current study that English teachers and staff emphasise the negative influence of the tensions created by these contradictory policies (see English school case study, Chapter Five).

Other issues which can affect and be affected by a negative school culture will be considered at the same time. In Kuwait, the lack of understanding among school staff and teachers, as demonstrated in their uncertainty over the definition and purpose of inclusion, is another aspect of the negative school culture. But without adequate opportunities to learn about the fundamental philosophical and practical issues underlying inclusive education, the implementation by policy-makers of any policy will be misunderstood (Fullan, 2002). It can be argued that lack of understanding leads to a negative attitude to disabled people in general, specifically to including them within mainstream schools. In Kuwait, similar perceptions of inclusive education are held by school staff and policy-makers at the macro level. The findings, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five, suggest that the dominance of the medical model has fossilised this negative attitude.

The findings indicate that these school staff held negative attitudes to the inclusion of MLD children and SEN children in general, which is in line with previous studies conducted in Kuwait (Al-muhareb, 2007; AL-abdulghafoor, 1999) and in the UAE, another Gulf State (Alghazo and Gaad, 2004; Gaad and Khan, 2007), and were in contrast with the findings from the English school in the present research and elsewhere (Fox et al, 2004; Avramidis et al, 2000; Villa et al, 1996), which indicate a positive overall attitude towards inclusion. Kuwaiti school staff demonstrated relatively little understanding of the meaning and purpose of inclusion, which aligns with their vagueness and uncertainty at the macro level. The justifications for a negative attitude to including children with SEN included the severity of the disability, mental capabilities (IQ level) and the physical appearance of the child. This is

in line with findings of other studies from Kuwait (AL-abdulghafoor, 1999), from the Gulf region (Alghazo and Gaad, 2004) and from England (Croll and Moses, 2000).

In England, the findings show that school staff held more positive attitudes to including children with MLD and clearly understood that inclusion implies promoting 'reasonable inclusion', as conceptualised at the macro level. This finding is consistent with the literature review (Avramidis et al, 2000; LeRoy and Simpson, 1996), which finds that teachers with more experience in teaching children with SEN hold more positive attitudes to their inclusion.

However, the tension of 'full inclusion' versus 'reasonable inclusion' in the English context, and between 'inclusion' versus 'integration' in Kuwait indicate that the development towards more inclusive provision is not straightforward. Resistance to move towards 'full inclusion' could be detected in teachers' concerns about academic achievement. This tension led to self-contradictory views among English school staff, that, on the one hand, they were expressing their commitment to inclusion from a social-ethical-human rights perspective, while, on the other, they emphasised the limitations of including all children who present with severe learning difficulties or severe behavioural difficulties. Rayner (2007, p.41) explains this self-contradiction as follows:

...policy in the minds of teachers often represents an ideal and a template for a preferred state. In practice, policy is converted to a code or protocol for action that whilst reflecting the values and substance of the ideal will never actually be realized as a perfect match in the 'real world'.

The differences between the two contexts may be further explained by the fact that inclusion in Kuwait has only recently been introduced and therefore there is less experience of teaching these children and a vaguer set of definitions and discourses. The long implementation and

experience of English teachers in teaching children with MLD has led to more positive attitudes and a more welcoming culture. Positive attitudes were evident in the present study but with reservations, in particular regarding behavioural difficulties and in the dominant 'raising standards' culture. This is consistent with work by MacBeath et al (2006): while teachers welcomed inclusion in principle, in daily practice they faced problematic issues and put boundaries around this welcoming culture. MacBeath et al (2006) summarise these issues:

- The nature of special needs which demand a more differentiated form of provision than containment within the mainstream classroom
- The decision-making process, whereby pupils are allocated to a school and to a teacher without adequate consultation and planning
- The lack of expertise to deal with certain kinds of behavioural and learning needs
- The nature and quality of support available
- The impact on the balance of the teacher's work
- The impact on all children's learning (MacBeath et al, 2006, p.29)

Bearing in mind Bronfenbrenner's ecological system framework, these issues raised by MacBeath are discussed in different parts of this chapter.

Leadership is another aspect which can influence the nature of a school's culture. The literature identifies that inclusive education requires strong and effective leaders who can influence others at the school, class and policy level, to plan, motivate, assist and demonstrate policies (Rayner, 2007). In Kuwait, the authoritarian approach of the centralised system undermines such leadership, maintaining routines without any true engagement and creativity. The findings indicate that in Kuwaiti schools there was little engagement, first, between the

school's headteacher and the 'special classes', and, second, between the Ministry of Education and the SGSE department. Despite its emphasis on the important role of headteachers as *'the gatekeepers for innovation, as they determine the fate of innovations from outside'* (Fullan, 2001, p.59), Kuwait gives no role to headteachers in developing inclusive education. To me, this situation not only creates a negative school culture but forms a barrier to improving and evaluating the current policy and practice, according to Ainscow's (2005) model as discussed in Chapter Two.

This limitation on leadership is attributable to the centralised system. Fullan (2001) argues that the *'primacy of personal contact'*, which is important in giving teachers the chance to communicate with each other about the meaning of initiatives within the educational setting, is denied not only to teachers but also headteachers, who receive policy from above without much involvement in the meaning and purpose of these changes. The lack of communication and a shared vision is evident in the findings from the negative attitudes to MLD children and the segregated classes which turned 'inclusion' into 'integration', as seen in Chapter Five. For example, the MLD classes in the girls' school were on the third floor, far from the rest of the school. The boys' school showed tension in the relationship between the headteacher and the other mainstream teachers, on the one hand, and the MLD teachers, on the other. At the macro level, as the SGSE member stated, MLD teachers were unable to define inclusion or to clarify the purpose and the aim of the MLD classes, as a step towards inclusion.

School staff, including teachers, were marginalised and not active in the process of developing inclusive education, as the lack of communication and training showed. The findings revealed that teachers and other staff expressed unfamiliarity with the concept of

inclusion (see Chapter Five). Marginalising school staff and teachers in the decision-making process leads to failure to motivate and interest staff in adopting new initiatives and changes (Fullan, 2001). Thus, it is not surprising that teachers and staff showed confusion and uncertainty and were unable to convey the purpose of inclusion and special MLD classes within mainstream schools.

Fullan (2001) emphasises that accepting change requires teachers to engage in the process of educational reform. This fact is noted by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who stresses the importance of supportive links between systems which depend on mutual communication to '*encourage the growth of mutual trust, positive orientation, goal consensus between settings*' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.214). Developing inclusive schools demands a positive culture underpinning a positive attitude, effective leadership, true engagement and mutual communication. To create this type of culture requires support from policies at the macro level.

The findings indicated that the 'inclusive programme' was actually a 'segregated programme' which kept MLD children in special classes within mainstream schools without any plans to include them within the mainstream ethos; this explains the lack of interaction between the children and the lack of coordination between the mainstream school staff and the MLD teachers. Feiler and Gibson (1999, p.147) state:

...our concern is that because there is no consensus regarding the definition of inclusion, various practices have sprung up that might, on the face of it, appear to be supportive of inclusion. On closer scrutiny, however, they may reveal that a variety of distinctive forms of exclusion are operative in practice.

In the present study, this situation led to these MLD classes being considered as outsiders in their own school.

Both the Kuwaiti and English examples illustrate the difficulties for researchers in identifying inclusive practice. The complexity of defining inclusion as a concept reflects the complexity of identifying its practices. A superficial examination may lead to false judgments about what is and what is not inclusive. As an example, I started this research supposing that, at first glance, the physical structure of the unit in the English school was a separate entity which could be considered an example of exclusion, comparable with the special classes in the Kuwaiti schools.

However, a deeper investigation of the empirical findings research proved the opposite: the unit shifted the definition of inclusion from 'inclusion within location' (integration) to a more complex phenomenon. The children's case studies from both sides showed different levels of meaningful participation. The Kuwaiti children were isolated from the school not only physically in their special class but also in most aspects of school life, such as the playground and activities. In Kuwait, the MLD students and their teachers from the special classes were viewed as outsiders in the host school, which led to their isolation. In contrast, English children were part of all aspects of school: assembly, mainstream classes, in the unit, the playground and after-school clubs.

The unit's role in the English school was viewed as the backbone of its support and improved quality of teaching. This was highlighted by an English teacher in the present study, who considered the unit as a major supporting factor in encouraging more inclusive practice within

mainstream schools (i.e. integral to the school's work overall). Moreover, the SENCO's role in both contexts was different. In Kuwait, the SENCOs role was limited to administrative work without engagement in the learning process or assessment of children's needs. In contrast, the English SENCO's role was seen as a bridge between the mainstream teachers and each MLD child, via engagement in assessing the child's needs, which extended beyond academic needs to social, behavioural and health.

This comparison between the unit vis-à-vis special classes in both countries led to a deeper comparison of placement versus participation, which links to the dilemma in defining inclusion. As noted in Chapter Four, the policy document *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004b) tried to move the debate away from the type of placement to focus on a 'flexible continuum of provision' within all types of school and collaborative service for meaningful participation (Tutt, 2007).

However, within the English school under investigation, the findings indicated the presence of inclusive thinking, which did not necessarily eliminate all the barriers to including children with SEN; this is consistent with other research, such as Avramidis and Norwich (2002). For example, some participants, including the headteacher, SENCO, speech and language therapist (SPLT) and teachers, supported inclusive principles but could not apply these principles to all children.

8.3.2.2 The lack of knowledge and skills for effectively implementing inclusive education

Lack of training and staff development

Lipsky and Gartner (1998) note that systematic staff development is essential for successful inclusive practice. Many research studies (Hodkinson, 2006; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002) note that mainstream teachers retain reservations about inclusive education, as a result of lack of training. Therefore, the main problem facing students, which may affect those with special needs, is a teaching style lacking skills and knowledge (Norwich, 1990).

The findings indicate that mainstream teachers lack the training to teach children with SEN, which is consistent with a recent review of the literature in Kuwait and England (e.g. Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009; Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007; Alseed, 2003). In England, Hodkinson (2008) confirms that 48% of newly qualified teachers are ill-equipped to teach children with SEN. Therefore, Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) argue that governments need a formulated plan to enable the higher education institutions' initial teacher training programmes to prepare student teachers to work in heterogeneous classrooms.

Kuwaiti universities and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training have a teacher education system of parallel general and special education tracks, rather than a unified system which encourages cross-training (integrated) and general educator responsibility for the success of all students. In Kuwait, teachers point to a lack of training opportunities in both pre-service and in-service training. They identified a focus on subject knowledge which is irrelevant to teaching children with a variety of educational needs; this is consistent with a

study by Almesaad, Alholi and Aldawood (2004). The lack of training is not limited to teachers but extends to other professionals concerned with children with SEN, such as SPLTs and psychologists. The country badly needs professionals and experts in special education. Kuwait needs coordinators, management staff and other professionals in such areas as dyslexia, MLD, SLD, EBD, ADHD, PMLD and autism. This barrier has been identified in other Gulf States with a similar context, such as the UAE (Gaad and Arif, 2008).

Lack of inter-agency partnership schools

In Kuwait the lack of outside support services is a major obstacle to inclusive education. Schools are relied upon too much to offer support for children with MLD/SEN, which in current school conditions is unacceptable. The findings in mainstream schools revealed the need for support services to meet the educational needs of children with MLD. Roaf (2002) indicates that multiagency working is essential for inclusion through adequate support and meeting individual needs: *'Despite the complexity of their difficulties, in school, teachers often find that when professionals work closely together, young people reach their educational potential'* (Roaf, 2002, p.2).

This limitation within the Kuwaiti context may be contributing, as the SGSE pointed out, to the separation of professional services outside the educational system into different departments in either the Ministry of Health or the Higher Council for the Disabled. This undermined the collaboration and planning intended to improve and extend these services.

In England, the findings showed a network linked to schools of professional services and agencies giving training and support. The value of the unit was highlighted as a support

mechanism for children and teachers in planning and providing direct and indirect support, through contact with the required agencies, consistent with Ofsted's (2006) report which positively evaluates units as mainstream resources. Despite a multiagency approach, school staff indicated that there was pressure on these services, social services in particular. The key contrasting point to convey is that Kuwait had no support services, but in England these were well established, even if they were not as accessible as teachers/schools would like, according to the participant teachers and the last report from UNDP (2006).

Lack of early intervention and identification policy

In the Kuwaiti sample, schools, staff and parents emphasised the lack of early intervention and identification of children with disabilities who showed no sensory or physical disability. The Ministry of Planning development report in Kuwait (2006) estimated the prevalence of disability among the population as about 10%, counting only the visible disabilities and excluding learning disabilities. This high level has been attributed to the lack of tools and programmes for early detection.

Early intervention and identification are efficient ways to reduce the consequences and negative impacts of disability on children and involve parents in their child's growth and achievement.

These barriers have many causes. First, as a result of the limitations within multiagency services, the current educational structure in Kuwait sets no explicit procedures to identify and address the special educational needs of children within mainstream schools. This is evident from the findings in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Kuwait lacks systematic

procedures for identifying children who require special help or support, thus precluding early intervention, which can lessen the consequences of impairment. Moreover, none of the official documents indicate collaboration between social services, health services and the Ministry of Education to develop a policy for early intervention. The lack of specialists and professional staff in schools delays the identification of problems, while the lack of collaboration between the relevant bodies hinders policies for early intervention from developing. Al-Hilawani et al (2008) attribute this barrier to limitations within the current legislation, which does not address questions of identification, eligibility, assessment or placement options.

Moreover, as highlighted above in this chapter, cultural beliefs influence the development of such policies. The present findings reveal that parents demonstrated not only limited knowledge of what constitutes developmental norms for their children but also denied and rejected their children's special needs, overcome by the cultural shame and stigma of disability. Brown (2005) acknowledges that cultural phenomena negatively influence early identification:

The accepted belief that it is better for the family not to know of the existence of an educational disability until it becomes obvious represents another obstacle. Among professionals from the region, there is often a reluctance to share suspicions of delayed development out of sensitivity toward the parents' feelings and the risks of eliciting the family shame response (Brown, 2005, p.275).

To summarise, in Kuwait the limitations within policy, together with cultural beliefs, lead to delaying identification until school age and allowing the children to fail for more than a year to demonstrate their disability to their parents, as happened in the case studies. All the children in the five cases presented with learning difficulties (added to speech difficulties for

Khalid); but early identification and intervention were absent. All their concerns were highlighted by their parents, but without any guidance and policy these children's problems were ignored until they started school.

In the English system, in contrast, schools can take action and follow procedures, such as statutory assessments and statements (Code of Practice, DoE, 1994; DfES, 2001b), at various levels. The Code of Practice recommends assessments and statements for under-fives, which can provide a good example.

8.3.3 Classroom level: barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practice in primary schools in Kuwait in general, specifically in science teaching – micro level 1

This system addresses the third research question 'What does examination of the current teaching and learning of children with moderate learning difficulties in science classrooms tell us about the barriers to the development of inclusive primary classrooms?' The literature points out that, for inclusion to achieve its objectives, educational practices must be child-centred (UNESCO, 1994; Buck et al, 2005). This means that the teacher's role is to facilitate their students' learning. Ajuwon (2008) stipulates that, to fulfill this role, teachers need to acquire skills in curriculum-based assessment, team teaching, mastery learning, assessing learning styles, co-operative learning strategies, facilitating peer tutoring and social skills.

However, exploring science classrooms in Kuwait revealed the practical barriers at class level used by teachers and staff to justify exclusion in this context. Teachers argued that large class sizes, a rigid curriculum, lack of resources and a teaching structure which emphasises subject teaching with specialist teachers led to inability to respond to children's special educational

needs, including children with MLD (as in Chapter Five). These practical barriers affect teaching practices which are dominated by traditional teaching methods based on exams and curricula, where the teachers' role is transmitting knowledge. The strengthening of teachers' roles under the influence of the National Curriculum and the assessment system is evident from the participants in the UNESCO workshop, who note that the curriculum is a marked source of exclusion which ignores the heterogeneous learning needs in the Gulf States (UNESCO, 2008). They also argue that assessment should be formative instead of exam-oriented, in order to develop more inclusive practice.

8.3.3.1 The rigid national curriculum and limited teaching approach

Developing inclusive practice requires a flexible common curriculum with a variety of teaching approaches. Therefore, the focus on curriculum needs to change; instead of fitting the pupils into a standard curriculum, access to a suitable curriculum should be provided for them. Thus, the recognition of individual differences is essential, to develop teaching methods and an inclusive curriculum for the first time in Kuwaiti schools. The findings reveal that the current practice in mainstream classes imposes a unity/commonality approach (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). This approach, highlighted in the findings, is that mainstream teachers in primary schools do not appear to make many specific adaptations to meet the needs of students with SEN and MLD; teachers themselves, parents and MLD children confirm this. This type of practice led to the exclusion of MLD children from the mainstream school, as the case study findings indicate.

The lack of differentiation and adaptation is due, first, to outside pressure on teachers from policy-makers within the Ministry of Education to cover the national curriculum with all

students and treat all students equally; and, second, to the lack of training, knowledge and skills in adapting teaching strategies. Brown (2005, p.266) argues that in Gulf States ‘individualisation’ and ‘differentiation’ refer to transferring students from mainstream to special classes:

The very process of identifying an individual in the collective group as different, along with any separate treatment they might receive, is perceived as individualization. In this context, individualization is synonymous with exclusion, rather than a precondition for promoting inclusive practices.

This understanding of ‘*individualization*’ may be influenced by cultural factors which emphasise unity/wholeness and protection and lead to segregation practices, an influence which continues even within special classes. Despite the curricular amendments, the science teacher highlighted the inappropriate rigidity of the national curriculum offered to children with MLD, with low expectations of these children and an over-emphasis on content-centred teaching. Further evidence of the influence of cultural factors and the lack of knowledge and training is the failure in Kuwait to use IEPs to tailor the curriculum and teaching strategies to let students learn to their own potential. The collectivist culture re-conceptualises the purpose of IEPs from individualism to a focus on group unity.

However, the findings on IEPs in the two contexts are somewhat similar, in that teachers in both contexts had some reservations about using them. In Kuwait, the misinterpretation of IEPs took them out of use, while in England, teachers indicated that IEPs are important; however, they did not use them all the time as they already differentiated their curriculum and teaching strategies to meet a variety of abilities and found them cumbersome.

Ferguson (2008, p.144) argues that inclusive education requires a shift from a teacher-directed classroom towards systemic school improvements: *'Using a range of strategies, these classrooms and schools are making the curriculum more engaging and meaningful, 'personalizing' learning for each and every student, and creating communities of learners who support and share in each other's learning.'*

Lewis and Norwich (2005) claim that there is little empirical evidence supporting specific pedagogies for each type of special educational need. In reference to MLD, Fletcher-Campbell (2005) argues that the MLD label has no pedagogic/curricular function. There is a shortage of pedagogic studies, but other studies introduce general strategies useful to children with or without MLD. In terms of the curriculum, Fletcher-Campbell indicates that all children can follow similar programmes without aids and without needing a supplementary curriculum.

The empirical research in the present study confirmed the findings of Lewis and Norwich (2005) that no specific pedagogy for MLD children was adopted in the cases studied in Kuwait and England. For example, the participant English teachers and staff emphasised generic strategies which benefited all students, not only those with MLD, such as a cross-curricular teaching style and differentiation in all curriculum aspects, allowing a better holistic response to all children and more intensity and deliberate teaching, which is consistent with the notion of having 'continua of strategies for perceived attainment levels' (Lewis and Norwich, 2005). Surely, the continuum of strategies requires skilled teaching.

In Kuwait, teachers pinpointed the inappropriate science curriculum, which forced them to choose between quantity and quality. Its focus on quantity alone led to a teacher-centred approach, which responded to the MLD students' needs in only limited ways. Exploring class practice and the school experience of the case studies revealed a tension between the differentiation approach and the whole-class approach (communality). This tension appeared first within mainstream classes, when the children in the case studies faced the communality approach, or common curriculum/pedagogy (Norwich, 1990). Second, the same approach of communality was applied within the 'special class' when their individual learning needs were again ignored. Differentiation, or the variation of generic strategies, was not applied here.

Norwich and Kelly (2005) suggest that teaching MLD children requires a 'unique differences position' where class practice is informed by the common needs of all learners as well as group-specific needs for MLD children, via intensity and deliberateness in the teaching strategies.

The difference between the two methods may be attributable to differences in the nature of the degree of centralisation of each country's educational systems. The degree of centralisation influences how flexible the national curriculum can be and the freedom offered to teachers to apply a differentiation approach to teaching MLD children in mainstream classes.

8.3.3.2 The assessment system

The findings indicate that the assessment systems in both contexts were considered barriers to including children in mainstream classes, which is consistent with a comparative study

between the UK and US by McLaughlin and Rouse (2000). In England, school staff revealed the negative influence of standardised tests and league tables on the development of inclusive education (Chapter Five). Lloyd identifies the problem of measuring the achievement of children with SEN as bound up with the normalisation principle. This ties the measurement of success and achievement to attaining a set of norm-related standards. Such policies put pressure on schools to rise in the league tables as effective and successful, but they naturally damage inclusive practice. To ease this tension, government strategy (DfES, 2004b) emphasises individualised learning and support, but Lloyd (2008, p.229) contends that it does so ineffectively:

For these marginalized groups the barriers to achievement, measured as success against the standards, are insurmountable and compensatory measures of support, such as individualized learning, extra resources and specialized teaching skills, can only lead to the reinforcement of their failure.

She views the work of this support system to meet exclusive and competitive standards as programmed for failure.

Similarly, a deeper look at the Kuwaiti primary school identified the assessment dilemma which was an obvious component of the teachers' interviews and the observations. The assessment dilemma concerns the purpose of the assessment. The findings revealed that because the assessment focused on 'what to assess' it focused in the test on the quantity of information that students could recall, not on the quality of knowledge. The orientation to the examination system had a negative effect, in that teachers focused on certain areas of the curriculum which these written tests would measure. Thus, the assessment system failed to respond to the individual educational needs of MLD children and was a factor in their exclusion. In order to develop an inclusive practice (Peters, 2004; Fullan, 2007; NCCA, 2007

- see Table 2.4), assessment should be used as an indicator to improve teachers' practice rather than focusing on student progress only.

The perceived similarity between the exam-oriented education systems in Kuwait and England reflects the contradiction between raising standards and inclusive education underlying the dilemma between formative and summative assessment. This contradiction is reflected in the global influences which at the same time promote inclusive education and, Santos argues (2001), promote global economic competition.

However, the influence of exams on MLD children is varied. In Kuwait, a system of failing led to their exclusion from mainstream classes, while the English classroom included MLD children's exam performance. Therefore, in England assessment hinders academic but not social inclusion, while in Kuwait the standardised assessment supported the exclusion of children with MLD from mainstream classes, as shown in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

8.3.3.3 Role of others inside the classroom: paraprofessional support

Black-Hawkins et al (2007) find that both secondary and primary teachers perceived the role of TAs as critical for ensuring participation and raising attainment. In Kuwait, the absence of paraprofessional support is another barrier to including children in mainstream classes. TAs do not exist in mainstream schools though it is considered difficult to include such children within mainstream classes without such support. The problem is aggravated by the misinterpretation of the value of TAs in MLD classes, which has led to their removal. This indicator of the absence of a collaborative culture in Kuwaiti schools has isolated teachers from others in their work, including not only TAs but also school psychologists and school

SENCOs, as Chapters Five and Six reveal. As the findings show, the responsibility of the school psychologist and SENCO in Kuwait, unlike their English counterparts, was limited to administrative work, without any deep engagement in the learning process which might have supported the children and the teacher together.

In England, the participant teachers were supported by various individuals, not only the TA, whose support was direct, but also the school SENCO, SPLT and the social and psychology services, as the students' IEPs show. However, with this comes the risk that the TA either seems to be concerned with non-educational matters or takes primary responsibility for the education of certain pupils. For example, the empirical findings showed that some children within English schools were attached to a specific TA, which may reduce the class teacher's responsibility or engagement in their education. For example, when I asked a class teacher about a child's IEP, she replied that she had no idea and would need to ask the TA about it. The risk of over-dependency on the TA is that it allows teachers themselves to receive no training in teaching children with MLD. These findings have been demonstrated in a recent study by Blatchford et al (2009) of England and Wales between 2003 and 2008. It highlights issues about the efficacy of support provided by TAs, whose role is limited to the completion of tasks rather than learning and understanding. Most teachers, moreover, did not have allocated planning, feedback or other allocated time with support staff inside the classroom. Other studies warn against certain ways of using TAs. Rose (2001) argues that any focus on certain individuals may lead to isolating these students from others, so the focus should be whole-class oriented. However, a recent study by Rose and O'Neill (2009) suggests that there is a shift in the TAs' role from working with individual students to supporting groups or the whole class.

Therefore, teachers need training in supervising and working collaboratively with TAs as educational partners. Hunter and O'Connor (2006) argue that the lack of adequate training for teachers and support staff is a major barrier to the development of more inclusive schools.

8.3.4 Children and family experiences – micro level 2

The children and parents' stories link the whole picture of the current provision offered to children with MLD to the nature of inclusive education in Kuwait. Their journeys can be perceived as a 'journey from exclusion to integration'. From their stories, I must end by confirming many of the barriers which have been highlighted at different levels.

The main finding is that the parents are shown to be not equal partners in the Kuwaiti educational system, in that their role is ignored at all stages. This begins when they are not notified of their children's difficulties and continues until they are forced to send their child to a segregated setting. This treatment is related to the centralised system, which marginalises not only schools and teachers but also parents and children. The Ministry of Planning report highlights these barriers as *'lack of involvement and efficient roles for families due to unavailability of family-oriented education and support programmes'* (2006, p.7).

The literature emphasises parental involvement as a possible source of support for the whole education process. Creating home-school links makes a great positive impact on children's learning and promotes social and educational inclusion for disabled children and their families (Mittler, 2000). This collaborative partnership between parents and school lowers the barriers between them. Cook and Swain (2001) emphasise that this collaboration leads to improved

performance by disabled children in mainstream schools. Moreover, when parents and teachers acknowledge their complementary expertise and arrange to share it, the result can be an educational institution richer in experience.

However, the relationship between parents and schools reflects an unavoidable underlying tension arising from the imbalance of power between them. Norwich (2002) explains that educational professionals must move from professionally-dominant to parent-partnership, which means collaboration, involvement, participation and co-operation. The value of this partnership lies in parents' knowledge and rights.

The partnership between parents and school needs much preparation, for which Mittler (2000) offers suggestions. First, school staff, including the head and teachers, should be prepared for and trained in working with parents. Second, schools need a partnership policy to include concrete proposals for achieving better working relationships with the parents of its students. Also, Peters (2004 - see Table 2.4) recommends formal training for parents and families of children at risk and with disabilities in order to promote a collaborative approach. This policy should give parents a chance to describe how they would like to be involved in discussions and decision-making about the work of schools.

In Kuwait, as parents' rights are merely informal, they are forced to send their children to private schools, which are mostly unqualified (Bazna, 2003; Brown, 2005). The case studies revealed the degree of suffering of these children and their parents in fighting for their right to be properly educated and to fit in with the mainstream dominant culture; the findings revealed issues of stigmatisation and a negative culture. These findings are consistent with the

literature from Kuwait (see Al-Hilawani et al, 2008) and other Gulf States (Crabtree, 2007; Gaad, 2004).

MLD children are frequently excluded from schools on the grounds that they benefit greatly from special provision in special schools or classes (see Chapter Seven). Empirical findings, exploring the children's case studies and school staff's perspectives, revealed that the preference for special classes in mainstream schools stemmed from two inducements: to remove from mainstream classes the 'problem' child who had no place within the current special schools; and for the parents to avoid stigma. This justification of the presence of special classes within mainstream schools was offered by the participants in the present study (Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

The transfer of children to these classes was associated with low expectations, a rigid curriculum, traditional teaching methods, a lack of resources, a lack of vision and a lack of preparation and training. In addition, a final question from the children's parents was 'What kind of future for our children does this programme envisage?' They answer this question for themselves in that there was no chance for their children to continue their education in the current inefficient programme beyond grade 8, which would qualify them only for low-paid jobs.

Creating these classes makes fewer demands for change in the educational system and the culture. But, to my mind, this group of Kuwaiti children in today's educational structure is lost in the middle; they cannot fit within mainstream education and at the same time cannot fit within the systems' special schools.

Most parents and their children within the sample preferred mainstream school with certain provisos, including trained teachers, good resources and positive attitudes. Parents attributed the negative attitudes to a lack of awareness among schools and general society of their children's needs. This situation led them to avoid stigma and protect their children by hiding their disabilities from others. This result is consistent with another study by Wehbi (2006), which investigated children with disabilities and their parents' attitudes to inclusive education in Lebanon. Wehbi's findings indicate a similar preference for inclusive education, so long as the mainstream school is well prepared to meet their children's needs. Similar cultures holding a negative attitude to disabilities may explain the congruence of the findings.

It is also consistent with another study in England by Norwich and Kelly (2004), which found in the study sample that a significant minority of MLD children preferred a mainstream setting. Therefore, research in this aspect of children's preferences is important, so as to develop more appropriate provision for MLD children (Fletcher-Campbell, 2005).

The parents' perspective on inclusion in the present study varied, most preferring mainstream schools. The reasons given by these parents were to avoid negative social attitudes and the stigma of sending their child to a special school. They also highlighted the limitations of mainstream school as a cause of their children's exclusion. This perspective of Kuwaiti parents which shifts the focus from their children's difficulties towards mainstream schools is consistent with a recent study by Cole (2008), which explores parents' attitudes to inclusion in England. The findings indicate a similar attitude to that of Kuwaiti parents, suggesting that *'despite policy shift since 1979, the process of inclusive education continues to be fragile'* (2008, p.179).

However, within the English context, even though the legislation recognises parents as key stakeholders and enables them to be active players in their children's education, the recent studies of parental satisfaction with special educational needs provision are mixed. On the one hand, the Lamb Enquiry into parental satisfaction (Lamb, 2009) highlights that some parents and carers express frustration, confusion and anxiety, due to the complexity of the system for special educational needs. This inquiry attributes this frustration and misunderstanding to an ineffective communication process in sharing understanding and collaboration between schools, the educational authority and parents. Another recent study, by Parsons et al (2009), argues that the mixed messages from the research literature are related to the variety of types of provision, children's needs or disabilities and the assessment procedures. Thus, this study emphasises the complexity and sensitivity of inclusive/special education. Generalising the findings requires a great deal of caution, in this case in particular, where there are few data on the parents' role, and the study has the perspective of an outsider.

8.4 Summary

Comparing the results from different levels, I found agreement between the present findings and the literature (e.g. Alseed, 2003; Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007; Lewis and Norwich, 2005; Ministry of Planning Kuwait report, 2006). I agree with Feiler and Gibson (1999) and Evans and Lunt (2002) on the barriers established at policy level, namely:

1. The competitive atmosphere in schools.
2. Confusion about terminology, e.g. inclusion/integration.

3. Highly structured organisational requirements stemming from curriculum initiatives such as the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.
4. Government structure, e.g. the management and organisation of support services; reluctance of health services to reorganise to support inclusion; lack of clear policy direction from senior management.

These barriers led to the adoption of a ‘quick fix/symptomatic solution’ through the opening of MLD special classes within mainstream schools, which are discussed in the following chapter. To be more specific, in the Kuwaiti context, there is also no evaluation policy, due to two missing factors:

1. Debates over inclusion.
2. Political will to adopt inclusiveness.

The lack of the factors below raises challenges at the policy level for both countries and should be easier to overcome in Kuwait because of its wealth:

1. Lack of professional development.
2. The inefficiency of support systems.
3. Low resources and funding.

Moreover, creating a collaborative multiagency support system is related to stripping the educational system of bureaucratic ways. But the major challenges at policy level which influence the practice within schools and classrooms are:

1. Changing the segregation culture.
2. Contradictions/dualism in the education system.

Overcoming cultural challenge is hard but not impossible, because culture is dynamic and circumstances can transform the attitudes of communities. McConkey and O'Toole (1995) believe that negative attitudes can be changed through local people's raising disability awareness and by bringing people into contact with their disabled peers. This change requires government funding; the British government committed over £2 million to a national disability awareness campaign in 1995.

The struggle for inclusive education in England, as in Kuwait, could never be simple, because of deep-rooted conceptions about education based on measuring, sorting, selection and rejection (Barton and Armstrong, 2007). Overcoming the contradictions in policy requires awareness from policy makers; in Barton and Armstrong's view (2007), policy reform should be based on principles of equity rather than on narrow conceptions of 'reasonableness' and economic rationality. This change of perspective can be achieved by adopting a human rights approach.

Perfect inclusion and special educational provision have not been achieved anywhere (Norwich, 2002). However, Mittler (1995, p.106) urges:

Enough examples of good practice exist in different countries to make it possible for all of us to reappraise ways in which a higher quality of inclusive education and schooling could be provided for all. In this process all countries have much to learn from each other.

In England, the government realised that current policy and practice had limitations and instituted an evaluation process which led to improvement. In Kuwait, however, the lack of evaluation processes – even awareness – has prevented people from recognising that the current policy has limitations; structural separations within a centralised system do not help, either.

Bearing in mind Knoster's framework (as described in Chapter Two) in evaluating the English and Kuwaiti contexts helps us to understand the gaps at the macro and micro level. According to Knoster's framework, the first element is a clear vision shared between the different levels of the school, policy-makers and society. In England, critics argue that policy suffers without this 'clear vision', which has affected policy translation and led to confused and contradictory current practices.

In Kuwait, the situation is worse, lacking not only vision but knowledge. Accordingly, the remaining parts of the framework are missing. In Kuwait, the required skills to implement inclusive education are undervalued, which consequently affects the availability of incentives. Although Kuwait is a rich country, it lacks resources for children with special needs, with a shortage of professionals and well-equipped mainstream schools; these are available but few can access them, for example, by early intervention. Evidence for this comes from policy documents and practice on an ad hoc basis, where confusion between integration/inclusion is noticeable and regulation and legislation are limited. Educational reform in Kuwait is slow and hindered by poor vision.

In summary, a range of barriers, as discussed in this research, face inclusive education. The Bronfenbrenner framework has greatly helped in illustrating the systematic nature of the barriers which operate at different levels and are shaped by the interaction of different levels. The discussion has been extended by contextualising the findings and by drawing lessons from the available literature. The identified barriers are consistent with other research in developing countries and the Middle East (for example Eleweke and Rodda, 2002; Brown, 2005; Gaad, 2004). Finally, once there is clear understanding of these barriers, then specific strategies and leverages can be formulated and implemented, to effect major and lasting change.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by reflecting upon what the study sought to investigate. A prime aim of this research was to understand the current state of inclusive education offered in Kuwait to children with MLD, driven by a belief that a deeper understanding of the educational system is a vital foundation for developing clearer policies, which in turn can shape practice.

The discussion draws from theory and research in the connected fields of disability studies and inclusive education, aided by a comparison with English practice and literature, situated within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. It extracts some lessons for policy makers, schools and society in general, together with some theoretical conclusions. The chapter considers the contributions and recommendations for policy and practice relevant to the research questions and goes on to signpost some areas which require further research.

9.2 Study Contribution

This study contributes to the knowledge of inclusive and comparative education by showing how models of disability have shaped the types of educational policy and practice offered in Kuwait to disabled children in general and specifically to MLD children.

Exploring Kuwait's history revealed a sequence of different disability models. After the discovery of oil and as a result of colonisation, the modernisation process led to the import of

Western policies without consideration of local contextual, cultural and religious factors. Arguably, this disregard led to a misinterpretation of the Islamic perspective on disabled people and to the adoption of the charitable model, which promoted segregated educational provision. The charitable/medical model was also reinforced by the Arabic culture of collectivism, which promotes negative attitudes to disability and stigmatises it. In sum, while there are indications that the early educational system in Kuwait was more akin to the social model of including disabled people within school and society, as the country became modernised, the educational system moved towards the medical model, reinforced by contextual factors.

The English context has developed differently, to the extent that the social model, coupled with a human rights perspective, has become more influential than the charitable/medical model. This evolution can be attributed to many factors (see Chapter Four), both in national development (e.g. the work of advocates in the disabled people's movements and Warnock, 1978) and international developments (Shakespeare, 2006).

Second, through comparative research, this study extends disability studies to an Arab Muslim country, Kuwait. This approach can provide more insight into the influences of cultural and religious factors on global and transferred policies. The first lesson from this study is defined by Alexander et al (1999) as an '*indirect experiment*', that one's own educational system can be better understood by comparing it with another country's. The usefulness of comparative study lies in allowing a closer look at educational systems in other countries, to explore policy and practice possibilities which could not be set up experimentally.

A further lesson is that, despite international influences and borrowed policies, the locality of the context led to reinterpretations which may not have been intended. For example, American educational programmes in the early period of SEN development and international pressure to adopt inclusive education were reinterpreted by the local cultural and social factors to produce contradictory exclusion practices. Therefore, this study supports the view in the literature that adopting or importing international policies and concepts without careful consideration of the local cultural and social factors is not likely to bring about the expected effects. Thus, when we learn from other countries' policies and practices, we should be conscious of the need to consider their appropriateness for the particular context of their new application. Riggs (1964) developed a 'prismatic society theory' in which he exposes the inappropriateness of imposing the Western model on a non-Western model without considering the social context. According to Riggs, the developing societies are 'prismatic societies', which mix local 'traditional' and Western 'modern' values and behaviour. Ignoring the locality was found to lead to a different form of implementation from that of the source of the new model. He criticises the process of importing models for their dependence on prescription rather than description:

I wish only to point out that prescriptions which are valid in one context may be harmful in others...in other words, we need a pretty complete descriptive and analytical understanding of what now exists before we can make useful judgments about what we ought to do, what changes should be made (Riggs, 1964, p.11).

Harber (1993) uses this theory to explore the ways in which the functioning of educational institutions is affected by their location in developing societies. He emphasises understanding the local context and the nature of the educational organisation where the educational change is to be introduced. The present study too emphasises the need for researchers and

governments to consider the policy of inclusion from the perspective not only of global agendas, but also national and local contexts. This point is also made by Armstrong et al (2010) in relation to inclusive education. They advise the West to engage in greater dialogue with the South:

Educators from the developed world need to appreciate that what others want or need may not be what would be expected by those from the developed world. Ideas that may seem appropriate based on one's own experience do not necessarily translate into something that is 'good for' people whose experience is quite different. This realization is about respecting other peoples, and it is ... about fixing the world, because we cannot fix it by transposing it into a first-world paradigm with a first-world understanding (2010, p.123).

The methodological contribution of the study becomes clear at the end of the research journey, which gives an opportunity to reflect on the research process. This qualitative research provided rich sources of data for understanding inclusive education in Kuwait. As D'Alessio and Watkins (2007, p.246) state:

Inclusive education is not an end in itself – it is a necessary vehicle towards wider societal inclusion and participation. This 'vehicle' requires continuous and more detailed study and it is suggested that, whilst current statistical data provides some indications of present situations in countries, it is not detailed or specific enough to indicate change in practice, or to explain the reasons for possible changes or developments.

The case study approach made it possible to examine the complexities of inclusive education in Kuwait. The ecological framework, for the first time in the Kuwaiti context, allowed the voices of the different participants to be heard, in particular, those of parents and MLD children. Sharing the thoughts, opinions, experiences and concerns of MLD children and their parents can guide the inclusion process and inform decision-makers about making mainstream schools more inclusive for all learners. The study indicates that a case study approach is a

very effective tool for identifying socio-cultural influences. This in turn can lead to identifying barriers and facilitators for developing inclusive education.

9.3 Limitations of the Study

In this research I was faced with practical problems, which were beyond my control and prevented me from conducting all the interviews originally planned. For example, in England teachers were overloaded by schoolwork. I failed to interview parents in the school in England, despite extensive efforts to do so and the support of the SENCO concerned.

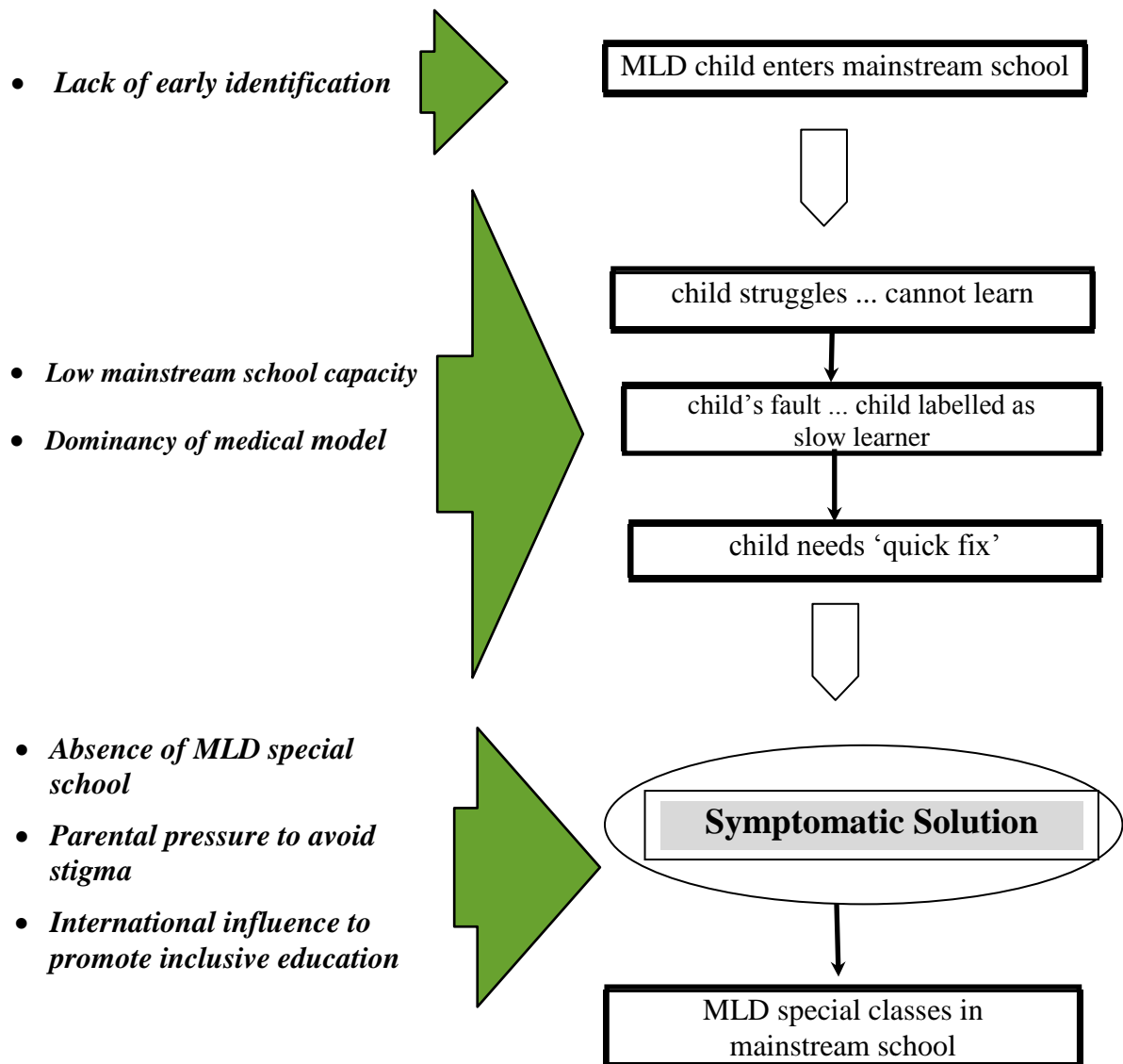
However, notwithstanding these limitations overall, the project contributes to the further understanding of inclusive education in Kuwait. In particular, the significance of the study lies in its comparative analysis, which not only depends on reviewing the literature but also extends to include empirical evidence. Furthermore, the significance of this study derives from the ecological framework and the qualitative research design, which was adopted to explore inclusive education in Kuwait and England at different levels (macro-meso-micro) and perspectives (those of school staff, policy-makers, parents and children).

Finally, it must be stressed here that since this study does not aim to generalise, or seek out pre-packaged inclusive educational policies and practices to import into the Kuwaiti context, its restricted generalisability is not considered a limitation.

9.4 Recommendations

In Kuwait, MLD provision might more accurately be described as ‘symptomatic intervention’. This intervention or solution is defined by Senge (2006) as the ‘quick fix’ which *‘solve[s] the problem symptom quickly but only temporarily’* (2006, p.93). In the absence of early identification policies, the entry of children with MLD into mainstream schools creates problems. Under the dominance of the medical model, which is aggravated by the limited capacity of mainstream schools to accommodate their needs, the problem is located in the ‘child’s deficit’. Consequently, due to other factors indicated in the children’s case studies, such as the absence of MLD special schools; parental pressure to avoid stigma; and international pressure to promote inclusion, the ‘symptomatic solution’ appears to be the most effective way of responding to the ‘problem child’. Hooker (2008) points out that this type of ‘symptomatic solution’ is associated with the ‘medical model’, which promotes separate programmes and initiatives for a group of learners who have learning difficulties. The following diagram illustrates this ‘symptomatic solution’:

Figure 9.1 Symptomatic solution model in Kuwait



Therefore, the presence of MLD special classes in mainstream schools as a gradual growth of the 'social model' should be interpreted with caution, as Martin states (1989, cited in Hooker, 2008, p.6):

The impression created from official government circles is that there is a tendency towards inclusive educational policies, but the irony (from a practical viewpoint) is an apparent increase in residential schools and the continuing placement of children with learning difficulties in segregated settings; a situation indicating that medical influences remain pervasive.

This has been demonstrated in this study through identifying the challenges in children's case studies at different levels from policy to practice in schools; it is consistent with other studies in Kuwait (Brown, 2005; Al-muhareb, 2007).

To move to more inclusive education, Ainscow (2004) suggests that the thinking on learning difficulties at the individual level should radically shift towards the social environment. This transformative approach to inclusion requires a 'fundamental solution' which calls attention to all the policies and practices in the educational system (Hooker, 2008). However, Hooker (2008) suggests adopting '*a pragmatic and realistic approach, [to] concentrate on leveraging the provision base which exists to achieve the next steps*' (2008, p.10).

In the context of frameworks by Knoster (2000) and Ainscow (2005) (see Chapter Two), the findings which emerged from the ecological framework, the comparative study and the cross-case analysis all lead to a deeper understanding and have consequently added to the body of existing knowledge. With this enhanced understanding, I feel equipped to offer some recommendations which can facilitate the further development of inclusive education, in Kuwait in particular.

9.4.1 Recommendations at the policy level

1. Educational system structure: the documentary and empirical findings indicate divisions in the educational systems in Kuwait which reduce collaboration and communication between different levels, not only within government, between the special and general education departments of the Ministry of Education, but also between government and the schools and parents. Thus, the Ministry of Education fails to locate inclusive education within the mainstream educational system.

This division hinders the development of inclusive education's goals, policies and practices. Setting the findings within Bronfenbrenner's framework highlights this barrier and attributes it to the nature of the one-way top-down communication typical of centralised systems; this stifles the individual's ability to engage in, be motivated by, take responsibility for and develop a positive response to new initiatives. The mutual trust and two-way communication between systems emphasised by Bronfenbrenner are essential to enhance the development of roles, practices and positive responses which encourage a shared vision of inclusive education. Kuwait's educational system should change fundamentally and adopt a shared vision of inclusive education if inclusive schools are to be developed.

2. Enabling legislation: the documentary findings indicate the absence of mandatory policies and laws supporting inclusive education in Kuwait, such as those found in England. Eleweke and Rodda (2002) state the importance of these policies, which stipulate: (1) protective safeguards which guarantee the rights of the beneficiary to receive specific services; (2) timed onset and phase plans; (3) consequential effect (that is, punishment) for non-compliance; (4) room for litigation; (5) accountability, evaluation and monitoring procedures; and (6)

financial backing and structure (2002, p.119). These writers (2002) also suggest that educational legislation should be supported by complementary legislation within the field of health, social welfare, vocational training and employment.

3. Comprehensive Policy: developing a comprehensive national inclusive educational policy requires collaborative teamwork with a shared vision from all stakeholders, from the government, disabled people, families and non-governmental organisations to other health and social educational professionals; they must formulate policies which can enhance and support inclusive education in the country, including early identification and intervention strategies. Therefore, in partnership with these stakeholders, the government might consider comprehensive national inclusive educational policy to serve disabled people's interest, one which took the human rights perspective. This approach guided by holistic and rights-based conceptions has been recommended by Peters (2004) in order to promote inclusive policy (see Table 2.4).

4. Issues of assessment and diagnosing procedures: the documentary and empirical findings show that in Kuwait the medical model dominates the assessment and diagnosing procedures and these are laden with bias, as noted by school staff, teachers and parents. In line with the literature, children with SEN should be referred to special educational services only with caution, since the validity of standardised intelligence tests has become suspect (Hunt and Marshall, 2002). The findings also show the limitations of the current assessment approach, which relies only on the school psychologist's judgment. Kirk et al (2000) indicate that, even with a school psychologist, some testing and interviews may not be enough. This is confirmed in the present study. A review of the assessment and diagnosing practices for children with

SEN is urgently needed. The findings show that using the medical model for placement decisions has led to some children being misdiagnosed, proceeding to inappropriate educational placements and being excluded from mainstream schools, as emphasised by some teachers, a school psychologist and parents of MLD children. Assessment should take a comprehensive approach using a multidisciplinary team to provide a more holistic picture of children's needs; class teachers and parents should be consulted, not the opinion of one person only.

5. Teacher training: the findings indicate a lack of teacher training. Training, not in a parallel, divisive system as at present, but to reflect the diversity of children's educational needs, should be a priority. This would ensure a positive attitude towards disabled students to protect their equal access to the National Curriculum (Peters, 2001), and to equip teachers with enough knowledge and skills to be confident and capable of supporting a diverse range of children in mainstream schools. Both pre-service and in-service training should be available.

6. Resources: well-equipped schools and classrooms with educational resources, in science and other subjects, would enable teachers and staff to support MLD children within mainstream schools. Human resources are also important to the success of inclusion. Therefore, the Kuwaiti government might consider promoting a collaborative approach between schools and outside paraprofessionals.

7. There is a need for co-authored research between UNESCO agencies and local researchers in order to avoid neglecting the local context and to develop local capacity. There are opportunities for global initiatives to update the local context by collaboration, not depending

on foreign researchers alone, who may lack local knowledge. This collaborative research will avoid misinterpretations such as those observed when IEPs and job descriptions for TAs and SENCOs were borrowed from the West without considering their purpose and practical implementation.

9.4.2 Recommendations at the social and cultural level

1. The impact of negative attitudes is evident at policy level, in legislation, in schools and in families and communities. Therefore, policy-makers might consider developing a positive attitude towards disability as a social challenge. This can be catalysed by action plans from the government to promote and educate the community into changing their perspectives and taking a new attitude to accepting individual differences among students, learning how to include them not only within mainstream schools but in general. As indicated by the findings, the media can play an active part in promoting social change. Raising awareness of disability should be based on human rights, which entails a positive attitude towards disabled people and consequently towards inclusion. To promote positive attitudes, a wide awareness-raising programme covering the government, schools and society is needed.

2. Develop a local social model of disability through adopting an ecological framework which is culturally responsive and avoids the imposition and mistranslation of foreign models: this approach encourages localised inclusive practices which bring out the Islamic perspective on disability and the positive elements of extended family support, as shown in Kisanji's research (1998). This indicates the responsibility on Islamic scholars to influence society's attitudes and the policy of adopting a human-right based approach to disability.

3. Empowering disabled people: in Kuwait, disabled people's contribution to their political and social welfare is limited, as a result of cultural influences which create dependency and passivity and of a centralised authoritarian approach which marginalises those in the system. Protectionist attitudes and the charitable/medical model have delayed the development of this contribution. Therefore, Peters (2005 – also see Table 2.4) suggests including disabled persons' organisations and parents' groups as resources and decision-makers at all stages of policy development.

4. Parental involvement: the parents of MLD children lack knowledge about their children's rights. Therefore, parents need to organise themselves and challenge exclusionary practices in the current educational system. They can do this through support from governments and non-government organisations if they are empowered to support inclusive practices with the necessary information to let them engage themselves in their children's education.

9.4.3 Recommendations at the school and classroom level

1. The findings indicate that the characteristics of Kuwaiti mainstream schools promote exclusion practices and negative attitudes, such as an inflexible curriculum, an exam-orientated system, traditional teaching methods and teacher-centred assessments. Therefore, the general educational system's policy and practice should be re-evaluated, to adopt more inclusive practices. Barriers in schools could be surmounted by various strategies: inter-agency co-operation, sharing vision, improving communication channels and acknowledging the importance of supportive leadership in relation to inclusive education (Smith et al, 2004).

2. Schools might consider providing administrative and professional support for teachers so that they can confidently plan and organise appropriate curriculum and assessment materials, adjusted to the level of all students, adopting co-operative learning approaches with innovative learning activities. These approaches can be enhanced by school principals through their leadership skills in developing people (see Table 2.4).

3. Preparing the school environment for inclusive education requires long-term planning, since inclusion is a new concept in the Kuwaiti context. Long-term planning should focus on a differentiation approach, which values the individual's differences instead of the current dominant culture of undifferentiated provision.

9.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

A growing knowledge pool will greatly assist in laying the foundations for developing a more inclusive system. The present study links with research in different disciplines, such as comparative education and science education, together with educational reform and school effectiveness. Some areas clearly need more investigation. For example:

- The future of special schools in the movement towards inclusive education should be monitored and reviewed.
- Further studies on different types of disability would provide greater knowledge and better understanding of the developing inclusive education in Kuwait.
- The study has identified a gap of support for teachers in accommodating MLD children's needs from advisers/supervisors when schools are inspected. A study should be made of the extent to which school headteachers and inspectors perform their professional responsibilities in inclusive schools or classrooms.

- Since this research has few case studies and is located within the subject of science only, future researchers are recommended to conduct further research of this kind in other subjects, in particular in the educational system of Kuwait.
- Further comparative studies would be useful, comparing other contexts in the Arab Gulf States which contain somewhat similar cultural and social factors to Kuwait's.
- Because including children with MLD is a new trend, future research should further investigate the social interaction between MLD students and mainstream students.
- Further research to investigate the barriers in middle schools and secondary schools should be undertaken, in order to expand the inclusion programmes.

9.6 Final Thoughts

This research has provided a snapshot of the complex road to inclusive education in Kuwait which I hope will inform the many developments needed for advancing this country's journey. I hope that through this study I have pinpointed areas for development and barriers to surmount.

At the same time, this study should not be considered as discouraging the move towards inclusive education by identifying barriers; rather it views inclusive education as an endless process towards social justice and an equal society. This conclusion has been reached through observing the experiences of more developed countries such as England and the difficulties faced there. As Uditsky (1993, p.90) states, '*Inclusive education may take generations before it is properly understood or practiced.*' Inclusion requires a dynamic effort, continually re-evaluating and re-examining the current policy and practices for a more inclusive orientation.

Notwithstanding the limitations which surround the study, it is, as far as I know, the first of its kind to investigate classroom practice for children with MLD in Kuwait or to include their thoughts and experiences and those of their parents. This study introduces the struggle for inclusive education from different angles in order to draw a holistic picture of the current situation as a platform for further development. As the first comparative study of inclusive education in England and Kuwait, this study constitutes a significant step towards a fuller understanding of the similarities and differences in inclusive education in these two countries. This study suggests that some features of English inclusive practices could be appropriate in the Kuwaiti context, for example, the classroom environment, such as small class sizes, support from a TA, positive attitudes and a flexible curriculum. Any changes and developments in inclusive education within the Kuwaiti context will be eased by its wealth and aided by positive cultural changes to move to a more welcoming, stigma-free culture.

This comparative study widened my horizons and helped increase my understanding of the educational systems in both countries. As we all take our own systems for granted, it is easy to overlook such issues in Kuwait as the way in which IEPs are used and the job descriptions for TAs and SENCOs, which totally differ from their original forms. I hope that my study contributes to the comparative study of inclusive education in England and Kuwait and more broadly in the West and East, identifying the importance of this area for comparative study. As Schneider and Harkins (2009, p.286) write, *'Looking beyond borders and oceans can always help to better understand what needs to be done at home.'* In the same vein, Rose and O'Neill (2009, p.254) remark, *'through studies of this nature it is anticipated that we may learn about systems which are supporting students with special educational needs at a local*

level whilst gaining opportunities to consider what might be transferable from one system to another’.

In any case, studying a foreign education system has many advantages. The quality of international research is enriched by the perspective of cultural outsiders. My desire to undertake a comparative study started from my first year of studying in England. The experience of doing research for a Master’s degree made me think differently, from a different perspective, about Kuwait’s educational system. I started asking about its special/inclusive education policy and practice; for instance, why was the English educational system the more inclusive? What are the factors and the driving forces or the barriers which have impelled or hindered inclusive education in both countries? At this point, I was already adopting a comparative perspective. Exposure to a new context is not the only factor that leads to this perspective; there is also the intercultural competence of the researcher. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006) remark that the skills which contribute to one’s intercultural competence are critical reflections on one’s own culture; curiosity about another culture; empathy with people from other cultures; linguistic skills; and analytical awareness, which allows understanding beyond superficial representations. I believe that these skills are developing as a result of my experiences and of collaboration with my colleagues at Birmingham University.

It is worth reminding the reader that this study’s aim was not to transfer/borrow policies and practices, but to gain a deeper understanding of the development of inclusive education through comparative study, offering a different angle for viewing my own context. Arnone and Torres (1999) recommend the use of comparative studies to understand both macro and

micro level activities, relating to international and national forces, which shape the educational system around the world. One value of comparative studies in education is in identifying the positive aspects of a national educational system and revealing defects to remedy.

Integrating the ecological model into a comparative framework, based on Bereday (1969, see Chapter Three) has facilitated the comparative analysis and systematic procedures by which I could identify different and similar variables. This comparative model brought deeper understanding of the complexity of the educational systems within national and international arenas.

Certainly, my experience as a research student at the University of Birmingham helped me to think ‘out of the box’, freeing me from cultural and traditional boundaries and ‘making the strange familiar and the familiar strange’. Before the research, I tried to reconcile two strong and contradictory beliefs: that whatever was reported in Western literature on inclusion was the ideal and hence could easily be transposed to the Kuwaiti educational system; and that the educational system in Kuwait strongly resisted any change, in particular regarding children with disability, which precluded such transposition. This was a result of my deficient knowledge and understanding of ways to interpret global agendas to suit national and local contexts. Thus, this PhD research was a journey on which these beliefs were challenged, making sense of an array of complexities, uncovering conflicts and tensions between global and local contexts, working to construct an interpretation and understanding of inclusive education. Through this journey, the importance of understanding policies and practices before they are blindly imported has become clear. The study, then, supports Kisanji’s (1998)

argument against such dichotomies within education as might appear between Kuwaiti and Western educational models:

At present the greatest threat to successful development of inclusive education practices in non-Western countries as proposed by its advocates lies in the polarization of indigenous and Western forms of education, the former being seen as 'primitive' ...and its culturally sensitive process ignored in favour of imported models (1998, p.69).

Finally, this research has developed my personal research skills, which will underpin further research in the field of inclusive education. This degree will enable me to resume my position as a lecturer in the College of Basic Education which helps to prepare the skilled national care needed to teach in primary and kindergarten schools in Kuwait. I hope that, from this position, I will be involved in preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms who will share more positive attitudes and be advocates for wider social change toward more inclusive perspectives.

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APPENDIX ONE

KUWAIT – FIELDWORK PAPERS AND LETTERS

1a. Permission Letter from the Ministry of Education to access schools

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY
FOR APPLIED EDUCATION & TRAINING.

الهيئة العامة
للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب

٢٩ / ١١ / ١٩٩٥
الرجوع :
التاريخ :
الموافق : ٢٩ / ١١ / ٩٥

إلى من يهمه الأمر

نود إحاطتكم علماً بأن السيدة/ منال حميدي الديحاني مبعوثة على درجتى
الماجستير والدكتوراه فى تخصص التربية/ ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة.
علماً بأن صاحبة العلاقة فى صدد إجراء بحث لدراسة الدكتوراه فى مجال
دراساتها، فعليه يرجى تزويدها بالمعلومات وتسهيل المهمة.
مع خالص الشكر والتحية،،

المدير العام
د. محمد العبدون
مدير إدارة البحوث والدراسات

٩٤٦٤٨٨
٩٧٧٩٥٨٩

٢٥٢٨٩٦٥ فاكس ٢٥٦١٩٦١ الكويت دولة ١٣٥٩٢ | ٢٢٣١٦٧ ص ب

TE: _____

٢٠١٧/٧/٢٩

F: _____

١٩١

السيد المحترم / مدير إدارة مدارس التربية الخاصة
تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،،

بالإشارة الى كتاب الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي بتاريخ
٢٩ / ٧ / ٢٠٠٦ والمرفق صورة منه والخاص بقيام السيدة / منال حميدى
الديحاني - بعمل بحث لدراسة الدكتوراه فى تخصص التربية (ذوى الاحتياجات
الخاصة).

برجاء التكرم بالإيعاز للمسئولين لديكم بتسهيل مهمتها

مع خالص التحية ،،،،

الوكيل المساعد للتعليم الخاص والنوعى

خالد عيسى العصفور



سنة للملف ٦٨

1b. Arabic Translated Consent Form



جامعة برمنجهام
كلية التربية

الى من يهمه الامر

تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،،،

انا الباحثة \ منال الديحاني مبعوثه من الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب الي جامعة برمنجهام – المملكة المتحدة- بصدد اجراء بحث علمي يتناول تجربة دمج الأطفال بطيئي التعلم في المدارس العامة وذلك للتعرف على عوامل نجاح هذه التجربة والصعوبات التي تواجهها. تشمل هذه الدراسة على زيارات ميدانية استطلاعية للفصول الخاصة بدمج الأطفال بطيئي التعلم وتتضمن النشاطات التالية :

أولاً: اجراء مقابلات مع اعضاء الهيئة التدريسية في المدارس والتي تشمل نظار المدارس، المدرسات والمدرسين ،منسق البرنامج، الاخصائي النفسي والاجتماعي، بعض الطلبة بالاضافة الى اولياء لامور. ثانياً: زيارات للفصول الدراسية للملاحظة مع العلم بأن هذه الزيارات ليس الهدف منها تقييم اداء المدرس انما الهدف منها ملاحظه سلوك وتفاعل الطلبة داخل الفصل.

ملاحظة هامة: تتعهد الباحثة بسرية اسماء المدارس والأشخاص المشاركين في البحث . للاستفسار الرجاء الاتصال على الرقم التالي : [REDACTED] أو على ايميل: mxa569@bham.ac.uk

مع خالص الشكر والتحية ،،،،،

الباحثة\ منال الديحاني

1c. Arabic Translated Parents letter



جامعة برمنجهام
كلية التربية

عزيزي الأب/الأم أو ولي الأمر (الوصي)

أكتب اليك لأقدم لك نفسي وأدعوك للمشاركة في مشروع بحثي أقوم به في الوقت الراهن. اسمي / منال الديحاني وأنا باحثة بكلية التربية – جامعة برمنجهام. يدور جزء من هذا البحث حول دراسة التجارب التي يمر بها الأطفال وآباؤهم في المدرسة الابتدائية ومدى شعورهم بـ "الدمج". لقد تم منحي ترخيص بإجراء هذا البحث في مدرسة ----- وأقضي الوقت حالياً في المدرسة للتعرف أكثر على الأطفال وما يقومون به بشكل يومي.

تتضمن هذه الدراسة أن أقوم بإجراء مقابلات مع بعض الآباء المختارين وأكون في غاية الامتنان لو خصصتم لي من وقتكم من 30 دقيقة إلى ساعة نناقش فيها هذه المسائل. وأؤكد لك أن محتوى ما يدور بيننا في هذه المقابلة سيبقى من دون ريب سري ولن أطلع أحداً عليه كما لن يتم الإشارة بالاسم إلى هويتك ولا هوية طفلك سواء في أطروحتي أو في أي مطبوعة أخرى. سوف تسهم نتائج المقابلة في زيادة معرفتنا بعملية الدمج ودعم الاطفال من ذوي الاحتياجات التربوية الخاصة. ويناسبني جداً أن أقابلكم في الوقت والمكان الذي يناسبكم.

برجاء الاتصال بي في المدرسة هاتف رقم [REDACTED] أو بالبريد الإلكتروني على mx569@bham.ac.uk وذلك لتحديد الموعد. في حالة وجود أية مخاوف أو تساؤلات لديكم، أرجو عدم التردد في طرحها عليّ أو في حالة طلب أية معلومات أخرى إضافية عن جوانب ما معينة في هذا البحث، أرجو الاتصال بالمشرفين على بحثي في جامعة برمنجهام وهم: د. / ميشيل شويزفورت – هاتف رقم: [REDACTED] – السيد / كريستوفر روبرتسون – هاتف رقم: [REDACTED] – أو الأخصائية النفسية أثناء ساعات الدوام الرسمي.

مع شكري الجزيل لأخذكم طلبي بعين الاعتبار وأتطلع لتلقي الرد منكم.

منال الديحاني
كلية التربية
جامعة برمنجهام

1d. Arabic Translated Parents Permission Letter



جامعة برمنجهام
كلية التربية

عزيزي الأب/الأم أو ولي الأمر (الوصي)
أكتب هذا الخطاب لأقدم لك نفسي وأطلب موافقتك على مشاركة طفلك/طفلتك في مشروع بحثي أقوم به في الوقت الراهن. اسمي / منال الديحاني وأنا باحثة من جامعة برمنجهام. أقوم في الوقت الحالي بإجراء بحث في كلية التربية – جامعة برمنجهام. يدور جزء محدود من هذا البحث حول دراسة الخبرات والتجارب التي يمر بها الأطفال في المدرسة الابتدائية و مدى شعورهم بـ "الدمج".
لقد تم منحي ترخيص بإجراء هذا البحث في مدرسة ----- وأقضي الوقت حاليا في المدرسة للتعرف أكثر على الأطفال وما يقومون به بشكل يومي.
بالتعاون مع معلم/معلمة الفصل، أود التحدث مع عدد قليل من الأطفال عن تجاربهم في المدرسة وسوف يتضمن ذلك إجراء مقابلة شخصية قصيرة خارج الفصل لا تزيد على 30 دقيقة. وأرجو موافقتكم على مقابلة طفلكم / طفلتكم وأرفق أسفل هذا الخطاب جزء يمكن فصله عنه لتعبئة بياناته.
وأؤكد لكم أن مضمون هذه المقابلة سيبقى سري ولن يطلع عليه أحد بخلاف الباحثة. كما أؤكد لكم أيضا أنني سوف أسأل طفلكم/طفلتكم عن ما إذا كان سعيدا بإجراء المقابلة ومن ثم يمكنه سحب موافقته في أي وقت يشاء.
في حالة وجود أية مخاوف أو تساؤلات لديكم، أرجو عدم التردد في الاتصال بي في المدرسة أو في جامعة برمنجهام بالبريد الإلكتروني على mx569@bham.ac.uk. وكذلك، في حالة طلب أية معلومات أخرى إضافية عن جوانب ما معينة في هذا البحث أو في حالة وجود أية مخاوف أو مرثيات لديكم نابعة من مشاركة طفلكم/طفلتكم في هذه الدراسة، أرجو الاتصال بالمشرفين على بحثي في جامعة برمنجهام وهم: السيد / كريستوفر روبرتسون – هاتف رقم: [REDACTED] ، د. / ميشيل شويزفورت – هاتف رقم: [REDACTED] – أو أوالاخصائية النفسية أثناء ساعات الدوام الرسمي. مع شكري الجزيل لأخذكم طلبي بعين الاعتبار وأتطلع لتلقي الرد منكم
منال الديحاني

كلية التربية

جامعة برمنجهام

أوافق على إجراء المقابلة مع طفلي/طفلاتي -----

الأب/الأم – ولي الأمر (الوصي) ----- التوقيع: -----

APPENDIX TWO

ENGLAND – FIELDWORK PAPERS AND LETTERS

2a. Consent Form



The University of Birmingham
School of Education

Christopher Robertson
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Tel: +44 (0) 121 414 4832
Email: C.M.Robertson@bham.ac.uk

Manal Aldaihani
PhD candidate
University of Birmingham
Tel: 07887588080
Email: mxa569@bham.ac.uk

Dear

I am currently at the University of Birmingham studying for a PhD which compares the kind of mainstream school provision for students with learning difficulties in England with that of my own country, Kuwait. The purpose of the study is to explore the factors which seem to underpin the successful inclusion of children with moderate learning difficulties in mainstream primary schools, with particular reference to science education. The resulting report will be in the form of a thesis for examination, and will, I hope, inform developments in inclusive education in Kuwait.

With this in mind I would like to ask if I might visit your school this term [in June/July] to carry out a small, but important aspect of my research. As a teacher myself, I am well aware of the workload that all teachers have to cope with and want to take up as little as possible of teachers' time. I would like, if possible, to undertake the following:

- 1) Interviews with the headteacher, three teachers, including one with a lead responsibility for science and the school SENCO.
- 2) Visit classrooms to observe the interaction and behaviour of children with MLD (but not, of course, to assess or evaluate teachers' practice).
- 3) Identify 2-3 children who may be experiencing difficulties in learning (moderate learning difficulties) and gain parental permission to observe them during the school day and interview them.

Naturally, I will observe ethical guidelines in dealing with teachers and participants to ensure that everyone who takes part does so willingly. I can also assure you that no data will be passed on to anyone in the school or local authority. Furthermore, the local authority, school, individual teachers and children will not be identified, thus ensuring confidentiality.

If you require any further information about specific aspects of my research referred to above, or the research more generally, please feel free to contact either myself, or my supervisor Mr. Christopher Robertson, whose details are included at the head of this letter. I would be happy to come to your school to answer any queries you might have and, if you consider it appropriate, to confirm possible arrangements in more detail.

I should be very grateful to be allowed to carry out this research.

Yours sincerely,

Manal Aldaihani.

2b. Parent Letter 1, 2 and 3

Parent Letter (1)



The University of Birmingham
School of Education

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

I am writing to introduce myself and to ask you to participate in a research project I am undertaking at the current time. My name is Manal Aldaihani and I am a student researcher based at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. A small part of this research involves looking at the experiences of children and their parents in an English primary school and how 'included' they feel. I have kindly been given permission to do this at [REDACTED] School and I am currently spending time in the school getting to know the children and what they do on a daily basis.

As part of this study, I am interviewing selected parents. I would be very grateful if you would consider spending 20 minutes to half an hour with me discussing these issues. I can assure you that the content of the interview will be kept absolutely confidential and not shared with anyone, and that neither you nor your child will be identified by name in my thesis or any publication. The results of the interview will contribute to furthering our knowledge of inclusion and supporting children with special educational needs. I am fine to meet you at a time and place of your convenience.

Please contact me at the school or at the University of Birmingham by telephone on 07887588080 or email at: mx569@bham.ac.uk, in order to set up an appointment. If you have any concerns or queries, please do feel free to ask me, or if you require any further information about specific aspects of this research, please contact my research supervisors at the University of Birmingham, Dr Michele Schweisfurth Tel: 0121 414 4809, Mr. Christopher Robertson Tel: 0121 414 4832 or SENCO [REDACTED] during working hours.

Many thanks for considering my request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Manal Aldaihani
School of Education
University of Birmingham.

Parent Letter (2) (offering £10 Voucher)



The University of Birmingham
School of Education

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

I am writing to introduce myself and to ask you to participate in a research project I am undertaking at the current time. My name is Manal Aldaihani and I am a student researcher based at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. A small part of this research involves looking at the experiences of children and their parents in an English primary school and how 'included' they feel. I have kindly been given permission to do this at [REDACTED] School and I am currently spending time in the school getting to know the children and what they do on a daily basis.

As part of this study, I am interviewing selected parents. I would be very grateful if you would consider spending 20 minutes to half an hour with me discussing these issues. I can assure you that the content of the interview will be kept absolutely confidential and not shared with anyone, and that neither you nor your child will be identified by name in my thesis or any publication. The results of the interview will contribute to furthering our knowledge of inclusion and supporting children with special educational needs.

I am fine to meet you at a time and place of your convenience. I have been offering £10 in cash to compensate the time and contribution of participating parents towards this important study, so you will be entitled to the same incentive.

Please contact me at the school or at the University of Birmingham by telephone on 07887588080 or email at: mx569@bham.ac.uk, in order to set up an appointment. If you have any concerns or queries, please do feel free to ask me, or if you require any further information about specific aspects of this research, please contact my research supervisors at the University of Birmingham, Dr Michele Schweisfurth Tel: 0121 414 4809, Mr. Christopher Robertson Tel: 0121 414 4832 or SENCO [REDACTED] during working hours.

Many thanks for considering my request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Manal Aldaihani
School of Education
University of Birmingham.

Parent Letter 3 (Questionnaire)



The University of Birmingham
School of Education

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

Thank you for your participation in this research. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, confidential and anonymous. The questionnaire, which is confidential between you and the researcher, is being sent to you with this letter. Please complete it as far as you feel able to and return it to the researcher in the pre-paid envelope.

The school will not see the completed questionnaires. The results of the questionnaire will contribute to furthering our knowledge of inclusion and supporting children with special needs.

We would encourage you to add further comments, by using the back of the questionnaire or write separately to the researcher.

Your views will be greatly appreciated. If you have any concerns or queries do feel free to contact me at the University of Birmingham by telephone on 07887588080 or email at: mx569@bham.ac.uk. Also, If you require any further information about specific aspects of this research or should you have any concerns, please contact my research supervisors at the University of Birmingham, Mr. Christopher Robertson Tel: 0121 414 4832 or Dr Michele Schweisfurth Tel: 0121 414 4809.

Thank you for your views.

Yours faithfully,

Manal Aldaihani.

2c. Parents Permission Letter



The University of Birmingham
School of Education

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

I am writing to introduce myself and to ask permission for your child to participate in a research project I am undertaking at the current time. My name is Manal Aldaihani and I am a researcher from Birmingham University. At the current time I am undertaking research based at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. A small part of this research involves looking at the experiences of children in an English primary school and how included they feel.

I have kindly been given permission to do this at [REDACTED] School and I am currently spending time in the school getting to know the children and what they do on a daily basis.

In collaboration with a class teacher, I would now like to talk to a small number of children about their experiences at school. This will involve a short individual interview of no more than 30 minutes, and this will take place outside the classroom. I would like to ask permission to interview your child, and include a tear-off slip for you to complete at the end of this letter.

I can assure you that the content of the interview will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than the researcher. I can also assure you that your child will also be asked if she/he is happy to be interviewed and can withdraw their permission at any time.

If you have any concerns or queries do feel free to contact me at the school or at the University of Birmingham by telephone on 07887588080 or email at: mxa569@bham.ac.uk. Also, If you require any further information about specific aspects of this research or should you have any concerns or comments resulting from your child's participation in this study, please contact my research supervisors at the University of Birmingham, Mr. Christopher Robertson Tel: 0121 414 4832, Dr Michele Schweisfurth Tel: 0121 414 4809 or Mrs. SENCO [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Manal Aldaihani
School of Education
University of Birmingham.

I give permission for my child _____ to be interviewed.
Parents / Guardians _____ Signature _____.

APPENDIX THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3a. Teacher Interview

Teacher interview	
Name	
Age	
Date	
Place of interview	
Time started	
Time finished	

- How many years have you spent in the teaching services?
- How long you have been involved in teaching a pupil with MLD?
- Do you have any additional qualifications related to the education of pupils with special education needs?

Teachers' perceptions of the term 'inclusion' (explore social, cultural, religious factors that shaped their practice?)

- What do you (teachers) perceive inclusive education to be?
- What is the purpose of inclusive education?
- What do you think about teaching children with and those without special needs together?
- Do you think children with special needs should have a chance to attend public schools? If yes, what kind(s) of disabilities do you have in mind? And where do you think they should have their lessons?
- How do you feel about the trend towards increasing inclusion?
- What do you feel are the attitudes of other staff towards increasing inclusion?

Science classroom practice

- Can you briefly describe any advantages which having a pupil with MLD brought to your class?
- Can you briefly describe any difficulties which having a pupil with MLD brought to your class?
- Have you had to change your classroom management approaches to accommodate a pupil with MLD? If yes, can you state how?
- Have you needed to make changes to your planning in order to accommodate a pupil with MLD?
- How often do you provide different activities where science can be practically applied to the world and to problems in every day life?
- Does the syllabus cause any problems for MLD pupils?
- Do you have to change the way you teach a lesson if you have an MLD pupil in it?

- Do you receive any support in your lessons?
- How do you make use of this support?
- Do you include the support in your lesson planning?
- What changes would you like to see made to this support?
- Does the nature of the science subject you teach cause any problems for MLD pupils?
- Can you outline generally what features would characterise a pupil with MLD academically and socially?

School factors

- What are the factors within the school and more widely which would facilitate the process of developing inclusive practice?
- What are the barriers to developing more inclusive practices? Are they removable?
- How could you describe your relationships with professionals, school staff and MLD parents who affect inclusive practice?

3b. Staff Interview

Experts' interviews

(SENCO, school staff, social services)

1. How do you and your colleagues provide direct support to pupils (i.e. what is the range of support activities)?
 - Who is involved in providing the direct support?
 - What strategies do you find have worked well? Can you give examples?
 - Do any aspects of the curriculum present particular challenges?
 - What factors influence how effective you can be?
 - Can you describe the relationship between you and mainstream teachers?
2. How do you and your colleagues provide indirect support (e.g. advice and in-service training to mainstream teachers, modifying texts)?
 - In what ways do you find you can be most effective? Can you give examples?
3. In what way do you feel the host school's approach helps (or hinders) your policy of inclusion?
4. What are the negative aspects in providing support?
5. Do you have any relationship with the parents of children with special needs and without special needs e.g. working together, raising awareness?
6. Can you describe your relationship with the mainstream teacher and school head teacher?
7. Do you think that the inclusion policy is working out? Or it should be changed?
8. How you use the IEP? Do you think it is an effective tool?
9. What do you think of current policy of SEN?

Head teacher/policy maker interview

1. What do you (teachers) perceive inclusive education to be?
2. What is the purpose of inclusive education?
3. What do you think about teaching children with and those without special needs together?
4. Do you think children with special needs should have a chance to attend public schools? If yes, what kind(s) of disabilities do you have in mind? And where do you think they should have their lessons?
5. What do you think of SEN/inclusive policy?
6. What are the strengths/weaknesses of this policy?
7. Do you think this policy can succeed in creating inclusive schools?
8. Do you suggest any changes to this policy?
9. What are the inclusive policy dimensions outside the education domain?
10. Who takes part in developing inclusive policy? Do you involve school staff and parents?
11. Do you receive any feedback from schools to improve the current policy?
12. Are there any organisations or parties involved in shaping the current policy?
13. What are the future plans?
14. Do you think that inclusive education will be expanded to include different disabilities?
15. What kind of support is provided for mainstream schools?
16. Is the support valuable in schools?
17. What is your school policy towards inclusion?
18. Do attitudes vary among staff?
19. Can you describe your relationship with the parents of children with MLD and the other involved staff?

3c. Student Interview

Interview schedule used with pupils accompanied with drawing

1-How long have you been coming to (*mainstream*) school?

2-What are the things you like best about coming to this school?

3-Is it very different from being at special school?

In what ways is it different? In what ways similar?

4-Were there some things which were better at special school? What were these?

5-What are you good at learning in school?

Are there some things which you find difficult? What are these?

6-How do the staff at (*mainstream*) school help you with the things which you find hard?

7-Are there any things which other pupils in your class at (*mainstream*) school do that you don't?

8-For instance science, are there other pupils better than you, or are there other students not as good as you?

9-Are there things which you do at (*mainstream*) school, which you didn't do at special school?

10-Were there things which you did at special school which you don't do at (*mainstream*) school?

11-Do you need any extra help at (*mainstream*) school? Who gives you this help? What help?

12-Who are your best friends at (*mainstream*) school?

13-If you could change anything in the school to make your life better, what would it be?

14-If you had to choose between staying at (*mainstream*) school or special school, which would you choose? Why?

3d. Parent Interview

Interviews for parents

1-How long has your son/daughter been attending mainstream school?

2-Do you see mainstream school providing advantages which the special school could not? If yes, what are these advantages?

3-Are there any advantages which the special school provided which your son/daughter does not receive in the mainstream school? If yes, what were these?

4-What kind of support is important for your son/daughter in the mainstream school?

How is this provided? Is this enough/adequate?

5-In what ways, if any, have you noticed changes in your son/daughter since moving into mainstream school?

6-What have been the most important factors in enabling your son/daughter to be included in a mainstream classroom?

7-Are there things which the mainstream school is unable to provide for your son/daughter? If yes, what are these?

8-What are your priorities for your son/daughter in educational terms?

9-If you were offered a straight choice between mainstream and special school, which would you choose and why?

10-Can you describe your relationship as a parent of child with special need with

1- Community

2- Extended family

3- School

4- Teachers.

11- Would you like to add anything?

3e. Observation Guidance Sheet

Science classroom practice

The major theme (linked with the literature review)

- The general modification/accommodations necessary for science classrooms to promote inclusive practice.
- Instructional strategies for teaching science for children with moderate learning difficulties.
- Ways of assessing the learning progress of students with learning difficulties in the science curriculum.

Aim of the observations is to discover the actual practice of the teachers and their interaction with the MLD student

Observation sheet

- | | |
|-----------|---------------------|
| - Date: | - student name: |
| - Time: | - teacher name: |
| - School: | - number of pupils: |

Part 1: Class environment:

Q1. What is the environment in the classroom:

- classroom furniture:
- setting:
- class size:
- resources:

Part 2: MLD student's participation:

Q2. What is the MLD student's learning participation?

Competitive - active - involved - none

Q3. What is the MLD student's level of independence:

fully independent - some independence - some assistance - fully assisted

Q4. What kind of participation is there in activities?

1 - Engagement/on task

2 - Support from: teacher - LSA - peers

3 - off task:

Q5. Teacher-student interaction: how the teacher approaches developing dialogues about science topics? Element to enhance the dialogue:

- Recognising children's ideas
- Asking the appropriate questions (avoiding difficult vocabulary)
- Selection of materials and equipment

- Using worksheet: (reducing long writing assignment, careful planning and design to avoid language difficulties)
- Developing process skills: such as recognising the features of objects; recognising that some features are the same, while others are different; grouping objects.

Part 3: Teacher's practice:

1. Instructional strategies for teaching science for children with moderate learning difficulties

- Vocabulary enhancement
- Text adaptation
- Text-processing strategies
- Real-world problem solving
- Hand-on science activities

2. Role of LSA:

- Mainly work with MLD pupil (one to one)
- Some work with MLD/some with other pupils
- General support around class
- Working with a small group including MLD pupils
- Other

3. Differentiation: Lewis (1992) indicated different types of differentiation that would improve class practice: content, interest, pace, level, access, response, sequences, structure, teacher time, teaching style and grouping. Differentiation should be seen as a developmental process instead of a fixed process

- teaching style
- lesson structure
- access
- level
- pace
- assessment
- grouping
- interests
- content

APPENDIX FOUR

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF DISABILITY

Perfection

‘Surely we create man in the best structure ...’ (Surah XCV4). In the same breath the verse continues: ‘... and afterwards we reduce him to the lowest of the low: with the exception of those who have faith and do good works’ (Surah XCV5)

The above two verses express not only the doctrine that humankind is originally good and pure but they also imply that disbelieving in God and doing sinful acts destroys the original perfection. Asad (1937) defines perfection in its Islamic sense as two types, first, ‘absolute perfection’ which belongs to the realm of the Divine attributes alone. To him, it is a trait that is far above human biologically limited beings who cannot reach absolute perfection. The second type, ‘human perfection’, is related to our earthly existence, developing the positive qualities that already exist in the individual in such a way as to rouse his innate but otherwise dormant powers. Thus, Islam declares the natural variety of life-forms; people’s inborn qualities differ in each case. Therefore, ‘individual perfections’ are different because their original characteristics are different too.

From the standpoint of disability, Islam avoids types of standardised perfection (able-bodied) and is inclined to the diversity of perfections related to the ability to develop existing skills and qualities. Thus, human nature is different, and in turn everyone’s ‘perfections’ are different. From an Islamic perspective, the focus shifts from disability towards ability: society, community, school, family and the individual should work to develop individual abilities in spite of people’s physical appearance, whether able/disabled. In this sense, Islam celebrates the diversity of individuals’ perfection and equality of life for everyone. This attitude is clarified in the following section.

Diversity and equality

O men! Behold, we have created you all out of a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware (49:13).

This verse emphasises the equality of all human beings, declaring that their origin lies in their unity. The verse shuns any superiority of one over another. It goes further to reveal that the purpose of human evolution and diversity of all peoples are to foster rather than to diminish their mutual desire to understand and appreciate the essential human oneness underlying their outward differentiations (Asad, 1980). Bazna and Hatab (2005, p.12) say that this verse means: ‘God’s measure of a human being’s worth relies not on physical attributes or material achievements, but on attainment of ... spiritual maturity and ethical development’.

Like the Qur'an, the Sunnah celebrates equality and diversity. The Prophet is reported to have said: 'Behold, God has removed from you the arrogance of pagan ignorance with its boast of ancestral glories. Man is but a God-conscious believer or an unfortunate sinner. All people are children of Adam, and Adam was created of dust' (Asad, 1980, p.794). The Prophet is also reported to have said 'Verily, God does not look at your bodies or your appearances, but looks into your hearts' (Muslim, 2564).

In summary, the Islamic perspective of diversity is based on accepting, respecting and safeguarding everyone's individual dignity. Such respect therefore includes the disabled, who are accepted, respected and accorded dignity in the Islamic perspective as indicated. Moreover, in an entire chapter, the Qur'an taught the Prophet and the believers to respect disabled people. In this chapter, the Prophet was admonished because of his encounter with a blind man who requested clarification of certain passages of the Qur'an while the Prophet was engaged in a conversation with some of the most influential chieftains of the Pagans Mecca. He was hoping to convince them and the Meccan community of the truth of Islam. The Prophet was annoyed and frowned and turned away from the blind man. Immediately, in the first ten verses of the chapter, he is admonished as follows:

He frowned and turned away (2) because the blind man approached him!(3)Yet for all thou didst know,[o Muhammad] he might perhaps have grown in purity,(4) or have been reminded [of the truth], and helped by this reminder.(5)Now as for him who believes himself to be self-sufficient-(6) to him thou give they whole attention,(7) although thou art not accountable for his failure to attain purity; (8)but as for him who came unto thee full of eagerness (9) and in awe [of God]-(10)him didst thou disregard! (11) NAY, Verily these [messages] are but a reminder: (12) and so, whoever is willing may remember Him (80:1-12).

A deeper analysis of the Qur'anic admonition reveals the following points:

Disabled people have equal rights over non-disabled people, so they should both be respected and treated according to the same moral criteria.

The links between disability and social class, as this verse testifies, is that the value of a true seeker of truth, whatever his condition, whether disabled, weak or poor, is more important than the status, wealth and power of neglectful people not what their social status is. The friendly reproof came in spite of the importance of convincing the chieftains of the Pagan of Mecca who would be able to influence the Meccan community of Islam, during its early stages. This is evidence of God's preference for spiritual maturity.

The verse also emphasises the importance of educating people, regardless of their disability and acknowledging their right to ask, to learn and to trust in order for their abilities to be developed further.

This discussion goes far to encompass the concept of labelling related to the concepts of perfection and diversity.

Labelling

Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Islamic perspective, by such authors as Turmusani (2001) and Brown (2005), result from superficial reading. For example, Turmusani claims that the Qur'an contains various statements referring to different impairments in a negative and stigmatising way, as follows:

(14) and when they meet those who have attained to faith they assert "we believe [as you believe]"; but when they find themselves alone with their evil impulses, they say, "verily, we are with you; we were only mocking!(15) God will requite them for their mockery and will leave them for a while in their overweening arrogance, blindly stumbling to and fro: (16)[for] it is they who have taken error in exchange for guidance; and neither has their bargain brought them gain, nor have they found guidance [elsewhere](17) their parable is that of people who kindle a fire: but as soon as it has illumined all around them, God takes away their light and leaves them in utter darkness, wherein they cannot see: (18) deaf, dumb, blind – and they cannot turn back" (2: 14-18).

Attempting to read the above verses out of their context from a linguistic standpoint will eventually lead to a misinterpretation of the Qur'anic sense of disabilities. However, sound understanding usually comes as a result of deeper analysis. In the previous verse (14-18), two types of disability are mentioned. The verse actually indicates that 'deaf', 'dumb' and 'blind' describes the unbelievers who turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to God. Benzahra (2002, p.21) explains that such metaphorical disability has:

...the moral connotation of an avoidable and largely self-willed failure to use the God-given senses, to hear, see and speak Islam's clear and peaceful messages. The beliefs in and understanding of God's words are according to al Qur'an the essential measures of ability and disability.

The second type of disability covers individuals with impairments, such as sensory impairments, who may differ in their capacity and appearance but are equal to non-disabled people in intelligence and merit.

More evidence can be drawn from Bazna and Hatab (2005), who searched the Qur'an and Hadith for terms thought to be associated with disability. Their various shades of meaning here and in the Lisan UI-Arab explore the Arabic language within its social context. Lisan UI-Arab is a comprehensive compilation of five dictionaries of Arabic language, cross-referencing verses containing the same terms with the Sunnah. Their findings indicate that physical conditions are viewed in the Qur'an as neither a curse nor a blessing; they are simply part of the human condition. Moreover, Musse (2005) provides an example of the Qur'an directly contrasting physical and figurative aspects of disability. He states: '*...it is not the eyes that have grown blind, but ...the eyes which are in the hearts that have grown blind*'.

Another aspect of Islam concerns naming. Islam put much emphasis on the importance of choosing names. It is against names which are offensive, rude and hurt people's dignity. The Prophet instructed: *'Do not scold each other by calling names.'* From this, it is clear that disabled people should not be called names nor labelled by their disabilities. The Qur'an states:

O you who have attained to faith! No men shall deride [other] men: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves; and no women [shall deride other] women: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves. And neither shall you defame one another, nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets: evil is all imputation of iniquity after [one has attained to] faith; and they who [become guilty thereof and] do not repent – it is they, they who are evildoers! (49:10)

Causation

In their evaluation of the Islamic perspective of disability, Bazna and Hatab (2005) conclude that disability is considered morally neutral; it is neither a punishment from God nor a blessing nor related to spiritual deformity.

For example, the Qur'anic stories tell us about physically disabled people chosen as prophets; Zacharia's muteness and Jacob's blindness teach the reader different lessons. First, disability as a physical condition does not impair the dignity of Prophets, teaching the reader respect and equality for the disabled. The stories also indicate that the causes of impairment are multiple and complex. For example, Jacob's blindness is caused by a combination of nature and culture. Society creates disadvantaged groups, such as Joseph and his brothers. Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sinna and al-Razi refuted the myths which claimed to explain disability, such as evil spirits. Their scientific insight led to institutions being built for disabled people, with the purpose not of isolating but rehabilitating and caring for them (Nasrawi, 1982).

There is also misunderstanding of the principle of 'fatalism', submission to the Will of Allah, which is held to contradict policies of prevention or intervention in disability. For example, a study of Bedouin Arab Muslim parents of children with disabilities in Israel found that parents who focused excessively on 'fate' were less likely to comply with intervention which led to self-pity and less belief in the efficacy of the intervention (Galil, Carmel, Lubetzky, Vered, and Heiman, 2001).

'Fatalism' should then be understood as accepting a disability rather than opposing intervention. Therefore, Muslims should accept disabled people; thus it is unacceptable for Muslims to kill a disabled foetus or hide a disabled child; instead they should use the available knowledge to manage and reduce the consequences of disability. Hasnain et al (2008, p.32) point out that 'free will' is the nuanced balance with 'fate'. They define 'free will' as:

Advice by Prophet Mohammad from the hadith literature instructs people to “Trust in God, but tie up your camel” in other words, human beings should be active rather than passive participants in the world, and at the same time they should realize that the ultimate outcomes of their efforts lie with Allah.

Given this fact, Hasnain et al (2008) suggest that the individual should balance these two concepts to promote acceptance and at the same time be motivated to overcome disability.

APPENDIX FIVE

CHILDREN'S CASE STUDIES ACCOUNTS

5a. Case Study 1: Reem

Reem is 11 years old. She has attended three mainstream primary schools. She transferred from two mainstream schools and in the third school she was offered special classes. I analysed Reem's school reports and summarise them in Table A1.

Table A1: Summary of Reem's performance according to the three school reports

Core subjects marks	Mainstream school 1			Mainstream school 2	Mainstream school 3 with special classes		
	Y1	Y2	*Y3 (First Term)	*Y3 (Second Term)	Y3*	Y4	Y5
Arabic	16/20	8/20 (-2) Fail*	21/50 (-4) Fail	19/50 (-5) Fail	36/50	44/50	34/50
Maths	17/20	11/20 (+1) Pass	22/30	9/50 (-16) Fail	47/50	34/50	38/50
Science	14/20 (+4)	15/20 (+5)	22/30 Pass	15/30 Pass	27/30	24/30	27/30
English	11/20 (+3)	12/20 (+4)	37/50 Pass	18/50 (-17) Fail	41/50	40/50	34/50
Comment	Good	* Given two marks to avoid failing	*Mother's decision to transfer to another school	* Reem was failed in order to transfer to MLD classes	84.7%	80.7%	86%

From the previous table Reem's performance seems to depend on her examination marks on paper. In year one, she passed mainly owing to the discretionary marks added by teachers. In year two, Reem started to struggle, in particular in Arabic language, but again she was given two marks as permitted by the legislation: two to four marks can be awarded to all students who might otherwise fail. However, the difficulties which became obvious in year three led to her transfer to the second school in search of more support. In spite of this move, Reem continued to struggle here also until her mother decided to transfer her to a different mainstream school, but one with special classes for MLD children.

Reem carried different labels according to different reports. In the report written by The Higher Council for Disabled Affairs, she is diagnosed as having a 'temporary educational disability'. In the Secretariat General of Special Education and the school psychologist's reports, however, she is diagnosed as a 'slow learner' based on an IQ test, in which she scored 73-81. Therefore, to clarify what the different labels meant, I looked for more details about Reem's special educational needs from her school psychologist's reports, which yield these points:

Educational learning disability mainly related to understanding, comprehension and short memory

Speech and language difficulties

Behavioural difficulties believed by psychologist to be as a result of low social status.

In order to explore Reem's story in detail, I give it according to her mother's account from pre-school to the present. To validate this, I compare it with the report written by the psychologist, which confirms it. Her mother noted that Reem struggled for two years in the mainstream system, in KG1 and KG 2, as follows:

'The problem is that she doesn't have any skills or information at all, in addition to involuntary urination... she always speaks incorrectly and she doesn't have information storage and she started to speak very [late] ...'

The mother clarified that she, not the school, discovered that her daughter had special needs. This may be considered a lack of early identification within the educational system in Kuwait, which is highlighted at the macro level (Chapter five) and also highlighted by school staff in the previous chapter.

'It was us, of course, who discovered the case in the second year of kindergarten and it was certainly by accident... But I didn't care about this issue, since her deceased father also suffered also from delayed speech.'

In spite of her identification, she remained for some time in denial; this may have resulted from a lack of professional support to investigate this case further and plan the right intervention. Brown (2005, p.253) explains this situation in that:

The invisibility of the disability experienced by children with mild degrees of cognitive impairment...has created confusion and contradictory responses among parents and educators...the absence of a clear cut, observable sign of the disability encourages denial and, frequently, neglect and misdiagnosis...the absence of a single set of specialized treatments for educational disabilities has resulted in confused, inconsistent, and fractured approaches to addressing these needs.

'I used to compare her with other children in the classroom and found her level was much lower... It was me, of course, not the teacher, who noticed this... I asked her teachers and they

assured me that “she does not take part, pronounces words incorrectly and she keeps silent most of the time. She also makes strange movements in a way that hurts other children without being noticed by anybody”... as the teacher used to say, she was different from other children and her level was poor. When I asked her “Why didn’t you tell me?” she said “I didn’t realise that. I don’t know”.’

The previous quotations indicate an ‘ignorance/denial situation’ among teachers in responding to the children’s needs. This point will be taken further across cases to aid accurate interpretation of the reasons for it.

The mother indicates that she left without any guidance from the kindergarten. The only support she received was that:

‘The school psychologist told us to let her repeat KG2 in the kindergarten; but, frankly speaking, I was very upset and so was Reem, so I refused to let her repeat KG2.’

Consequently, the mother looked for help from professionals outside the educational system:

‘I realised then that she has a problem. Therefore, I spoke to my uncle, who knows some doctors and I took her to a speech and hearing clinic where she was examined and they said she didn’t have any speech difficulty; but she had the problem of “replacement of letters”... I followed it up with them.’

Reem’s mother went on to recount her early years of schooling:

‘She moved to first primary grade and there were no problems and she succeeded with a general grade ‘good’... But, in the second grade, the problems started with the teacher of Arabic, who was the first one to say that she didn’t get any marks in the dictation and that “she doesn’t write” though I used to teach her at home... I even brought tutors to her at home; but they didn’t know how to deal with her. That is why I took over teaching her myself... She succeeded in second grade and was also good, but with help.’

The last words here, ‘*with help*’, need more explanation for those outside Kuwait. This type of help means giving the student extra marks, such as Reem received, precisely to avoid failing; she needed two marks in Arabic. Then, Reem moved to grade three but in a different school. Her mother justified Reem’s transfer:

‘In the third primary grade, the actual problems started. At the beginning of the school year, in the first week, her father passed away. Reem came back home and was shocked to experience the situation of her father’s death. Everything happened before their eyes [her children]. Reem kept silent and didn’t speak at all; so she regressed badly... She used to run away all the time, either to the house roof or hiding in the wardrobe and I kept calling out to her but she didn’t respond, in addition to her involuntary... urination and excretion. It was really very hard and I got very tired. In addition, her teachers always complained about her... till I had to transfer her from this school, because the school psychologist diagnosed her as “insane”.’

I asked her further whether she agreed with this diagnosis. She replied:

‘Of course not! ... My daughter is not insane; but she was experiencing a psychologically bad phase... I don’t say that my daughter is OK, as her IQ ranges from 90 to 110... I am educated and I know these things, as I am a nurse... In her first IQ test, she got 73, and 86 in the second IQ test... This is a great development and even the doctor has said that such a development in such a short time is something great... I don’t claim that she is very intelligent or that she is at the same level of thinking as her sister because her sister is much better than she is. There is just a difference in capabilities and thinking; but she is not insane. The diagnosis that she is “insane” and doesn’t understand anything is wrong. The school psychologist badly frustrated her.’

The type of language in use, ‘insane’, ‘IQ’ etc. is indicative of the dominance of the medical model. The mother also highlights a problem in the communication process between schools and parents and the lack of understanding of the social problem which Reem faced at the time:

‘When I used to discuss the matter with them and ask them to take care of her, they said “leave her by herself till she gets accommodated...” How could that be done when she is going through such hardship? Should I leave her till she deteriorates more and more? I can see something they don’t see... I used to visit them and explain her case to them... Frankly, the psychologist tired me out and I wouldn’t go to see her even if she asked me, because every time I went to her, she used to say “your daughter is insane” and she had a big board on the wall showing mental capabilities; so I said to her “how do you diagnose my daughter?”... She showed on the board that she was insane and I told her that my daughter was not insane. She said that I was her mother and this was why I couldn’t see that.’

The above quotations indicate inappropriate ways of dealing with a parent of a child with SEN. The school psychologist approached Reem’s case with a view to forcing her exclusion from mainstream school by locating the deficit with her:

‘...the first school frustrated me very much. I used to cry... after meetings with teachers and the school psychologist... They used to say that her case was considered “mental retardation” and I used to ask them “on what basis have you judged her to have mental retardation?” She said “I conducted tests on her”... I used to say “what kinds of test?... I got the Stanford test conducted on her and the result was not retardation”. She said “No! It is a different test”. Mental retardation is obvious. My daughter is not mentally retarded. Yes! The knowledge she has is superficial but she is not mentally retarded. I consider her as suffering from a school retardation and not mental retardation, due to the psychological trauma she experienced. This is my diagnosis.’

The tension is between the medical model of using language of a certain type such as ‘mental retardation’, and the social model, which her mother pinpoints as ‘school retardation’. This tension may be interpreted as a struggle within the system which is dominated by the deficit model and leaves no space for considering other factors which may have led to special educational needs. This tension and struggle to view Reem’s case from another perspective has led to failure, as her mother explains:

‘I informed her teachers of her case... I used to tell them to take her psychology into consideration and the teacher used to say “I can’t... I don’t have time to call her sweetheart because I have 30 students in the classroom. How can I get enough time?”...’

After this, her mother took the decision to transfer her to a second primary school:

‘I told them myself to transfer her if she needed ... I transferred her to another school where the teacher discovered her very poor level. There were teachers who took her special case into account.’

This quotation confirms the result from Chapter five that individuals in Kuwait are able to resist to some extent the influence of the strongly centralised system in which they work. In spite of this sympathy from the second school, after a while the mother was not satisfied, for the following reason:

‘But I thought to myself “How long will this state of affairs continue”... “When shall I have to ask teachers to help and take care of her? Even if she succeeds this year, how long will they let her succeed? She will not be able to continue in this general education system and this situation will not be of any use to her.” Besides, in the school, they started to call her ... stupid or lazy, or say “you don’t understand”.’

This point confirms the barriers that face full inclusion, as the school staff indicated in the previous chapter. Within the mainstream schools, teachers and non disabled children hold a negative attitude towards children with special educational needs. In order to avoid over-interpretation, I asked for more clarification about the situation in the second school:

‘In most cases, it came from students and sometimes from teachers. Reem told me that a teacher said to her “You are lazy”. Reem is very sensitive and cannot stand such descriptions... At this point, I went to the school psychologist and asked her “Does my daughter need to be in the slow learners’ classroom?” and she said “Yes”. So I told her “Then transfer her there”.’

The decision was taken by Reem’s mother to transfer her to an MLD programme. I asked her how she knew about the existence of such classrooms. She replied:

I knew about it from Dr. (NAME) [Head of the speech and hearing therapy centre] when he asked me just one question “Can your daughter succeed in the normal education system?” I said “what do you mean?” He said “Do you guarantee that she will succeed in the normal education system?” I answered “No! Because I know her”. So he told me to register her with the Supreme Council for the Handicapped so as to be enrolled in the slow-learners’ programme.’

At this point, the tension between the two models, medical vs. social, can be traced. On the one hand, the mother is rejecting the diagnosis and labelling of her daughter as ‘mentally retarded’, stressing that what her daughter suffers from is ‘school retardation’, while on the other she can say *‘No! Because I know her’*. This tension may be interpreted to mean that even parents to some extent accept the medical model.

Afterwards, in year three, Reem was allowed to fail, according to the legislation, in order to transfer to the MLD programme. This legislation may explain the delay in informing the parents of the need to transfer their child early in year one or year two to special classes. To me, this legislation delays the child's exclusion; it is not what the policy maker intended, but is instead to ensure that the child must prove that s/he cannot cope with general education before being allowed to transfer. The limitation of this legislation is that it does not provide schools with the intervention which might have supported the child and prevented the failure and consequent exclusion. Reem's mother describes how failing affected her daughter:

'When I was going to receive her results at the end of the school year, she insisted on seeing her sister's results first. Her sister succeeded and got "excellent", but she failed and had to repeat the year because of three or four marks. She broke down and cried a lot and was really shocked. She asked me "why?" and I answered that I had asked the school to do this so that they could transfer her to a better school. She accepted this.'

Here, we find a similar policy to England's. As with the league tables in England, it is a familiar sight in Kuwait schools at the end of the year to hang a poster showing students' names and their results where everybody entering the school can see it. In England the effect is on the school, while in Kuwait the effect is on the children who are stigmatised by having their results displayed in public.

The mother describes her daughter's experience at the beginning of the programme. First, she talks about preparing Reem to transfer to the third school with its MLD classes:

'Though I prepared her for this transfer by taking her to the school before the start of the school year to get to know it and I told her "Look how close it is to your uncle's", she used to cry and was afraid. However, after a week of study, she became calm and started to love the teachers.'

This confirms the results from previous chapters that there is insufficient preparation of MLD children as they enter the programme. The mother emphasised the changes since her daughter has joined the programme, which confirms the teachers' view of the importance of 'partial inclusion'. She describes the changes within classroom practice as follows:

'The small student groups make them concentrate well and the teacher can control them; so in the second semester, she felt fully included; besides, the teachers are very good... Take for instance, Miss (name), who teaches her social studies; she gets down to their level in such a manner that you feel as if she is a child among them and she is very close to the children, who all love her. Also, Miss (name) to whom I attribute the success of my daughter, because she teaches them very smoothly and taught my daughter how to read and write after she used to know nothing – she has now a lot of knowledge, since Miss (name) does not leave the classroom unless every piece of information has been conveyed to the children...'

'She has felt comfortable psychologically... The way the teachers used to treat her has changed. In the past, the word "lazy" was quite enough... Reem used to say "The teacher doesn't give me a chance to think" and she used to stand right beside her and say "Speak up you ... you ...". So, Reem used to get tense and keep silent... I tried the general education schools. They have nothing but yelling and beating... But she was transferred to these

classrooms where she found good treatment and love... Reem joined these classrooms when she did not know the alphabet. Can you imagine that she was in the third primary year and she did not know how to read and write?... Now, she can read and write with no problems.'

In addition, the mother went on to describe the changes in her as indicators of the new relations between her and the school:

'When I attend parents' meetings, I go out happy while in her previous school they used to say "your daughter is lazy and doesn't get involved"... So, I used to go out sad after the meeting... But now, even if there is a negative aspect, they observe the mother's feelings by starting first with the positive aspects and then the negative ones without annoying the mother or the child. They sometimes talk about her stubbornness while the teacher is hugging her.'

She mentioned also the changes at management level:

'Honestly, the school principal is new, but she is great. The former principal was strict and tough in her dealings with people and even Reem used to complain that she was always yelling... As for the present principal, I had the experience of her being very cooperative with me when Reem got chickenpox in the examination period and was not allowed to be absent from school but at the same time forbidden to go to school, because the disease is infectious I talked to the principal and she said "we will approve her progress over the quarter as an alternative to an examination grade"; so, thank God, she got the grade "very good".... After she had been transferred to this school, I began to feel psychologically comfortable because the psychologist is always in touch with me and she always looks after her.'

These changes in Reem's schooling experiences may be interpreted to mean that 'partial inclusion' is better than 'full inclusion', as the school staff indicated in previous chapters. However, if we define 'full inclusion' as the staff define it, that is, as 'location inclusion' (being present in the mainstream classroom with adjustments to the course), then full inclusion suffers by comparison. This misunderstanding of 'full inclusion', as was clear from the school staff, is also part of the parents' perception. Reem's mother, for example, was not happy to return Reem to the mainstream class, as she was opposed to 'full inclusion'. I asked the mother if she had thought of including Reem in mainstream classes and whether it would be at all possible to do so, given the school factors. She responded:

'No! It lies in the school... The curricula are all bad and old and depend on memorising... Even if she returns to the general education... No ... to study the same system? No!'

'You know, I swear to God that even if they say "what if you return her to general education and let her succeed" I will say "No!"...the most important thing is to focus on general schools, as I suffered a lot from the school psychologists ... They ought to be effective... Yes! I myself discovered my daughter's case and it was me who identified her case, as the kindergarten school psychologist was always absent... Yes! I don't say that she will be cured or become normal... But caring about her will bear fruit and she may complete a general education... However, thank God, she is stable and I will not allow them to bring Reem back to general education, whatever they do... I don't want to see her cry one day or hide the exam or the certificate from me ... I am now happy and proud of her marks in examinations and she

has become self-confident while, in the past, she used to be hesitant and ask to stay away from school; but now she never does.'

Reem's mother identified the same school barriers as were identified by school staff in Chapter five, such as lack of early identification, ineffective support staff, rigid curricula and the assessment system.

'Because she is forgetful, the examination information is now simple. She cannot learn a lot of information by heart; so, if I take her back to general education, she will suffer a setback.'

This attitude to full inclusion from parents, is, to my mind, based on a misconception, because the current practice in the mainstream school such as Reem has encountered is described as 'mainstreaming' rather than 'full inclusion'. In this case, the confusion about the meaning of inclusion extends to include parents with the school staff, as seen in Chapter five.

I asked her if she was now happy about Reem's schooling:

'Yes! Very satisfied... I adapted myself to this situation... You know it is very difficult for a mother to know that her daughter will not complete her education.'

However, she also expresses her satisfaction with Reem's future:

'I heard that they will allow for completion up to high school. Even if this doesn't happen, I accept it and have reconciled myself to knowing that she will get the ninth grade certificate and then take training courses and get the diploma... I myself have a diploma.'

In spite of these advantages, Reem's mother pinpoints some problems within the MLD programme, such as staff shortages:

'They haven't been taught computer studies for two years because there is no teacher... In the first place, a computer is important as everything nowadays is done by computer... She hasn't had a sports class period for two years, to the extent that she is not psychologically well, asking "Why don't they give me that?" Sports subjects are always cancelled in the certificate, because there is no teacher for them... Reem, psychologically, has become upset when she sees her sister playing sports while she takes in her sports clothes but comes back with them in the same state as she took them.'

I took this statement as a chance to explore the situation between MLD classes and the mainstream classes, asking her 'why aren't they taught by the teachers of the general classes?'

'We did talk [about it]; it was due to the lack of teachers for the normal classes... so... "how can I ask for teachers for special classes?"'

This kind of superiority between the MLD classes and mainstream classes is highlighted in previous chapters; moreover, the parents accept it as the norm and thus it may be considered to indicate a cultural perspective.

I changed the subject from Reem's education by asking her about the relations between Reem and the family and whether they knew about her placement:

'No! Only her close relatives; but non-members of the family, such as neighbours, do not know, as there is no occasion to tell them about it... However, I had to tell a friend when she wondered why "your daughter is in a school far away"; so I say "she is a special case".'

This quotation could be considered to illustrate a strategy for 'avoiding stigma'. It refers to the main advantage of joining MLD classes, as TT (maths teacher) highlighted above. To avoid over-interpretation, I asked her to clarify this.

Researcher: 'Why would you rather not talk about the type of class Reem is in?'

Reem's mother: 'There are some people who say that she is insane...'

Researcher: '*Such as who?*'

Reem's mother: 'My mother... she is very old and difficult to deal with.'

For the same reason she keeps her daughter's case hidden from others to avoid stigma:

'I can enlist her in the summer club without telling them that she is a special case; so there are no problems.'

Interestingly, Reem herself echoes her mother's wish for her to stay in the MLD classes and not return to mainstream classes. During the interviewing Reem appeared calm and well behaved, very aware of my presence as a researcher. I organised her short answers into three sections. The first relates to her past experience in the first two mainstream schools:

Researcher: 'Would you agree to go back to your previous school?'

Reem: 'No! I want this school.'

Researcher: '*Why?*'

Reem: 'Because teachers do not get angry with me... there was a teacher (name) who used to yell at me when I asked her... She used to say to me "sit down at the back of the classroom... lazy..." They do not let me participate in activities... It is difficult... they just let other girls read and write and did not let me do that.'

Reem confirms her mother's statements about her struggle in mainstream classrooms.

In the second section, she talks about her current experience in the MLD classes and the effect on her academic performance, which confirm the findings from the previous chapter regarding the advantages of these classes:

'Now, they are better... when I asked them, they did not get angry with me... Miss (name)... used to make me memorise lessons and train me in writing and when I made a mistake she used to help me and never got angry with me... I like the number of students to be small... because when there are many students there will be chaos and disturbance... For example, if there is a difficult question, the teacher helps me to answer it.'

Reem made comments on the teacher's approach in the classroom, which she considers an important issue. Finally, I asked her about friendships outside the classroom; she talked in the same way about the past and the current situations.

Reem: 'Because girls play with me now...'

Researcher: 'What about your previous school?'

Reem: 'No! They did not play with me... I was all alone... It makes me sad... Whenever I found a friend who played with me, they used to tell her not to walk with me... and they used to beat me.'

Reem refers to the lack of friendship in her previous school which may be interpreted as a result of the cultural stigma attached to low achievers and prevents them from being popular in the school. However, from observation, her new friendships in the current school are limited to a classmate and she does not mix with exclusively mainstream students. This issue has been raised in previous chapters from school case study findings.

I observed Reem in Arabic and science classes: she was active and independent. In Arabic, she was confident and active. In science, she was the first student to complete the exercise with correct answers, always ready to answer questions and highly influenced by spoken praise, as was obvious from her excitement. She showed a high level of engagement; for instance, when tested on spelling words on the whiteboard in front of the class, she made no mistakes. She showed no sign of behavioural difficulties. I observed that, despite the comments on her language difficulties, she participated actively in explaining the metaphors in a poem. Her teacher asked her to read the poem to the class, with expression in her voice and body language, and rewarded her at the end by applause and a sweet. When I asked her teachers about her in private, they agreed that her behaviour had been difficult at first but after the psychological sessions and encouragement in a nurturing atmosphere, she gradually improved behaviourally and academically. They commented:

Social studies: 'She improved a lot ...her behaviour problems disappeared after the psychological sessions. She became active and more engaged in the class.'

Religious studies: 'She recites the Qur'an very well and is very careful about her work.'

English: 'She likes participating in the class activities... she is excellent.'

These comments on Reem's performance confirm the mother's and daughter's comments about the recent improvements.

5b: Case Study 4: Asad

Asad is 12 years old. He lives with his parents and four siblings. His family has a social problem related to the father's behaviour, which Asad and his mother both mentioned. This relationship is filled with domestic violence, as his mother describes:

'Their father is always silent and angry... All my children complain about their father... Because of his naughtiness Asad's father used to beat him every day till it reached the point of hatred. We have been suffering since he was in the first primary grade. It was so bad with him that he began self-harming... The last time he wounded himself, I asked "Why did you do that?" He said "Because my father beats me"... Then his father stopped beating him' (Asad's mother).

It was clear that Asad's behavioural difficulties affect his family, who find beating and yelling the only answer. Asad's mother had no guidance in dealing with her son and this affected her psychologically:

'There is still tension and it got worse due to his obstinacy and there was beating and yelling... I yell at him a lot... I don't know... I need somebody to help me and teach me how to deal with him... I have five children... I am in a very difficult situation' (Asad's mother).

The type of difficulties faced by Asad, which led to his transferring to his present school's special classes after being diagnosed as a slow learner, depends on his IQ score and failing mainstream courses. His formal report for transferring describes Asad's difficulties as attention deficit, and learning and behavioural difficulties, which prevented him studying in the mainstream. The difficulties were obvious early on, his mother says:

'He has been very naughty and wilful since he was very young. In kindergarten, I realised that he does not understand well; for instance, he cannot understand the numbers 1 and 2. Oh my God!... I don't know what is wrong with him... He is different from his twin brothers.'

In spite of this early identification, there were no early interventions from the mother or from the educational system. His mother continues:

'At kindergarten, I tried to reach an understanding with the psychiatrist but in vain. The same thing happened in the primary stage – I used to beg the teacher to let him succeed and he actually passed and was promoted to the second grade... But afterwards he kept on failing frequently till he was transferred to the slow learners' programme.'

'Asad studied in two schools. In the first, he passed the first two grades with the help of teachers whom I used to beg to help him... When he reached the third grade, the headmistress promised to let him pass on one condition: that he would not be in her school the next school year... I transferred him to another school, but unfortunately, he failed.'

This table summarises his schooling so far:

Table A2: Summary of Asad's performance according to the three school reports

Mainstream school 1			Mainstream school 2	Mainstream school with special classes	
Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y4	Y5
Pass through discretionary marks added by teachers, then forced to leave.			Failed in Arabic and maths	Pass	Pass 74%

I asked his mother why he had failed in these schools; she replied:

'[The reason] lies in the school; they always complained "Your son is very naughty". If they had understood his nature, he would have been properly grounded in the basics. He has come to have a level of accumulated academic weakness and his condition's got worse.'

She also pointed out the failure of the school psychologist to inform her of Asad's difficulties:

'She didn't help – she just used to call me if he was absent from school or created a problem.'

Further, she highlighted the teachers' role in his difficulties through neglecting her capacity to support her son:

'They don't want me to interfere with his teaching; they just want me to help him with homework ... In the parents' meeting ... They (teachers) don't ask me for any help.'

As with the other cases, the first step in transferring to special classes was the parents', as she confirms:

Researcher: 'How was he transferred to the slow learners' programme?'

Mother: 'Through one of my husband's friends, as his son joined the same programme; so I took Asad to a psychiatrist and she decided to transfer him to the slow-learners' programme.'

As with other cases, the transfer process faced rejection from the extended family and lack of preparation from the school:

'His brothers started to find fault with him, saying "You're stupid" and he used to answer "I'm not stupid". All of them thought it was a school for mad children... I was met with their objections... Some of them said "Why? What is his problem?" and the others didn't care. Unfortunately, he used to be set upon by his cousins... I cried very much and felt that his level was lower than other children's.'

I asked Asad's mother if any preparation had been offered to Asad to ensure a smooth transfer; she answered:

'No! No! I didn't know what to do. Even his brothers laugh at him and call him "slow learner".'

As in other cases, joining this programme led to improvements in Asad's learning:

‘He came to understand a little bit better... It is a simplified programme, so the student can understand and also there are fewer students in the classroom. He started to count numbers in maths and started to read... They [teachers] are excellent and cooperative’ (Asad’s mother).

‘Now, I have come to know how to read. But I don’t know about dictation. Just a little’ (Asad).

I observed Asad in three classes: Arabic, English and science. In Arabic, he was struggling a good deal with writing and keeping up. In the spelling test he got 2/7, but even when the teacher gave him another chance he could not spell accurately. During the class he was restless and not concentrating. His teacher said that he could not go back to general education, owing to the severity of his difficulties in Arabic. In English, it was no better; he was sitting at the back with a poor view of the whiteboard so he was less engaged and was browsing through the pictures in his text book, not attending to the lesson.

However, in science Asad was much better; he participated in all the activities and continually asked questions, even when the teacher ignored him. But his mood changed and his enthusiasm disappeared when the teacher embarrassed him by making jokes about his spelling errors, which made his class laugh at him.

Asad supports his mother’s replies; he states that he has difficulties in Arabic and English language, which led to his failure at this school. I asked him why he found these so difficult. He replied that he could not understand the teachers and they were not good at teaching him. He also recalled that they used to beat and shout at him if he made a mistake. However, in spite of this negative experience, Asad wanted to return to this school, because he has many friends.

‘I was happy ... I had many friends ... I love my friends ... We used to have fun there ... We used to go to the playground to talk and play football.’

It is obvious that friendship is an important issue to him, if in spite of mistreatment he wants to return. This point led me to investigate his relations with other children within the special classes and the host school; he confirmed the detail from previous chapters that tension exists between students from special classes and mainstream students; he says:

‘I don’t know – every time I go there [playground] so that we can play... the boys tell us that the ball is theirs.’

Asad’s answers highlight two important points. Firstly, the bullying at school and how the school tackles it:

‘...once they see me, they push past me and go ahead... They go ahead of me when I’m standing in line for the refreshment counter [canteen]... Even if I tell the teacher, she only just talks to them and goes and then they do it again... We tell the teachers and they say “Where are they?” but they don’t go for them.’

Secondly, there is the effect on other children of labelling their classes as 'special classes'; they perceive them as 'different'. Asad said they are called names:

'They always say that those in the special classrooms are mad... I don't know. I say to them that we are in the same normal classrooms but they teach us slowly and that is the difference. Then, they say "No! No! You are mad".'

'I don't know – whenever I go to the canteen, they say to the teacher that I belong to the special classes I don't know. When I take a walk, they say "go away from here".'

This issue was less obvious in the girls' school and may be due to gender differences or it may be as a result of the girls' school not putting up signs saying 'special class' to avoid labelling the children. I witnessed some incidents, in particular in the playground, where these children were targeted by other mainstream students and were called names such as 'mad', confirming Asad's report;; the teachers' ability to handle this issue was not impressive. This feeling of not belonging may explain why Asad refuses to go to this school, as his mother maintains:

'He always cries and screams in the morning. He refuses to get up and go to school.'

She notes that the problem with the programme is that the study level is so low that it will affect his future plans. The future with this programme leaves both the parents and child dissatisfied:

'Asad needs extra support... I haven't felt there is much progress achieved in one and a half years... There is not even financial support... I also object to his having a 'handicapped' certificate...no way... There is nothing wrong with my son... the word "disabled" is hurtful... In our society, this word is bad. If he wants to get married, for example, who will accept him?... Also...I don't like these training courses... There is no career in them... Even if he finds a job... the salary will be very small... I dream of a better and magnificent post for my children' (Asad's mother).

'I don't want these courses... I want to be a doctor' (Asad).

Therefore, she advocated full inclusion to give her son a better education and also to avoid cultural stigma:

'The problem with the programme is that the study level is low and I'd prefer him to be in normal classes with other children... I am scared of society's views and I always think of the time when he has grown up and people discover that he was studying in a slow-learners' programme. This will affect him badly... He always says "Mama, I want the school that is by the house, to be with my brothers" and I tell him he cannot go there... I am thinking of transferring him to a private school to complete the secondary stage, which is the most important thing, but he is a slow learner and cannot complete the course... Psychologically, he is very tired... Even his cousin says to him "You are the only mad person in the family... in the school of mad people". He has even started to feel jealous of his brothers.'

Her support for full inclusion extends to other children whose physical appearance may be challenged by society:

‘Yes! ... Asad is normal ... even Down’s syndrome children must be included ...’

She is clearly against special schools and she prefers special classes for the following reasons:

Researcher: ‘What would you think if Asad were transferred to a special school for children with special needs?’

Mother: ‘No! I want him to be with normal children... So that he can feel he is normal... like the rest of his brothers... I was very upset when he was transferred to the slow-learners’ programme in this school... But after his brother started at the same school in the normal classes... I felt happy because they are together and to other people there is no difference between them.’

The culture influences parents’ choices, in particular, in their desire to avoid stigma which may affect their children not only educationally but to the extent of their social status. Of course, Asad’s mother is aware of the barriers to inclusive education in the mainstream schools, including the curriculum, class size, quality of teaching and lack of facilities compared with the private sector:

‘The curriculum is less intensive than that of the general education system, as there are 30 students together, with a huge curriculum, and they don’t take into account the fact that each student has different capabilities, which should be observed. In the same classroom, there is a smart student and a stupid one who needs to be cared for... If I had a choice, I would choose the private sector, as the level of observation and facilities are better there... teachers in state schools are different from those in the private sector... In the private sector, students are always looked after and are continuously attended to; unfortunately our children are lost in the state schools. ...particularly in terms of teaching the basics to the child and identifying the child’s case... But I can’t afford to enrol him in a private school.’

Her previous statement highlights the lack of parental choice in the type of schooling available for children.

5c. Case Study 5: Khalid

Khalid is 8 years old. He is a quiet boy, the eldest of four. He has language difficulties which led the school to ask his parents to consult the children's hospital for a diagnosis. The medical report diagnosed him as a slow learner (IQ 76), with a speech delay. During the interview, Khalid found major difficulties in expressing his thoughts, but drawing and writing helped him to overcome his speech difficulties. However, in spite of them, Khalid was relaxed and cooperated well with me.

Khalid's difficulties, as his mother describes, have been highlighted since kindergarten:

'On joining the kindergarten, there was a complaint that he did not understand and did not concentrate; so I used to be continually in contact with the kindergarten psychiatrist.'

I asked her about the type of intervention offered to Khalid after this identification, but she said:

'There was no direction by anyone... There was no direction, but they used to say "Why does Khalid have such poor articulation?"'

Khalid moved to the primary stage without any intervention or support in dealing with his learning and speech difficulties. He spent the first and second grades in one primary school. In year one, he earned an excellent evaluation. In year two, however, his speech difficulty became the catalyst for treating his case as a special one which had to be dealt with. Unlike other cases, Khalid did not fail or repeat a year but because of his speech difficulty the school asked for him to be transferred earlier than other cases. Hence, he transferred before reaching the category of 'repetition zone year three' in which other cases fall.

'They [pre-school] did not care about his problem. When I enrolled him in the primary stage, they started to care about his case through the psychiatrist. I used to go to his school and they used to cooperate with me.'

The shared feature of Khalid's case and others is that they usually offer children another chance in year one and year two through discretionary marks added by teachers, as his mother describes:

'They used to say that he was quiet and rational; but he had no ability to concentrate or comprehend... He succeeded and was promoted to the second primary grade when all the students reached an advanced stage of study, except for Khalid... They used to keep me and his father happy and then we'd get a shock. We want them to report his actual level so that we can teach him more at home.'

In year two, the school started to consider Khalid's case as special:

'The psychologist used to contact me continually and talk about Khalid's poor performance, saying that his case should go to the Supreme Council for Persons with Disabilities. She

called me many times when I was very busy at work and complained about my son. I said nervously “Ok, if you don’t want him at your school, you can transfer him to another school” (Khalid’s mother).

The transfer process then began. His parents started arranging for the IQ test and medical reports, so as to be eligible to enrol in the ‘special classes’. Khalid was not happy to leave his friends, as he said and his mother confirms:

‘He prefers the previous school because “my friends are there”... when you ask him “Do you have friends?” he answers “No! I don’t have any friends [in the present school]”’ (Khalid’s mother).

His case closely resembles Heba’s and Asad’s, who would like to go back to their former schools for the sake of their friends. The features which Khalid likes about his previous school were that he could join the others in playing football at break times, but he cannot in his present school because of bullying. He remarks that they [his classmates] just sit still and eat snacks in the break.

I asked his mother what she thought about the special classes; she replied:

‘There are no problems. But why isn’t there a special female teacher for the students in Khalid’s situation? This would be better.’

It should be noted that Khalid had only spent three months in the new school; therefore, it was too early to draw clear conclusions about his progress in the special classes or to make a fair judgment of their quality. In order to overcome this limitation, I observed Khalid in three classes (science, Arabic and religious studies). However, I could not take appropriate notes about Khalid in the latter two classes because one of his peers who has severe learning difficulties took up the teacher’s time and meanwhile the other students were chatting or doing other things. In science, the situation was better, because the absence of the boy with behavioural difficulties gave the teacher control over the class.

In science, Khalid was participating and answering questions, but on occasion he misunderstood these. He freely expresses his ideas, for example, when his teacher asked about examples of water sources he said the River Nile and talked about his holiday in Egypt. I noticed also that Khalid prefers to work independently; for example, when he found it difficult to write something he refused his teacher’s support and decided to work alone.

In order to fulfil the research aim of exploring further the perceptions of inclusive education, I asked his mother about enrolling Khalid in a special school. She had refused to do this, saying:

‘No... Because my sister works there and has advised me not to enrol my son there. She says, “Your son is normal. Don’t get him in there”.’

She went on to say that she had taken this decision because of the current situation in these schools and because she considered it to be an anti-inclusion move. I next asked her:

Researcher: ‘What about if the government establishes a special school for Khalid and children in the same situation?’

Mother: ‘Yes! I’d agree... I’d agree if they had the same sort of stammering problems as my son Khalid.’

When, to clarify further, I asked her if she supported full inclusion, she demurred:

‘No! I want them in a school for them only, because all students will be at the same level and there will be no difference between them; they will not mock each other and none of them will tell another that he is stupid and does not understand.’

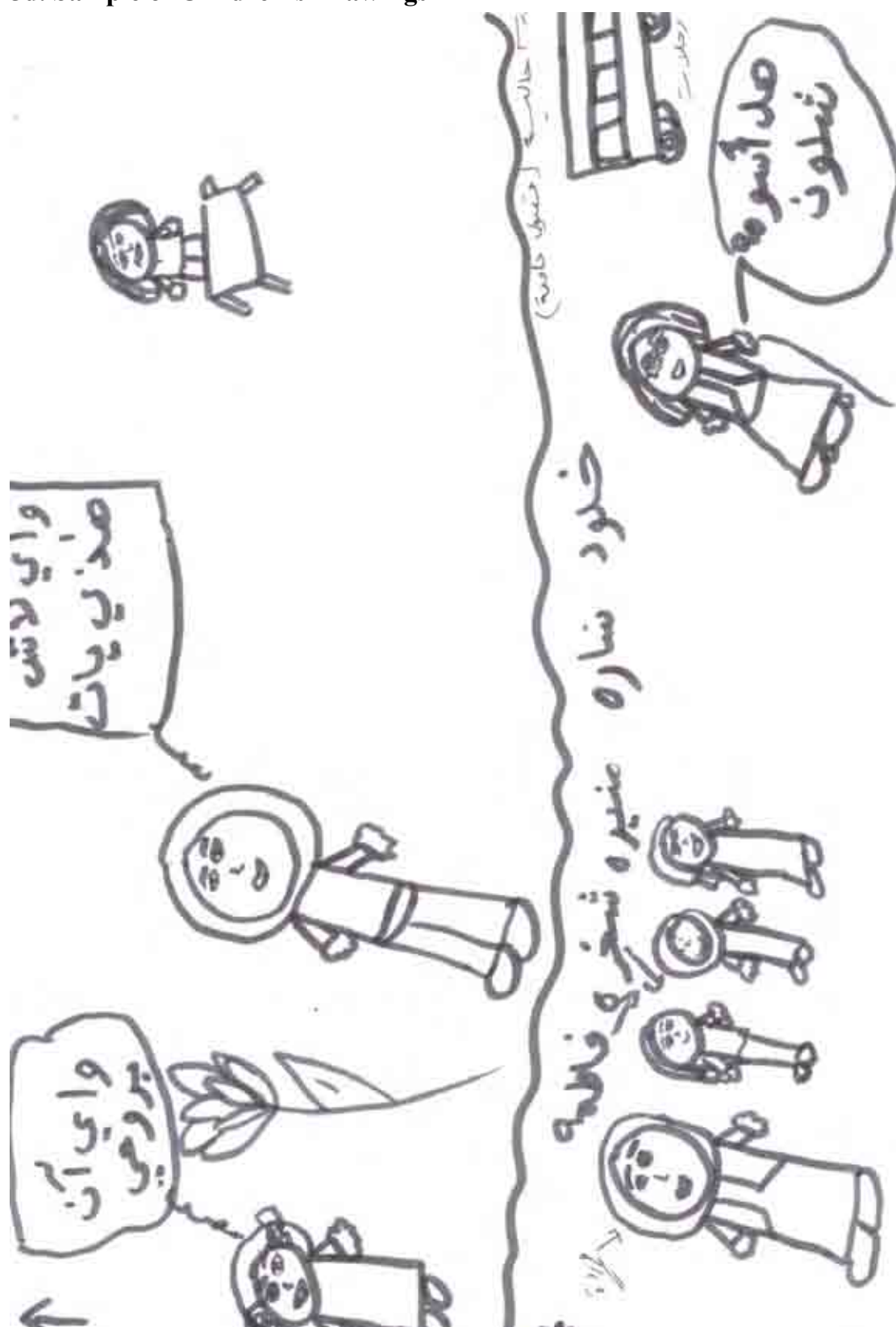
Thus an over-protection culture becomes one of the reasons behind the rejection of full inclusion. This statement confirms what MA (science teacher) said in Chapter six, who emphasised that including SEN children may lead to them becoming victims of bullying and attacks from other children.

Khalid’s mother went on to tell me that she and her husband had gone further in this decision to serve Khalid’s interests in spite of the extended family’s objection by enrolling him in ‘special classes’; they would do the same if there was a special school for his group:

‘I and his father, as well as my relatives, will be upset – you know our society. They will say “Why did you enrol him in special classes, as there is nothing wrong with your son?” but I say to them, “There is nothing wrong with my son; he just has the problem of stammering and lack of concentration. However, if you think there is something better for him, I don’t mind. The most important thing to me is that my son Khalid should excel and have a great career and I don’t care about society’s views”.’

Khalid’s mother states clearly that what is important is to serve his interests, regardless of whether this requires special schools or special classes.

5d. Sample of Children's Drawings



Like

Teacher

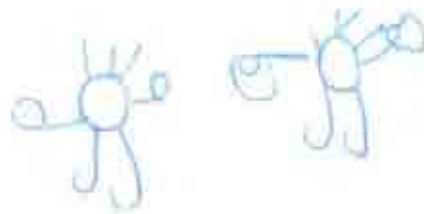
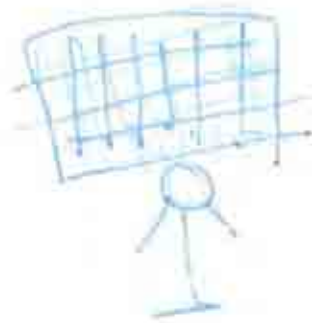


Dis like

other
boys



ike



Teacher



Dis like