‘Teacher Education and Challenging Children: Contexts and Identities’

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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LIST OF CONTENTS

Contents .................................................................................................................................................. 2
List of Tables and Figures ...................................................................................................................... 5
Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 6
Declaration ............................................................................................................................................. 7
Copyright Statement ............................................................................................................................. 7
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................... 9
Acronyms ............................................................................................................................................... 10
Preface ................................................................................................................................................... 11

Chapter One: Teacher Education and Children with Challenging Behaviour: an Introduction ......................................................................................................................................................... 12
1.1 Rationale .......................................................................................................................................... 12
1.2 The Study ....................................................................................................................................... 14
1.2.1 Research Aims .......................................................................................................................... 14
1.2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study ......................................................................................... 15
1.2.3 Research Questions and Methodology of the Research ......................................................... 16
1.3 Summaries of the Chapters ........................................................................................................... 17

Chapter Two: Quality of Educational Placement and Teacher’s Role: Setting the Context of the Problem .................................................................................................................................................. 19
2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 19
2.2 Methodology of literature review ................................................................................................. 19
2.3 Quality of Placement ...................................................................................................................... 22
2.4 The Case of Challenging Behaviour ............................................................................................ 23
2.5 The Case of Challenging Behaviour in the Greek Context ........................................................... 25
2.6 Teachers’ Role and Challenging Behaviour ................................................................................. 27
2.7 Conclusions ................................................................................................................................... 30

Chapter Three: Teacher Education ..................................................................................................... 32
3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 32
3.2 Initial Teacher Education in Greece ............................................................................................. 33
3.3 Workplace Conditions ................................................................................................................... 34
3.4 Classroom Conditions .................................................................................................................. 36
3.5 Developing a Framework for Theorising Teacher Education ..................................................... 37
3.5.1 Conceptions on Teachers’ Role ................................................................................................. 37
3.5.2 Conceptions on Teachers’ Programmes: Challenges for Educating Teachers for All ....... 39
3.5.2.1 Knowledge, Skills and Beliefs: Issues of Content .............................................................. 41
3.5.2.2 Theory versus Practice: Issues of Structure ..................................................................... 44
3.5.3 Research on Teacher Education Programmes ......................................................................... 48
3.5.3.1 The ‘Attitudes Research’ Tradition .................................................................................... 49
3.5.3.2 The ‘Practicum Research’ Tradition .................................................................................. 52
3.6 Conclusions ................................................................................................................................... 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2.5</td>
<td>The Interpersonal Relationships Setting</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Foregrounding the Cultural Models</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Identities of the Practicum</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.2</td>
<td>The ‘Visitor/Guest and the Class’ Teacher Identities</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.3</td>
<td>The ‘Student Teacher’ Identities</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.4</td>
<td>The ‘Mainstream’ and the ‘Special teacher’ Identities</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.5</td>
<td>The ‘Leitourgos’ and the ‘Public Servant’ Teacher Identities</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.6</td>
<td>The ‘Made’ or ‘Born to Be’ Teacher Identities</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.7</td>
<td>The ‘Conflictual or Inclusive’ Teacher Identities</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chapter Eight: School Placement Contradictions: an Activity Theory Analysis</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>School and University as Activity Systems</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>School Placement as an Activity System</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Locating Points of Contradiction within the School Placement</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.1</td>
<td>Contradictions as a Lack of the Degree Programme</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2</td>
<td>Contradictions as Contrasting Practices</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2.1</td>
<td>Differing Objects</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2.2</td>
<td>Mismatch Between Artefacts and Object</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2.3</td>
<td>An Ambivalent Community and the Object</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chapter Nine: The Invisible Children: a Discussion</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>The Invisible Children</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Disconnected Partnership Patterns</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.1</td>
<td>Missed Opportunities for Learning</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.2</td>
<td>‘In Betweenness’</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.3</td>
<td>Inadequate School-University Supports</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.4</td>
<td>Learning Spaces</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.5</td>
<td>Conflictual Identities</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Discussing Methodology</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Discussing Limitations</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chapter Ten: Implications for Initial Kindergarten Teacher Education</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Information on Challenging Behaviour</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Acknowledging Partnership</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>Balancing Partnership</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Supporting Partnership</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>Supporting Cultural Models</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>Supporting Inclusive Identities</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Supporting Future Research</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chapter Eleven: Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References .................................................................................................................... 244

Appendices .................................................................................................................. 284
1. Description of the Programme ................................................................................. 284
2. The Lesson Plan Preparation Sheet ......................................................................... 285
3. Fieldwork Timetable ................................................................................................. 286
4. Data Sources Information ......................................................................................... 287
5. Summary of Information Regarding Student and Beginning Teachers’ Schools and Challenging Children ................................................................................... 289
6. Consent Forms ......................................................................................................... 292
7. Interviews Sample Questions ................................................................................... 293
8. Example of Matrix for Validity ................................................................................ 295
9. Example of Initial Coding ......................................................................................... 297
10. Example of Refining Codes and Categories ......................................................... 298
11. Example of the Final Theoretical Analysis Table .............................................. 299
12. Examples of Analytic Memos ................................................................................. 301
13. Examples of Initial and Refined Diagrammatic Illustrations ................................ 302

List of figures

Figure 1: Vygotsky’s Basic Mediation Triangle Adapted from Cole (1996) .................. 62
Figure 2: Activity System Model Adapted from Engeström (1987) ............................ 63
Figure 3: Two Interacting Activity Systems as Minimal Model for Third Generation of Activity Theory - Engeström 1999 ................................................................. 64
Figure 4: Two Programme Areas ............................................................................... 112
Figure 5: Subthemes Linked to ‘Nonstop’ Flight Teaching Norm .............................. 118
Figure 6: The School Placement Settings and its Constraints ................................... 122
Figure 7: Subthemes Linked to Collectivity Setting .................................................... 124
Figure 8: Subthemes Linked to Transition Setting .................................................... 132
Figure 9: Subthemes Linked to Classroom Setting ................................................... 136
Figure 10: Subthemes Linked to Supervision Setting .............................................. 140
Figure 11: Subthemes Linked to Interpersonal Relationships Setting ...................... 150
Figure 12: Situated Student and Beginning Teacher Identities ................................ 163
Figure 13: The University Activity System ............................................................... 181
Figure 14: The School Activity System .................................................................... 182
Figure 15: The Disconnected School Placement Activity System ........................... 183
Figure 16: The School Placement Activity System and its Contradictions: Challenging Behaviour as Programme Deficiency ......................................................... 185
Figure 17: The School Placement Activity System and its Contradictions: Challenging Behaviour as Programme Contradictions .................................................. 186

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ABSTRACT

At the present time there is common agreement among academics and practitioners that the notion of inclusion means more than simply access to education. The mere placement of children in mainstream educational environments does not suffice to foster participation and equal opportunities for success. In Greece, this is particularly the case for children with challenging behaviour, the majority of whom are educated in mainstream classrooms. Personal experience shows that students and experienced kindergarten teachers feel ill prepared to manage these children. This, in most cases, results in the children being isolated from the pedagogical process. This form of internal segregation, in addition to the fact that the teacher’s role, and consequently teacher education, is key in promoting inclusive practices, provides the overall rationale of this study.

Initial teacher education is a context in which changes in professional values, knowledge and beliefs can and do occur. Within this frame, the present study examined the initial kindergarten teacher education provided to kindergarten teachers with an aim to shed further light into how they can be better prepared to accommodate the needs of their hard-to-manage pupils within mainstream settings. Using an activity theory perspective, the study was designed in such a way so as to allow student teachers to be followed in their transition between university and school through their school placement. This allowed for a coupling of the university and school contexts and thus provided a means of analysing contrasting practices in order to find possible misalignments and contradictions between these two contexts. The aim was to learn more about how these two systems can be better aligned with implications for improving the initial kindergarten teacher education curricula and pedagogy.

A qualitative multiple case study design was employed in order to explore student teachers’ experiences of their teaching practice. The participants in the study were drawn mainly from student teachers on a four-year teacher education programme at one of the universities in Greece. Beginning teachers were also observed and asked to reflect retrospectively on their transition from university learning to actual teaching at school. Inadequate preparation, lack of relevant modules and the gap between theory and practice were a few of the constraints that were pointed by this study. However the interest focused on the way these elements were located in concrete contextual conditions. The constraints students and beginning teachers face in developing inclusive practices for their challenging pupils are located at the level of the contrasting practices and discourses of the school practicum. Within these constraints students and beginning teachers adopt particular student teacher/teacher identities with ramifications on the children who have challenging behaviour.
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To disadvantaged children

To teachers who support disadvantaged children

To researchers who support teachers to advance the education they provide children.

Στα παιδιά που ξεκινούν τη ζωή τους με λιγότερες ευκαιρίες.

Στους παιδαγωγούς που προσπαθούν βελτιώσουν τη ζωή των παιδιών αυτών.

Στους ερευνητές που βοηθούν τους παιδαγωγούς να βελτιώσουν την εκπαίδευση που προσφέρουν στα παιδιά
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I am always grateful in every possible aspect to my family and friends.
### Abbreviations

- **BT**: Beginning Teacher
- **ST1**: Student teacher one (student teacher who each time teaches)
- **ST2**: Student teacher two
- **Skt**: School’s kindergarten teacher
- **TA**: Teacher assistant
- **I**: Interviewer
- **Int.**: Interviews
- **V/O**: Videos/observations

### Greek Acronyms

- **ΚΔΑΥ**: Identification, Assessment and Provision Centers  
  (Κέντρα Διάγνωσης, Αξιολόγησης και Υποστήριξης)
- **ΚΕΔΔΥ**: Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Provision Centers  
  (Κέντρα Διαφοροδιάγνωσης, Διάγνωσης και Υποστήριξης)
- **ΥπΕΠΘ**: Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs  
  (Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευµάτων)

### English Acronyms

- **CHAT**: Cultural Historical Activity Theory
- **SEN**: Special Educational Needs
- **NCCTQ**: National Comprehensive center for teacher quality
Preface

Konstantina Geogalaki graduated from the Department of Kindergarten Education of the University of Crete and obtained her first degree in Kindergarten School Education (2000), including teacher training qualifications. She continued her studies, funded by the Greek State Scholarship Foundation (I.K.Y), at the University of Manchester (Faculty of Education) where she conducted research under the title ‘Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Inclusion of Children considered as having Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Mainstream Settings’ (2003), submitted for the degree of M. Ed. in Special and Inclusive Education. She obtained the degree of M. Sc. in Educational Research at the University of Manchester under the title ‘Grounded Theory and Initial Teacher Education as preparation for Children Considered to Have Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties’ (2004) leading to the current PhD research. She was later placed as a mainstream kindergarten teacher in kindergarten schools in Crete where she has been working for the last six years.
Chapter One

Teacher Education and Children with Challenging Behaviour: an Introduction

1.1 Rationale

‘Teacher education and the inclusion of children with challenging behaviour’ is first a pragmatic problem. Within the contemporary educational, philosophical, and legislative (see Law 2817/2000 and Law 3699/2008) context, as it is defined by the demand, principle, and pedagogy of inclusion, teachers are often at the forefront in recognising these students and implementing classroom-based interventions (Soles et al., 2008). Nevertheless, kindergarten teachers in Greece declare themselves unprepared to include children with challenging behaviour in the pedagogical process. They feel that they are not trained sufficiently on issues and problems of school discipline (Kourkoutas, 2007). Hence, although the majority of children with challenging behaviour are educated in the classrooms of the general schools (Xristakis, 2001), they constitute a threat to teachers’ professional ability to control the class and to attain their curricular aims (Poulou, 2005).

By implication, these children are on the verge on exclusion (Shearman, 2003). They remain most of the times unsupported or receive punitive discipline whilst their problems remain unsolved (Xristakis, 2001; Jull, 2008). They are usually identified as having fallen behind academically (Lorch et al. 2005 cited in Fovet, 2011; Infantino and Little, 2005), as having difficulties in establishing relationships with peers (Diener and Milich 1997 cited in Fovet, 2011) and as developing confrontational relationships with teachers (Fovet, 2011).

They are those children who disturb the class and whom the teachers try to segregate so that the lesson can take place in an orderly fashion (Angelides and Stilianou, 2005). This key phrase synopsises much of the main pedagogy of general classrooms, and forms the principal rationale for the theoretical and research focus of this study. The classroom pragmatics, which is the focus of this thesis, examine how kindergarten teachers can be better supported to include more successfully children with such difficulties in the pedagogical process of the mainstream classroom.
Assuming, therefore, that legislation on its own will not transform an education system into a fully inclusive system (Visser and Stokes, 2003; Papageorgiou, 2000; Nikodimos, 2000; Liodakis, 2000; Didaskalou, 2002) and that exploring the barriers and potential development strategies regarding the inclusion of challenging children through the lens of those directly working with them is important, the present research places teachers in central position. The difficulties they face, at the stage of their initial training, will form the basis of such an exploration. In particular, the research will focus on student teachers’ transition between what they learn on their course and their field experiences. The focus will be on initial kindergarten teacher education.

Pre-primary education, to which kindergartens or kindergarten schools (*nipiagogeia*) belong, constitutes the first level of the Greek education system and applies from ages four to six years. From the 2007/08 year on, kindergarten attendance is compulsory for all five year olds. Kindergarten schools follow national curricula that have been developed by the Pedagogical Institute. Their aim is to support children in their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development within the frame of the broader objectives of the primary and secondary education (YPEPTH, 2002).

Apart from a personal interest, the reasons for focusing in this area of pre-primary education are societal and pedagogical. Kindergartens are the first schools children attend and therefore improving the providence of good kindergarten education may be considered a significant means of fostering better behaviour before they attend primary school (Tafa and Manolitsis, 2003). Timely intervention may prevent more serious problems later on (Tafa, 1998; Bilancia and Rescorla, 2010; Riney and Bullock, 2012).

In addition young children have not formed stereotypes about individuals (Buysse and Bailey 1993 cited in Tafa and Manolitsis, 2003) and thus they are more open and receptive in new or different environment (Xaritou, 2000 cited in Spartali, 2006). Furthermore the early interaction between young children with and without special educational needs may increase the likelihood of the later acceptance of people with disabilities (Tzouriadou and Mparmpas, 2003; Kipriotakis 2001, 1998).

Pedagogical reasons concern preschool education as an institutional frame with special features allowing for the open curriculum and children-initiated activities (Poimenidou and
Papadopoulou, 2013). The educational programs in preschool education provide for a more personalised approach to teaching and learning (Tzouriadou and Mpampas, 2003). The relations of parents and teachers can, for instance, have more directness as well as the interaction of the kindergarten teacher with every child (Xaritou, 2000 cited in Spartali, 2006). For these reasons, preschool education teachers have to a greater extent than their colleagues who teach older children, the possibility to contribute towards the promotion of effective inclusive practices. However, for the educator to be able to undertake this role, training of a high quality is required (Tzouriadou Mpampas, 2003).

The training provided to teachers is a key issue in promoting inclusive practice. Tilstone et al. (2000) argued that the pace at which we move towards inclusion is dictated through the means we equip teachers to meet the demands of inclusive schools. For this reason, light must be thrown on how the task of preparing teachers to respond to pupil diversity might be best conceptualised. This represents a major challenge to the status quo in many countries (Ainscow, 1999) and Greece is no exception. Preparing general education pre-service teachers for the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties has been characterised as grey area (Feyten and Hines, 1998; Whelan and Simpson, 1996; Martin et al., 1995 cited in Cooley-Nichols 2004).

In this light, this thesis aims to shed further light on the inclusiveness and/or exclusiveness of current Greek approaches to education. In particular, it aims to shed light to the task of preparing kindergarten teachers to respond to pupil diversity with regard to pupils considered to be challenging. A brief outline of the context of the empirical research will now be provided, along with an outline of the conceptual framework, methodology and research questions. Finally in this chapter the reader is introduced to the content of the remainder of the thesis by providing short summaries of each of the chapters which follow.

1.2 The Study

1.2.1 Research Aims

The aims and rationale of the present study blend with the current educational context of Greece, previous research findings as well as with conceptualisations of the needs of a
current research agenda on teacher education. The first was documented in the previous section. Regarding the second, previous research in the international arena has shown that adding special education courses to the curriculum has not resulted in adequately prepared general educators for inclusive settings (Stayton & McCollum, 2002). This might imply the need for teacher education reform. In relation to current conceptualisations in the research agenda about teacher education, these have clustered ideas of teacher research around two key concepts. One is about realising the complexity and dynamics of student teachers’ learning experiences and enhancing the importance of good student teaching placements (Ronfeldt and Reiniinger, 2012; Brisard et al., 2006; Tang, 2003;) and the other is the idea that emphasises the importance of identity in teacher development (Chong, 2011; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Hall et al., 2009.; Malderez et al., 2007; Swennen et al., 2008; Beijaard et al., 2004). The importance of the concept of professional identity lies in the assumption that who we think we are influences what we do, thereby making identity a critical factor in understanding teachers’ classroom behaviours (Watson, 2006; Cross and Hong, 2012).

Shaped by these ideas, the aim of the present study is to inform the aspect of initial teacher education that focuses on challenging behaviour by shifting attention on student teachers’ learning experiences. Using perspectives and concepts from an activity theory framework the study sought to relate and explain the development of student teacher identities in relation to the constraints and/or facilitators they face in their dealing with challenging behaviour upon their transition from university to school. This framework allowed for a methodology to be designed through which university and school could be explored together. This might expose possible ‘contradictions’ between them and so should inform knowledge about how these two contexts can be better aligned.

1.2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The key theoretical influences of this study come from sociocultural theory. Within the broader framework of social cultural theory as reflected in the research traditions that have developed from Vygotsky, Leontiev, Luria, the study particularly draws on cultural historical activity theory. Activity theory provides tools with which to conceptualise learning, in an identified activity, as mediated by the object, artifacts, rules, and division of labour. In this frame, learning to teach is considered as a process of participating in the activity and as a process of becoming (Edwards and Protheroe, 2004; Vågan, 2011). The focus shifts on
identities – on identities in relation to the school and university contexts. In order to investigate the construction of identities in university and school, an understanding of identity as changing, fluid and multiple (Hawkins, 2004) must first be proposed.

Holland’s account of identity is in accordance with such a definition of learning. Holland and her co-authors (Levinson et al., 1996) offer an account of identity in practice that is close to the concerns of sociocultural theory. Identities are seen as ‘being accomplished in the course of social interactions and within specific discursive and rhetorical contexts’. People’s attitudes, perceptions and behaviour are situated in relation to the activities they participate in (Lave, 1996). Such a conception of identity focuses on the individuals with regard to how they form senses of themselves in relation to ways of inhabiting roles, positions and cultural imaginaries that matter to them (Holland and Lachiotte, 2007 cited in Peltier and McCafferty, 2010)

In line with this stance, becoming a teacher is conceived of as a process of development, resulting from the meaningful social interaction between the student teacher and his/her professional environment (Rots et al., 2012). Becoming and being a teacher of a certain kind is neither only a matter of autobiography nor only a matter of training (Holland and Lave, 2001). How teachers become who they are depends on what they experience in social contexts in which they participate (Moen, et al., 2003). Students’ and kindergarten teachers’ meaning making processes about challenging behaviour are viewed as socially situated, enmeshed in their participation and interaction with the university and school contexts.

1.2.3 Research Questions and Methodology of the Study

Within this framework, the research focused on how the university and school systems facilitate or constrain the development of teaching practices in mainstream classrooms which include children with challenging behaviour. In this light, the following research questions were formulated:

(I) How do the school and university practices and discourses facilitate or constrain the development – by the student teachers – of inclusive practices for children with challenging behaviour and
(II) What teacher/student teacher identities are found within these practices?
The first question concerns the structure and the workings of the practicum. That is the context of learning and the modifications in student teachers’ practice that occur during the practicum. If we wish to describe the learning process of student teachers, it is important to understand their experience of the learning environment, as well as their perception of the process whereby they learn to teach and develop as teachers (Buitink, 2009). The second question relates exactly to this: to the ways in which student teachers develop – that is, their process of professional development and identity formation.

Both questions guided me towards the kinds of information I needed and the ways I should collect the information (Lewis and Munn, 1997). To explore and describe the ways in which student teachers develop their identities in terms of their experiences, the study draws on data gathered by a qualitative multiple-case study. In many cases researchers adopting an activity theory perspective are often committed, although not explicitly obligated, to the use of strategies from methodologies such as case studies and ethnography. The commitment is to take an extended, holistic view that allows for the contribution of multiple perspectives (Barab et al., 2004). A qualitative methodology, then, was considered as more likely to capture the complexities and dynamics involved in the student teacher university-school transitions.

Specifically three schools were chosen for 10 student teachers, and further three for three beginning teachers. Each was followed and observed while teaching. In four schools I was allowed, also, to video teaching sessions. Participants were then interviewed as well. Observations field notes and video recordings were used in the interviews. Additionally, I followed student teachers at university wherein I observed them in their preparatory meetings with their supervising kindergarten teachers as well as in a number of lectures. Lastly school’s kindergarten at schools and supervising lecturers and lecturers at University were interviewed as well.

1.3 Summaries of the Chapters

The first chapter presented the introduction to the study. It introduced inclusion, teacher education and challenging behaviour as the major issues that form the focus of the present study. In addition it provided a brief summary of the research aim and questions as well as of the methodological and theoretical frameworks that guided study. The second chapter sets
the background and states the problem. It is concerned with the theoretical context of the problem, which in turn signifies particular concepts as important. Pupils’ participation and ‘teachers’ role’ are such concepts.

Chapter three forms a review of a literature of teacher education. This review is concerned with two major issues in developing initial teacher education programmes that were significant in this study: the issue of content and the issue of structure. In particular, a consideration of the school placement is made as a crucial component of a teacher education programme. This aspect was also crucial in relation to the theoretical framework adopted in the study. Chapter four deals in more detail with the sociocultural perspective and in particular with Activity Theory that underpins this study. It examines the key conceptual elements of the socio-cultural activity theory. The chapter concludes with a more detailed discussion of the concepts that were of particular relevance to the context of the present study.

Chapter five is a presentation of the methodology of the research. It examines the qualitative research paradigm as more suitable for this study. Furthermore, it discusses the sample and research site, the data collection methods as well as issues regarding generalisation, ethical principles, researcher’s role and reflexivity. Chapter six discusses the procedures of data analysis. These included two major phases, the thematic analysis phase and analysis according to the tools provided by the activity theory framework.

Chapter seven and chapter eight present the findings. Apart from the need for ‘more courses and field experiences’, data pointed to several elements of the school placement activity system and how they impact on particular student teacher identities as necessary in conceptualising the constraints participants face in relation to behaviour difficulties. Chapter nine discusses the findings based on the perspective of activity theory and in relation to the relevant literature. In addition the methodology is discussed. Also an account for the limitations of the study is provided. Chapter Ten suggests some potential practical and policy recommendations for initial teacher education in Greece. The last chapter, chapter eleven, makes concluding remarks of the thesis and discusses its significance in the Greek context.
Chapter Two

Quality of Educational Placement and Teacher’s Role: Setting the Context of the Problem

2.1 Introduction

‘Teacher education and inclusion of children with challenging behaviour’ is also a theoretical problem; in the sense that the terms ‘teacher education’ ‘inclusion’ and ‘challenging behaviour’ that articulate the theme carry assumptions about the area of investigation. Indeed when the theme’s constituent parts are broken down, two significant subunits are found: ‘teachers’ education’ with an emphasis on challenging behaviour is the first. This is modified by the second term ‘inclusion’. That is inclusion defines the problem and sets a frame for its theorisation.

I have already touched upon inclusion as a frame for exploring and theorising teacher preparation for challenging behaviour. By promoting inclusive educational environments, wherein pre-school age children with and without challenging behaviour are put together in general kindergarten schools (Tafa and Manolitsis, 2003), attention shifts to the concepts and corresponding practices of participation and/or marginalisation in the mainstream classroom. In this sense inclusion as ‘participation in the pedagogical process’ is a problem and a concept that redefines the educational realities of challenging children.

Here I will elaborate more on this concept and discuss in particular its relevance to challenging behaviour and the Greek context. Discussion will then move on to an exploration of teachers’ role as one major prerequisite of the quality of the mainstream placement. The chapter will end by emphasising teachers’ initial education as one significant impact on shaping their role as inclusive teachers. Before though I discuss these ideas, I will justify their use explaining how these were found to be important in the literature.

2.2. Methodology of Literature Review

Literature review is a synthesis of available research published on a particular area. Its purpose is to review this literature critically. In addition reviews are written from a particular
perspective or standpoint of the reviewer (Hart, 1998). It is in this way that this review is partial. In particular, the present study reviewed prior research studies and theoretical articles concerning initial teacher education and how this can support prospective teachers to develop more inclusive practices.

The sources of information included online searches of relevant electronic databases and library catalogue searches covering books, journal articles, conference papers and proceedings. The following databases were searched: BEI (British Education Index – 1975 to date, covers all fields of education), ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center – (1966 to date – index to current literature relevant to US education), AEI (Australian Education Index). The University of Manchester and Crete libraries holdings were searched. In particular recent issues of some key Greek journals related to the topic of interest were hand-searched including the “Psychology” [Ψυχολογία], “Inspection of Educational Issues” [Επιθεώρηση Εκπαιδευτικών Θεμάτων] and “Issues of Special Education” [Θέματα Ειδικής Αγωγής]. This was a slow but necessary way of sourcing Greek articles.

The searches were conducted with reference to the following broad key concepts: Teacher education, challenging behaviour and activity theory. Relevant keywords were carefully chosen in order to generate the information being sought. For instance, keywords used to identify emotional and behavioural problems in Greece may differ from the British in meaning. For this reason the alternative term of ‘challenging behaviour’ was considered with similar meaning. In particular the following list of keywords were used ‘Initial teacher education’, ‘Initial teacher training’, ‘professional development’, ‘Kindergarten teacher education’, ‘Kindergarten teacher training’, ‘Nursery teacher education’, ‘Teacher training’, ‘Teacher education’, ‘Student teachers’ training’, ‘Emotional and behavioural difficulties’, ‘Challenging behaviour’, ‘Greece\Greek’. These terms were used singly or in combination. Combining keywords through the ‘AND’ and ‘OR’ Boolean operators was a useful strategy (Ely and Scott, 2007 cited in Cronin et al., 2008) to elicit relevant information.

The next step was to select and then structure the relevant knowledge retrieved on the topic. Selecting the studies and articles was a difficult process. The first step that was taken, in this respect, was to relate the reviewing literature to the guiding concepts of the thesis and its research questions. The concepts of challenging behaviour, teacher training and inclusion helped me prioritise and then sort the retrieved literature. In addition I tried to follow through
a set of concepts and processes to help me read analytically the papers. A critical appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of work was a necessary part of the process. In this respect and following Taylor’s (2008) advice the following questions were applied to research studies, in particular:

1. Has the author formulated a problem/issue? What is that problem being investigated?
2. Is its significance clearly established? What results did the investigator obtain?
3. Are the basic components of the study design valid? Is the analysis of the data accurate and relevant to the research question and are the conclusions validly based upon the data and analysis? Are the conclusions valid given the results?
4. What is the investigator’s research orientation and theoretical framework?

After this first screening, I tried to synthesise the remaining articles and structure them. To do so, an effort was made to identify the main questions and problems that have been addressed to date as well as the issues that are not still known in the particular area of the thesis. Then the main issues and areas of controversy were identified. This was also the way the review was structured. In structuring the review it was decided that it would be organised into sections that present themes and identify trends. An effort was made to avoid listing the material, but to synthesize and evaluate it according to common denominators such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, specific purpose or objective, chronology, etc. For instance the first chapter of the review refers to the concept of teacher’s role and the major issues that relate to Challenging Behaviour

The second negotiates the major debates that relate to initial teacher education. It discusses the major debates on initial teacher education concerning issues of content and issues of structure. It structures relevant studies according to the methodology and focus followed. This was decided in order to show the gap that exists in Greece in relation to qualitative approaches to the problem and how this leads logically to the present study’s methodology. In other words this was the way I tried to ensure the readers of this study can make the link between my views on the literature and the approach I adopted in completing the study. The research questions highlight the strengths and omissions of the literature and aimed to extend the topic and the existing knowledge in the area
2.3 Quality of Placement

The focus on the concept of participation in the pedagogical process encourages a greater emphasis on the quality of a pupil’s educational experiences rather than on where he or she is placed. It describes the extent to which a pupil with special educational needs is truly ‘integrated’ (Beveridge, 2000). This emphasis on the quality of the educational experiences represents a significant shift on thinking of what has come to be characterised as a basic and oversimplified model of inclusion following the publication of the Warnock report (Beveridge, 2000). At that time, the focus of special education reform was essentially structural. The debate was over where students with disabilities should receive education (Skrtic 1991 cited in Visser and Stokes, 2003) and it was based on the idea that access to mainstream schooling, inevitably gives rise to equality of opportunity (Mason, 1992; CSIE 1999 cited in Visser and Stokes, 2003).

This idea, that access involves the movement of pupils from special to mainstream contexts with the implication that they are included once they are there, has been challenged since then. It has been argued that it distracts people from exploring the realities of practice (Booth and Ainscow, 1998). Instead, inclusion involves the processes of increasing the participation of students in mainstream curricula, cultures and communities (Booth et al., 1998). This seems to be far from a taken for granted process. Achieving equality remains a major challenge in schools globally (Yeung, 2012). This is supported by a growing number of authors who argue that attendance in school does not necessarily ensure social inclusion or a commitment to learning. Improving attendance is a matter of ensuring that the schooling children experience genuinely adds value to their lives (Reid, 2012; White, 2012 cited in Daniels, 2012).

In many countries, not all children are in school, and even when they are, they do not necessarily have positive experiences of education (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007 cited in Florian and Rouse, 2009). While they are physically present they are differentiated by their absence from aspects of school life in terms, for instance, of social and learning membership (Rutherford, 2012). Educational placement says nothing about how the teachers share, or fail to share, responsibility for students’ learning, or how students are succeeding as learners (Ferguson, 2008). Waterson (2002), for instance, stresses that even where pupils from at risk groups are present in schools they are often not fully included and are thereby disadvantaged in
terms of their achievements. As Collins (2003) vividly put it, physical presence in the classroom is not synonymous with learning.

For these reasons, the so-called ‘achievement gap’ between those who achieve most and those who achieve least, has become a major concern in many places (OECD, 2007 cited in Florian and Rouse, 2009). Most school systems have children who do not participate in meaningful learning, or who underachieve, and this gave a new impetus to the call for more inclusive education (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007 cited in Florian and Rouse, 2009). In this sense, getting pupils into school is only the first step towards solving the problem of exclusion. The next is to ensure that they are active participants in the social and academic life of the school (Collins, 2003). ‘Meaningful inclusion’ (Howes and Davies 2007) has come to be considered, nowadays, as one of the the biggest challenges facing today’s teachers and teacher educators (Kaur, 2012; Duflo, 2012).

2.4 The Case of Challenging Behaviour

That the movement towards inclusion represents much more than just the physical placement of learners with challenging behaviour in mainstream classrooms, is not to be treated as a truism, for it has serious implications in the educational lives of many children. The previous section showed that children can become marginalised within the mainstream classrooms. Due to schools’ and teachers’ attitudes and values, particular groups are to a greater or lesser extent not fully included in the curriculum and life of the school (Simco and Wilson, 2002). The case of emotional and behavioural difficulties seems to best illustrate this (MacFarlane and Woolfson, 2013).

According to a review of international studies, children with difficult behaviour present, usually, the most difficulties for educational staff (Croll and Moses, 2000; Nind et al., 2012). They add to teachers’ concerns, threaten their authority and make teachers feel they have lost control (Cooper, 2000; Phillips and Jenner, 2003; Gal, 2006; Lane et al., 2010). Dealing with misbehaviour can generate feelings of helplessness and incompetence (Lennox, 1991; Bennett, 1992; Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993; Chazan et al., 1994; Gray et al., 1996 cited in Poulou and Norwich, 2002). Hence, it is not surprising that some educators may feel fearful when students with emotional or behavioural difficulties are assigned to them (Cavin, 1998 cited in Cooley-Nichols 2004).
This has consequences on children’s social and academic achievement. Classrooms without teacher-managed behaviour tend to be chaotic places where little academic learning takes place (Visser, 2000). Academic failure has been documented by a number of authors who stress that students with such difficulties are traditionally grossly underserved, (Lewis, Chard and Scott, 1994 cited in Maag and Katsigiannis, 1999; Burton et al., 2009; Al-Hendawi, 2012) and have lower academic achievement than any other group of students with disabilities (Koyangi and Gaines, 1993 cited in Maag and Katsigiannis, 1999; Hamill and Boyd, 2003).

Largely, this is because educators of students with emotional or behavioural difficulties struggle usually to provide a safe and stable environment and are too overwhelmed to focus on academic instruction (Bullock et al., 1994; Cavin, 1998, cited in Cooley-Nichols, 2004). When the teacher of the class ‘runs’ with the high achievers or ignores children that are for different reasons marginalised (Angelides et al., 2006) the possible consequences are clear: inattention, poor learning and academic failure (Hull Learning Services, 2005). Also, in many cases, children with such difficulties, attend programmes where the primary emphasis is behaviour management and social adjustment rather than academics and vocational preparation (Knitzer, Steinberg and Fleisch, 1990 cited in Maag and Katsigiannis, 1999).

It is not surprising, then, that the term emotional and behavioural difficulties is used mainly in the education service to refer to a pupil’s difficulties which are severe and persistent such that they negatively affect their educational functioning (Cooper, 1996; Soles et al., 2008). These difficulties may be so intertwined with their inability to learn and to get on with their peers, that an approach which does not include attention to the educational alongside their emotional social and behavioural needs will fail to provide the range of support that they need (DfEE 0112, 2001).

Convincingly, therefore, Jupp (1992 cited in Farrell, 1997) asks whether pupils placed in units attached to a mainstream school are more integrated than if they were taught in a special school. The author argues that such units can be just as segregating. Similarly, Farrell (1997) argues that a pupil with special educational needs placed in a mainstream class may in fact be isolated from the rest of the class and not truly integrated within the group. Integrated placements may still leave the pupil segregated (Mixailidou and Angelides, 2008). Hence
making educational provision is one thing whilst getting children to attend this provision, is another (Visser, 2011)

These considerations were also supported by research. Research has shown that in many instances pupils with special educational needs are not included, but are integrated into mainstream school (Norwich, 1990; Riddell et al., 1994; Galloway et al., 1994; Gerber, 1996; Jenkinson, 1997; Lindsay, 1997; Vlachou, 1997; Booth et al., 1998; McCulloch, 1998; Mithaug, 1998; Feiler et al., 1999; Wilson, 1999 cited in Visser and Stokes, 2003, Nind et al., 2012). There are various methods including the use of ‘remedial’ groups, an individual’s withdrawal from normal classes and the segregation within a class using teaching assistants particularly if he/she works with a him/her in one-to-one sessions for the majority of each day (Farrell, 1997; Rutherford, 2012), used by schools to effectively produce internal exclusion. Defining, therefore, inclusion solely in terms of the provision a pupil receives, tells us nothing about the quality of the education which is received in this provision (Collins, 2003).

2.5 The Case of Challenging Behaviour in the Greek Context

Applying this discussion in the Greek context, one can notice similar patterns. Before though I discuss these patterns, I should stress that in the Greece, the social status of children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is a priori marginal. Children with problematic behaviour especially when this is exhibited with violent reactions are characterised as ‘bad children’ and experience feelings of rejection (Xristakis, 2001). In other words they encounter negative treatment and devaluation (Hinshaw, 2007 cited in Broomhead, 2013). In support of that and from a different angle, Poulou (2000) notices that children, who often are considered as “naughty” or with “distracting behaviour”, do not inspire the same sympathy compared to children with physical or learning difficulties. She agrees with Xristakis (2001, 2000) that children with behaviour problems are the most mistreated as much by their problems as from the unfortunate interventions from their environment.

In relation now to educational services, Greek teacher’s concerns seem to echo voices in the international arena. Their responses when asked which cases of children with special needs they consider that can be educated in the regular kindergarten school are indicative of such voices. According to Tzouriadou and Mparmpas (2003), the great majority believed that
children even with mild problems of behaviour cannot be educated at the regular kindergarten school whilst children with mental retardation can. This was despite the fact that children with mild problems of behaviour are much closer to the demands of the learning process of the general kindergarten school than children with mental deficiency. Nevertheless they are being rejected because of the problems they create in the smooth function of the team.

Also, it is most likely that kindergarten teachers will refer more children with challenging behaviour to special services than children, for instance, who have only language difficulties without a problem of behaviour (Stow, Arnold and Ortiz, 2000 cited in Manolitsis, 2002). Fantuzzo et al.’s (1999, cited ibid) study showed similar results. Manolitsis’ (2002) study also showed that kindergarten teachers are more likely to identify children with behavioural problems in relation to children who face other problems. In his study children’s behaviour was highly correlated with the referral of the child to a special service.

With regard to teachers’ responses within the classrooms, traditional answers to these problems are teachers excluding pupils from school events, giving them separate work, and punishing them (Danasss-Afentakis, 1992). In addition, teachers mostly engage with the children when they present disruptive behaviour (Xalatsis, 2005). A typical classroom pattern is for teachers to focus on pupils when they exhibit loud, aggressive behaviour and to give attention to the children only when they pose a potential threat to the smooth running of the school (Collins, 2003; Tzouriadou and Mparmpas, 2003) or disrupt the education of the rest of the children (Rooney, 2002). In contrast, when the child is not disturbing for the rest, teachers reduce their engagement with him/her. Interestingly, this implies that their pedagogical interactions with the challenging children are determined more from the need to maintain under control the classroom than their commitment to support their education (Xalatsis, 2005).

Within these conditions, mainstream kindergarten classrooms can become sites wherein exclusivity is practiced in particular patterns. Hence, there is an outstanding demand for training providers to meet teachers’ needs in this area (Cooper, 2008). Teachers’ role is crucial in the decision-making and practices of these forms of exclusion and by the same token is central in developing inclusive educational practices (Mitsiani-Matheopoulou, 2006). The next section will discuss this centrality.
2.6 Teachers’ Role and Challenging Behaviour

In any discussion pertaining to the exclusivity and/or inclusivity of education, as a principle and institution, inherent is the central role of teachers (Malinen et al., 2012). Particularly in relation to challenging behaviour, there is a well-researched body of evidence which shows that teachers make a difference in the behaviour of pupils (DES 1989, Mortimore et al., 1988; Brown and McIntyre 1993; Smith and Laslett 1993; Rutter et al., 1979 cited in Visser, 2000; Farrell, 1995; Daniels et al., 2003; Visser, 2000; Murray and Zvoch, 2011). The class teacher stands out as a key factor when it comes to preventing and handling aggression in classrooms (Vaaland and Roland, 2013). The Elton Committee reported (DES, 1989) that without-child causes clearly relate to skills on basic classroom management. This is supported by research that shows how the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties behave extremely well in well-run classes, but their behaviour deteriorates in less well-organised lessons (Swinson et al., 2003). School ethos can and does influence behaviour (Ayers and Prytys, 2002).

In support of this research, Hamill and Boyd (2003) accept that some young people can be so disruptive that they are unwilling to respond positively to any teacher but they are also well aware that teachers vary considerably in their ability to relate to young people. Pupils are seldom so challenging that their behaviour is poor for all teachers. Morris (1999 cited in Visser, 2000) found that even pupils with severe behaviour difficulties, who were eventually permanently excluded, behaved well for some teachers within the school. In a similar way, Mittler (2000) reports that children taken into care speak very positively about individual teachers who have gone out of their way to listen to them and to meet their individual needs. At the same time when such problems occur, pupils commonly refer to a breakdown in teacher–pupil relationships (Sellman et al., 2002).

These suggest that there is a considerable amount of evidence which shows that not all teachers are equally effective in promoting positive behaviour. There are some mainstream schools that have a much better record of maximising the inclusion and meeting these pupils’ needs than others (Cole et al., 1999). Weber (1982) claimed that the teacher is the ‘key’ and this summarises the position of much of the literature on effective practice in relation to challenging behaviour. However, this is far from a problematic idea.
Management of behaviour and good order is not an easy task (Lloyd et al., 2003). It is a teaching quest. Many factors contribute positively or negatively in the achievement of this quest. Teacher’s personality is placed as the first in a list of such factors in various studies. It has been considered as the most significant factor for shaping the climate, the relationships and the behaviour developed in the school class (Hoover and Kindsvatter, 1997; Levis 1989; Fontana, 1996 cited in Matsaggouras, 1999). In a similar way Kitsaras (1997) speaks of the kindergarten teacher as the driving force of the kindergarten school. More emphatically Matsaggouras (1999) stresses that the general principles and the objective conditions play important roles but they are activated and materialised through the personality of teacher, as precisely as the general principles of painting are materialised through the personal talent of the painter.

Inherent assumption of this discourse on teacher’s personality is that because of inherent attributions certain teachers are in a position to face more effectively difficult situations than others even if they have all been taught the same principles and practices of school discipline (Dreikurs et al. 1989 cited in Matsaggouras, 1999). Kitsaras (1997) gives an example of this, when he speaks of kindergarten teachers who despite working under the same prerequisites and conditions, they usually present great deviations with regard to their achievement of their goals. Matsaggouras (1999) adopts a more challenging idea when he states that the education of teachers on issues of teaching organisation and organisation of class contributes considerably in the improvement of teachers, but in no case does it eliminate the differences of personality.

Perhaps it is worth noting that this discourse on teacher’s personality is long rooted in the Greek pedagogical thought. It was dominant, roughly, in the period 1669 up to 1821. During this period personality appeared as the main factor of success or not of a higher school. This is because the teacher of that period is not committed by any authority, by any instructive books, nor from any pedagogic principles regulating his teaching and his behaviour. The schools are private and teachers are committed but only by the will of the founder of each faculty. Therefore he can teach whatever he wants, the way he wants and for as long he wants to. Aggelou (1975) stresses the ‘traps’ that such a freedom has, of course, for the
mediocre teacher. At the same time he acknowledges the great prospects it does open for the talented personality.

These however are not simple conceptual ideas as they pertain to the more complex discourse of the made or born teacher (see e.g. Pamouktoglou, 2001; Dew-Hughes and Brayton, 1997; Malikow, 2006) this variability in ability of dealing with children deemed to be challenging constitutes a dissonance to be solved. Accepting teaching as ‘talent’ has many and serious consequences in the education of children with challenging behaviour; in particular for those children who are taught by ‘ungifted’ teachers. Thus, to place teachers in a central role holds an inherent paradox; it is to make dependant the learning process upon ‘incidental variations’ as it is, in our case, the teacher and, for instance, his/her individual style (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2002).

For this reason, instead of questioning teachers’ centrality altogether, a discourse which seems not fruitful in any aspect, the discussion here will take another path. Variations in school or student performance are often attributed to such factors as teacher quality and teacher training. But these are each significantly different. In contrast to the first, it is the second that holds possibilities for change. That is the discussion on the centrality of teachers’ role cannot be limited to a treatise of talent nor can we leave children’s possibilities of educational achievement on the chance. Starting from the basic principle that teacher in whichever level he/she belongs to is being shaped through his/her scientific and professional training, we must accept unavoidably the necessity of providing teacher education of high quality.

This is also supported by teachers. Even when they are not negative, teachers stress that they do no have specialisation, education or qualifications for the effective implementation of inclusion (Panteliadou, 1995; Salend, 1998 cited in Panteliadou and Nikolaraizi, 2000). Teachers fear that they may not have the specialised knowledge and skills to work with students with special educational needs in regular classrooms may also be a cause of reluctance to accept inclusion (Jordan et al., 2009). Discussion thus moves on to how can we better prepare kindergarten teachers to meet the challenges presented by students with emotional and behavioural disabilities (Feyten and Hines, 1998).
In this light, the importance of this question is not only to the answer itself. It is also in that this question is set within a view which is pedagogically useful; in a prospect that allows the conception of a notion of a teacher who is not born but made. Perspectives such as this are viewed as tools and are judged in terms of their potential of their utility for allowing educators to positively affect child outcomes (Reid et al., 1998).

2.7 Conclusions

There are many antinomies and unsolved tensions inherent in the concept and practice of inclusion: The ‘openness’ of the term to different interpretations (Beveridge, 2000; Harriott 2009); the problematic dichotomy of what is expressed as the ‘vision or reality’ of inclusion (Beveridge, 2000); the dilemma of ‘full or not inclusion’ and the criticisms which vary from warning of the dangers of embracing the ‘illusory rhetoric of full inclusion’ (Kauffman and Hallahan1995 cited in Hornby et al., 1997: 75) to the more moderate responses of ‘as much inclusion is feasible, as much segregation is necessary’ (Tzouriadou, 1995 cited in Tzouriadou and Mparmpas, 2003: 133); the so called ‘twin-track’ approach (Miles and Singal, 2010).

These make the query ‘what does inclusion rooted in liberal, critical and progressive democratic thought (Engelbrecht, 1999; Thomas, 1997) mean in practice?’ hard to answer. There are many different versions of inclusion in practice and in each different context people strive for it in a range of ways (Nind et al., 2003; Miles and Singal, 2010). Some believe that the case for inclusive education has been made (Nind et al. 2003) whilst others debate the pros and cons of inclusive education (see Farrell, 1997; Hornby, 1999, see also Winter, 2012 for a more recent review of the meanings and associated problems of the term ‘inclusive education’).

Notwithstanding these acknowledgements, there are also two core themes that seem to lessen the intensity of these antinomies and despite them justify inclusion in principle. The first concerns the theme of bringing down barriers to participation and learning (Nind et al., 2003) for a diversity of learners. Although inclusion’s theoretical development began with a focus on special educational needs, the concept survived and grew separate from the history of concepts of integration, recognising the diversity of learners who face barriers to learning and
participation. Being about more than special educational needs is now a common thread in
the literature about inclusive education (Booth 2003 cited in Nind et. al., 2003). The agenda
of inclusive education is now concerned as much about participation and marginalisation in
relation to race, class, gender, sexuality, poverty and unemployment as it is about traditional
special education concerns with students categorised as low in attainment, disabled or
deviant in behaviour (Booth and Ainscow, 1998).

The second theme is that the current challenge of inclusion is to reinvent schools with new
assumptions and more effective practices rather than simply making additions or corrections
to existing practice (Abrams and Gibbs, 2000 cited in Ferguson, 2008; Sebba and Ainscow,
1996). This seems to constitute the driving force of the impetus of inclusion as something
more than one more limited in scope innovative educational initiation. Many authors argue
that inclusive education is not about the reform nor is it a sub-specialism of special
education. It is fundamentally about how we understand and engage with difference in
constructive and valued ways (Barton, 2003). The predominant effort in education has been
to rethink educational systems from the bottom up to include the full range of students'individual challenges and backgrounds (Tilstone et al., 2000; Miles and Singal, 2010). This
meta-approach provides a wider perspective on inclusion which is not directly tied to any
specific trend and or theoretical approach (Engelbrecht, 1999, Simco and Wilson, 2002).
After all inclusion is in itself a contextual concept (Nind et al., 2003).

A last point to stress is that there is a wealthy body of literature theoretical and studies, on the
pros and cons of inclusion. The review concerned mainly the pros. This is mainly due to its
moral/ethical base: many authors claim that the strongest argument for greater inclusion
comes from its philosophical/ base. In this sense the use of literature on the pros of inclusion
has the potential to inform teacher education in its theoretical base. Ideas, however, about the
theory and practice of inclusion are still dynamic. Usually teachers have mixed feelings about
inclusion when they are not given the resources to deal with problems associated with
children with special needs. That is teachers seem not to be against the ideal of inclusion.
Rather they are negative when the do not have proper supports such as training, teaming with
a specialist and assistance with modifying the curriculum.
Chapter Three

Teacher Education

3.1 Introduction

It is important to note that attempts to transform schools cannot take place through teacher-preparation programs or courses alone. Differences in educational opportunities for children depend not only on the ways in which educational systems are structured but also on their individual societal, cultural and economic circumstances (Florian and Rouse, 2009; Kladis, 1991). These reform contexts influence what happens in schools (Peters and Reid, 2009; Campbell and Fyfe, 1995). Also, they are beyond this study’s scope. What will be examined here is the widespread acknowledgement that teachers play a crucial role in providing quality education (Florian and Rouse, 2009; Fantilli and McDougalla 2009; Saiti and Saitis, 2006; Retelsdorf and Günther, 2011) and that the success of teachers’ efforts relies extensively on the responsiveness of teacher education programmes to prepare them for inclusive education (Campbell and Fyfe, 1995).

Initial teacher education affects significantly prospective teachers’ practice (Angelides and Stilianou, 2005; Angelides et al., 2006). It is the first of several steps towards becoming an effective practitioner (Thomas and Smith, 1985). In particular, student teaching is regarded as a critical stage in the development of novice teachers as the relationships and experiences that occur during this period influence the development of their professional identity (Smagorinsky et al., 2004 cited in Bradbury and Koballa, 2008). Even so, the preparation of teachers to meet the challenge of teaching in increasingly diverse schools is one of the many difficulties associated with ensuring educational equity (Florian, 2009). Yet, it is in need of change because under the current system too many students are not meeting their full learning potential (Rigelman and Ruben, 2012)

With regard to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties one might anticipate that preparing teachers to engage effectively with this group of students would have a high priority within teacher education (Goodman and Burton, 2010). This is because working with students who have such difficulties is demanding (Goodman and Burton, ibid.).
Nevertheless, usually general education teacher preparation programmes typically require one course, which provides an overall introduction to special education and special services (Arant, 2001 cited in Cooley-Nichols, 2004); a response which has not been characterised as sufficient to foster teachers’ preparation for diverse classrooms. The issues raised by teachers bear striking resemblance to those acknowledged in policy over 20 years ago suggesting that longstanding obstacles to inclusion have yet to be addressed (Goodman and Burton, 2010). Therefore the issue becomes one of how can the barriers, such as feelings of unpreparedness and being overwhelmed by the nature of emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, be addressed in general education teacher preparation programmes (Cooley-Nichols, 2004). The following sections deal with this issue. After briefly introducing the reader into the Greek initial teacher education context, the chapter proposes to develop a framework for theorising teacher education – as well as to create a frame of reference against which the data of the present study will then be discussed.

In particular, the chapter examines the following concerns. First it reviews conceptions of teachers’ role and best practice on challenging behaviour. Literature has shown that both affect policies with respect to teacher education. These sections will then be complemented by a review of research into teacher education. Among the many issues that research has highlighted in relation to teacher education, the following two were selected as being of considerable importance: what is covered, in initial teacher education courses, relating to diversity and inclusion, and how that coverage is organised, particularly that relating to school-based experience (Garner, 2001).

3.2 Initial Teacher Education in Greece

Since the mid 1980s, teacher training programs have been upgraded from a two-year curriculum to four-year academic program. At the present time, kindergarten teachers are graduates of a four-year programme offered by the public university sector. To enter teacher education at the Universities of Greece, students must pass the National Entrance Examinations. At universities the program of studies includes three basic areas: theoretical studies in certain fields of pedagogy and psychology, seminars and observation of teaching and practical exercises. There are required subjects, compulsory electives and free electives.
(For an example of such a programme in the School of Education of the University of Crete, see appendices one and two). All graduates have a right to be appointed as kindergarten school teachers. Such appointment takes place upon their success on the national test. Kindergarten teachers who serve in the public schools are civil servants and therefore are subjected to the public civil service code.

Teacher education programmes in Greece in general and special education are segregated and discrete entities. There are schools of education in the universities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Patra, West Macedonia and Crete and School of Special Education in the University of Thessaly. General education teacher preparation programmes address the preparation of all teachers for students who have disabilities by offering what quickly became the norm in most preservice programmes—a single required course in special education for all general education teachers (Pugach and Blanton, 2009). They typically require one course, which provides an overall introduction to special education and special services (Arant, 2001 cited in Cooley-Nichols, 2004). In some cases, other disability-related courses are offered as optional for students who wish to obtain a specialisation in the subject. Practical strategies and activities designed to address common areas of concern for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are infrequently incorporated in teacher education programs (Maag and Katsiyannis, 1999, Whelan and Simpson, 1996). This contributes to the belief of educators, both general and special that they are unprepared to provide services to students with emotional and behavioural disorders (George et al., 1995 cited in Cooley-Nichols 2004).

3.3 Work Place Conditions

It is also worth noting that there are no induction courses for newly qualified, beginning teachers. Once appointed kindergarten teachers are considered as having full responsibility of their classrooms. In addition up to date there are no other professionals (e.g. school psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists, counsellors) than teachers working in mainstream education (Strogilos et al., 2011). Presently, only teachers serve in regular schools and in a large portion of special education schools, where the presence of such extra support personnel is sporadic (Dimakos, 2006).
In relation to support outside the school over the last decade government legislation mandated the creation of an extensive, country-wide network of state-run Centres for Identification, Assessment and Provision (KDAY) which recently (2008) were transformed into Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Provision Centers (KEDDY). These centres are staffed by multidisciplinary teams consisting of school psychologists and regular and special education teachers. The teams are augmented by additional specialties if necessary. Their primary function is to assist in the assessment and classification of students in need of special education services. In practice, although the KEDDY teams provide the necessary gatekeeping for students with special educational needs, the application of any programs primarily rests with educational personnel (Dimakos, 2006). In addition KEDDY has been criticised for supporting the medical model (see Efstathiou, 2003 for an extensive critique).

Another form of support to consult with and ask advice from when necessary, is the ‘Counsellor’ or ‘Adviser’, a mentoring, as well as supervising, position held by teachers with several years of teaching experience and additional post-graduate degrees in an education-related areas of expertise. The Adviser may deal with the assessment of students in need of special education programs, suggest behavioural interventions in the classroom, and provide teachers with a general pedagogical oversight and guidance. However, the Adviser cannot be present at any school all the time. Even when a system of consultation involving the Adviser and a teacher is put in place, such a system does not function properly often and for the benefit of students and teachers, because of limited time and resources (Dimakos, 2006).

The fact therefore remains that on any given day a regular kindergarten school typically consists of the kindergarten teachers and the pupils. Teachers are left alone to work with cases such as those ranging from special education assessment, to handling crises, to dealing with difficult parents (Dimakos, 2006). Inevitably, this has led to increasing workloads and stress (Koustelios and Kousteliou, 2001).

Consequently, the majority of teachers form a superficial view of inclusive education and they seem reluctant to respond to their new role (Phtiaka et al., 2005 cited in Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009). They feel that they are called to face alone the problems of behaviour
within the class. They consider these children’s education as one more additional problem, which they are called on to solve by themselves without having neither the proper infrastructure nor, mainly, the necessary “qualifications” (Tzouriadou and Mpampas, 2003; Panteliadou and Patsiodimou, 2000). In this way although the law legitimised inclusion, the education of disabled children still maintains a segregated nature, even when it is provided in a mainstream school.

3.4 Classroom Conditions

The school year for Kindergarten school begins on September 1st and ends on June 21st. Every school belongs in a certain school district and accepts children who are resident there. Some kindergarten schools are housed in the same building with an elementary school, but in these cases each school remains administratively autonomous (Doliopoulou, 2006).

There are two types of Kindergarten schools - half day schools which operate from 08:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and whole-day schools with hours from 8:00 a.m. till 16:00 p.m. The first employ one kindergarten teacher whilst the all-day kindergartens are managed by two kindergarten teachers, with a 4-hour shift for each educator. They both meet between 11:45 and 12:00, in order to consult each other and to design their activities.

Children attend kindergarten school for two years, from the age of four to six. Attendance for children aged 4 to 5 is not yet compulsory in Greece. Classes are usually mixed and different ages are not separated, although activities can be differentiated in accordance with each age group’s ability.

Most kindergartens are state run. The Greek educational system is characterised by centralisation which is reflected in many parameters of schooling as well as in the curricula (Kazamias et al., 2001; Georgiadis, 2005 cited in Sofou and Tsafos 2010). The kindergarten curriculum places emphasis on an interdisciplinary and thematic approach to teaching and it specifies that the kindergarten classrooms should be divided into “activity corners/areas” of learning/pedagogical activities (ibid.). Daily activities are divided into
free-choice (approximately one hour) and organised activities (three hours including lunch
time and break).

Free-choice activities include the spontaneous engagement of children in the activity
corners without the direct involvement of the kindergarten teacher. Children have access to
various activities such as block building, pretend play, books, table toys and art materials.
During instructional time children are engaged in activities targeted on the achievement of
objectives pre-selected by the kindergarten teacher. Objectives are chosen according to
children’s interests and level of development. Teachers then select and organise activities
relevant to these objectives. Usually the first activity involves a circle time where the entire
group discuss their ideas about the theme. Then children work at various relevant tasks.

3.5 Developing a Framework for Theorising Initial Teacher Education

3.5.1 Conceptions on Teachers’ Role

‘Reproducing the special education system in the mainstream school’ and the fact that in
their initial teacher education programmes the disability-related courses are offered as
optional might imply that teachers do not feel responsible for the diversity of their students.
This is first and foremost a conception of teacher’s role. Conceptualisations of teachers’ role
may have socio-political and ideological beginnings (Mpouzakis and Tzikas, 2002;
Kazamias, 1985; Zambeta, 2002). In addition, teacher’s role is diversified in the frame of
theories which philosophy of education develops (Dellis, 1995 cited in Mpouzakis and
Tzikas, 2002).

Although a detailed reference of these beginnings is beyond the scope of this focus, it is
however important to stress that the need for considering perceptions of teachers and their
role is critical since before any proposal of change in individual sectors, such as teacher
education, a discussion is necessary for its general orientation (Papanoutsos, 1976; Kladis,
1991). How we conceptualise the work of teachers inevitably influences how we think about
their professional preparation, and ultimately shape suggestions for the further improvement
of teacher education (Haggarty et al., 2011; Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Vekris, 1987).
There are a number of classifications of ideologies and conceptual orientations in teacher role which at different points have been particularly influential in shaping the nature of initial teacher education courses (see e.g. Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Haggarty et al., 2011). Such claims, however, are premised on simple models of how teachers learn to teach and leave out of the account the complexity of the tasks that teachers undertake and the different kinds of learning that these most likely involve (ibid.). For instance, not only must preservice teachers learn their subject matter but they must also learn how to teach it in a way that ensures that the wide range of students in their classroom do so as well (Scherff and Singer, 2012). That is, the teaching profession is being shaped by the contemporary demands of each society (Stamelos, 2001). An increasing recognition of the needs of a diverse pupil population is such a contemporary demand (Mpatsouta and Papagiannidou, 2006).

Discussion on preparing teachers for challenging behaviour is set in this context. The ongoing challenge of conceptualising a contemporary role for teachers is to take account the complexity of the nature of their learning as well as how they can fit diverse learners into the future. Respectful educators will manage to do this by including all children (Nutbrown, 1996 cited in Clough and Nutbrown, 2003).

With the strong movement towards a changing paradigm regarding the education of students with a diversity of needs and abilities, the education of teachers has to undergo a shift in focus away from preparation for what has previously been seen as the ‘normal’ classroom. The inclusive education movement requires teachers to be prepared to teach in increasingly diverse classrooms (Forlin, 2004; 2005 cited in Forlin and Hopewell, 2006). It requires teachers to teach not only a heterogeneous group of students, including those who previously would have been educated in special schools but also many other potentially marginalised groups of students who need a modified or differentiated programme in order to access the regular class curriculum (Forlin and Hopewell, 2006).

Within these parameters, commitment to developing teacher skills and knowledge is not seen simply in terms of recognising the importance of teachers, or providing them with better opportunities to develop professionally. Rather it is a commitment to creating a more modern
profession (Robertson, 1999). Thus the issue is now how are initial teacher education providers to approach the new demands of educational inclusion (Waterson, 2002). Dyson (1997 cited in Engelbrecht, 1999: 9) calls it the ‘pragmatic discourse’ that focuses on a critical appraisal of the ways in which educators can become more inclusive in their teaching approach (Skrtic, 1995 cited in Engelbrecht, 1999). The question to begin with is: What difference does inclusion make to the work of teachers and above all how does it affect pupils? (Mittler, 2000).

3.5.2 Conceptions of Teachers’ Programmes and Challenges for Educating Teachers for All

The issue of behavioural difficulties in initial teacher education is set at many levels: at the level of specialised programmes, at the level of generic special education teacher preparation and at the level of general education teachers (Robertson, 1999; Bishop and Jones, 2002; Barton 2003; Florian, 2009; Jordan et al., 2009; McIntyre, 2009). On the assumption that the dichotomy of special and general education courses contributes to the general discourse of segregation (Villa et al., 1996; Zoniou-Sideri, 1998) the last aspect will be discussed here in more detail.

Preparing general educators to accommodate a range of their pupils’ needs is in a way against the assumption that different types of courses and qualifications are needed to prepare teachers to teach different types of students. In many countries, this can be seen in the proliferation of different kinds of schools such as charter schools and specialist schools that focus on science, the arts, and so on, as well as in the range of provision within schools (Florian, 2009).

Consequently as the range of schools has grown, so too has the number of qualifications and types of programmes of teacher education within higher education (Florian, ibid). O’Neil et al. (2009) report that providers in New Zealand offer eighty five different qualifications across sectors. In the United States, there are specialised programmes that prepare teachers to work in urban schools, or multicultural classrooms, and so on. In other countries where there are fewer qualifications and specialisms in initial teacher education, options are often
available to enable teachers to undertake further courses or higher degree study in particular areas, such as special educational needs (O'Neil et al., 2009), as is the case in Greece.

This assumption, though, tends to limit who teachers think they are qualified to teach (Young, 2008, cited in Florian, 2009). As a result, when teachers encounter students who may be experiencing difficulties in learning, they often assume that they do not have the requisite knowledge or skills to teach them (Florian, 2009). Yet, the belief in including all children in their teaching is one characteristic associated with teachers who manage classrooms successfully and with effective teaching (Jordan et al., 2009).

Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, there does not appear to be a general consensus about many issues in designing general teacher training courses. Variations exist between length of course and whether or not there is or should be some kind of practicum associated with the course (Thomas and Smith, 1985); about when experience in school is best introduced and how students are most appropriately prepared for it (Philpot, 2005); about the roles of the personnel involved, and about how student teachers are supported in dealing with the demands of the school and the classroom (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997).

Similarly teacher educators are faced with many individual decisions with particular student teachers in specific contexts: how do you best support a student in difficulty? How do you help them learn? What do they need to know and do? How do you help them select from and learn from a wide range of experiences that they are exposed to in school? (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). According to Burnard and Yaxley (2000) the strength of the basic training would lie in the approach of the university tutors who would need additional training in how to link theory and practice in school experience.

In this sense, from among the myriad questions that confront teacher educators who prepare teachers to work with hard-to-manage children are two that, according to a number of authors, deserve priority attention: What knowledge, skills and beliefs pertaining to children with challenging behaviour should be learned (Ajzen, 1991; Ammah & Hodge, 2005; Jordan et al., 2010 cited in Vermeulen et al., 2012); How much should be learned in university
classrooms, and how much should be learned in applied settings with real live cases (Liberman, 1995 cited in Whelan and Simpson, 1996). That is how much emphasis should be placed upon each component of the structure.

According to Korthagen et al. (2006), responses to these issues are increasingly critiqued. These criticisms have centered, mainly, around teacher education’s limited relationship to student teachers’ needs and for their little impact on practice. In training general education pre-service teachers, the application of theories to practice is a key difficulty that is frequently reported as reducing the effectiveness of teacher education programs (Eilam and Poyas, 2009). Nevertheless, issues about the content and structure of the courses are difficult decisions that have to be faced in designing teacher training courses (Calderhead and Shorrocks, 1997).

Particularly in relation to challenging behaviour, concerns which are germane to developing more effective teacher education programmes are to identify best practices intervention models – what is covered – and to identify methods for training prospective teachers to use them with children – how that coverage is organised. With regard to the second, the school-based experience component gains particular emphasis. The emphasis on partnership between schools and universities, currently being promoted, could provide a useful vehicle for development (Garner, 2001) due to their potential in improving student learning (Epstein, 2001 cited in Kim et al., 2013). The next sections will deal with these issues. First, issues of content will be discussed and then issues of delivery.

3.5.2.1 Knowledge, Skills and Beliefs: Issues of Content

This section could, of course, stand as a completely separate literature review. Here, though, only roughly the main aspects of what constitutes best practices for including challenging pupils will be discussed. The first views the professional concern for children with behavioural difficulties as an integral part of teacher’s role. Seeing children’s diversity as an integral part of the teacher education process is a necessity which has as a major objective the involvement of future teachers as active agents in promoting change (Thomas and Smith, 1985).
There are authors who argue for a wide-ranging introductory course at an early stage in the training programme. This is not to be seen as an exclusive area devoted to special needs but including a number of minority group areas to which the teachers in training will have their attention drawn (ibid). Others believe that inclusion training topics could include apart from behaviour management, courses on curriculum adaptations, collaboration strategies, friendships and disability awareness (Katsiyannis et al., 1995 cited in Harriott, 2009). Other topic areas such as instructional methods, communication skills, assessment, technology use, and the benefits of inclusion to students should also be considered as inclusion training topics (Harriott, 2004, in press cited in Harriott, 2009). Symeonidou and Phtiakaa (2009) propose that a variety of aspects such as teaching skills, ways of differentiation, characteristics of different groups of disabled children, legislation about integration and theoretical background of integration should also be addressed.

What is common in all these suggestions, more or less overtly, is the development of inclusive dispositions from the part of the trainee teachers. Beliefs is an additional area which seems to draw increasing attention in developing the skills of teachers for effective teaching in inclusive settings (Ng et al., 2009; White, 2000; Stuart and Thurlow, 2000 cited in Jordan et al., 2009). Raising student teachers’ awareness of the underpinnings of their beliefs about behaviour management and managing student learning may allow them to see how this may be affecting their teaching practices with their students (Ng et al., 2009). Antonak and Larrivee's (1995 cited in Jordan et al., 2009) found that there was a strong relationship between levels of epistemological beliefs and attitudes to inclusion. Those participants who endorsed beliefs in gradual, effortful learning and improvable learning ability also expressed positive attitudes toward the benefits of inclusion. Schwartz's (2008 cited ibid.) study, also, reflected this finding.

Teachers' beliefs about who has responsibility for students with special education needs can make the difference between effective and ineffective inclusion (Rix et al., 2009). Jordan et al., (2009) argue that beliefs in the locus of responsibility as belonging to the classroom may be prerequisite to teachers’ development of effective instructional techniques for all their students. They suggest that opportunities for reflection and discussion of the implications of
one's perspectives, may demonstrate for prospective teachers how a change in beliefs and attitudes can lead to more effective teaching practices with all their students.

Apart from these suggestions all prospective teachers need some knowledge of management methods. As Stipek *et al.* (2001 cited in Jordan *et al.*, 2009) commented “It is clear that beliefs and practices are linked, and emphasis in teacher professional development on either one without considering the other is likely to fail”.

Effective teaching skills consist of high levels of student engagement based on good classroom management skill (Jordan *et al.*, 2009). The section will not discuss separately each one of the theoretical perspectives on behaviour that offer a variety of explanations for understanding difficult behaviour and the corresponding responses to it (see e.g. Cole, 2000; Papatheodorou, 2000). Rather what is generally constituted good practice on challenging behaviour irrespective of its theoretical origin will be discussed. Whilst each classroom presents a fresh challenge in managing behaviour, requiring flexibility, there are some underlying common characteristics that emerge from teachers’ experiences and research that are associated with teachers who manage classrooms successfully (Visser, 2000).

These characteristics (Daniels *et al.*, 1998 cited in Visser, 2000) are a professional attitude to teaching, a consistency of approach (see also Jenkinson, 2011), flexibility and responsiveness with individuals as well as high standards of classroom management. Good subject knowledge, high expectations for pupils’ achievement and well paced lessons, are among the factors that contribute to positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Additionally, acting upon evidence from teaching and learning to inform future teaching is particularly important (Visser, 2000). In a nutshell, teachers should be well prepared.

Weiner (1999), for instance, stresses that teachers should understand their subject matter enough to examine it from different perspectives and to develop a personal understanding of the value of the content. This will allow them to discover ways of making it meaningful to their students. He argues that creating high-quality lessons is the key to having classrooms function well. As Farrell (1997) put it, if pupils are busy doing useful things then they are
less likely to misbehave. Additionally, teachers should also know their learners in order to differentiate their work. ‘Differentiation is a process whereby planning and delivering the curriculum takes account of individual differences and matches what is taught and how it is taught to individual learning styles and needs’ (Mittler, 2000). It is an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula and teaching methods to address the diverse needs of individual students (Tomlinson et al. 2003, cited in Vermeulen et al., 2012). The goal is always to maximise the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom (Tomlinson et al. 2003, cited in Vermeulen et al., 2012).

Being well prepared, means, also, learning how to develop whole class, school and multi-professional approaches (McNamara and Moreton 1995). “Joined-up”, multi-professional approaches are needed to tackle the wider difficulties children face (e.g. Ofsted, 1999a). Also, concentrating efforts on whole class and school approaches instead of focusing on the particular hard-to-manage pupil can support teachers to feel less frustrated. This is because they are focusing on the things over which they can have control (Ofsted, ibid.).

In addition, considering wider whole school, community and familial factors, in constant interaction, in the child’s life is necessary (Ofsted, 1999a; Cole, 1999; Cooper et al, 1994; Cole et al, 1998; Munn et al, 2000; Daniels et al, 2003 cited in Visser, 2003). As Greenhalgh (1994 cited in Visser, 2003) puts it sometimes there are events beyond the classroom that make it very difficult for the children ‘to make themselves available for learning’.

3.5.2.2 Theory versus Practice: Issues of Structure

Assuming that the above demonstrated the need for a consideration of the need for a broad knowledge base about teaching children with challenging behaviour in initial teacher education, especially their needs in general education settings, this section moves discussion into a consideration of how these are going to be taught to prospective teachers. The theory-practice dichotomy and how much emphasis should be given to each of these elements forms a main point of this discussion. Many studies of new teachers highlight the sudden experience of the transition from student to teacher (Flores and Day, 2006) and emphasise the ‘reality shock’ which confronts new teachers as they take on responsibility of their roles.
as school teachers (Huberman, 1991; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Veenman, 1984; Vonk, 1993 cited in Flores and Day, 2006). Hence, the theoretical or practical orientation of the programme is one of the axes in the argumentation of programme design from the aspect of educational policy (Avgitidou and Georgiadis, 2004): what is needed most academic knowledge or school experience?

Currently, claims concerning potential ways of improving teacher education involve an increase in the practical component. Research seems to support this argument. Questions such as which parts of their initial training student teachers value and perceive as the most useful predominated this agenda. Responses to these questions indicated that student teachers appear to be dissatisfied with the bridge between theory and practice whilst they often value more highly the practical aspects of their course (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). They regard their field experiences as the most favourably viewed component of their education (Ben-Peretz, 1995).

Student teachers and teachers want and need to know practical issues of pedagogy (Dew-Hughes and Brayton, 1997). When asked to priority rank four given thematic areas of a training course about integration, the first in their ranking was practical strategies for coping with SEN children (Symeonidou and Phtiakaa, 2009). This finding is in agreement with other research about teachers' needs for in-service training at the local level (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2007). New teachers report the need for pre-service programmes to be enhanced to include increased exposure to practical tasks that prove most difficult for teachers at the beginning of their career. Managing the behaviour and diverse needs of students is one of these concerns (Fantilli and McDougalla 2009).

Feyten and Hines (1998) also argued that if, during training, the teacher has been exposed only to the average student, he/she may not be prepared for nontraditional students upon entering the public school system. Therefore, enabling preservice teachers to work with hard to manage pupils during their programmes of study will better prepare them to provide services to individuals with similar conditions in the future (Feyten and Hines, 1998; Martin and Winkie, 1998; Whelan and Simpson, 1996 cited in Cooley-Nichols, 2004).
These findings, however, are particularly troubling in the light of the wealth of research suggesting that even with the addition of content and in some cases, field experiences, general education teachers still feel inadequately prepared to teach individuals with disabilities (Davern, 1999; Gettinger et al., 1999; Goodland and Field, 1993; Wolery et al., 1993 cited in Stayton and McCollum, 2002). The practice of adding one or two courses in special education or adding field experiences in inclusive settings has not resulted in adequately prepared general educators for inclusive settings (Stayton and McCollum, 2002). This is a critical finding.

Giangreco et al. (1993), importantly, indicated that teachers’ beliefs change when they have positive experiences working with the students in their classroom and vice versa. Teachers who are most resistant to change are those who have had past experiences that are negative and who question whether the general education placement was of any benefit. For this reason, they highlight the importance of having good teaching placements for teachers to be (Bech and Kosnik, 2002; Burstein, 1992; Clark, 2002; Potthoff and Alley, 1995 cited ibid.); or as Zeichner (1996) put it of an ‘educative practicum’. An educative practicum provides novices with learning opportunities that can lead towards better understanding of learning to teach (Schwille, 2008).

Providing such learning opportunities and understanding is not a taken for granted process. For some students, occasionally, learning to teach can be a traumatic experience (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). Presuming that appropriate course content and experience in schools will, for most student teachers, result in competent teaching is an idea that oversimplifies the complex nature of the problem (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). Therefore such a discussion cannot be limited in an emphasis of the one element over the other – e.g. practice over theory. An emphasis on the practicum does not appear to be on its own an adequate condition for improving teacher education.

Hence, many researchers have begun to question the fact that the aspect of field experiences and learning is frequently viewed as unproblematic in teacher education (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). They stress the paradox that whilst the development of pedagogical skills in the interactive aspects of teaching is crucial, it is the component of professional education
over which there is little control. It is neither typically nor rigorously addressed in teacher education programmes (Jordan et al., 2009).

Consequently, there have been many suggestions on how to arrange good teaching placements for student teachers. According to Jordan et al. (2009) the challenge for teacher educators is to ensure that pre-service teachers have practicum experiences in which there are opportunities to examine and foster their beliefs and learn desirable lessons about how to address the needs of diversity in a classroom. Grossman et al. (2009) argue that teacher educators need to attend to the clinical aspects of practice and should add pedagogies of enactment to an existing repertoire of pedagogies of reflection and investigation. In order to make this shift, teacher educators will need to undo a number of historical divisions that underlie the education of teachers. One of them includes the separation between the university and schools.

Many studies in teacher education show that student teachers do not use much of the theory taught in university and once in school they complain that they meet many problematic situations for which they were not sufficiently prepared (Korthagen and Wubbels, 2001 cited in Grossman et al., 2009). Among the many explanations (see e.g. Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997) for this teaching practice inadequacy is what has been described as a theory-practice transfer problem (Korthagen et al., 2006, Craig, 2013). An underlying assumption of this division is that the theoretical resides in university course work and the practical resides in school-based placements (Grossman et al., 2009). Responsibilities of schools and higher education in the training of new teachers were compartmentalised. Teachers in schools considered that universities taught the theory of education while the schools taught them how to deliver curriculum in the classroom (Downes, 1996).

Nevertheless, the concept of ‘partnership’ brought new patterns of relationship between schools and higher institutions; and a new focus on research. Abrandt Dahlgren and Hammar Chiriac (2009) stress that the relationship between school and the training program can influence the professional development of beginning teachers; on the premise that learning is a social process. According to them, this is against a traditional view of teaching skills as something that is learned through practice and consonant with a modern academic view of
teaching, where practical experiences are integrated with theoretical reflections. These do not support the idea of the transition from teacher education to work life as a theory-practice shock, nor do they reveal a perfect match between the objectives of the programme and the demands of the professional work as a teacher.

Rather what has begun to be been pointed as important is the transition in itself from teacher education to work life and tools such as mentoring, spaces for reflection, and a supportive and carefully planned phase of introduction for making this transition more successful (OECD 2005, cited in Abrandt Dahlgren and Hammar Chiriac, 2009). In this frame the relationship between teacher education, teachers’ learning and professional practice has been pointed out, as a much needed area of research (AERA, 2005 cited in Abrandt Dahlgren and Hammar Chiriac, 2009).

Based on the above as well as on the premise that decisions pertaining to the design and delivery of teacher education seem more often to be based upon prevailing ideologies within education than upon any tested understanding of how student teachers learn (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997), the next sections will focus on research. Research findings are seen as another area of knowledge that might usefully be drawn upon in designing and implementing courses of initial teacher education.

3.5.3 Research on Teacher Education Programmes

The previous section ended by stressing that attempts to improve teacher education, particularly recently, have often been motivated by political or ideological concerns, rather than by a thorough understanding of the nature of teacher’s work and the processes of becoming a teacher. However, teacher education is not only influenced from models of thinking about teachers’ role and corresponding conceptions on their education. Improvements in the field are dependent on a fuller understanding of what learning to teach involves. Exploring and identifying the factors that facilitate or impede learning can further our appreciation of teacher education and provide a reasoned basis for its future development (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997).
For this to happen it is essential to move further from structural alternatives and conceptual orientations. Although both provide a way to highlight some of the major efforts that have dotted the teacher education landscape, both lack well developed traditions of practice. Instead of mandates and models, we need to learn from the past, experiment with alternatives and clarify what is entailed in helping people in different settings learn to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). Data-led evidence which is so diminished by politicians is viewed as essential by practitioners (Asmussen and Weizel, 2010 cited in Garner, 2013).

The following review will focus first on research on teacher education in Greece. Teacher education has been mainly investigated through attitudes, focused on in-service training and on primary education. The main implications involved concern a reorientation of the content of the pre- and in-service programmes. The review will then refer to the international arena and the more recent trend of investigating teacher education as a ‘process of becoming’ which leads to implications in more aspects. Synthesising finally these trends, the need for moving beyond the attitudes tradition is identified as a necessary step for developing research in the area of preservice kindergarten teacher education in Greece.

3.5.3.1 The ‘Attitudes Research Tradition’

The vast majority of published research on the broad area of inclusion in the Greek context is concerned with surveying attitudes. The focus on attitudes has been prevailing on areas regarding, for instance, the development of school psychological and counselling services (Dimakos, 2006; Farrell et al., 2005); the role of parents (Tafa and Manolitsis, 2003; Kalyva et al., 2007); the strategies used by teachers to maintain discipline (Zounhia, 2003); the various disability categories (Kakouros et al., 2004; Kleftaras and Didaskalou, 2006; Hadjikakou et al., 2008.); the inclusion of children with special educational needs (Kipriotakis et al., 2000 Koutrouba, et al., 2006); the factors affecting teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Koutrouba et al., 2008); the effective special teacher characteristics (Soulis, 2009); university Students’ Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness (Stephanou, 2012); teacher power in the classroom (Koutrouba et al., 2012) and finally teacher education (Panteliadou and Nikolaraizi, 2000).
Issues regarding challenging behaviour were also investigated in this line of research. On the assumption that attitudes are crucial for including children considered to have difficult behaviour, the attitudes of teachers is the area which has received considerable research attention. The vast majority of this literature focuses on primary education and on in-service training. Many authors extended more or less their analyses to provide implications for initial and, mainly, in-service training (see e.g. Papatheodorou, 2000; Didaskalou and Millward, 2001; Poulou, 2005a, 2005b; Avramidis et al., 2000). These implications refer to the cognitive and emotional skills as well as to the knowledge student teachers should possess, in order to prevent the occurrence of challenging behaviour.

In the course of their analysis, for instance, Didaskalou and Millward (2001) identified a reorientation of elements concerning misbehaviour within initial and in-service training programmes as an implication of their research. Criticising the over reliance on the use of behaviourally based techniques, they suggest engaging with a wider range of factors that are necessary for the successful implementation of behaviourally based techniques. Poulou and Norwich (2000) as well call for the enrichment of teachers’ repertoires with skills for coping effectively both with the emotional and conduct difficulties met in their students. Preparation should include field experience and modeling of positive and supportive classroom environments (Zins et al., 2001 cited in Poulou, 2005b). In agreement with Poulou and Norwich (2000, 2002), Panteliadou and Patsiodimou (2000) argued for a programme that could be planned with a focus on the behavioural problems that the educators themselves state that can handle with the greatest difficulty. The main areas could be: understanding of the problems they notice and in methods of dealing with them.

Apart from the above ‘content-knowledge implications’, research also supported a focus of preservice programmes on student teachers’ beliefs and views on challenging behaviour. Poulou and Norwich (2002) studied teachers’ perceptions of and decisions about emotional and behavioural difficulties, with relevance to teacher trainers and policy-makers. Prospective teachers should be encouraged to believe that children’s problems are susceptible to improvement, and that they themselves have responsibility to produce better outcomes in children’s lives. In a similar way Mavropoulou and Padeliadou (2002, 2000) indicate that teachers should become familiar with current conceptualisations of behaviour problems. In particular, there is a need to provide a comprehensive framework for the understanding of behaviour problems, focused on the ecological approach.
Research on kindergarten education has followed the same line focusing on kindergarten teachers’ perceptions on behavioural problems (Papatheodorou and Ramasut, 1993; Ramasut and Papatheodorou, 1994). Implications involved the adding of proper content knowledge.

Papatheodorou, (2000) argued that the ecosystemic approach and its underlying whole-school’ notion to the management of children’s behaviour problems should be introduced and studied further in teacher training courses (Papatheodorou, ibid.). Panteliadou and Nikolaraizi (2000) investigated educators’ attitudes towards in-service training on special education. They argued that educators have not realised their role towards children with challenging behaviour and have not understood the role of inclusion. In symphony with Semmel, Abernathy, Butera and lesar, (1991 cited in Panteliadou and Nikolaraizi, 2000) and Salend (1998 cited ibid.) their participants believed that they cannot respond to the demands of the new student population and that the education of a child with special needs is the responsibility of other educators. These implications are important as they move discussion for revising training programmes from the content to other aspects as well. Talking for example about in-service trainers’ profile and school placement indicates that revision of training programmes is a much more complex endeavour than a focus on the preservice content.

Towards this direction, Angelides et al. (2006) developed a case study of a higher education institution in Cyprus through a critical incidences methodology to explore how Cyprus universities respond to the challenge of inclusive education. Analysis of data indicated curricula of universities, the notion of inclusion and different levels of culture as barriers in the development of inclusive practices by student teachers. Furthermore developing partnership between universities and schools in order for schools to be helped to develop more inclusive practices was also found to be important. Through collaborative research, in which all the teachers of a school will be involved, with the help of a certain academic as a critical friend, the practice of teachers will be analysed, something that can help the development of more inclusive practices by teachers (see Ainscow, 2003; Angelides et al., 2006).
To sum up the results of the studies reported above, highlight knowledge base implications for teacher education programmes. Although important in advancing knowledge of the field, they do not engage systematically with the field practices debate as discussed in section 3.3.2.2. With regard to methodological assumptions, the search for this type of information is based on the assumption that the feedback that comes from the students comprises the substantive factor, in relation to evaluation and improvement of their training programmes (Poulou and Xaniotakis, 2006).

However, there is the view that traditional ethnographic approaches may lead to unhelpful over-simplifications or misleading inferences for College curricula (Williams and Wake, 2007). This is because they build on a whole tradition of syllabus construction which is known to have weaknesses, especially since it relies on perceptions (Williams and Wake, ibid.). For these reasons, this review will not only examine research describing the content and processes which employers and trainers believe to be important. It will also explore studies that investigate the contextual processes of learning within teacher education. This is primarily because such studies are based on the analysis of contextualised data by researchers who step inside the schools.

3.5.3.2 The ‘Practicum Research Tradition’

The intriguing query remains: why even with the relevant knowledge and field experiences student teachers declare themselves unprepared to deal with hard-to-manage students? And it moves the above-mentioned discussion which is concerned with the ‘what’ of the programmes to the ‘how’. The student teachers’ experiences seem to be there. The issue is why they are not productive. For this reason, over the past several years improving the quality and extent of prospective teachers’ field experiences has become the centrepiece of teacher education reform (Latham and Vogt, 2007; Parsons and Stephenson, 2005; Smith, 2004; Young, et al., 2005, cited in Nokes et al., 2008). Educational researchers and professional developers set to better understand the dilemmas teachers face in making use of learned practice (Battey and Franke, 2008).

In Greece Kiridis et al., (2005), Poulou and Xaniotakis (2006) and Poulou (2007) focused on the school placement as the issue of their investigation. Poulou’s interest was to develop
student teachers’ reflective thinking. She found that student teachers had a great difficulty in critical self reflection and the content of their experiences were mainly descriptive. She concluded that critical reflection should be advanced in initial teacher training programmes by keeping a diary during school placements and by giving student teachers feedback with alternatives on the issues described by them. Kiridis et al. (2005) on the other hand, investigated student teachers’ need for practical exercises and their opinions for their significance. The majority of the participants valued highly practical exercises. However what was really interesting in this research was student teachers’ negative opinions with regard to the duration of the exercises. Student teachers found the time the school placement lasts as too much and suggested it should be limited. This contrasts much of the research who supports student teachers’ opinions for more school placement.

Research in the international arena seems to support the complexity of the practica. One stream of this line of research has sought to look for overarching themes as representing core aspects of the experience of school placement (Malderez et al., 2007). It has identified a number of general themes as core features of the experience of becoming a student teacher. These relate to the role of the mentor which is increasingly viewed as important in the process of guiding student teachers’ work in the field (Awaya et al., 2003); to the concept of teacher identity and strategies to support student teachers in the development of their teacher identities (Malderez et al., 2007); to the relationship between the higher education institution providers and the schools and partnership practices (Brisard et al., 2006; McIntyre, 2009; Allen, 2009; Bartholomew and Sandholtz, 2009). The core of such endeavours is the understanding that teacher professional learning is a complex situated process (Saigal, 2012) which requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively (Avalos, 2011; Cross and Hong, 2012).

Although these descriptions of how teachers learn in the workplace have been characterised as still rather general (Wilson and Berne 1999; Hashweh 2003 cited in Meirink et al., 2009), they are important in that they provide a justification in looking into teacher learning as a complex process. Indeed, a common theme in recent teacher-development literature is the rejection of approaches that essentially rely on a focus on the individual learner. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ, 2006), for instance, argued that input (such as certification and experience) and outcome (e.g. what students actually learn in the classroom) studies fail to account for what teachers actually do in classrooms and
seldom take into consideration the context in which teachers make their contributions to student learning. These contexts may include collegial and administrative support, peer effects and other factors. This is primarily because such studies are based on the analysis of decontextualised data by researchers who never step inside the schools.

The dominant models of the 1980s – of teacher learning included apprenticeship (Zeichner, 1980; Beyer, 1988 cited in Haggarty et al., 2011) and reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Calderhead & Gates, 1993 cited ibid.) are now being challenged and enriched by arguments from researchers that develop a growing interest in pursuing theoretical paradigms that capture educational environments as complex learning situations.

Researchers stressed the need to attend to situational factors that affect programmes of professional development at both the institutional and individual levels (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild, 2009). Such a research design should reveal teacher education as a complex set of interconnected systems (Sexton, 2008). Learning occurs in particular educational environments or school cultures, some of which are more appropriate and conducive to learning than others (Avalos, 2011).

One of the most recent approaches in this vein involves what has been called as ‘the sociocultural turn’ (Johnson, 2006 cited in Feryok, 2009: 279). This strand of research into teacher learning seems to provide alternative insights into how and when exactly teacher learning takes place.

In particular, studies of this theoretical strand are shaped by aspects of Vygotskian social constructivism (Richardson, 1997 cited in Haggarty et al., 2011) and by cultural models of learning (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Hodkinson et al., 2004 cited ibid.). They are also extended by ideas about communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and by activity theory (Engeström, 1995, 2001; Cole, 1996; Engeström et al., 1999 cited in Haggarty et al., 2011) which looks beyond the individual learner (Russell, 2001).

Cultural historical activity theory is one of several theoretical frameworks that became very popular among educational researchers because it conceptualises individuals and their environment as a holistic unit of analysis. It assumes a non-dualistic ontology and
acknowledges the complexities involved in human activity in natural settings (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild, 2009). Through publications in reputable journals – such as American Psychologist, Educational Psychologist, Educational Researcher, and Review of Educational Research – the activity theoretical framework is building a reputation as an effective alternative research perspective to traditional learning theories (Roth and Lee, 2007 cited in Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild, 2009)

Within this perspective researchers shift their focus to describe student teachers’ trajectories as they move from the university context to a period of practical internship in school (e.g. Eteläpelto and Saarinen 2006 cited in Dahlgren and Chiriac, 2009). The transition between teacher education and working life as a teacher has traditionally been described as a question concerning application of teacher knowledge that is acquired within teacher training. From a sociocultural approach, this perspective has been challenged. Knowledge, in this conceptualisation, cannot be separated from the processes that generate it (Frankham and Howes, 2006). The process of learning has begun to be seen as a process of becoming. For instance, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) see learning as a process of identity as being constructed and negotiated through participation and engagement in local communities of practice, of which the university context is seen as one community and the work-life context another. Researchers turned to identity to document, analyse, and understand teacher learning and classroom practice (Battey and Franke, 2008).

Learning to participate in the social and cultural practices, with regard to education, is assumed to be crucial for developing a professional identity as a teacher (Pearson, 2009). In other words every context harbours different possibilities for agency as well as limitations regarding agency (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989 cited in ten Dam and Bloom, 2006); hence it is important to be examined. In this light, research questions were formed that reflected a focus on issues such as student teachers' learning in practicum (Hascher et al., 2004). They focused on issues of whether there is a stimulating context for student teachers to develop their own professional identity and whether students become members of professional learning communities (ten Dam and Blom, 2006).

The interest in this focus is in that it moved discussion on revising training programmes to further levels than the adding of appropriate modules: into how the teacher education programme can be designed so that school-based teacher education can provide a supportive
context for students to develop a professional identity (ten Dam and Blom, 2006). For instance, Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild (2009) stressed how important is for schools and universities to acknowledge that they are participating in a joint activity. Revision implications, in this line, required engagement in a discussion to identify what the joint professional development activity is and how the activity affects the individual teacher activity and institution school/university activities to minimise tensions that impede the progress of individual and institutional professional development activities. Partnership members should engage in discussions to resolve tensions that arise, for instance, from communication problems and from not sharing a common goal. The unclear goal, or object in activity terms, was also stressed by Bartholomew and Sandholtz (2009) who found that divergent goals may become more apparent and compromise the school and university partnership work. In a nutshell, research in this line suggests better alignment of school and university contexts.

In research into the provision for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, influenced by activity theory, Daniels and Cole (2002) and Daniels (2001) argue for the value of directing attention to the need to adopt the activity system itself as the unit of analysis in research which seeks to change practice instead of interventions which tend to refers to individuals in isolation. In order to understand and change such practice, they argue that a detailed analysis of the current circumstances must be supplemented by an understanding of how that practice has come to be as it is. This example supports the contention that there is scope for more research in the area of inclusive education that draws on activity theory. Although in the Greek research framework such efforts on the area of teacher education and challenging behaviour are new, it could be argued that using activity theory as a framework for planning the curriculum may be advantageous and that the benefits of this approach are that activity theory does not disconnect knowledge from the practice to which it belongs (Van Aalsvoort, 2004); hence it allows for implications at the level of practices.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined perspectives of teachers and teacher education as well as research findings on field experiences in order to develop a context for developing the design of the present research. These showed that in order to prepare student teachers for diverse and
inclusive classrooms teacher educators should provide student teachers with both the vision and the skills to operationalise that vision (Avramidis et al., 2000). It was discussed that these are necessary to be set in a context of interaction.

Based on the literature, this study sought to understand kindergarten teaching practice in Greece based on the perspective of activity theory. This perspective allows teacher education programmes to take account not only the technical aspects of teaching but to conceive school placement as a complex endeavour which includes aspects and processes such as collaboration, transition and teacher identity. This is where an activity theory framework becomes pertinent in this study. An activity theory-led study has the potential to delve into the various contextual aspects of teaching practice as the joint space of kindergarten school – where student teachers conduct their teaching practice – and the university – where they undergo their teacher education programme.

Collaborative partnerships between universities and schools deserve particular attention due to their potential in providing new learning opportunities for children with disabilities who may have a limited access to learning provided by traditional methods (Kim et al., 2013). The next chapter addresses activity theory in relation to how it guided the theoretical and methodological aspects of this study.

Before though I move to this chapter, it should be noted that the reviewed research focused mainly on teachers. Variations in school and/or student performance are often attributed to such factors as teacher quality and teacher training. However these variables, although crucial, are only two amongst many others that are associated with growth in student achievement. Effective school variables, school climate, family and individual factors as well the socioeconomic status level of students are a few examples of such variables. Yet, a consideration of these and/or additional aspects was beyond the scope of this context. In addition whilst factors such as the socioeconomic status of students is extremely difficult to change, teacher education might not be.

An inherent problem of the teacher education variable is that whilst there is a great deal of agreement that it is important for student achievement, there is still a great debate about how to improve it. Critics in the literature state that there is very little agreement mainly on the
structure and content of teacher education. As it has already been said one reason for this might be that educational stakeholders seem to resist utilising this research (http://www.woodhillpark.com/attachments/1/Critiquing%20Reviewed%20Literature.pdf)

Apart from that, another issue to stress is that even though we can identify skills which we believe teachers need, as this literature review has stressed, we cannot be sure that teachers will develop them. Teacher education is not a linear system. In a linear system, utilising the classical mechanical paradigm developed by Newton, the amount of change in the outcome variable, e.g. school achievement, is directly proportional to the change in a context, input, or classroom process variable such as school size for instance or quality of instruction (Huitt et al., 2009). Teacher education however is a dynamic system. In such a complex system where variables are related interdependently and non-linearly it cannot be assumed that the amount of change in teacher education can be disproportional to the change in children inclusion.

In this sense there should be kept in mind a scepticism in relation to most research studies of teacher education including the present literature review and research: that these studies have not been designed to identify definitive causal effects (Menter et al., 2010). The assumption in much of the teacher education research that if one can identify and utilise proper knowledge content related to an inclusive orientation, inclusion in schools will increase should be critiqued. Research, therefore, in teacher education could possibly take account a number of related factors that could result in a large change in school inclusion functioning. Perhaps it would be useful for multiple modifications at the teacher education and school and classroom levels to be made simultaneously.

Hence, although the present literature review studies did not explore the relationships between possible forms of teacher education and the enhancement of inclusion, identifying current strengths and areas for improvement was an important contribution in itself.
Chapter Four

The Sociocultural Framework

4.1 Introduction and Justification of the Theoretical Context

The previous chapters theorised the problem within the inclusive framework and explained how within this framework certain aspects of the educational process appear as central. Particular emphasis was given to the marginalisation within the mainstream classroom. Although present in general schools the majority of challenging children are often marginalised from opportunities for educational success. Since one main reason for this is teacher’s inadequate preparation, teacher education was placed at a central position in the effort to maximise teachers’ ability to develop more inclusive practices. Research was then reviewed in order to develop a methodological frame for researching the problem. In particular, it has been suggested that research in the student teachers’ experiences based on learning as a social process seems to be able to enrich implications for teacher education programmes. Therefore the purpose of the present study is to examine student teachers field experiences from an activity theory perspective so as to provide implications for teacher courses developers.

This chapter will discuss in more detail the inherent theoretical principles of this framework as well it will justify its selection and explain its use in the particular context of the present study. As it was explained, student teachers school placement experiences appear as a complex and multifaceted process. Learning is not conceived as a process of transmission between university degree programme and student teachers. The acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills are not conceived as transferable commodities (e.g. Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000 cited in Ten Dam and Blom, 2006) nor as a body of content to be acquired.

Instead learning is conceived as constructed between humans as they engage in specific situated social interactions (Hawkins, 2004). Activity theory which has the capacity to deal with action, learning and the impact of context on these (Davis, 2007) can provide a means of examining learning to teach as a social practice. Hence it is especially relevant for the
proposed inquiry because it provides a means of analysing contrasting practices in order to find possible misalignments and contradictions between the two contexts: in this study initial teacher education in the university and teaching as a social practice in schools. It provides the means to analyse the contradictions between these two systems, and so should inform knowledge about how these two systems can be more closely aligned.

The complexity of such an endeavour is obvious. Initial teacher education can be considered as a complex system in which student teachers learn to be teachers. Their preparation is a complex process that takes place in two activity systems: the university department providing higher education and schools where prospective teachers have field experience. In this sense, school placement may be seen as the centre of these two interacting activity systems.

In this context, an appreciation of school placement as a complex system is a prerequisite to understanding appropriate strategies in order to provide implications for change in initial teacher education. At the same time it makes partnering an important aspect of managing the complex activities in these two learning contexts. Teacher educators must work within and across two interacting educational organisations. This is the context for this study: learning in transition facilitated and or inhibited by factors of that context.

In the sociocultural framework teacher identities are seen as being constitutive in talk and action about the activity of school placement. This involves the tracing of talk and practices of the activity such as the object and aspects of the community that mediate their identities as they move across the two professional practices of university and school. This focus leads, in turn, to a study of formal activities as well of talk and to a concern about kindergarten teacher identity formation in the these practices and discourses. The theoretical challenge, in this respect, was to develop a framework that could understand and capture the relations between the social organisation of the school placement activity system, discursive practice and identity.

To investigate these complex relationships sophisticated tools were needed that could help us think about this system, model it and study it in greater depth. These tools were drawn from three interrelated theoretical ideas: (1) activity systems and how they give rise to collective

60
patterns of learning through the mediating activity, (2) understanding the role of discourses in these activities and (3) learning as a process of identity formation.

First, activity theory focuses on certain questions about parts, wholes and relationships. It describes school placement by means of viewing joint activity or practice as the unit of analysis. Also the study of a complex system is about understanding discursive dynamics. Student teachers hold “taken for granted theories” (Gee, 1999) about their school placement experiences. The field of discourse analysis provides a number of sophisticated tools that can help access these theories. Cultural model is one such tool. It is there - in addition – where prospective teachers find meaning for their school placement experiences. Student teachers hold cultural models of the activities of school placement. All of these parts shape the initial teacher education experience.

4.2 Understanding Activity Theory: Mind and Mediation

4.2.1 The First Generation Activity

That the human mind is mediated is the most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that human learning takes place in the form of interactions among signs, mediating artifacts, and the individual. He argued that just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely instead, on tools and labor activity, which allows them to change the world, they also use symbolic tools, or signs to regulate their relationships with others and with their selves and thus change the nature of these relationships (Lantolf, 2000).

In this sense, the emergence of tool production and use of signs revolutionised the nature of higher mental functions. The development of mind is not any longer a purely internal process. External artifacts permit humans by the aid of extrinsic stimuli, to control their behaviour from the outside (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Miettinen, 2001). This process has been traditionally identified as the basic structure for mediated action, and is graphically represented as Vygotsky’s basic triangle (Cole, 1996; Cole and Engeström, 1993), as in figure one. The subject is the individual or individuals engaged in the mediated action, the mediating artifact/tool includes physical items, social others, and prior knowledge of the subject. The object is the goal of the activity.
This triangular representation of mediated action was Vygotsky’s attempt to explain human development that did not rely on the dualistic stimulus-response association (Yamagata-Lynch, and Haudenschild, 2009). According to Engeström (1999a), mediation by tools and signs is an idea that puts in a dialectic relationship the individual mind and the society. This is evident if we look at the notion of control and the prevalent dichotomous notion, according to which humans are either controlled from the outside by the society, or controlled from the inside by themselves. In the former case, the possibility of human agency and transformation of social structures from below becomes an unexplained mystery. In the latter case, the origins of individual self-determination are attributed to the equally mysterious sources of biological urges or inherent free will:

“…The idea [of mediation] is that humans can control their own behaviour - not 'from the inside', on the basis of biological urges, but 'from the outside', (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Engeström 1999a: 29)

The control of behaviour through the use and creation of artifacts is an optimistic perspective concerning human self-determination. Also it calls for a study of artifacts as integral components of human functioning (Engeström, 1999a).

As Marx Wartofsky (1979 cited in Engeström, 1999a: 29) put it, “the artifact is to cultural evolution what the gene is to biological evolution”. To this direction, Vygotsky attempted to theorise and provide methodological tools for investigating the processes by which social, cultural, and historical factors shape human functioning (Daniels, 2004); and to provide an account of development and learning, subsequently, as mediated processes. The idea of
mediation constitutes then an analytical viewpoint on learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This orientation draws attention to the need to understand knowledge and learning in context as participation in a social world as opposed to individual learners and their cognitive processes (Sleith, 2005). In this sense, activity theory has the conceptual and methodological potential to be a pathbreaker in studies that help humans gain control over their own artifacts and consequently agency (Engeström, 1999a).

4.2.2 The Second Generation Activity

Vygotsky’s basic triangle, or else the first generation activity, was expanded by Engeström (1999b) who argued for an examination of systems of activity at the level of the collective in preference to a focus on the individual. This expansion provided a useful way of analysing the social structure of practice. It emphasised that the key to explicating how human action as situated is the use of mediated action as a unit of analysis and the agent-acting-with-mediational means (Wertsch, 1998 cited in Wells, 2002) as the agent of this action. Figure two below depicts these relationships.

![Activity system model adapted from Engeström (1987)](http://language.la.psu.edu/aplng596d/thorneinnov.html)

The second generation activity theory contextualises the learning processes of an individual in a meaningful context of goal-oriented, socially situated activity. Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild (2009) describe this as follows: Subjects are participants in an activity, motivated toward attainment of the object. The object is goal of an activity, the subject’s
motives for participating in an activity, and the material products that subjects gain through an activity. Tools are socially shared cognitive and/or material resources that subjects can use to attain the object. Rules regulate the subject’s participation and can be formal or informal. The community is the group to which the subject belongs. Division of labour refers to the responsibilities of each community member. Finally, the outcome is the consequences that the subject faces because of his/her actions driven by the object. These outcomes can encourage or hinder the subject’s participation in future activities.

4.2.3 The Third Generation Activity and Basic Concepts

Third generation activity theory moves beyond the single activity system and takes as its unit of analysis at least two interacting activity systems. Wherein learners participate in two different activity contexts, the third generation of activity theory develops conceptual tools to understand multiple perspectives and networks of interacting activity systems. The minimal representation which figure three provides below, shows but two of what may be a myriad of systems exhibiting patterns of contradiction and tension (http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/liw/resources/Models%20and%20principles%20of%20Activity%20Theory.pdf). This dialectic of interacting and co-developing activity systems has been especially powerful in work on work/school transitions (Williams, 2005). This is mainly because such an embedding reading can illuminate on the gaps and contradictions between different educational practices as participants transform their practice while trying to mediate between these contradictions (Orland-Barak and Becher, 2011).

Figure 3 Two interacting activity systems as minimal model for third generation of activity theory –adapted from Engeström, 1999
4.2.3.1 Boundary-Crossing

Boundary crossing conceptualises the interaction between two activity systems and Engeström’s particular contribution in this respect is in pointing out the importance of boundary crossing to expansive and transformative learning. It is through this concept that activity theory can focus the analysis on the coupling of the two systems. This is conceived as being structured by multiple dynamic systems of activity which are interlinked by boundary crossers in ways which provide conflicts and contradictions (Søreide, 2006). That is students do not simply change contexts. Instead they ‘cross boundaries’ (Tuommi-Gröhn et al., 2003). Hence, possible conflicted narratives may indicate contradictions between elements of systems (Søreide, 2006).

4.2.3.2 Tensions and Contradictions

Engeström (1999b) stresses the conflictual nature of social practice. In complex interacting systems there may be competing goals, differing values and a variety of desired outcomes. This might lead to what Engeström sees as instability and contradiction. The concept of contradiction applies to dissonance or clashes within elements of a system or between related activity systems (Kuutti, 1995). It is particularly important as is the ‘motive force of change and development’ (Engeström 1999b: 9). That is, activity theorists see contradictions as sources of development that can be used to initiate change to the activity system (Russel, 2001). Contradictions prompt people to ask better questions for redesigning activity environments. When tensions need to be resolved significant steps can be taken in knowing more or knowing better (Finlay, 2008)

In the case of the present study, two systems of activity are involved. Several possible kinds of contradiction can be distinguished, including mutually incompatible goals, mismatches between tools and goals, and different systems working together but seeking different goals. The term “contradiction” therefore is useful to indicate possible misalignments sufficient to impair the smooth functioning of the activity systems. Whereas discussion in teacher development often has a focus on “impediments”, activity theory suggests identifying and addressing misalignments. This can be a more helpful approach because it recognises that
there are different perspectives involved and that the solution may not be removing impediments, but rather re-aligning the activity systems (Biddle, 2009).

4.2.3.3 Expansive Learning

Contradictions are important because they contain a potential for transformation of activity (Murphy and Rodríguez Manzanares, 2007). That is the concept of contradiction connects to the concept of expansive learning. This is an important connection. Points of contradiction or discoordination in an activity can lead to expansive transformations and new forms of activity (Engeström, 1987 cited in Walker and Nocon, 2007). As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. This can escalate into a deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity (http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/liw/resources/Models%20and%20principles%20of%20Activity%20Theory.pdf). Hence the concept of expansive learning theory can illuminate the process of learning by complex organisational partnerships (Brown, 2005).

4.3 Understanding Kindergarten Teacher Education through Activity Theory

With these considerations as background, the school placement in this study can be seen as two interacting network activities coming together. These activities are school and university and come together through students who act as boundary crossers. During this transition learning is not seen as occurring in a process of storing knowledge acquired at university on the individual basis and is subsequently applied in practice (Lave1988; Abrandt Dahlgren and Hammar Chiriac, 2009). In contrast the model as depicted in figure three illustrates learning as occurring (most effectively) when genuine participation in meaningful activities is involved (Lave, 1995). Participation ‘refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991).
The transition student teachers make between school and university involves the construction of knowledge and skills understood as transformation rather than as the mere application or use of something that has been acquired elsewhere (Tuommi-Gröhn et al. 2003). In a similar way, Beach (2003) criticises the way previous approaches to transfer conceptualise the generalisation of individual’s knowledge across contexts as “transferring” something from one place to another. A transition is consequential when it is consciously reflected on, struggled with, and shifts the individuals’ sense of self or social position. Learning transforms who we are and what we can do and for this reason it is an experience of identity: ‘It is not just an accumulation of skills and information but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person. We accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract, as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity’ (Wenger 1998: 215).

It may be useful to consider here more fully how the concept of identity is used in this argument. In contrast to a traditional notion of identity as of something essential about ourselves, a fixed and stable core of ‘self’ (Watson, 2006), Holland et al., (1998) articulate and offer a dialogical and developmental understanding of human self. Synthesising theoretical contributions made by Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Bourdieu and drawing upon examples from cross-cultural fieldwork, they offer an account of identity in practice. They put identity as a key concept for understanding human action. According to them identity is simultaneously a social phenomenon and a phenomenon of the person and they have studied its development and agency specific to historically situated, socially enacted, culturally constructed worlds. That is talk about identity in social terms does not deny individuality but views its definition as something that is part of the practices of specific communities (Williams and Davis, 2006). Thus a person’s identity is mediated by the discourses and practices of people’s social activity systems (Engeström, 1995 cited in Williams and Davis, ibid.).

To examine the mediation of discourses, in particular, I draw on Gee (1999) and analysis of students’ positioning with or against kindergarten teaching cultural models in order to explain differences towards challenging behaviour. According to Gee (ibid.) cultural models are the everyday theories or taken for granted assumptions about what is typical or normal that people use to make sense of their lives. Hence, they may provide an important tool for analysing the sociocultural impact of outside communities on educational participation and
outcomes (Davis, 2007). Cultural models mediate between the micro level of interaction and the macro level of institutions and tell us what is ‘typical’ or ‘normal’ mediating this way our actions, not universally, but from the perspective of their experiences (Davis, 2005).

Under these directives, the present study aims to explore whether learners within the context of school placement construct identities that support or hinder the development of inclusive practices with regard to children with challenging behaviour. The focus is on the development of student teacher identities but student teacher identities in comparison to the two systems. Each of these systems has its own structure, attitudes, beliefs, norms and roles. Identifying thus the ways the organisational and cultural contexts of the university and the workplace produce different kinds of teacher identities (Levinson et al., 1996), will allow for implications for initial teacher training to emerge.

4.4 Conclusions

Sections 3.5.2.2 and 3.5.3.2 discussed school placement as a multifaceted activity. For this reason activity theory with its capacity to dwell on complex systems seems to fit the pragmatic context of the study. It is argued that activity theory has a unique power to frame a study of student teachers’ professional experiences during teaching practice. This is, first, because it enables an understanding of how learning and teacher identity development is mediated in a particular context. Second, it can operate across different levels of analysis, individual, group and institutional and thus allows the multi-dimensional aspects of teaching practice to be considered. Third it allows for contradictions to be seen as a means for change.

A last point to stress here, is that social theories of learning with an emphasis away from individual mental capacity not only account for the complexity of the process of learning in ways that allow change in multiple levels but do not naturalise divisions of social inequality in our society (Lave, 1995). This is why in its analysis of situated social practices, the theoretical assumptions of a sociocultural perspective lead to a focus on activity rather than the focus on individuals’ internalised learning associated with a more cognitive or behaviourist approach. This focus on activity leads to interaction as a unit of analysis and the individual’s cognitive development is seen as the product of the activities and cultural practices that they engage in with others (Plowman and Stephen, 2005). This inherent
assumption is compatible with the assumptions shaping this piece of research. The next chapter will discuss how these shaped the formulation of research questions, and guided the conduct of the study. That is it will address decisions on the research methods and data analysis in this study.
Chapter Five

Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter considered activity theory, within the broad frame of a sociocultural perspective, as a useful lens in order to theorise student teachers’ learning between university and school. This chapter will discuss how this framework shaped and guided the methodological choices of this research: the formulation of the research questions; the choice of research methods and methodology; the analysis of the data; the presentation and discussion of the findings.

The first part of the chapter deals with the rationale for the study. It explains and justifies the research questions, the choice of the methodology and the particular methods of data collection. The second part goes on to detail how the research design was operationalised in practice. It examines the sampling procedures and the research sites of the study, the access procedures, as well as the particular ways in which observations and interviews were designed and carried out. Next, issues of generalisation and validity are addressed. The final sections of the chapter describe the role of the researcher, reflexivity and the ethical considerations of the fieldwork.

5.2 Rationale for the Study

5.2.1 Research Questions

Cultural historical activity theory provided a lens through which research questions were approached. An understanding of student teacher learning as identity construction mediated by the elements of the activity system available in each setting, as presented in chapter four, demanded an investigation of these contexts. Practices, discourses and identities became the conceptual elements that it was hypothesised would allow such an investigation. Therefore questions on how can we better prepare kindergarten teachers to include children considered
to have behaviour problems into mainstream settings, were chosen within student teachers’ transitions between university training and actual teaching:

I. *How do the school and university practices and discourses afford or constrain the development of inclusive practices for children with challenging behaviour?*

II. *What teacher/student teacher identities are found within these practices?*

Research questions are critical in that they identify particular concepts as relevant and so direct researcher’s attention to what is to be examined within the framework of the study (Willig, 2001). They introduce particular assumptions of the world and knowledge and consequently ways of going about investigating these relationships. To ask “*how do the school and university practices and discourses afford or constrain the development of inclusive practices*” and “*What teacher/student teacher identities are found within these practices*” it is to accept people’s everyday understandings as important. This acceptance shapes a methodology of a naturalistic way of exploration which allows the close study of persons in their environments.

5.2.2 Qualitative Paradigm

To explore student teachers’ learning experiences, the study adopted a qualitative research methodology. Methodology issues concern the choice of methodology and methods to collect and analyse data as well as the justification of the choice and use of this methodology and methods (Crotty, 2003). Such a discussion is necessary to show the coherence of the design from its purpose to its analysis. It as well provides a context for the process and grounds the study’s logic and criteria (ibid.).

Specifically, the study sought to document teaching and learning as a social cultural practice. Research questions seek to understand student and beginning teachers’ learning experiences by examining the dynamics of challenge and support in relation to challenging behaviour in the two learning contexts – that of university and that of school placement. They focus on possibly contrasting discourses and practices at the levels of subject, object, rules, artifacts and division of labour between school and university, especially for identities, in order to understand how these constrain the development of more inclusive practices for challenging
behaviour. This inherent focus on the complexity of these settings provides a justification for the choice and use of a qualitative methodology.

The strength of qualitative research derives primarily from its focus on specific situations or people (Maxwell, 1996) and seems, thus, best to address this focus. A qualitative approach is consistent with the frame of sociocultural perspective. Such a perspective requires an in-depth look into the learning and teaching process within the interactional process of persons and contexts. It is important to understand individuals within their environments and therefore it is important to investigate these environments. Interactions among the individual and institutional levels (see chapter four) merit a qualitative research design which takes account the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions (Maxwell, ibid.).

In contrast to quantitative research which focuses on ‘explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2002, cited in Muijs, 2004), it has been suggested that qualitative methodology is appropriate for a deeper exploration and understanding of the social phenomena since its focus is on understanding the processes by which events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 6, 7) there is a number of core recurring features for qualitative studies that seem to support this kind of exploration:

- Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a “field” or life situation. These situations are typically “banal” or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organisations.

- The researcher’s role is to gain a “holistic” (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules.

- The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors “from the inside”, through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding and of suspending or “bracketing” preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

- A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations. Relatively little standardised instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is essentially the main “measurement device” in the study.
In order to explore teaching practice using the perspective of activity theory, all these features seem compatible. To fully understand the complexity of student teachers experiences it is important to examine those in a manner that allow for a deeper understanding of how they are constrained or supported by the context of school placement. This demands a prolonged engagement in the field, a holistic understanding of the implicit and explicit rules of each activity system and participants’ meaning making processes in relation to these norms. Qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning in context (Merriam, 2001). Lastly a key philosophical assumption of the qualitative paradigm is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (ibid.). It is important therefore to understand these emic perspectives. A qualitative research design focuses on the “participants’ perspective” (Maxwell, 1996). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

5.2.3 Case-Study

Specifically, an in-depth qualitative multiple case study approach was adopted for this study. The case study involves an in-depth intensive focused exploration of a natural occurrence with definable boundaries or bounded system (Smith, 1978 cited in Merriam, 2001; Gomm et al., 2000). Apart from this, there are particular features of case study that makes it compatible with the research questions: its idiographic perspective which aims to understand an individual case in its particularity; and its holistic approach in that it considers the case within its context that is its attention to contextual data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984).

Since the aim here is to gain an understanding of student teachers learning within the systems of school and university, attention should be paid to the ways in which various dimensions of the case relate to or interact with its environment. Conducting, therefore, case studies in contextually rich schools and universities will make it possible to identify the meanings of activities studied for the participants, their perspective, as well as to retain the holistic and idiosyncratic nature of the data (Maxwell, 1996). In addition, to understand an individual’s identity it is important to take account of the social setting within the person acts (Holland 2001).
In the case of the present research the case study methodology also fits as the case study strategy is most likely to be appropriate of “how” questions (Yin, 1994). In addition, since the aim is to understand the course from the students’ perspectives in order to inform change in initial education, case study offers a good vehicle to get study’s message across to practitioners as they may identify themselves in practice and adopt some elements. In this way it can create a vehicle to reach practitioners and policy makers in better ways than other forms of research writing. As Stake (1995) put it, much of our gathering of data will take the form of stories they tell and much of what we can convey to our readers will preserve that form. Furthermore insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 2001).

With regard the cross-case design, multiple case studies can produce more robust results than a single case study as they add confidence to findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to Patton (2002), this is because cross-case study enables the exploration and interpretation of experiences of student teachers within and across different settings. Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) support this in that they argue that knowledge of the school culture mainly develops through the accumulation of case studies. Furthermore, the multiple case study design, by contrast to the single, provides the researcher with the opportunity to generate new theories. Here theoretical formulations are developed and refined on the basis of the comparative analysis of a series of cases (Willig, 2001). Analysis of the first case leads to the formulation of tentative hypotheses which can then be explored in the light of subsequent cases (ibid.). The inclusion of multiple cases is, in this way, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalisability of the findings (Merriam, 2001)

Furthermore a single case design could not serve this study’s purpose. A single case study design could be used to study a critical case to confirm, challenge or extend a particular theory (Willig, 2001). Though the purpose here was to understand how the contexts support or constrain student teachers, challenging a theory was neither the main purpose in the study, nor one case could provide that evidence.

In relation to the case study design, the theoretical assumptions of a sociocultural perspective lead to a focus on activity rather than the focus on individuals’ internalised learning
associated with a more cognitive or behaviourist approach. For this reason in relation to
student teachers each case study will be the student in transition from university to school.
Since the primary unit of concern is not the individual or the context per se, the coupling
itself will be the unit of analysis in each case study. This takes account of the fact that
individuals move across contexts and changing social activities, rather than being
hermetically situated within an unchanging context (Beach, 2003). In relation to beginning
teachers, each case study is the beginning teacher in school. The unit of analysis is the
beginning teacher in the context of the school thinking retrospectively on initial kindergarten
teacher education.

In particular the study draws on case studies on six schools. The first school involves four
final year student teachers, the second two final year student teachers and the third four third
year students. The rest of the three schools each involve one beginning teacher.

5.2.4. Data Collection Methods

Methodology denotes ‘the logic of methods. It provides a rationale for the choice of methods
and the particular forms in which these methods will be employed. That is it shapes which
methods are used and how each method is used (Silverman, 2000). Case study research
constitutes an approach to the study of singular entities which may involve the use of a wide
range of diverse methods of data collection and analysis (Robson, 2002; Yin 1994). It is
therefore not characterised by the methods used to collect and analyse data, but rather by its
focus upon a particular unit of analysis: the case. However some methods are usually
associated with specific strategies (Marshall and Rossman, 1995) and some methods go
naturally with case study. For instance, participant and non-participant observation,
interviews conducted with varying degrees of structure, audio-visual recording and field note
taking, are some of the methods that are compatible with case study research (Adelman et al.,
1976).

Apart from this compatibility of case study with some methods, the research methods that
were used in this case study were also selected in the light of the research questions that
motivated the study. Since the interest was on the ways in which student teachers experience
their learning in the school placement context, a combination of semi structured interviewing
and classrooms observations was used. These methods were compatible with the study’s
theory that sought to document student teachers’ learning as a social practice (Luttrell and Parker, 2001). Since the interest was on the participants and their interactions with their contexts, observation would enable the gathering of data on the interactional setting such as for instance the formal and informal interactions (Morrison, 1993).

This was also because case study research should involve a certain amount of triangulation. This is because it is unlikely that the use of a single research method would generate data that do justice to the complex relationship between the contextual dimensions of an event or a phenomenon with which case studies concern themselves (Willig, 2001). In contrast “triangulation is a way of enriching and completing knowledge and [towards] transgressing the always limited epistemological potentials of the individual method” (Flick, 1998 cited in Willig, 2001: 76).

Therefore both observations and interviews were the methods that seemed to be in sufficient depth to foster “thick description” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The first method allows for the observation of participants in their natural settings. Observational data afford the researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations. This enables researchers to understand the context of the university programme and of the school and to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed (Cohen et al., 2000). Observations can also move perception-based data such as opinions in interviews (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, running concurrently with interviewing, can allow data from each to be used to substantiate events, test emerging hypotheses, and make further decisions about the conduct of the research.

Observations, therefore, can be very effectively joined with and can provide a sound basis for subsequent interviews. Interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Cohen et al., 2000). As Tuckman (1978) describes it, ‘by providing access to what is “inside a person’s head”, it makes it possible to measure what a person knows, what a person likes and dislikes, and what a person thinks. The interviews allowed for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection. Soliciting emic viewpoints to assist in determining the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) was also compatible with the present study’s purpose. In addition, following methodological approaches developed by Hodikinson et al. (1996) there was an effort to
develop a multidimensional richness in the data by not only talking to trainees but also to the ‘stakeholders’ they came into contact with. Eliciting their views on the issues examined and triangulating these with the trainees’ perceptions proved to be a necessary part of the process.

5.2.5 Research Sites and Sampling Procedures

Sampling in qualitative field research involves the selection of a research site, people and events (Burgess, 1982). It is usually non-probabilistic and purposeful (Patton, 1990 cited in Merriam, 2001). Purposeful sampling is about selecting information-rich cases for study in depth (ibid) and can be differentiated in many types. Due to the circumstances of the present study the purposive sampling procedure was used combined with conveniency procedures.

The research was conducted at the University of Crete, Department of Preschool Education in the island of Crete, Greece. This is considered as a typical pedagogical department. Apart from this, being a graduate of the University of Crete myself was also a main criterion for deciding on this site for the research. It was expected that relationships of mutual trust and respect I have developed throughout the years with the staff would ease the access and support other aspects of the research as well. In addition, this site was chosen by reasons such as ease of access since it was located at the same place where I live. All these factors constituted university of Crete an accessible site that can provide data readily and quickly Silverman (2000).

In relation to the organisation of the teacher education programme this includes the components of formal coursework and field experiences. The coursework subjects range from pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, sociology and physical education, mainly, as these disciplines apply to education. In relation to field experiences these include visits to schools in groups of four and classroom observations during second year, and actual teaching during the third and fourth years. Third years teach each half of the day once per week. Fourth years teach each the whole day once per week. Each student teaches per week sequentially while each time the rest are helpers. Each group is assigned lecturers and appointed kindergarten teachers at university as mentors. Responsibilities of the supervising kindergarten teachers involve preparation meetings with the students before their teaching to help them prepare for
their teaching. Feedback is usually given at the schools immediately after the student teacher finishes teaching. Kindergarten teachers and supervising lecturers also visit student teachers in their schools as part of the observation and assessment procedures of teaching practice and a grade is given by the lecturers based on what the supervisor observed.

The sample consisted of ten full-time third and final year trainee teachers and three beginning teachers who had two years of teaching experience with an age range of 21-27. Student teachers were the main source of data. By the third and final year of their course, they take responsibility for the whole school day during their school placements. Students and beginning teachers were selected on the theoretical premise of the research that learning to be a teacher is not a simple process in terms of acquiring knowledge and then unproblematically transfer it and apply it to school. Instead learning to be a teacher is considered a process of a continuous ‘reconceptualisation’. They learn by engaging in and participating in different contexts. I am particularly interested in what learning to become a teacher means to the students in relation to the contexts they find themselves in.

I am also interested in these processes from beginning kindergarten teachers’ aspect. Since professional development is not finished with their leaving university but is rather a long-term process from teacher education to on-the-job learning at school (e.g. Ball & Cohen, 1999 cited in Retelsdorf, and Günther 2011), it is also important to rethink how teachers experience challenging behaviour at their place of work. Beginning teachers tend to draw on the knowledge they gained from training (Dean, 2001) and therefore can offer useful comparisons of the two contexts providing deeper insights into the school context of which they are now part. They will have deeper experience of actual teaching in the school context. Therefore, thinking retrospectively, they can offer useful insights of their experiences of the two contexts with regard to what it means to be a kindergarten teacher who teaches children considered to have difficulties in behaviour in a mainstream classroom.

The focus of the study was to do with experiences of student teachers during teaching practice in relation to children with challenging behaviour. Thus I purposively included student teachers who were in fourth and third year of their teacher education programme and had challenging children in their classrooms. Six schools were selected, three for student teachers and a further three for beginning teachers. Although there was an effort for the selected schools to contribute school features e.g. urban rural locations, this was not possible
as student teachers do their practicum in urban area schools and beginning teachers serve at schools located in rural locations.

However there was an effort for the schools to be selected on the basis of providing variation in terms of the behaviours exhibited by the children. Participants’ experiences with children deemed to have emotional and behavioural difficulties were varied. Some focused on particular pupils with such behaviours while others had to deal with a whole challenging class. In one case student teachers had to work in an integration class where there was a teaching assistant appointed to care for a child whose behaviour was of concern. Beginning teachers had children who exhibited difficulties of more of an emotional nature such as attention seeking behaviour, while the rest two had to deal with aggressive forms of behaviour.

In relation to the choice of beginning teachers and the University of Crete site conveniency reasons also played a role. The third year students were selected due to the arrangement of the practicum. All final year students teach every Thursday which made it difficult to observe often all three groups. For this reason a group of third year students were selected as these teach every Wednesday.

Apart from the student and beginning teachers a secondary sample involved focus group interviews with student teachers from all the years’ cohorts, to elicit a possible range of their preservice experiences, reasons for entry into teaching, and their understandings of themselves as teachers that would help to from subsequent focus of the case studies. In addition – during the case study stage – lecturers who supervised or not student teachers during teaching practice as well as the supervising kindergarten teachers were interviewed. Also the schools’ kindergarten teachers were interviewed as well as the teaching assistant. These participants were considered to contribute useful insights from their part.

In total the sample employed ten student teachers – four 3rd years and six 4th years – and three beginning teachers. Each third year student was observed for eight days and each 4th year student teacher was observed for four days during two semesters. Beginning teachers were observed for one week each. All were interviewed in three rounds. Student teachers were interviewed individually and in some cases in pairs. Each school kindergarten teacher
was interviewed once. Also eight lecturers – among which three supervising lecturers – were each interviewed once at university. Finally four supervising kindergarten teacher were interviewed at university as well. (See appendices three and four for the sources of data for each school and appendix five for a summary of information regarding student and beginning teachers’ schools).

5.3 Part Two: Operationalisation of the Study

5.3.1 First Contacts

My first contact with the university was through the president of the department who I knew since my studies. He welcomed me and after explaining him the purpose of the research he gave me permission to continue. He asked me to write a letter to ask permission of the research to be examined by the department as well (see appendix six for the consent forms). Next I tried to identify my participants. Identifying both types of sample, student kindergarten teachers and beginning teachers, had not been an easy process.

In relation to student teachers I contacted the supervising kindergarten teachers and asked them whether they can locate the schools wherein students might face problems in relation to children’s behaviour. They told me they would get back to me. However they did not, so I started visiting the schools myself talking to the students and trying to identify the schools.

Even this however was difficult as in all schools I visited asking student teachers to identify a pupil they would consider has challenging behaviour they would all identify at least one. However after spending some time my subjective opinion was that the children were as usual naughty. Finally and after some more visits at schools I managed to locate three schools wherein children presented a behaviour which could be characterised as something more than naughty. Distinguishing between behaviour which is ‘naughty’ from that which is ‘challenging’ is difficult. One of the reasons for this is that one teacher might describe a child as ‘naughty’ while another would describe the same child as having challenging behaviour. However there were some characteristics that when coexisted strengthened student and beginning teachers’ opinions for characterising a child as challenging. These were: academic
failure, poor social skills, aggression, difficult home circumstances, and the feeling that they can no longer cope. Also there was a case that had been diagnosed from KEDDY.

All of the student teachers were very keen to be involved in the study. The fact that I was a graduate of the same university, having shared the same experiences and probably the same problems played a crucial role to this willingness. Presenting also myself as a student wanting to share with them their problems in order to improve things soon made me one of them. Gaining access to the schools was also easy as schools’ teachers did not have a problem at all with my presence especially when I told them that I wanted to observe the student teachers. They saw me as one more student.

In relation to beginning teachers, I tried initially to locate participants through the local education authority. This though was unproductive, as they could not give me any information other than a (long) list of the phones of the schools. Since it was impractical to visit schools by myself and found it impersonal to talk over the phone about the aim of my research, I decided to contact my previous course mates. After a few phone calls two of my ex course mates who live in Crete told me that they face challenging situations in their classes and that would be more than happy to accept me. One of them informed me about one of her colleagues who also faced a serious problem in her class. I immediately contacted her, as I knew her personally, and she as well agreed for me to visit her at school. Retrospectively and since the situations I wanted to explore were sensitive and even the teachers whom I knew and accepted me showed feelings of anxiety of me watching them I concluded that a completely unknown person would show even more anxiety and maybe would not accept me at all.

5.3.2 Designing and Conducting Observations

Section 5.2.4 discussed the choice of observational and interview data collection in theoretical terms. This section will discuss the ways these techniques were employed. Data collection methods must be consistent with the kind of theoretical position one adopts for his/her study (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). Informed by an essentially qualitative and interpretivist epistemology case study in the spirit of a social cultural perspective seeks to record participants’ experiences and the context in which these are being formed. Naturalistic observation and semi-structured interviews seems to fit firmly in this design.
At University observations of lectures and preparation sessions were recorded. At schools observations were made of the teaching of student teachers. On the continuum from unstructured to structured observation and on the continuum along which researcher roles are classified from complete participant to complete observer (Gold 1958 cited in Cohen et al., 2000), the present observation was placed in the middle of both continuums.

Semi-structured observation was employed. The criticism of systematic observations which focuses on the use of pre-established categories that do not allow the researcher to capture the complexity of classroom behaviour and the context in which this behaviour takes place (Delamont & Hamilton, 1993; Walker & Adelman, 1990), was taken account. For this reason it was decided that, although there was an agenda of issues from the theoretical framework and the relevant literature, gathering of data should be far less predetermined to illuminate in more breadth these issues.

With regard to the ‘researcher role’ classifications, the observer-as-participant role was adopted more and less the ‘participant-as-observer’. Usually I engaged more with the children during their unstructured activities. However, my presence during formal activities mostly included me sitting a little further behind the children recording notes in the form of field notes and/or videoing. Field notes were written in Greek. Using mother tongue and at the same time, the language in which the interaction was taking place helped me keep the recorded data close to real events and avoided any misinterpretation through translation in a hurry.

Information was jotted down in a particular structure. Specifically a distinction was made between notes that constituted raw data and the emerging analysis (Brown & Dowling 1998). Field notes were written on papers divided into two columns. On the left hand side, events, classroom interaction, speech extracts and so on were recorded, whereas on the right I developed my own thoughts, feelings and ideas about the situation under observation. Since there was no pre-defined categories and therefore no effort to try to allocate observed behaviours, field notes allowed for flexibility in what I was going to record according to the main interests of each stage of the study.
These included a focus on student and beginning teachers’ interactions regarding children’s behaviour as well as their interactions with the rest of the student teachers, the class teacher and the university supervisors. Through observation critical incidents were also collected which contained elements that I considered were related to marginalisation and exclusion. The method allowed me to observe incidents at the schools which could not be obtained by any other method. This is the main advantage of the observation technique, in comparison with the other techniques of collecting data; that it allows direct collecting of data by the observer in the natural setting (Bryman, 2004).

However this approach had its difficulties in terms of what is or could be useful to record. In these terms I found recording of classroom data in the form of videos really useful. Videos established a rich visual archive of student teaching practices within each school context.

Since observations are unable to capture student and beginning intentions or thoughts, interviews were used to complete this type of information. For instance, interesting incidents written down and/or videoed were subsequently discussed with the student teacher involved, in order to develop a better understanding of that incident. Furthermore, when other people were involved in it, directly or indirectly (i.e. teacher of the class or the head of the school) they were interviewed as well.

5.3.3 Designing and Conducting Interviews

Open interviews were conducted with student and beginning teachers. Lecturers, supervisors and school’s kindergarten teachers were also interviewed. Locations of the interviews included offices at the department for lecturers, offices in the schools for schools’ teachers, and schools’ classrooms, student teachers’ houses, coffee shops for student teachers as well as university classrooms for student teacher focus groups. Beginning teachers were interviewed at their schools and two of them at their homes. Each interview lasted between one to one and a half hours. Each was recorded on audiotape, and then transcribed verbatim. In addition informal interviews took place at the various placement establishments (e.g. outside the schools after teaching had finished, during breaks, etc.). These were kept in field notes.
Interviews took various forms. Face-to-face individual and focus group interviews were held. They were semi-structured and in-depth. In contrast to structured interviewing, wherein there is very little flexibility in the way questions are asked (Fontana and Frey, 2000), semi-structured approaches set the agenda but do not presuppose the nature of the response (Cohen et al., 2000). This flexibility is one of the major strengths of the method because it promotes positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee since the interview is more like a conversation and because it allows participants to talk about something in detail and depth. This might also strengthen validity (Sociological Research Skills, 2009). Nevertheless, a degree of systematisation in questioning was necessary as it is usually with multi-site case study. This is to make a form of comparison between answers possible necessary for cross-case analysis (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Focus group interviews use the interaction among participants as a source of data. The key characteristic is the insights and data produced by the interaction between participants (Gibbs, 1997; Morgan, 1997). During it, statements are challenged, and developed in ways that generate rich data (Willig, 2001). That is, it is the interaction between participants that is important. The researcher’s task is not to conduct several individual interviews simultaneously but to facilitate a comprehensive exchange of views in which participants are able to respond to the ideas of others (Walker, 1985 cited in Watts and Ebbutt, 1987). The ‘group moderator’ role (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987) was best suited the design of this study as I tried to establish and facilitate the discussion rather than lead it.

The disadvantage of group interviews was that they were of little use in bringing intensely personal issues to surfaces, or points where the interviewer has to probe an interviewee’s perceptions with a succession of follow-up questions. The dynamic of a group denied access to this sort of data (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987). In almost each response interesting issues were emerging but I found it extremely difficult to make follow-up questions as at the same time the conversation led in different directions.

On designing the interviews, there was an effort to form questions on the basis of what truly needs to be known. The interview schedule consisted of a number of broad areas to be explored covering participants’ experiences as student teachers and learners in relation to challenging behaviour. The questions asked in the first interviews aimed to obtain information on their decision to go into teaching and their expectations in relation to difficult
forms of behaviour and their role. Questions were also asked about whether they felt prepared to deal with problems of behaviour; whether there are relevant courses at university; and if so whether they encounter difficulties when they try to apply what they learn at university. Subsequent interviews contained questions on the trainees' views on the different aspects of the initial training course and how useful they had been during the year. In addition trainees were asked to comment on their experiences as trainee teachers and on their experiences of their placement schools. They were asked about their relationships with their fellow coursemates, supervisors and schools teachers about their aim and conceptions of teaching and learning in relationship to their hard-to-manage pupils as well as how well they saw themselves as fitting in the schools (See appendix seven for a sample of questions).

When I began to have a clearer picture of the teaching practices of the student teachers ten interviews were conducted with ten lecturers of the university that taught various subject lessons (e.g. teaching methodology of different subjects, philosophy of education, educational psychology, etc.). For stimulating the discussion during these interviews issues that had arisen from the analysis of the students’ teaching practice were used. Supervisors were asked questions such as: Is it possible to provide student teachers with preparation to cope with behavioural problems? Should they be prepared for behaviour management? Schools teachers were also interviewed. They were asked whether they felt satisfied with the current school placement arrangements, their cooperation with the students and their supervisors and their perceived role in the practicum. All participants were asked about their suggestions for improvement.

5.4 Issues of Validity

The purpose of this section is to deal with whether or not the findings collected with the above mentioned methods are sufficiently credible and trustworthy; that is whether the research has grasped adequately those aspects of the world that it has sought to study (Maxwell, 1996). It will address some of the strategies employed for assessing the methodological rigour and analytical defensibility of the qualitative paradigm in this study.

The problem at issue refers to a more encompassing problem permeating qualitative paradigm and which refers to criticism from both inside and outside sources. On the one
hand, positivists allege that the product of qualitative inquiry is ‘fiction, not science’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 cited in Anfara et al., 2002: 28). In particular case study research has been criticised as lacking a high degree of control (Shaughnessy et al., 2006). On the other hand there are some qualitative researchers who criticise qualitative methods for being too positivistic (Anfara et al., 2002).

These criticisms led to considerable controversy about standards for the design and conduct of qualitative research (Howe and Eisenhart, 1990 cited in Anfara et al., 2002). Analysing this debate is beyond the scope of this chapter (see e.g. Anfara et al., ibid. and Winter, 2000 for a review of such a debate). Discussing, though, how the present study dealt with validity threats is necessary. The discussion will be structured around four criteria of evaluating qualitative studies.

The four criteria addressed in quantitative studies – internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity – were recasted by different researchers for the needs of naturalistic research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability typology whilst other constructions of validity for qualitative inquiry entail ensuring a fit between research questions, data collection procedures and analytic techniques (Eisenhart and Howe, 1992), as well as prolonged engagement and persistent observations, triangulation, clarifying researcher bias and thick description (Creswell and Miller, 2000 cited in Anfara et al., 2002).

Interestingly all of these varieties of validities have failed to sufficiently call attention to the issue of publicly disclosing decisions made during the research process by which raw data were collected and the processes by which they were compressed and rearranged so as to be credible (Lincoln, 2001 cited in Anfara et al., 2002). This is supported by Constas (1992), who argued that researchers should make all aspects of their analysis open to public inspection since the privatisation of qualitative analysis issues is one main reason for criticising the credibility and status of the qualitative paradigm.

In this study, issues of data trustworthiness were tackled according to a number of the above criteria. Specifically, to guarantee the quality of this study, the following measures were taken: the principle of triangulation, thick description, clarifying researcher bias, and disclosure of decisions. These were applied in an effort to rule out threats of validity which
concerned issues of design, the data collection methods, interpretation and the extent to which the natural subjectivity of the researcher shapes the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

A sound design means that choices about the methodology and methods link logically to the conceptual framework and research questions and to the overall strategy of the study (ibid.). Similarly, Maxwell (1992) argues that validity is relative and has to be assessed in relation to the purposes of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions. Sections 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.1.3 provided such a justification of the research design choices on epistemological and philosophical grounds.

In relation to the data collection methods, it should be noted that each is associated with limitations. In each method particular sources of error or bias exist (Maxwell, 1996). For instance, observations can provide information on different aspects in a school setting that cannot be produced by other methods, such as non-verbal communication and the language used (Foster, 1996). Also observers are able to see what participants sometimes cannot (Foster, 1996). On the other hand, the main difficulty is that observation itself can be a partial and selective view of the reality under study. Also people tend to change their behaviour when they are observed. The ‘observer effects’ (Brown and Dowling, 1998) constitute one of the main criticisms of observation, in terms of validity. The other lies in the area of reliability. The absence of statistical analysis in qualitative observations means that the researcher is unable to ensure that his/her findings can be generalised and applied to groups other the one under study (Foster, 1996).

Similar criticisms pertain to interviews. Finding a balance between maintaining control of the interview and allowing the interviewee the space to re-define the topic under investigation and thus to generate novel insights for the researcher (Willig, 2001) can be a potential limitation of the method. Moreover the possible effects of interviewer’s social identity can impact negatively on the interviewees.

In response to these concerns, certain procedures were followed. The first concerned dealing with particular threats of each one of the methods. The second relates to the effort of recording data in the most accurate way. The third relates to triangulation.
In relation to interviews, the first step was to make sure that they were compatible with the study’s aims. There was an effort for the right questions to be asked. Also an effort was made to eliminate interviewer’s authority on the interviewees. Developing a good rapport with them and making them feel friendly towards the research was easier than expected: Being of the same nationality, ethnicity and gender, having (roughly) similar age and sharing the same identity – that of the student teacher - helped me to familiarise with student teachers cultural milieu (Willig, 2001). Motivation towards the study was achieved by presenting the research as one significant opportunity for them to share their difficulties and corresponding suggestions which in turn could positively affect teacher education programmes.

In relation to observation there was an effort to separate observed data from noting down judgments. In addition an effort was made to convince beginning teachers, in particular, that I was not there to ‘watch’ them or to assess them as teachers. This was eased by my personal amiable relationship with the teachers built in mutual respect and trust.

As far as the data recording is concerned an effort was made to record data in the most accurate way in order to provide a good description of the situation under investigation. The inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data can be a major threat to valid description (Maxwell, 1996). For this reason observations and interviews were audio and video recorded and verbatim transcribed; processes which largely solve this problem (Maxwell, ibid.) Where video recording of observations was not possible, an effort was made for the observational notes to be as more detailed and concrete as possible. The audio recording of the interviews gave me the opportunity to listen to the interviews and after transcribing them to revisit them as many times as needed. Video recording allowed me to observe again and again, with no rush, the complexity of the teaching situations. It was a means of thick description that provided rich data. Rich data are detailed enough to provide a revealing picture of what is going on since they give the context of an act, how it develops and the intentions that organise it (Denzin, 1989).

Both interview and observation data were also validated through triangulation. When relying on a single source of data, the risk of an undetected error increases (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Therefore the principle of triangulation is used to increase the reliability
and internal validity of a study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). This is by making use of different types and sources of data collection.

The combination of the two methods, in itself, provided grounds for their validation. Each technique revealed different aspects of the situation under study and combining them was useful in overcoming their drawbacks. Participant observation allowed me to observe situations described in interviews and thus become aware of distortions presented by the participants in the interview (Foster 1996). By interviewing participants, on the other hand, I could verify some of the information gathered by observations. For instance they may genuinely believe what they are saying, but actual observation of what they do might well produce a different picture (McNeill, 1990). Diverse kind of data that lead to the same conclusion can add confidence to that conclusion (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) In this sense, limitations in one method were compensated for by the strengths of a complementary one (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Triangulation, also, enriches case study research because it allows the researcher to approach the case from a number of different perspectives. Case studies integrate information from diverse sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Willig, 2001). Collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods reduces the risk of systemic biases due to a specific method (Maxwell, 1996) (Appendix eight illustrates an example of the matrix which was constructed to ensure the internal validity of the study).

Another threat concerns interpretation and the threat to be ruled out here is imposing one’s interpretation, one’s own framework or meaning rather than understanding the perspective of the participants (Maxwell, 1996). Hence, I tried to be conscious of the danger of going native: Over-identification with the respondents and mere acceptance of what they say forecloses opportunities to develop more encompassing and varied interpretations (Delamont, 1992; Woods, 1979).

For this reason, I tried to listen for the participants’ perspectives, and avoid asking leading questions. Also, responses were validated by participants. In most cases summaries were given to the participants of their responses. They were invited to make changes, if necessary and to add any further information or comments. Testing my interpretive constructions in this
way was important in establishing evidence of credibility and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Clarifying my thinking, purposes, and beliefs – developing my reflexivity as a researcher, in other words – was a necessary part of this process.

5.5 Role of Researcher and Reflexivity

Qualitative research does not use standardised research instruments and procedures (Breuer et al., 2002). The researcher is the primary “instrument” of data analysis and his or her self and background have a significant bearing on the interpretation of the data (Delamont, 1992). The way in which the ‘self’ of the researcher is used as a research tool is both a strength and defining characteristic of ethnographic approaches (Pollard, 1996) as well as the main reason for its low reputation (Breuer et al., 2002). Given the close involvement of the researcher at every point of the research process, there is an obvious question about the extent to which he or she influences the findings (Pollard, 1996). For these reasons, reflexivity is deemed essential (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Russell & Kelly, 2002; Stake, 1995 cited in Watt, 2007).

Reflexivity is not a method. Rather it permeates the research design from its beginning. It is a quality of awareness in which researchers do not suppress their primary experience nor they allow themselves to be overwhelmed by it. Rather they raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process (Reason as cited in Maxwell, 1996). The goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate reactivity but to understand it and to use it productively. In this way reflexivity can add to the trustworthiness of the study (Watt, 2007). The next sections will examine two reflexive accounts, one of data collection and the other for data analysis.

5.5.1 A Reflexive Account for Data Collection and Analysis

A reflexive account for data collection includes researcher as the “instrument” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995), hence his/her influence on the setting and individuals studied, power relations and rapport building. In relation to all these issues, I did find many of the things I expected, but also discovered a great deal about things I did not expect.

In relation to observation and in particular with the beginning teachers, I thought observation would be clear and simple – an observation at the school of persons I know and who know
me. However beginning teachers expressed to an extent feelings of insecurity about my presence in their classrooms. These highlighted the power relationships that exist in any researcher and participant situation. At that time I was not only a friend. I was the researcher and should not take for granted that they would consider my observation as non judgemental. However this anxiety settled down as the research progressed.

Things were more straightforward with the student teachers and the children. I made sure I showed the video camera to the children before the lesson started so they would get familiar with it. Indeed after a while they got bored with and not impressed by it. I left the camera on my knees or a table and moved it discreetly looking at it from the view screen. In this sense I would argue that my low-key role extended over a long period was very slight. It seemed that in the passing flow of the teaching practice there were more important things for beginning and student teachers to deal with than to think of the research and my presence.

My assumptions about the interview process were also disrupted after entering the field. For instance, I took for granted that watching the videos would yield rich interview data. Yet, participants found it extremely challenging to talk about their practice in more reflective terms.

Dealing with preconceptions had also been a major challenge. Consider for instance the following interview extract:

I: Is this true that she [supervising lecturer] has no experience of kindergarten teaching?
ST1: yes I wanted to say this. She has finished her degree in literature. She had been teaching at secondary education schools
ST2: yes she herself has said that she has no experience of the area of kindergarten school
I: She is responsible for your evaluation.
ST1: Of course, without having a relationship with kindergarten teaching..
ST2: but no one has a relationship. Who do you think has a relationship with the kindergarten school? No one is a kindergarten teacher (student teachers extract)

While coding the interview and in the process of reflecting I realised my preconception about lecturers who had not worked at kindergarten schools. This alerted me to this preconception and helped me in the next interviews to avoid it. Thus when the issue came up again, from the participants’ part, I held a more neutral position by making a neutral comment:
ST1: Fani, once went to ask K. [supervising kindergarten teacher] about management problems. Ok so what, she has not much experience of teaching from what I know.
ST2: she must have one or two years.
I: I see, I still have not talked to her yet (student teachers extract).

In this way, I gradually understood how my personal experiences could be an asset rather than a liability. Being reflexive, therefore, although it did not provide me with instant answers and solutions alerted me towards the ways I might influence the interview.

As regards interviews, there was a conscious and deliberate attempt to establish rapport with the subjects of the research in order to empathise and understand their perspectives, actions and interactions. This played a crucial role in collecting certain data. In one case one of the student teachers talked to me informally about a personal health problem and how disappointed he was by his supervisor. According to him she did not show understanding for his problem. In addition he commented on his problems in relation to the team collaboration. He ended by saying “I am telling you these because you know these”. In another instance, I was interviewing one beginning teacher and friend. I used to stay at her house and when we go to our beds we started talking about the children. After I switched off the tape recorder she told me she had decided to confess to me something. I switched on again the tape recorder. She said:

At some point when I could not handle him I threaten him that I will tell his father about the markers I had given him. [After an incidence his father had forbidden him to accept anything by the teachers] I was then thinking he confided something in me, something he did not want, and I told him that I will not tell it and then I threaten him that I will. I still feel so bad about it (Beginning teacher extract).

Researcher as “instrument” has not only been a prime component of the data collection. In qualitative research, there is a great emphasis on the role of the researcher in the construction and analysis of the data (Berg, 2007). All research is influenced by the ideology of the researcher and it is good practice to provide a clear statement of methodological stance in terms of the values and beliefs of the researcher (BERA, 2000 as cited in Halliday, 2002). According to Clough and Barton (1995) the assumptions researchers have are inevitably
present. Reflexivity provides researchers with the means of understanding how the values and expectations they bring to the study may influence their conclusions.

Interpretation was informed by my background and interest in the field of teacher and inclusive education and by my knowledge and experience as a previous student of the University of Crete. Recognising thus my bias and preconceptions and how these can affect interpretations was a necessary part of the analytical process.

First, my ideas had got to do with the theoretical lens within which the study was couched. I entered the field expecting some tensions among, for instance, the aims. At the same time these expectations became points of attention. Realising them helped me to safeguard to an extent my analysis from preconceptions and bias.

5.6 Ethics

Qualitative research is carried out in real situations with real people. By its very nature, therefore, it brings with it a greater likelihood that ethical issues will arise (Konza, 1998). In the present study, these issues associated with informed consent, confidentiality, participants’ involvement as well as with issues that arose from the ‘on-the-spot personal interaction’ (Holbrook, 1997). The first three issues were engaged with at the outset of the research. The fourth surfaced during fieldwork.

In relation to consent all participants were told about the main features, that is the how and why of the research at the beginning. As case studies are concerned with the details of individual participants’ life events there was a particular sensitivity to issues around confidentiality and anonymity (Willig, 2001). Both were assured. This was through changing participants and schools names. Also participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the study. Given that the study was potentially obtrusive to the trainees and teachers I emphasised to them that the research was purely voluntary and that they could leave it whenever they felt the need. Furthermore participants were involved in the research to the extent possible. Although they were not supplied with detailed drafts of how their cases were being written up, they were presented with summaries of the analyses allowing for their validation and ensuring that the emerging analysis is grounded in their reality.
Except from these themes, a number of ethical considerations were raised during fieldwork. These were challenging in that they were subtle, unexpected and had to be dealt with on the spot. They were related to the effect of the research, to my role as researcher and to what I call ‘what you would do’ issues.

First, I did not expect the effect of the research. In some cases my discussions with participants motivated them towards certain actions. In one instance, we were discussing with one of the student teachers, at school, on the fact that she had never discussed the issue of her challenging pupil with her supervising teacher. At one point she asked me ‘so what do you think should I go and ask her now?’ I replied ‘why not?’ and indeed she went at that time to the school’s kindergarten teacher office where the supervisor was sitting and for the first time they discussed the issue; although the student returned dissatisfied as the supervisor according to her opinion did not tell her anything important.

Another instance concerns the discussion during the preparation meeting. The day before, the student teachers and I watched together their video teaching and commented on the fact that a child did not listen to the school’s teacher. This incidence initiated for the first time a discussion on challenging behaviour during preparation meeting which lasted over an hour. In another case a beginning teacher after discussing with me that she does not know how her colleague deals with the challenging child, she decided to ask her and so she did.

In another instance, one student teacher and his supervising kindergarten teacher had an intense disagreement in relation to children’s behaviour after the teaching had finished. The next day it happened to meet her at university and she asked me ‘what my opinion was’ and ‘what, according to my opinion, can she do to improve her mentorship towards the students’. At the moment I felt overwhelmed by her question. My spontaneous response was to tell her that this is a big issue and hopefully my research would yield some useful insights towards this aspect. However although I felt I was not giving her much I added that what I saw as positive was her supportive attitudes to her student teachers and the interest she showed in improving their cooperation.

Another difficulty came by the beginning teachers. Many times I came to difficult position when they asked me ‘what would you do’ (Konza, 1998) questions. In one case the challenging child wanted to hold a bottle of water during the learning process. The beginning
teacher allowed him to do so. After a while, though, the challenging child made another child wet all over. After watching this incidence on video she asked me ‘what would you have done in my place? Would you have taken the bottle from him?’ My response was as follows:

*I: What would I have done? Now, that’s a good question. Theoretically speaking someone could say that you should have taken the bottle. On the other hand I understand that you had your reasons for not doing so. BT: If I had taken it and as I know Manolis the issue would not have been solved, he would have created a big problem to me.* (Beginning teacher interview extract).

In another case I felt embarrassed in relation to the response of one of the beginning teachers towards the challenging child. She smacked him on the bottom. I felt so bad that my spontaneous reaction was to turn the camera off. Retrospectively thinking the reason I think I did it was because I found this very personal. I felt I intruded her classroom and the need to ‘protect ‘my participant for a behaviour I thought was inappropriate.

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However characterising a behaviour as inappropriate or not was not a black-and-white decision. This incidence could not be characterised as clearly right or as clearly wrong. So it was not easy to make a moral decision about it. As a researcher this has been the most difficult lesson to learn. Thinking in terms of black and white in personal life can be useful in some situations. But in research, acknowledging the many "grey," or in-between, areas possible in classrooms was ultimately the biggest ethical challenged I faced. This was because a certain action could be right or wrong depending on the context. In the case of this incidence the first I thought was that the behaviour was inappropriate. On a second “reading’ though I saw the second side of the issue. The teacher was really frustrated by the child’s behaviour, unequipped to deal with it. Having observed the teacher before, I judged that there
was not an issue of, for instance, child abuse. Setting this incidence in its context it felt that this was more like a mother’s reactions to her child. This though does not mean that I justify her action. Rather I can understand it.

A second, and related, consideration was an ethical dilemma raised by this incidence. I asked myself what I would have done in a case I would come up with a real case of a child at risk of harm. In case of such a dilemma presented and taking in mind the young age of the kindergarten children, I would pass this information on to a professional who can protect the child at risk even when this may mean losing the trust of the participants of the study.

In all these ways I felt torn between considering the best interests of my participants and reporting findings which I really thought were useful in providing insights to my area of investigation. On the other hand of course this reaction in a way validated that the participants acted as they would have acted even without my presence. In any case, I had to deal with the question of how do you deal with something your participants would not see as flattering, especially when you know them personally. Mainly I tried to do this by using in the analysis categories to classify these responses that were not judgmental. I called these the ‘real reality’.

Similar feelings were created by interview data in which some participants portrayed other participants in an unflattering manner:

ST Fani is good in her teaching. The way she does is fits her but something goes wrong with her as a personality.
I: I see. Well I do not know her personally ST: Neither do I but there is something wrong

As it can be seen in these interviews comments I tried to maintain a neutral position by replying for instance “mmm”, “I see’ etc.

A last issue which I had not thought during the research concerned the responsibility towards the participants (http://www.sahealthinfo.org/ethics/ethicsqualitative.htm). That is the question of whose interests would be served by my study (Wolcott, 1995 cited in Watt, 2007) and issues of reciprocity. I knew I wanted my study to contribute something sensible to the field of teacher education but how would my participants benefit from their involvement in my study was not as straightforward. Ideally there should be reciprocity in what participants give and what they receive from participation in a research project.
I could not give my participants anything more than an opportunity to talk about their problematisations and the opportunity of knowing that future student teachers might be benefit from their suggestions. In any case I was indebted to my participants for sharing with their experiences and I let them know.

All the above mentioned issues were dealt more or less successfully. What though was for sure is that lessons were learned. These issues heightened my realisation of the many ethical issues surrounding the practice of qualitative research and became lessons for the future.

5.7 Generalisation

The chapter will conclude with discussing issues of generalisation. Generalisation is important as it links to the issue of the study’s value. There is a debate on generalisation and on qualitative research’s effect on policy changing. In particular, a common criticism of the case study is that it provides little basis for scientific generalisation (Chetty, 1996). Yet, case study research aims to expand and analyse theories and not to enumerate frequencies (Yin, 1989). Analytic generalisation, usually, is based on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases. The focus is on a generalisation to theory rather than to a population (Yin, ibid.; Stake, 1995). The detailed exploration of a particular case can generate insights into processes, which in turn can give rise to theoretical formulations and hypotheses (Yin, ibid.).

In multisite case studies the theoretical formulations are developed and refined on the basis of the comparative analysis (Strauss& Corbin, 1998) of a series of cases. With each new case, the emerging theory is modified in order to be able to account for all instances associated with the phenomenon under investigation. Eisenhardt (1989) was one of the first to support multiple cases theory-building properties. She found that multiple case study encourages the researcher to study patterns common to cases and theory and to avoid chance associations. Cross-case comparisons force researchers to go beyond initial impressions and take a more in-depth structured approach with the data (Yin, 1989). However Adelman et al., (1976) argue that it is tempting to argue that the accumulation of case studies allows theory-building via tentative hypotheses culled from the examination of single instances. But the generalisations produced in case study are no less legitimate when about the instance, rather
than about the class from which the instance is drawn (i.e. generalising about the case, rather from it). Therefore the understandings generated by case study are significant in their own right (Adelman et al., 1976).

In any case, this significance is not stronger or weaker than those of experimental research. Rather it is different and it is based on different epistemological views. Case study might be seen in the context of an interpretive tradition whilst experimental research in the context of a natural science tradition. The most important difference in these views is in the way claims are made against truth and in the demands made upon the reader. Whilst experimental research guarantees the veracity of its generalisations by reference to formal theories and hands them on intact to the reader, case study research invites the reader to underwrite the account, by appealing to his tacit knowledge of human situations (Adelman et al., 1976).

In this light it can be argued that the theoretical analysis of processes which influence the development of teachers’ identities will be relevant well beyond the parameters of the case. This claim rests on theoretical inference and on researcher’s invitation to readers to engage in reflective application of the analysis to their own lives (Pollard, 1996).

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter aimed to generate a discussion of the conceptual and methodological choices of the study. A qualitative multi-case study design was considered to fit firmly the study’s questions, purpose and theoretical background. Qualitative inquiry emphasises the importance of the contexts. Activity theory also stresses the importance of the interaction of persons and contexts. I have addressed the research sites, the sampling strategy and the participants. I have also discussed issues of validity, generalisation, ethics and reflexivity. These issues were useful in ensuring that the empirical fieldwork was informed by a sound and coherent methodological design. They were also useful in raising issues, problematisations and in providing lessons for the future in relation to the complexities and challenges of fieldwork. One such significant lesson was that fieldwork represents a demanding craft that involves continually dealing with ethical dilemmas (Punch, 1998). In the next chapter, I address issues around the analysis procedures that I followed. This discussion is in line with qualitative research methodology and activity theory as a theoretical framework.
Chapter Six

The Process of Analysis

6.1 Introduction

Interview transcripts, observation field notes and videos were the main data sources for building up qualitative analysis. Analysis is the process of understanding and representing ‘what’s there’ in all its complexity and richness (Marshall, 1981). This process has been grounded in the theory used to frame the study. This frame was provided by activity theory. Activity theory provides concrete analytical tools with which to conceptualise data.

In relation to the analytical procedures a multi layer approach was followed. With the use of constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) patterns of challenge and support in the facets of the student teaching context were first identified as in thematic analysis. These patterns of challenge and support were then put back together and connected to student teachers’ construction of the teaching self within the context of their transition between school and university: That is the next phase analysis drew upon the activity theoretical analytical tools.

Taking account of Bryman and Burgess’ (1994) skepticisms that qualitative data analysis in particular has been ignored by general texts on research methods despite allocating space to data collection and Attride-Stirling’s (2001 cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006) assertion that qualitative researchers need to include the often-omitted ‘how’ they did their analysis in their reports the next sections will try to make this process as transparent as possible. In addition explanatory material included in appendices will be used as a means of illustrating the ways data were organised, analysed and interpreted.

6.2 The Process of Analysis

Analysis of the data started long before the formal data collection phase. This early analysis included ideas from the literature, the initial inquiry themes as well as personal
preconceptions. However there was a phase during which the main emphasis was on the analysis.

This phase was developed within a multi-layered framework which included two stages. The first involved identifying episodes of interactions and the pedagogic reality of student teachers with their pupils with challenging behaviour as in thematic analysis. However examining a student teacher-child interaction in its immediate context did not provide me with information regarding the quality of interaction since it omitted a consideration of contextual features that enabled or hindered this interaction.

Therefore extending the analysis further at the institutional level, allowed an examination of issues which were not captured at the previous stage. This was in accord with the research questions and the theoretical framework of the sociocultural perspective on learning. Within this framework it was necessary to examine pupil-student teacher interaction in relation to the practicum context. It should be also noted that these stages should not be seen as distinct and separate from each other. Rather it is a shift in focus within one unified process of activity theory analysis. As more familiarisation with data, through thematic analysis was gained, the more confident I felt to apply the theoretical tools. For reasons, though, of clarity the two stages will be discussed here separately.

6.2.1 Thematic Analysis

Before using the analytical potential of the theoretical framework, data were read and themes identified as in thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These patterns or themes involved identifying episodes of interactions between student and beginning teachers and their challenging pupils. They captured something important about the data in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke ibid.)

Initial thematic codes were identified using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thematic analysis is one of the methods that depend on constant comparative analysis processes to develop ways of understanding human phenomena within the context in which they are experienced (Thorne, 2000).
This involves data processing by open encoding, axial encoding and selective encoding deleted (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994). These techniques were chosen as appropriate since they are considered capable of capturing the interpretive experiences of teachers (Strauss and Corbin, ibid.) and because the study’s purpose was explanatory and contextual (Eisenhardt, 1989) rather than confirming and testing a hypothesis.

Open coding involved the identification of the various issues brought up by the interviewees and dividing them into categories. It is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The initial step in this process was reading all data. Reading and rereading the data forces the researcher to become familiar with those data in intimate ways (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Delamont, 1992). During this process I examined what is there and labelled it (Patton 1990, cited in Anfara et al., 2002). At the beginning analysis was detailed chunk of meaning-by- chunk of meaning (Marshall, 1981). This was to generate a good number of initial categories.

I begun by staying very close to the interviewee’s own words, and in some cases just copying the words. Many initial reflective remarks were also taken down. Many of those were transformed later to codes. For instance the following segment:

*I am not allowed to participate. However I do intervene some times especially when I see that the children get mad, right? Or that they get upset, or when they need to relax (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).*

was coded as ‘*I am not allowed to participate. However I do so when children misbehave’.*

The marginal remark taken down was as following: ‘*So despite not being allowed to do so, school’s kindergarten teachers do intervene during student teachers’ lesson. Why not assigning them a formal role?’*

This process of coding was lied in the decision of using either a bottom-up approach eg, Frith and Gleeson, 2004, cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006) or by creating a “start list” (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of codes. It was decided that the use of “in vivo codes” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was most appropriate. However it should be noted that researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum (Braun and Clarke, 2006). That is, as the analytic process
progressed from description to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 1990 cited in ibid.), it was necessary to relate data to previous literature and activity theory analytic preconceptions (see appendix nine, ten and eleven for examples of coding at the initial and later stages of the analysis).

Once codes began to accumulate, the process of grouping them or categorising them under more abstract terms began. Categories enable the analyst to reduce the number of units he/she is working with (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and are defined as having some common element or property (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). A number of these categories and the codes grouped in them formed at this stage were as following: Emotional and behavioural difficulties (types of difficulties, severity, aetiology); Kindergarten teacher’s role/Views of the job (as of public character, or as of vocation); Degree content (School placements, theoretical modules, evaluation); (Dilemmas, theoretical underpinnings, whole class perspective, support); Implications for change (At practical level, at theoretical level); Approaches to dealing with emotional & behavioural difficulties (Focus on class, focus on individual); Exclusion in inclusion. These codes cannot be regarded as exhaustive, but rather as closely related to the study’s interest and research questions. In addition categories were at a law level of abstraction (Willig, 2001) and more descriptive than analytical and rarely their interrelationships were reflected upon. These were sorted into files by cutting and pasting using the word processor.

Gradually and as more familiarisation with data was being gained, axial coding was used, that is the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This refers to an additional review of the data during which data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Asking questions and making comparisons (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) facilitated this process. Asking questions helped to reveal relationships among the categories. For instance, in relation to the following extract below:

Especially when you start something and you see that you get bewildered. Well it is not the best thing to happen to you especially when you are being watched (student teacher extract).
Questions were asked such as: ‘What does evaluation mean?’ ‘Why it is defined as ‘being watched’?’ ‘Why does evaluation carry a negative meaning?’ ‘How does it affect student teachers’ responses and what are its consequences on children with challenging behaviour?’. The making of comparisons involved assigning properties and dimensions to the concepts. These are characteristics that allow for the similarities and differences to be brought out so that concepts can be refined. In relation to the above excerpt the evaluation category was compared alongside the following dimensions: Does evaluation carry always a negative meaning or are there particular conditions under which it becomes negative? Under what conditions do participants see this in a negative light? In what other ways could it be seen? These questions led to refining the general category of evaluation as ‘evaluation as means of supervision’ and ‘evaluation as a means of improving practice’.

Refined categories made easier the conceptualisation of data. Conceptualisation of data involved also identifying salient themes, recurring ideas and patterns (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Through interrogating the data (Delamont, 1992) and reflecting on the conceptual framework analysis moved on to making generalisations (ibid.) Generating patterns codes involved looking for threads that tie together bits of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For example, if two or three informants say independently that they are so stressed by the evaluation that they do not care to engage with challenging behaviour, these bits of data may suggest an important variable to check out. Then, all variables were considered and all together come into an initial plot of the terrain.

Finally, if the researcher in a multicase study comes across a similar profile of the evaluation, or, alternatively finds no similarity at all in similar conditions, we have the first threads of cross-case comparisons. Surfacing common themes and directional processes lays the groundwork for cross-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These help researchers elaborate a schema for understanding local incidents and interactions. Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1994) call this selective coding: A sorting process leading to the core category and formation of a conceptual theory.
6.2.2 Linking Activity Theory and Data Analysis

The theoretical tools offered by the theoretical framework of the research played around this point a significant role and moved analysis further; from getting to know the data to its conceptualisation. The previous phase presented a working set of codes that described the phenomena in transcribed field notes. However, just naming or classifying what is out there is usually not enough (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The analysis so far, had only implicitly contrasted the formation of teaching and learning practices in university with that of the school. Thus, in this phase I focused and extended analysis into the contradiction of the two. The differences between school and university systems, i.e. their object, motivation, tools, division of labour and expectations became all analytical categories that directed analysis. In the present case study analyses these categories were fruitful in drawing attention to significant differences between school and university.

In the case of the present study, student teachers were conceptualised as the subjects. The categories ‘learning of challenging pupils’, ‘learning of student teachers’ and ‘passing the course’, for instance, became the objects of the system. In a similar way, categories of the previous phase such as the ‘lesson plan’ became a ‘tool’, whilst the ‘school’s kindergarten teachers’, ‘teaching assistant’, ‘pupils’, ‘challenging pupils’ ‘student teachers’, ‘supervising kindergarten teachers’ and ‘supervising lecturers’ were coded as the ‘community’. As regards the ‘division of tasks’, this meant the role that each student teacher played in the pursuit of the object of teaching practice. The rules related to the explicit and implicit regulations norms and conventions that constrained actions and interactions in activity systems (Engeström, 2001). These also directed attention to the discourse data of each participant to locate contradictions. This was by means of cultural models. Cultural models capture how language is related to broader ways of doing and knowing (Gee, 1999).

At this point research questions were revisited again in order to direct analysis. The school and university practices and discourses that afford or constrain the development of inclusive practices for children with challenging behaviour became the main analytical categories through which the data were processed. In this way the theoretical scheme was applied to the data, to each category of data. An instance of these multilayer analytical ‘readings’ concerns the following segment:
Initially this segment was coded as ‘practical considerations’. In the next readings it became a code that was grouped under the more general category of inclusion to which issues of focus, as well as issues of a whole class perspective (see e.g. Ainscow, 1999), mentioned at other points of the interview, were pertinent. At the end it was coded as ‘the one and the rest cultural model’ included in the more analytical category ‘constraining cultural models on challenging behaviour’.

Activity theory considers such impediments within the performance on subjects in an activity as contradictions, clashes or dissonance (Roth and Tobin, 2002). Through these concepts, I tried to analyse some of the underlying contradictions that produced disruptions and hence necessitate innovations to school placement teaching practice. For instance student teachers’ statements such ‘no we do not have cooperation among us’ in relation to planning management approaches for challenging pupils although such a consistent approach is considered as ‘very important’ revealed a tension in the element of the division of labour at university which seemed to constrain student teachers from developing inclusive practices for their challenging pupils.

That is, in identifying contradictions the focus was on data that reflected tensions, contrasts, denials, or oppositions (Murphy et al., 2006). For instance the following segment:

In a traditional classroom you cannot function with inclusive education criteria. There is a need of special criteria. How do you integrate these children in the traditional classroom? You need a new classroom. Another philosophy, another function, you need ad hoc curriculum. Here we talk about ad hoc curriculum for every child separately. (Supervising lecturer extract).

Was coded as following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional classrooms</th>
<th>inclusive classrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot include challenging children</td>
<td>can include challenging children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then contradictions were categorised according to elements of the activity system. The previous contradiction was categorised within the element of the rules. The rules and the
ways of traditional kindergarten classrooms contradict the inclusion of challenging children.

In a similar way, the search was for all the factors that contextualise student teachers’ individual actions within the nodes, between the nodes as well as between the nodes of the university and school systems.

These contradictions then led me to think about the nature of the school placement as an activity system and how this influenced participants’ identities in relation to children’s conduct difficulties. Once this central category was developed, selective coding had been achieved. The core category “disconnected partnership” was an abstraction of the other categories, fitted the data and provided explanations for the phenomenon under study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). That is, it mediated in particular ways student teachers’ various kinds of identities.

In accord with the second research question, the accounts provided by the participants in relation to this category were also interrogated to identify how they represent themselves as subjects in the two activity systems of the university and school or in the disconnected partnership of school placement. Attention was paid to statements that began, for instance with ‘I’. The following elements were examples that identified from the accounts as mediating their senses of selves: time spent in teaching; beliefs on children’s ownership; school’s kindergarten teachers’ stance; supervision. The following accounts are typical examples of the way in which descriptions that included the above elements were framed:

*Children are not mine. I am not their teacher, to start telling them off* (Student teacher extract)

*I felt like a student. Even though I entered the class I did not feel that I will be teaching in the future. I was stressed to do well the teaching, to get a good grade. This.* (Beginning teacher extract)

In these ways the framework allowed for a deeper investigation of the data and was used to “expand, transform and reconceptualise data opening up more diverse analytical possibilities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). That is, it set the stage for the more abstract conceptualisation (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) of the data, interpreting and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Patterns and
recurrences were understood (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and the formation of a core category was achieved.

All the above procedures began with single case analysis, where each case was treated as unique, to proceed then to a cross case level which included comparisons among the cases. Qualitative cross-case study enables the analysis within and across different settings (Patton 2002). I first analysed each participant’s data separately to gain an understanding of their experiences from a single-case perspective. I then conducted a cross-case discussion of the findings. This allowed me to gain a general understanding of the study’s issue from different participants.

6.2.3 The Data Generation Process: Linking Observations and Interviews

Data about the school and university activity systems were generated through participants’ interviews and observations. Observations and interviews were the main data sources. They were linked. By linking observations and interviews attention was focused both on what has happened and on what participants said about what has happened (Becker and Geer, 1957). This is because observation, providing a rich experiential context, sensitises the researcher to subtleties which might pass unnoticed in an interview and forces him to raise continually new and different questions, which he brings to and tries to answer in succeeding observations (ibid.). At the same time interviewing is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of the impressions he or she gained through observation.

In particular the interviews were often based on incidents that had been observed previously in the lessons. In many cases I felt the need to interview participants involved in the scene I observed to get their thoughts on particular incidences. In this sense, observational data were to me what Delamont (1992: 122) described as the “sweetest jams and the most aromatic oils and spices”. Indeed, after a first period of general scanning I started paying attention to a more selective set of phenomena concerning the problems facing the student teacher group. Some of these problems, for instance, concerned their interactions with the challenging children and the schools’ kindergarten teachers as well as the relationships among them. At the same time participants during the interviews raised issues that became the focus of exploration in subsequent observations. Examples of these issues had to do with the preparation, supervision and feedback practices.
In this way data generation was ongoing and cyclical. Interviews helped me assess which of the incidences observed were relevant and important. At the same time observations helped me identify which of the issues arising from the interviews were important enough to become focus of the observations. So the data collection and generation process proceeded according to the analytical focus and interest as these were developed according to the observations and the interviews.

For instance observing the following incidence: “student teacher asks a child to change the date. Child gets troubled to find the correct…student teacher do not know how to help him. Children get noisy” led to the following interview discussion: “- so what happened when you changed the date? What exactly is supposed to happen. – yes, this is not quite clear to us. And we do not like this system. We preferred the old one in which the children were moving the arrow to the right day. Especially since many children cannot yet recognise/ read the cards with the days. They do recognise numbers but not the days.” In the next observations I tried to focus on incidences concerning the routines of the classrooms and if and how student teachers’ knowledge of these routines affect their role in class and their responses towards misbehaviour.

In another incidence, one beginning teacher described of how her challenging pupil did not want to sit in the circle and he wanted to play by the shop-corner with two of his classmates. She described that she allowed him to do so because he was created to her a problem and “since schools are almost about to close I do not push them a lot”. This statement focused subsequent observations into possible forms of what later became the ‘internal inclusion’ category.

In Danai’s and Stella’s case when Achilleas (challenging child) stands up, yells, shouts, it is the teaching assistant who approaches and tells him “Achilleas sit down”. When he starts eating his lunch she will be the one to say “we do not eat now, it’s lesson time”. When he lies on the floor, she will go to get him and when he gets noisy she will intervene to tell him to be quiet; whilst the student teacher continues the lesson. These observational data led to a series of interviews questions and a further set of subsequent observations to verify these interviews concerning student teacher feelings of ownership and corresponding interactions towards children with challenging behaviour.
Similarly in another school when Elli (challenging child) misbehaves “the schools’ teacher says ‘Elli promised today that she will be good. She will now sit at the chair to think what she did’. She takes her from her hand and takes her to a chair outside the circle. Elli sits there. In the meantime the student teacher is showing pictures to the rest of the children”. Incidences like this were later discussed and revealed schools’ teachers interventions as an important mediational factor of student teachers’ experiences in the school placement classrooms.

By triangulating data, in this way I was able to compare the data I got through interviews and observations, gain a greater perspective about them and finally interpret them in a more insightful way. The two data types closely linked in the ways described above permitted me to develop a deeper understanding of how the study participants perceived their realities. They allowed me to make connections between events and perceptions of these events and to generate data to study the school placement activity system.

6.3 Data Display and Memo Writing

‘Memo writing’ and ‘data display’ were two key elements that were used in this analysis as additional analytic strategies. Memos allow the analyst to relate codes and to identify connections between emerging concepts. These elaborate the data and represent the first step in the emergence of theory (Strauss 1987). Notes and memos were written and tentative ideas were developed about categories and relationships throughout the analytical procedure. Their use was significant as they were analytical tools that permitted analysis to further. This was by stimulating critical thinking (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). At the beginning the analytic memos were little more that extension of the categories and some initial interpretation on how some of these categories may link. They were limited mostly on jotting down certain key words/concepts that become apparent to me and issues that were striking to me. Impressions seemed to dominate at this stage. Later on they became more analytical. (Appendix twelve shows two samples of descriptive and more analytical memos).

Data display is an organised assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking. It involves assembling the data into diagrammatic, pictorial, and matrix displays such as matrices, graphs, networks and charts in order to show what the data imply.
and in order to clarify the main direction of the analysis (Maxwell, 1996). Building up diagrams was a useful conceptual tool in that the relationships among categories were illustrated in a more direct and comprehensible way. They made ideas and analysis more visible and facilitated thinking about relationships among categories. They served the function of data reduction and the representation of data in a form that allows it to be grasped as a whole (Maxwell, 1996). These relationships started as very simple diagram which helped initially analysis to be focused to develop them to more analytical schemes attempted to explain inner workings and relationships. Similarly with the memos, and in parallel with the analysis, their form moved from simple to more complex ones (see appendix thirteen).

6.4 Conclusions

Method of analysis springs from a methodological position, from a worldview, from one’s view of one’s purpose and task, and therefore from one’s theoretical framework and perspective (Titscher et al., 2002). This study was informed by the activity theory frame. Engeström’s (1987) activity system was used to analyse what participants perceived as factors that affected their interactions with challenging children. The concept of contradictions was used to document and analyse the challenges teachers found in their activities. Analysis began with reading the data in order to gain an initial familiarisation. As familiarisation was gained data were coded and emergent themes identified as in grounded approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open, selective and axial coding were the coding procedures through which answers to the research questions were provided. What follows is a presentation of an emerging theory which shows the construction of the teaching self in the midst of the dynamic interaction of challenge and support, with illustrations extracted from the student and beginning teachers’ professional learning journeys (Tang, 2003).
Chapter Seven

The Findings

7.1 Introduction

Many children present kindergarten educators with behaviours which challenge. In this study these challenges took many forms. Yet, they had one common impact upon teaching and learning: teachers’ feelings of incompetence and children’s corresponding marginalisation. Prospective and beginning teachers often did not know how to help their children succeed in school. Children frequently disengaged from academic learning and experienced some form of exclusion from the social classroom processes. In brief, they were the children who most needed their kindergarten teachers to support them to engage in academic learning and in the development of socially acceptable behaviours; yet, they were the hardest for the teachers to approach.

Using an activity theory framework, this study explored how the teacher education system created and sustained this pedagogical reality. The framework provided an analysis of, jointly, the school and university discursive practices as key influences upon the ways in which prospective kindergarten teachers learn and practice (or do not practice) inclusively. Particular emphasis was given to the concept of identity. Identity has been both an analytic tool (Gee, 2001) for studying teacher training as well as the analytical outcome arising from that study. That is findings revealed that the kind of learning student teachers receive in making the transition from student teacher to teacher emerged as a strong mediating influence in determining the kinds of professional identities they develop. This then had a direct impact on their decisions with regard to children who ‘do not behave’.

From the data collected it was possible to highlight two overarching areas of the initial teacher education context that were identified as important in creating the climate for practice in the education of children with challenging behaviour. The first was the theoretical part of the programme; the second, the school placement component. In both areas, issues stemmed mainly from a discrepancy between training and school. In particular, two main issues of concern were recorded which constituted this discrepancy; on the one hand there was an absence of concern regarding challenging behaviour. On the other, there was a number of
contradictions between university and school with regard to the effort of both contexts working together in support of children who challenge (figure four). Both produced kindergarten teachers who make challenging children invisible.

In particular, trainee kindergarten teachers constructed ‘conflicting’ student teacher identities that hindered them from developing inclusive mindsets and practices for their pupils. The constraints they face and their corresponding identities are developed each in the next sections. First, the nature of the mainstream classroom forms of exclusion is demonstrated. This helps to direct analyses towards the contextual constraints that mediate these forms of exclusion. The status of theoretical modules on challenging behaviour is the first constraint that is discussed. Then analysis focuses on the contradictions that relate to the transitional component of the initial teacher education programme.

These contradictions were categorised around three main facets of the school placement: the organisational; the cultural; and the identity formation context. The first has to do with the concrete practices and norms along which the school placement is being practiced. The second emphasises the ways of thought that are bound up with those practices. The ‘identity formation’ context picks upon the identities found in these ways of thought and practices. All the contradictions encountered come within one or more of these contexts. Before though I move to this discussion, it should be noted that the examples that are quoted in this chapter are representative and typical of (usually) many similar examples in the data.
7.2 The ‘nonstop flight’ teaching norm

The research documented participants’ feelings of incompetence in relation to the behaviour of their hard to manage pupils. Student and beginning teachers declare themselves untrained to ensure that a challenging child’s needs are met during their teaching. They feel that their training as kindergarten teachers leaves them ill-equipped to cope with children’s difficult behaviour.

The majority of the participants faced similar issues of behaviour from the typical butting in and inappropriate loudness through to aggressive behaviours. In all cases, they faced significant challenges in the effort to deal with these forms of behaviour and were unsure of how to effectively address them. When children butted in, made noise, swore, or became aggressive participants “did not know how to treat them”. They “did not know how to behave towards them”. As one of the beginning teachers in sharing her experiences said:

I did not know how to deal with him [challenging child]. That is in the beginning he wouldn’t sit at all on the chair. And I got headaches. Should I force him and what if I make things worse? Shall I leave him alone and what if I make things worse? (Beginning teacher extract)

A student teacher recalled another dilemma:

Once he [challenging child] came in the middle of the circle and was jumping while I was teaching. And I did not know what to do: that is to carry on the lesson or not? To tell him to be quite? He wouldn’t listen to me. So I did not know what to do, that is I was in a difficult position. I do not know what I should do: To stop or to continue? I continue. I pretend I do not see this (Student teacher extract).

‘Pretending not seeing’ the challenging child has been a key phrase. It has been the direct consequence of participants’ perceived incompetence and the corresponding typical response in addressing behavioural issues arose by hard to manage children. Consequently children with challenging behaviour were left to get alone:

What happens is that you look first all the rest, the eighteen-nineteen, and about him [the challenging child], whatever he can do on his own (Student teacher extract).
He [challenging child] participates only if the teaching assistant tells him to do so. When, for example, she tells him ‘Achilleas come, sit on the chair’ (student teacher extract).

It is in this sense that student teachers teach in a way that does not encourage challenging children’s participation in the pedagogical process; what will be called from now on the ‘nonstop flight’ mode of teaching. In this mode of teaching participants struggled to continue their lesson. They continued the lesson for the majority dealing with challenging children in any way “so as the teaching can take place better” (Student teacher extract). This has been another key-phrase. As one of the beginning teachers recollected about school placement:

*The message was: “Take the child and do whatever you think so that the child will not destroy your teaching, so the supervisor will not see this”. Instead of telling us “you are student teachers, you have a challenging child, let’s see what can we do”, they were saying “it is your fault’. They were not putting emphasis on these children and these problems. It was like ‘we can go and hang for all they care’ (Beginning teacher extract).

In disentangling the non-stop flight metaphor the following patterns were of importance: children’s participation, children’s forms of removal from the class and student teachers’ knowledge of their challenging pupils.

In relation to children’s participation, this was far from active. Children were usually not paying attention to the pedagogical process. This included children misbehaving, wandering around the class, engaging with something else, and, even, leaving the class without student teachers, in some cases, noticing so (video and observation field extracts). In addition, when they did not wish to participate they were allowed to engage with something else. Also there were cases where participants themselves suggested the child to ‘engage with something else’ (observations and interviews extracts).

*We allow them to engage with something else as long as they do not upset the others (Student teacher extract).*

*I allow them to engage themselves with something else as long as they do not disturb the others or if the teaching is about something that is not very important (Beginning teacher extract).*

There were also cases in which children were excluded from the pedagogical process in more overt ways. These included the removal of the child from the circle to another table as well as
the removal of the child from the class. Both student teachers as well as school’s kindergarten teachers send usually the children to the teachers’ office and/or to the other classrooms. This appeared to be a fixed strategy initiated by all members of both parts involved (video and observation field notes). As two of the student teachers said:

She [the school’s kindergarten teacher] has told us to take to her office the children who misbehave (Student teacher extract).

She [the school’s kindergarten teacher] has told us to take him [challenging child] to her office so that the teaching can take place better (Student teacher extract).

Lastly there were cases in which student teachers, in particular, did not interact at all with the challenging child (video and observation field extracts).

Case study – School Gama
Removal from class

ST1 shows them a picture of a cell phone and asks ‘what is this?’ ‘A cell phone’, children reply. ‘Why do we call it like that’? ‘We do not know’, the group of the boys answer making fun of ST1. […] they all start singing a song. ‘No one of you is going out during break’, ST1 says. She now shows children a picture of a radiophone. Lakis sits at a table by himself reluctant to do as ST1 requests. The boys now talk about Olympiakos [a football team]. Suddenly ST2 and ST3 look at each other and grasp each a boy and take them out the class (09:43pm). As they return, ST3 says: ‘let me see now who is going to be the next’. The rest of the boys keep quite. In the meantime ST1 is talking about the radios […] Discussion continues […](09:53). ST1 asks children to get their markers and sit at the tables’. ST1 disseminates sheets of paper. The two boys are still out […] At this point, class’ kindergarten teacher knocks and opens the door. She asks ST1 if they are doing an assignment and if the children can return to the class (09:55). ST1 replies that they can. The two boys enter the class and sit at the tables (Observation field notes).

Similarly, with regard beginning kindergarten teachers there were cases where they referred children to primary school head teacher’s office or send them to their colleagues’ classrooms.

Sometimes I tell him ‘I will take you to the office’; ok which is not right anyway. Simply he wants to go because the head teacher gives him candies. And other teachers are there too and he draws as they give him pencils, or they will give him a ball they have there so it is his best thing. So I now avoid sending him there. Because every time he misbehaves, he says ‘take me to the office’ (laughs) (Beginning teacher extract).
In relation now to the good knowledge of their pupils, prospective kindergarten teachers showed a critical level of knowledge concerning issues surrounding difficulties in behaviour. Interviewees found it difficult to talk about challenging behaviour in pedagogical terms. This included background issues and issues of the nature of children’s behavioural strengths and difficulties as well as possible reasons of these difficulties. “I do not know” has been the most common answer concerning questions on these issues. For instance one of them said:

_I do not know exactly what his problem is. I simply once asked the teaching assistant ‘what is his problem?’ and she told me that they still do not know what exactly he has_ (Student teacher extract).

Furthermore student teachers felt unable to refer to, let alone to develop, appropriate ways of supporting their children to develop emotionally, behaviourally and academically. They stated that in order to deal with behaviour problems, they use mainly corrective (e.g. warning, calling school’s kindergarten teachers, etc.) and punitive strategies (e.g. isolating the child from classroom, sending the child to the head kindergarten teacher’s office, etc). The application of a more diverse range of effective teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of their children was an issue that participants did not refer to. For instance, as for the means of behaviour management, the student teachers were asked whether they use or plan to use a range of strategies to deal with problem behaviour. Typical responses were as follows:

_No we do not use any [strategy] (Student teacher extract)._  

_I do not know if there is a method that could work with him_ (Student teacher extract).

Also, they were asked if they were aware of the school’s kindergarten teacher’s management strategies. Other questions referred to children’s social and academic achievements; that is whether and if so the extent to which they thought children were truly integrated. Again responses to these issues can be summarised under the heading of one main theme: “ignorance”.

_I do not know if she [school’s kindergarten teacher] uses any method and if so what that method is_ (Student teacher extract).

_I cannot know that, if he is effectively included or if he learns, or if he understands_ (Student teacher extract).
I do not know if he is learning. I cannot evaluate his learning (Student teacher extract).

I do not monitor his progress (Student teacher extract).

Unawareness of critical information concerning various facets of difficult behaviour inhibited student teachers from helping their pupils having access to a balanced and relevant education. It worked against valuing challenging learners, setting suitable learning goals and responding to their diverse learning needs.

Synthesising these responses it can be suggested that the school placement classrooms were sites wherein exclusivity was constructed. Each of these respondents acknowledges the struggle and the frustrations that working with challenging behaviour occasion. They also recognise that these lead to negative outcomes for children with difficult behaviour:

He [challenging child] reacts to what we say. He does the opposite of what we tell him. There is no such a case that he will listen to us. He disturbs the rest of the children. So this is how it works: ‘Petros out’, ‘Petros in the corner’, ‘Keep Petros out of the team’ so that he cannot disturb the other children. We are being forced to exclude him (Student teacher extract).

They are “being forced to exclude him”. By what or by whom? Phrases such as this and also such as “I pretend I do not see this”, “as long as they do not upset the others”, and “so as the teaching can take place better” were of key importance. They synopsise much of the reasoning and motivation behind this study as well as much of the nature of the problem. They also shift attention to the teacher education programme processes as they carry an inherent implication of the degree programme that challenging children is a problem that student teachers must get round it instead of dealing with it.

From an activity theory perspective, the teacher education context was an activity setting in which student teachers were engaged during teaching practice and which created meanings about challenging behaviour for them. A common thread of these meanings, as it will be seen later, was that student teachers kept their internal conflict to themselves and avoided or minimised asking their supervisors for help in behaviour management issues. The following sections will present the social and cultural factors that were found to mediate teacher development in the particular school placement context in this respect.
7.3 Disentangling the nonstop flight teaching model: the degree programme

7.3.1 The theoretical courses component

The first condition which served as a crucial context for student teachers developing their responses towards challenging behaviour, as described in the previous section, was the theoretical component of the degree. Participants spoke negatively about the way in which they were able to learn from university. Sometimes, this was a function of a deficiency in appropriate modules on challenging behaviour. Others, it was due to a theory-practice gap. Even in the case when they felt they had learned something, they considered it as ‘theoretical’ and hence unhelpful. Participants reasoned that both conditions might explain why they had difficulties in their teaching practice, particularly in relation to challenging children. This was well documented in the following comments:

*I cannot think of a lesson from which I can take something and put it in effect in*
practice in relation to Achilleas (Student teacher extract).

And

You learn everything well but they do not help practically. You have them in the backside of your head, let’s say, somehow but they do not help you practically (Student teacher extract)

and

We did not have a lesson on how to deal with aggressive behaviour. [...] What can they tell you Nadia at the department? Were we able to observe an example of good practice? Because we did a couple of modules on psychology, this does not mean that we learned these. Ok I have the books, I read them, so what? (Beginning kindergarten teacher extract)

The gap in content as well as the problem of effectively interweaving theory and practice were also reported by a number of lecturers. One of them said:

I had suggested the introduction of a new module on behaviour modification but it was not approved by the department. There are some structures, which do not see this as a big problem. However, I consider this as extremely significant. If the kindergarten teacher cannot manage the classroom, it is very hard. In addition, unofficially, I understand that this is a gap in student teachers’ preparation as in many discussions comes up. Thus, I believe there is a need of such a module (Lecturer extract).

In agreement with this statement another lecturer commented that in relation to difficult forms of behaviour within the school placement frame:

There is not a separate piece and I think this is a lack and our department must proclaim some lectureships for persons who have been specialised on the theme of such difficulties (Supervising lecturer extract).

These statements were not only important in that they documented a problematisation about the theoretical courses component but also in how this problematisation constructed participants’ actual responses towards challenging behaviour. Setting the issue of difficult behaviour within the ‘unofficial area’ of the degree programme, was one of the main reasons on which participants grounded their exclusive classroom norms as reported in section 7.1. They stressed repeatedly that they cannot engage with their challenging pupils because they lack essential knowledge on behaviour management issues:
I feel that I cannot manage these children. For I am not trained in a special education programme, I cannot manage them and they get out of my control (Student teacher extract).

My preparation is for normal children (Beginning teacher extract).

Dealing with behavioural difficulties is for girls who want clearly to engage with this area (Student teacher extract).

These statements suggest that a lack of relevant modules leads to a series of expectations regarding teacher roles. The special – general teacher education dichotomy gave prospective and beginning teachers the necessary argumentation to remove from themselves ownership of children who misbehave and to explain why they reacted to ‘these’ children in a limited contact manner. This was also compounded by a number of factors of the school placement context. The following extract is a good and dense example of a number of these aspects:

Ok, now that the other girl [teaching assistant] is in the class and takes care of him, things are easier. But when you teach and you feel stressed that someone will come to see you and you have to be perfectly prepared and the children must be quiet in order to seem that your lesson is successful, you surely have a problem if Achilleas gets up and starts jumping all around, for example, or if he starts screaming (Student teacher extract).

This student teacher is one example of an individual whose development and learning of teaching across the school and university contexts was shaped by aspects of that context. First it was shaped by the practice and belief that Achilleas is the responsibility of the teaching assistant. Secondly, it was shaped by both the evaluation practice and her perception of it. In this case the supervisor was seen more as an evaluator instead, for instance, of a supportive advocate. In addition the fact that he/she visits the class unexpectedly exaggerates feelings of stress. Lastly it was shaped by the perception that successful lesson means quite children.

Also, the extract shows that interesting findings did not draw only on what was thought helpful or not when student teachers were asked directly about it. Whilst the lack of appropriate modules, the most common answer given by the majority of trainees, was a large part of that experience it was in more open discussion that the other major strictures of this experience were revealed. The strictures were viewed as constraints because they created
conditions of collective development that did not allow student teachers to consider challenging behaviour as a part of their responsibility, identity and role.

7.3.2 The School Placement Component

Participants reported experiencing several kinds of constraints in dealing with the challenging behaviour of their pupils. Although these aspects appeared in reality as a unity, here they will be presented separately for ease of discussion.

First the practical aspects of the school placement will be presented. There were five settings within which tensions were encountered. These were the collectivity setting and its collaboration norms; the transition practices regarding students teachers’ visits in schools and their knowledge on children and classroom routines; the classroom setting and its pedagogy; the mentorship setting and in particular the preparation and feedback practices as well as classroom supervision and the criteria of evaluation; finally tensions were encountered at the interpersonal relationships setting. There were eleven factors that emerged from the analysis of the data as overarching themes that related to the development of ineffective teaching practice in the education of children with challenging behaviour in these settings. These were: ‘Routinisation’, ‘Adhocracy’, ‘Ambiguity’, ‘Imbalance’, ‘Peacefulness’, ‘Denial’, ‘Skydiving’, ‘One-way transition’, ‘Materialism’, ‘Judgment’, and ‘War-friendlyness’ (see figure six).

‘Routinisation’ can be defined as the ways in which the school placement arrangements and working relationships between university and school members were established. These appeared to be fixed and undiscussed since the beginning of the placement at schools decades ago. ‘Adhocracy’ can be conceptualised as the main principle on which many of the workings of the school placement were based. These workings and practices had not a stable structure nor were they predefined. In most cases they were dependent upon the personal views and choices of the practicum members. ‘Ambiguity’ refers to the unclear elements of the teaching practice, in particular in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the persons involved.

‘Imbalance’ had to do with those features such as curriculum planning that were not equally and isomeric shared between university and school staff. ‘Peacefulness’ can be defined as the
effort of the two parts’ members involved to avoid paths of conflict. ‘Denial’ is defined as the ways in which the university student teachers and stakeholders avoid directly and indirectly the issue and presence of challenging children. ‘Skydiving’ describes student teachers’ nature of transition whilst ‘one–way transition’ depicts transition that happens only from the part of university. ‘Materialism’ is conceptualised as the emphasis on the technical parts of the teaching process versus a focus on its adjustment on the specific needs and personalities of a range of pupils. ‘Judgment’ had to do with the predominant sense of teaching as a judgmental process in itself rather as a process of learning. ‘War-friendliness’ is a concept that captures a lack of good will among the school placement members. It has been the vaguest filter of all yet an important one.

All of the examples of practice encountered came within these themes. Whilst there were issues that were mentioned explicitly by respondents in relation to all settings as being key to the development of inclusive practices, as discussed in section 7.2.1 these eleven themes, in particular, were implied by individual responses and are concepts that were introduced in order to encapsulate findings in the school placement settings with regard to children that exhibited difficult forms of behaviour.

Figure 6. The school placement settings and its constraints
In the remaining sections each theme will be defined, explored and discussed with examples given of how they translate into school placement practice. Frequently these examples may illustrate constraining practice in more than one setting but have been included under the theme to which they most closely relate. Next the cultural models being mediated and mediating many of these practices will be discussed. These models concerned beliefs on the nature of challenging behaviour and attitudes on the pedagogical responses towards it. They also involved perceptions of the school placement and more generally of the nature of knowledge. Both the practical and cultural aspects of the school placement were pivotal in influencing the developing identities of the student teachers and their corresponding responses towards children with difficulties in behaviour. These connections are emphasised in the final section of this chapter.

7.3.2.1 The Collectivity Setting

The collectivity setting refers to all members of the school and university activity systems as well as to the basic norms and practices of their coexistence. School placement was found to be a field where knowledge and expertise of many people were involved. Besides the student teachers themselves, university staff as lecturers, supervising lecturers and kindergarten teachers as well as the schools’ kindergarten teachers were implicated. The way communication, professional relationships and interactions among those members were established had an effect on student teachers’ practices.

Data suggested that collaborative relationships were a matter of routine. This allowed ambiguity and adhocracy to permeate roles, actions and expectations and promoted an imbalance in the partnership. Communicative patterns were based on participants’ skin-deep relationships that served, mainly, their desire to avoid conflict. Role definition, curriculum planning and open discussion were particularly important in that they mediated how beginning and student teachers felt about teaching in general and teaching children with challenging behaviour in particular. Basic issues of collaboration concerned the knowledge of each context’s expectations of the other, each member’s role and what is to be taught.
In relation to expectations it should be noted that the kindergarten schools of Rethymno accept the students of the preschool education department of the University of Crete every year. Data suggested that acceptance was a matter of routine. There was no evidence of deliberate collaborative practices in terms of each part’s expectations on the coexistence. For instance, two of the schools’ kindergarten teachers agreed ‘there is good cooperation’ between them and the university. However when asked to define the nature of this cooperation in more detail, as well as whether they have discussed which their expectations should be in relation to each other, they went on saying that:

*We do not know what requirements they [university members] may have and they do not know what requirements we may have too. However we have not clashed in anything (school’s kindergarten teachers extract).*

‘Having not been clashed in anything’ seemed to be a condition sufficient enough for the coexistence. However taking a closer look this absence of conflict does not indicate necessarily a collaborative scheme. Instead the fact that the two contexts do not discuss their expectations, in relation to student teachers’ placement had significant ramifications on how kindergarten teachers perceived their aims and obligations towards student teachers.
In particular, schools’ teachers perceived that they did not have professional obligation to play so that favourable professional learning took place for student teachers. In this respect, it appeared that there was no adjustment from the part of schools as to student teachers’ visits:

> I do not know what I should change to be honest for the student teachers. My aim is children’s learning. This is what I know (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).

According to other kindergarten teachers there were cases where they felt student teachers are:

> A heavy burden to my programme. I cannot work the way I want to work (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).

> I wanted to do many themes but with the student teachers here we cannot. We cannot do what we want to do (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).

> There are many times we cannot do our job as we want. We do not have the time (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).

> Okay we are educators, okay we say ‘yes’ to research, we have been there, through that stage, but you cannot only burden the kindergarten schools of Rethymno every year. In one or two days some themes are not being completed, the teacher changes continually […]. I would suggest that at the beginning of the year and until the children get to an order, student teachers should not come. Children should first get to an order, learn some basic rules, the rules of the class and then student teachers should come. But then you will tell me shouldn’t the student teachers see children at this stage? They have to but it cannot be done (school’s kindergarten teacher extract)

When children’s’ learning remains the only goal of schools, this then impacts on student teachers’ learning. Student teachers’ learning was confined and looked upon only by the view of whether they manage to deliver or not the programme according to the schools’ priorities. It is in this respect that school’s kindergarten teachers feel dissatisfied:

> It is a fact however that the school kindergarten teachers tell us many times that ‘I am forced to repeat the teaching’ which means that it did not work with the student teacher. Similarly we have been told many times this year “I have very good student teachers and the programme goes very well” (Supervising lecturer extract)
As far as their role is concerned school kindergarten teachers said that they have not been told anything in many years about their role in the collectivity. When asked about their role they gave the following answers:

*At the beginning, it is the first time I work in Rethymno, I did not know to whom I should talk to. I have asked and I have been told by colleagues that normally it is good not to interfere with student teachers’ teaching (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).*

*We are not allowed to participate neither to butt in to tell the student teacher, for instance, ‘you should do this like that’. It is not allowed. We do not have the right to do this in accordance to what we have been told a long time ago. Recently we have not been told anything. They have told us nothing, in so many years. Maybe this tactic is considered as fixed (School’s kindergarten teachers extract).*

*You know things just work the way they work. I mean I have not asked anyone about my role and I really have not even thought about this as an issue (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).*

*The first time I worked in Rethymno I just knew student teachers would come. People [supervising lecturers and kindergarten teachers] were entering my class and I did not even know who they were (school’s kindergarten teacher extract).*

However, data showed that schools’ kindergarten teachers do intervene and hold perceptions of their role. Both interventions and role perceptions are far from prescribed or clear. Instead both depend on the individual perceptions of each kindergarten teacher. They act ad hoc. For instance, although it is “normally good not to interfere” the majority of the kindergarten teachers said that they believe they should intervene and do so:

*In extreme cases. I believe we should intervene on issues of discipline and I would say in relation to children’s safety (School’s kindergarten teachers extract).*

*I have not been told anything officially about whether I should intervene or not. However of course I do intervene especially in cases of children who misbehave. When you see them [student teachers] struggling to manage the class you cannot do otherwise than help (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).*

Challenging behaviour was seen as a reason for school’s kindergarten teachers intervening in order to keep the lesson ordered; yet another manifestation of the ‘non-stop flight teaching’.
This perceived obligation, by kindergarten teachers, was so strong that mediated and defined their interventions towards challenging children.

_I did not understand actually how it happened but once I sent my two challenging boys to the integration class next door so that the student teachers would teach more easily (School’s kindergarten teacher extract)._ 

The same unclearness and ‘adhocracy’ was noticed in relation to another aspect of schools’ kindergarten teachers’ interventions that of giving feedback to the student teachers. On the one hand:

*_I do not know if we are allowed to intervene to their work. That is to advice a student teacher. We are about the same age so it is not easy for me to tell them that they did not go well. That is I do not want to insult them. Maybe if it was an experimental school it would be easier for me to say some things (School’s kindergarten teacher extract)._*

On the other:

*_It would be useful to give feedback to the student teachers or just to say something. But no; this happens very discreetly and if the student teacher wants it. Because there are some student teachers who do not want this: to tell them that what they did was wrong (School’s kindergarten teacher extract)._*

Obviously, some teachers felt the need to support student teachers however they were discouraged by the routinised collaborative norms according to which members of the collectivity functioned an ad hoc. In addition, the majority of schools’ teachers and supervisors disempowered student teachers in relation to misbehaviour: They recognised that dealing with misbehaviour can be frustrating and stressful. Yet they did not provide student teachers with a supportive ethos and did not strengthen their opportunity to learn about and deal with these behaviours. Behaviour management was seen as the exclusive responsibility of the schools’ teachers. This removed, possibly, an invaluable opportunity of learning how to deal with challenging children from student teachers.

Another element related to collaboration norms had to do with curriculum planning. Curriculum planning involved schools’ kindergarten teachers’ decisions about the themes they wanted to teach their classrooms throughout the year. Data indicated that these decisions on the curriculum lied with the school. University tutors and student teachers did not take part in the planning of the curriculum. Instead they were expected to fulfil schools’ kindergarten teachers’ aims. This seemed to create some disturbance at the university system as
supervising teachers and student teachers stressed that not being able to regulate school curriculum did not allow them to improvise ways of making the curriculum content meaningful.

As one of the school’s kindergarten teachers said:

We cooperate in the sense that we can say that I want this theme to be worked or this activity so that they [student teachers] can follow our programme (school’s kindergarten teacher).

University members, on the other hand, were of the view that following schools’ programme contradicted many times their desire to teach themes that they considered as more relevant to the children.

We are being limited a lot. I am being limited from the aspect of the themes that come to us from the schools. But it could not be done otherwise because they have their classrooms and themes proceed developmentally or according to a mode which we do not know. Therefore we are forced to obey to some things and very often we are being pressed to do typified things which are not in accordance with our philosophy in order to satisfy some situations for which I know that student teachers will face problems if they do not do it (Supervising kindergarten teachers).

Student teachers also followed a programme with which they disagreed or found irrelevant within the particular circumstances of their classrooms. The following comments from a student teacher portrayed this:

I am against discussion at the kindergarten school. I do not believe in it. In the circle you can instead tell a story. […] When I see ‘discussion’ I try to do something else in between. It doesn’t work. They are bored and it is reasonable. I am being bored too to listen and to listen. I cannot just listen (Student teacher extract).

It is interesting that these problematisations were not articulated formally through a scheme of dialogue and communication. Forms of communication encapsulate practices that do not take account schools’ opinions and willingness about accepting student teachers as well as an absence of practices that might assist both partners to foster productive communication. In particular, as far as the initial practices of fostering communication are concerned, the university’s supervising kindergarten teachers were asked whether, for instance, a number of preparational sessions were held for them in order to ease their transition to schools, to get to
know with the schools’ teachers and to discuss general issues pertaining to their expectations and collaboration. There were not any such forms of preparation:

*We just go to schools (University’s kindergarten teachers extract).*

Likewise there were not arrangements in order for the two parts to discuss possible problematisations that arose from their coexistence throughout the academic year. Conversation, one of the most frequent types of communication, was not used as the vehicle that potentially would allow both parts to make sense of their experiences in the classroom. That is, the study showed more about factors that can thwart effective communication than support its effective development.

Communication about challenging behaviour followed the same pattern: for the most part it remained a hidden issue. There were two possible situations. The first was characterised by an avoidance of procedures for discussing the issue. Secondly when problems became so intense that they could not remain hidden discussion evolved around whose fault that is, without though the two parties exchanging openly these views. This was linked to a great extent to the will of university to maintain good relations with the schools. In other words, ‘peacefulness’ mediated communication in the collectivity setting.

This norm described participants’ reluctance to disagree with each other because they were unwilling to jeopardise the relationship. Student teachers, in particular, were not encouraged to disagree with the schools’ kindergarten teachers. One of the supervising lectures said that:

*When we have difficult forms of behaviour we tell student teachers to ask the school kindergarten teacher how she deals with those. We do not want to create problem to the kindergarten teacher who welcomes us and supports us because we cannot - as I said previously - change or turn upside down in one day what she herself has done (Supervising lecturer extract).*

Indeed student teachers said that in relation to the ways they should “behave at schools” they have been told ‘only’ that they:

*Have to be cautious, to behave nicely, not to quarrel with them [schools’ teachers] as we are guests. That is they stress this. We are guests means that they help us to do our school placements so we cannot speak up (Student teacher extract).*
The following extract shows exactly how this ‘no creating problems’ mediated significantly communication from student teachers’ part. In one instance, one of the student teachers was telling her supervising kindergarten teacher of her unsuccessful effort of doing a dramatisation activity because of children’s misbehaviour. She then narrated how this became a source of conflict with the school’s teachers:

*And I told her [the school’s teacher] ‘what is going on here can you tell me what is wrong with the children’ and they told me ‘yes you are right’. And then Chrisa [another student teacher of the group] went during break to ask about the theme of the next week and they told her ‘sounds’ and ‘sources of sounds’ and ‘you are never pleased from the themes. And you are not pleased from the children and do not pick on children’. And they got us then and they lectured us. And we explained to them that we do not know what to do and we feel swamped in an open sea and we cannot be saved by anywhere (Student teacher preparation meeting extract).*

The supervisor’s response was as follows:

*Your goal is not to come in confrontation with school’s teacher (supervising kindergarten teacher preparation meeting extract).*

These findings demonstrate that school and university systems allowed student teachers to go on teaching practice before they had fully developed and set clear all the parameters of their coexistence and communication in particular. Student teachers’ possibility of agency in relation to challenging behaviour was limited by collaborative and communicative norms that were matters of routine and based on the reluctance of creating any kind of disturbance. Both patterns stood in the way of productive challenging behaviour experiences of student teachers. Both left student teachers uncertain of their position at the community and out of the possibility of developing inclusive practices for their challenging pupils. To an extent, this sheds some light on the findings that support the student teachers who face challenging behaviours in their classrooms were, in most instances, reluctant to take responsibility for their hard to manage children.
7.3.2.2 The Transition Setting

Transition related to participants’ visits at schools. Student teachers’ first visits at schools as well as their supervisors’ were found to mediate significantly their teaching practices and responses towards the diversity of their pupils. This was because the practices concerning transitions from university into the classroom did not allow student teachers and their mentors to acquire good knowledge of the class and of the individual pupils they were about to teach:

In my opinion transition in class happens abruptly. Teacher is presented as a skydiver and he does not know where he is and where he stands. They tell them ‘sink or swim’ and they throw them in the middle of the sea, helpless, in the deep; and everywhere around sharks, metaphorically speaking (Beginning kindergarten teacher extract).

Thus, a focus on the experiences of student teachers’ transitions provided useful insight to address concerns related to how the university-school system produced student teaching experiences that hinder student teachers’ inclusive responses.
Good knowledge of the classrooms was seen as a prerequisite for a smooth transition from university to school which in turn was prerequisite for developing inclusive teaching practices. However, study participants viewed the ways their first visits to schools were organised and the ways in which they were introduced to the pupils as a resource for inhibiting their good knowledge of the children. These ways were as follows. The student teacher who is about to teach first, visits the class a few days earlier to get information on issues such as “children’s names” and the “theme” (student teachers’ interviews extracts) they are supposed to teach. Then they go straight on to teaching.

**Case study: School Gama**

**Knowing the classroom rules**

*During lesson a child asks ST1 to go out to have water. ST1 says ‘you can go’. As the child leaves the class’ kindergarten teacher enters the class and asks her: ‘Where are you going? ‘To get water’ the child answers. Teacher replies: ‘Go and sit where you were sitting. You know I do not allow you to go for water during circle time, only for toilet’ (Classroom observation notes).*

This rule was critical in that it shows how knowledge of classroom norms and routines mediated student teachers’ responses towards misbehaviour and reinforced problems of alignment between student teachers and schools’ kindergarten teachers:
“Things like this happen and then children cannot be taught in an orderly fashion (school’s kindergarten teacher extract).”

Indeed this was even more intense in relation to hard-to-manage pupils. Data revealed various ways in which inadequate transitions reinforced behaviour problems. In one incidence student teachers did not know routines such as the prayer or the way children change the date. By the time they figured this out the children had become ‘restless’ (classroom observation notes).

ST1: when we went to class we did not know that they were doing prayer. So children stand up and started saying the prayer. So we heard it once twice, we learned it. But now it was the first time they did a different one and we did not know it.
ST2: suddenly the prayer changed
ST1: and from what I have understood she [school’s kindergarten teacher] does prayer when they leave as well. But the children were not telling us that when they leave they say prayer. They wanted to leave as soon as possible (student teachers extract).

Also, participants referred to the ways the challenging pupils were introduced to them and the practice of not observing the school’s kindergarten teachers as two additional barriers to their smooth transition from university to actual teaching. In relation to the ways their pupil were introduced to them a trainee teacher stated:

I do not remember quite well. I think she [school’s teacher] told us like this in a very relaxed way ‘and here is Ioanna [teaching assistant] who takes care of him’ (Student teacher extract).

Another trainee teacher commented:

The kindergarten teacher told me that they have a big problem, that generally the level is too low and that she has never come across such children (Student teacher extract).

A further student teacher stated:

When we went to ask the school’s teacher you now for the theme, etc., she told us that Petros’ parents are divorced recently and that he tries to get over it. She told us that 70% of children are foreigners. These things. These general things, nothing specific. So how are you supposed to be able to teach these children? (Student teacher extract).
Also student teachers said they did not know how the school’s kindergarten teacher responded to challenging behaviour although they would consider this as useful. For instance, one of them said that she does “not know what she [the kindergarten teacher] does when she does the lesson”. Two more said:

\[St1: \text{I would like to see her just once only her being in the class by herself. To see how it happens when she is in. does the same mess happen? Maybe it does I do not know}\]
\[St2: \text{you can never know} \ (\text{Student teacher extract}).\]

Schools’ kindergarten teachers, also, considered student teachers visiting and observing them very important:

\[\text{In order to adjust then their teaching} \ (\text{School’s kindergarten teacher extract}).\]

They:

\[\text{Consider basic student teachers before starting their teaching placements to come and observe us. That is they should devote a day observing how the kindergarten teacher treats children and to see how children behave towards the teacher. I consider this as basic. To observe how the kindergarten teacher works, how she/he makes the prayer and the routines children follow the whole day} \ (\text{School’s kindergarten teacher extract}).\]

In relation to challenging children’s behavioural problems and whether they discuss it with the student teachers their answers were as follows:

\[\text{They do not ask about the children. They do not ask for information} \ (\text{School’s kindergarten teachers extract}).\]

**Case study: School Alpha**

Knowing challenging children

\[\text{I remember when I had talked to Elli once. She herself started telling me about her grandmother who had been injured and would go to the hospital and she told me that she lives with her mum and brother. And then she told me my dad’s name is Grigoris. And I asked her ‘do you see him? Does he pay you visits? And she told me no. And I asked her ‘do you talk on the phone’ you know we did not know what to tell her. We tried to patch things up. We learned all these, that her father has abandoned her from Mary, Elli’s mothers’ colleague which I happened to know. This happened before I learned these from Mary because I am telling you I learned all these yesterday from Mary} \ (\text{student teacher extract}).\]
These data indicate that student teachers and kindergarten teachers in the schools did not manage to create a practice of sharing information in relation to challenging behaviour. The practice of student teachers’ not visiting and not observing the class prior their teaching, seemed to reinforce classroom patterns wherein students lacked basic knowledge on the nature of challenging children’s of problems, on possible management techniques followed by the schools’ kindergarten teachers and more generally on class’ routines.

Apart from student teachers, their supervising lecturers and kindergarten teachers also visited the schools. However both visited the schools during the hours student teachers did. This made one of the supervising teachers to comment that she prepares students for a class that “conditions do not allow her to get to know it”. On the question of how this affects their contribution in preparing student teachers in relation to challenging behaviour, one of them said:

\[ I \text{ work with my student teachers. [...] I do not have this luxury to enter the class and observe it before their placement. [...] On the other hand there should be many more assistants to be able to visit each week only one school if you like. That is as often the students go, to go ourselves too. This again does not happen because the ministry does not assign more persons (Supervising kindergarten teacher). } \]

Whilst it appeared that preparing student teachers according to particular pupils’ needs is a valuable component of supporting them in relation to hard to manage pupils, preparation was actually one-sided. Supervisors were found to provide support to student teachers with regard teaching decisions. Support based on a principled understanding of the particular pupils and how they learned was not provided. Mentors were not able to form a good understanding of the classes and felt that for this reason they could not support student teachers in relation to their challenging pupils. This makes it possible to state that the development of transition practices as such has discouraged student teachers and their mentors to diversify their teaching and thereby extend their learning about hard to manage children.

7.3.2.3 The classroom setting

In this study, the classroom setting category referred to the classrooms in which student teachers were introduced with the task of learning-to-teach. There were structures in these classrooms that provided student teachers with hindrances to develop inclusive pedagogy.
These were the relationships among the members of each group of the student teachers and the relationships between student teachers and kindergarten teachers in schools. Both seemed to mediate significantly student teachers’ development as teachers for all.

![Diagram](attachment:image.png)

**Figure 9. Sub themes linked to classroom setting**

It would appear that the way student teachers interact among them raised matters of major concern. The concern was where a single student teacher had no clear role or assigned tasks and where there was not a common strategy followed by the group in relation to challenging behaviour. Also a number of concerns were generated regarding the relationships across the student teacher year groups that visited the same class.

In relation to the members of each team, participants in the study recognised the importance of consistency in dealing with difficult forms of behaviour. Nevertheless they observed that they do not actually follow such a consistent approach. This led to some conclusion that relationships among members are important in relation to behaviour management. A student teacher pointed out:

*Of course it [lack of consistency] makes our job difficult as these children need consistency and because if one day you say this and another day the other says something else then you cannot do anything* (Student teacher extract).

Another said that
In relation to management issues, things are left unclear (Student teacher extract).

The majority of participants commented that they do not cooperate among them in relation to behaviour management techniques. A student teacher commented that:

With Stella [student teacher of the group] we are out of contact. Last year I was with Dora that I did not know prior our placements and we became best friends. Now with Danai not that much. Not that we are not on speaking terms, we just do not have any more contact (student teacher extract).

Another said:

We are everything but a team. We are the two of us and the other two are separate (Student teacher extract).

These patterns wherein student teachers acted ad hoc in relation to responses to challenging children often resulted in conflicts among student teacher often resulted in

When I was teaching Elli did not want to do what the others were doing. I told her ‘ok, go and sit over there. You do not want to participate then you will not sit here because you will make noise’. So I told her ‘go sit over there’. After a while I saw that she started raising her hand, asking questions. I did not pay attention to her on purpose. After a while she came. So when Marina [student teacher of the group] was teaching Elli again did not participate and I saw Antonia [student teacher of the group] taking her on her lap and I told her ‘Antonia what are you doing? Let her go over there’. And Antonia told me she does not want to. And I asked her why do you have her on your lap? And then I told Elli go and then Antonia told her too to go and sit over there. And she went (Student teacher extract).

Another said:

It gets on my nerves this thing. When I was teaching Elli took a book and went with Fani [student teacher of the group] and they were reading the book. I was irritated by this thing that time. Because I had in my mind the rest of the children and I also had Fani’s chatting with Elli. And it really got on my nerves. She should have told her either to sit in the circle or to go and sit at a table further from the circle (student teacher extract).

Further aspect of the classroom setting concerned the relationship among different student teacher year groups that were assigned the same classrooms. That is interactions among the third and fourth year groups who visit the same class. These relationships were characterised by non-collaborative practices. This was a factor that constrained the development of
inclusive practices. Non collaboration in these aspects brought discomfort in student teachers. In some cases this resulted in two different group year students to teach the same theme at the same class:

*I remember in my previous teaching when I was teaching the traffic signs. She [supervising lecturer] told me then that I was too authoritarian. In the meantime the third year students had taught the previous day the same theme. And I told her and I do not know if you were at the beginning the minute I started presenting the traffic signs children told me ‘what the traffic signs again?’ So I told her that look if I was not raising the voice they would have misbehaved. They had got bored of the theme. They had discussed it again and again. This was the only time we commented on challenging children (Student teacher extract)*

In these ways the student teacher groups emerged as a crucial factor in the development of inclusive practices for all. Student teachers were placed in school placement in groups. Probably this was meant to be a source of learning to teach. However, the university system did not seem to recognise the importance of the group dynamics or the classroom setting as a learning system within the school arguably because they were not providing student teachers with necessary expectations and roles regarding their cooperation. Instead this process was considered as happening automatically. Spontaneous incidental developing relationships dominated.

*No we have not been told anything we just do what we think we should do (student teacher extract).*

That is whilst the university supervisors advised student teachers on pedagogical issues they did not give them guidance regarding some encouragement to plan and reflect together. Similarly the school system had no interference at all to the conduct of the student teacher group while they were in the school. In this respect, it would appear that both the school and university systems had a tendency to subjugate the student teacher system.

Section 7.3.2.1 has already discussed schools’ kindergarten teacher roles at the collectivity level. Here their role is seen at the classroom setting. Their actual responses at an everyday level in class were found to be a significant factor mediating student teachers’ perceptions towards their role and subsequently towards the challenging pupils.
First, and in relation to their physical presence in the classrooms, it should be noted that in some cases they were in the classrooms, in other cases they were in their offices and in one case the teacher was absent from the school. It has already been mentioned that school’s kindergarten teachers have been told that normally it is good not to interfere and that there are no official arrangements for their professional role in the school placement. Furthermore, they were not assigned any mentoring responsibilities. However, they did intervene in all these aspects.

In some cases student teachers saw these interventions positively and in others they were negatively disposed to them. One student teacher, for instance, remarked:

*Some intervene which is annoying. Sometimes they tell us something politely they do not demand it. Others, who are weird, demand it. And when we do not do it they tell us off* (Student teacher extract).

Another student teacher noted that:

*Last year the school’s kindergarten teacher was interfering in our teaching: ‘don’t say it like that, say it like this’. She was interfering at that time in front of us and she was making us look like idiots. I’ve heard of other cases too of kindergarten teachers who take over the lesson and do whatever they want to do* (Student teacher extract).

In relation to problems of misbehaviour student teachers see positively their interventions:

*The school’s teacher helps us a lot. And during the time we teach, she respects us too. She intervenes only to help. And only in cases of misbehaviour. She does not interfere in the teaching* (Student teacher extract).

These statements show that teachers were an important factor for effective student teaching and learning. They also show that when kindergarten teachers intervene in an offensive way during student teachers’ teaching they were viewed as a hindrance to their professional development. Also their interventions in relation to challenging behaviour were seen as positive despite the fact that this might had an adverse effect on their learning about this behaviour.
7.3.2.4 The supervisory setting

The supervisory setting was the fourth important facet of the student teaching context. It was comprised of three processes: the preparatory meetings, the actual supervision in class and the feedback practices. Supervising kindergarten teachers have as their main responsibility the preparation of student teachers. They are not trained to be coaches. Supervising lecturers observe student teachers in class and have as main responsibility their evaluation.

The way student teachers experienced supervision in all three aspects suggested several effects on teaching practice and identity. The core of these effects raised issues related to the contradictory nature of the dual functions of supervision: that of facilitating student teachers’ learning and that of assessing their teaching (Calderhead, 1993; Cooper et al., 1994; Slick, 1997; cited in Tang, 2003).

Student teachers felt that the mentoring component of teaching practice generated unproductive learning experiences for them in relation to behaviour management. This was due to three reasons. First there was a belief that supervisors gave too many negative comments in their supervision. Second participants felt that they were not communicating helpful advice and feedback to them. Third supervisors ignored problems of coping with behaviour management. That is in view of the difficulties they faced and the ‘left-to-get-alone’ norm through which they responded to their diverse classrooms, it would be expected...
that behaviour management would be given special emphasis in the mentoring setting. However this was far from the case. The following comments of two participants reflected a commonly held view of the supervision setting in relation to challenging pupils:

Such difficulties [behavioural] pass through structures indifferently…they [supervisors] are not interested in challenging children. So we are not interested either (Student teacher extract).

The schools I visited were attended by challenging children. What was the problem? That they were not focusing on these children and these problems (Beginning teacher extract).

These extracts are but two examples of participants who identified a link between their perceived supervisors’ disinterest about challenging behaviour and their own interaction with challenging children. The study showed that such a perceived lack of concern about challenging behaviour hinders the development of an inclusive delivery and thinking about teaching.

With regard to preparatory meetings, every week the student teachers of each group that are about to teach meet with their supervisory kindergarten teachers at university few days before they go to school. There they discuss the process of their teaching according to the themes they got from schools during their last teaching. Usually they give first their ideas as to how they should proceed with their teaching and then upon receiving advice from the supervisor, they discuss and refine their ideas. This however was contested by the participants:

What was disturbing me during the preparatory meeting was that I was telling them my ideas for which I had devoted time and effort to think about and they were not respecting it. In the end I had to do what they were telling me. This canceled my imagination, my creativity (Student teacher extract).

This problem related to the responsibilities of the student teachers and of the supervising kindergarten teachers in relation to how much should each part contribute to the preparation of the lesson.

Findings also revealed that the conferences focused on immediate classroom practice rather than wider educational issues for instance as well as practical rather than theoretical issues. The emphasis was on the material student teachers should use and on the activities they
should organise. With regard issues of children’s’ behaviour these in most cases remain unaddressed. Typical responses recorded in student teachers’ comments on their preparatory meetings were the following:

*Usually most of the meetings are in relation to organisation, material, etc.* (Student teacher extract).

*We do not discuss management issues. In any meeting, never. Not last year and not this year; We discuss about material etc. Nothing on behaviour* (student teacher extract).

This was a recurring theme, supported by another student teacher who added that they have never discussed individualised work for their challenging pupil:

*It would be helpful, but no, we have discussed nothing. We do not discuss anything separate, anything different for Achilleas [a challenging child] (student teacher extract).*

A number of criticisms were made by prospective kindergarten teachers in trying to explain this lack of focus on challenging behaviour. These evolved around supervisors’ priorities and preparation. Both were reflected by the views of two student teachers who said:

*She herself [the supervising kindergarten teacher] is not bothered by the issue. She does her job to prepare us to give us the themes and that it is* (Student teacher extract).

*Of course, I do not know if this is feasible, because in our school placements on the one hand we have a helper but on the other she has to have training on misbehaviour in order to help us. And they do not have such training* (Student teacher extract).

This emphasis on material was supported by supervisors’ comments as well. One of them said that they:

*give a great emphasis on the visual part of the teaching, in what the students will prepare to attract the children, the picture the magical they will be showing to them; The “how”; In relation to management issues, no* (Supervising kindergarten teacher).

Summarising it can be seen that all ten participants clearly approached challenging behaviour as an issue that was not part of their aim and responsibility. Dealing with bad behaviour, variation within the lesson, pupil inidividualisation, attention to pupil development and backgrounds, and management skill were issues that in most cases were not discussed at all. With regard to the contextual perspective, it should be said that all participants realised that
their responses and pedagogy towards challenging children in class was part of what happened within the university and during the preparatory meeting, and that they were part of this setting and did not operate in a classroom in isolation.

I will now turn to the issue of supervision. Lecturers from the university as well as the university kindergarten teachers took on roles of supervisors and observed student teachers as they conducted lessons. These visits for supervision generated a number of tensions for student teachers. These concerned the frequency, the duration and the fact that these visits were unexpected. The limited number and duration of the visits as well as the fact that they do not know whether and if the supervisors will visit them seem to exaggerate the stress student teachers experience in relation to supervision:

*She [supervising lecturer] came to see me only once during the whole year. Only once. She saw me for only ten minutes and for these minutes things happened to be the way they were. That is she will lower my grade, she said that, you heard her. She asked me what was your grade and I said 9 and she told me what I saw did not deserve a 9. Ok she will do it 8 and she only stayed in for five minutes (Student teacher extract).*

*During the teaching I am always stressed in case the supervisor comes. Nothing else. Sometimes I feel nothing else (Student teacher extract).*

*Another thing I did not like was that not only supervisors would come and see you for only 10 minutes, but that they would tell you off as well. Some of them would see you and then would say nothing neither good nor bad. While others were at the other extreme telling you so many details that got on to your nerves (Beginning teacher extract).*

According to participants, the supervisors tend to have a judgmental role. When they feel that the mentor's role is solely judgmental there are various consequences:

*This is what we know for the school placement: that we will be entering classes and that we will be watched. Not to feel kindergarten teachers, educators and teachers or anything else. We feel that we are being examined. And once lecturer enters the class the time of Crisis comes. That's it (Student teacher extract).*

Applying this consequence to challenging behaviour one participant had this to say:

*We do not know how to evaluate our experience, how to study and learn from it. When we were doing our teaching there were times that no one was in.*
especially when I had T. and K. as my supervisors I was teaching by myself. Not even the supervising nursery teacher was in the class. It was only the school’s nursery teacher who was saying “John be quite, Kostas be quite”. So how can you learn about challenging children? First of all you do not see that, that you are learning. You are stressed to pass the placement, to do it well and to leave. Nothing else (Beginning teacher extract).

For student teachers these tensions formed borders that had to be crossed in order to develop teaching and learning in its inclusive aspects. There were indications that experiences that occurred during the practice of supervision influenced the development of non-inclusive practices. Similarly, feedback practices seem to give rise to bigger tensions. These refer to their form and content, as well as to the evaluation criteria.

First, feedback is given on the spot right after teaching at school. After the teaching finishes supervisor takes the student teacher that has finished his/her teaching to give his/her feedback. The other student teachers stand farther.

Case study: School Alpha
Supervisor feed backing student teacher

ST1 finishes teaching. Supervising lecturer provides her feedback. They both stand. Lecturer: ‘the protocols were poorly written compared to the student teacher’s protocol who teaches next class. You should have a look at it. It is very nice. I did not like you at all today. Your rhythm was not good. You lost the children. Student teacher replies “last night I was sick”. Lecturer says “it would be good for you to move around the classes and watch the other student teachers... but you cannot do that as you teach the same time. But you understand that we who can do that compare you to each other. ‘What grade did you get the previous semester? Student teacher: ‘nine’. ‘The other student also got nine. But nine is near ten and you understand you were not near ten. The other girl was’. Then supervising lecturer leaves the class. ST1 starts crying and leaves the school before we have a chance to comfort her. Then the rest of the student teachers as well as the class’ kindergarten teachers approach me and ask me what the lecturer told her. I tell them briefly. The class’ kindergarten teacher comments: ‘this was not right’. The other student teachers also share their stories with the particular lecturer. ST2 says that “she never says any good”. ST3 says that once she told her that she did not like her look it was very strict (Observation filed notes extract).

However student teachers suggested that they would prefer to be given the feedback as a group and that this should be organised in a better way:
M [another supervising lecturer] did that last year. Every time when we finished he would take us all together to give us his feedback. It was better because we could comment as well (Student teacher extract).

Everything happens in a slipshod manner. Instead, we could arrange to meet up every now and then at university to discuss about the teaching (Student teacher extract).

I believe that supervisors should discuss with us too. That is e.g. when one teaches supervisor should also take the rest three of us and ask us what do you think of the student teacher who taught. K [supervising teacher] has never done that to take us and ask us. But X [supervising lecturer] once had asked us what we thought about our course mate’s teaching (Student teacher extract).

In relation to the content of the feedback this is

Not so much on the teaching – once she told me it went well. They make some comments on the lesson plans as they look at them (Student teacher extract).

Another student teacher said that after she finished her teaching the supervising kindergarten teacher commented on her puppet show:

About the voices to pay attention to them. That it was a little bit – it had to have in between a funny incidence in order to be more interesting and children to laugh. And what else? I think these were the comments (Student teacher extract)

When asked if they discuss about challenging children and their responses towards them, a teacher student responded that once she told the supervisor about the difficulties she faces with Achilleas:

And she told me “ok”, it is nothing let’s say. She passed by it like this like it was nothing (Student teacher extract).

Another respondent made a similar comment:

The last time that I was teaching traffic education and I had made a scale model of a road with cars, etc. and one child was tearing the Styrofoam. And the supervising lecturer went and hit him once on his hand. And I told her we have a big problem with the children, they do not listen to us; they do not attach importance to us. They are also problematic, one has this problem, the other that. And she told me ‘it is very difficult to manage a classroom’. She said nothing else! They are not interested in these problems (Student teacher extract).
These statements indicate dissatisfaction from the respondents’ part. Participants expressed their concerns about the usefulness of their supervisors’ comments in relation to their challenging pupils. One of the student teacher spoke of how in relation to challenging children:

*what we are being told by supervising teachers are very theoretical and they do not help at all. I guess they have to justify the money they get* (student teacher extract).

Another student teacher supported this comment by stating that:

*K. [supervising kindergarten teacher] ok you know that she will never leave the class and tell you that you are perfect. Never. Ok even if the colour is outside the picture, she will tell you so. That’s it. In order to find something to tell, and not to say that I came here in vein* (Student teacher extract).

A further student teacher said that:

*During one meeting, I had told her that we have a big problem with the children. And she told me ‘why are you saying that?’ and it depends on how we will treat children and such nonsense* (Student teacher extract).

Summarising it could be argued that although the issue of misbehaviour is critical in the class it is not perceived nor practiced as such during the feedback sessions. Sessions dealt mainly with didactic issues and supervisors give little or none priority to behavioural issues. Data also indicate that neither student teachers are willing to initiate such a discussion although it was obvious that the subject was bothering them. Hence student teachers do not have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and receive instruction from their university supervisors. In this sense it could be argued that by providing feedback that focuses only on didactic issues prospective kindergarten teachers were not encouraged to learn about misbehaviour.

Evaluation seemed also to be a point of dispute among student teachers and supervisors. This seems to stem from differences and mismatches in relation to the criteria with which supervisors mark student teachers among supervisors and student teachers. According to a supervising lecturer:

*I have come in confrontation, in conflict, so to speak, with some student teachers […]. ‘But I was fully prepared’ ‘but here is the plan of my teaching
here which is for ten’ yes? But your presence was not for ten, it was for 6 for 5.[...] Students’ criterion is what the lesson plan says, what my material says, I am impeccable in my lesson plan therefore I demand a ‘10’ [=A]. This is students’ criterion. And it is a point of conflict, permanently with the students. When you say for example I did not see anything to attract me, I got tired. So how the child cannot get tired. You did not attract me who I am an adult I come to observe you, this is my job, this is the reason for which I am here, me, it did not attract me, how it can attract the child (Supervising lecturer extract)

According to supervisors what they are interested in is student teachers attracting the child whilst student teachers’ first criterion is the well-written protocol. However this contradicts the incidence referred to section 7.3.4.3 wherein this tutor criticised student teacher’s protocol. This criticism provoked a negative response on the part of the student who found that these comments “were not to the point of the matter”. Indeed it seems that the criteria according to which supervisors evaluate their student teachers are not clear and agreed upon across supervisors. Take for instance the following extract and how many times the ‘first criterion’ is used for different criteria:

My first criterion is if the student teacher has contact with the children. This is very important. There are students that you can tell from the first moment that they will not become perfect kindergarten teachers. Eee and you see students who are good from the first day they enter class. I am interested, of course, in seeing that the student got prepared and that has not done it in sloppily which means that what he/she does, does it with scrupulousness, and is not bored. That is, they do not go to do something for half an hour and then get up and leave; because we do not do a job office to have papers in our hands. We have children in our hands. So, I look first of all and this is something that you can tell at once, if the student got prepared rightly. From then and on I look his/her contact with the children and what he/she says. From then and on I look at the material she/he has prepared. So I look the material, I look the preparation, the material is in the preparation and mostly the contact with the children. I am not interested as some other colleagues of mine in what the student has written on his/her preparation plan and if she/he did the activity that way. What you write on paper can be perfect. I am interested in how he/she will implement these in the class. And many times the students at the end burst into tears and tell me ‘oh dear, I did not do well the job’ and I have been pleased because they actually gave the children what they had to tell the children and they gave it to them. So these are what I look at in the class. And of course I do not have the demand from the first time they enter the class to have the experience. But to be able to have been prepared appropriately and to have contact with the children (Supervising lecturer).

The phrase ‘I am not interested as some other colleagues’ indicates that there is no uniformity in relation to the evaluation criteria. Another lecturer though said that:
We look more generally to have a coidentity in relation to the criteria we take for marking (Supervising lecturer).

According to him ‘success in teaching’, ‘planning of teaching’, ‘material’ and ‘responsibility’ are important evaluation criteria:

The criteria are of course the success in the teaching, the main one could say. This is something we can see either by ourselves when we go to schools and observe with the girls, the kindergarten teachers who observe many teachings, as well as with the schools kindergarten teachers who see all teachings. Another part we look at is the planning, that is the plan of teaching, the organisational. [...] Through that we can see whether student teachers chose the aims and corresponding activities and whether they organised these in a way so as to work. It may did not work but had they at least worked towards a way which is methodologically accepted? The other is the material. Because in preschool education we cannot work without the right visual material and broader pedagogy. Of course responsibility is a very important thing. For this reason I am saying that we try to put students in the culture of the profession. Responsibility towards the school kindergarten teacher; towards the university kindergarten teacher, that they will be on time on their meetings to get prepared; towards their colleagues, the others since they do during third year teaching in pairs. Therefore we try through these ways to see how we can evaluate a student teacher (Supervising lecturer extract).

In relation to challenging behaviour issues and whether they are being taken account into the evaluation criteria the following answers were given:

This has to do with how ‘imposing’ how convincing is the kindergarten teacher as a presence right. If our system is this and demands a very theatrical kindergarten teacher who will have to inspire children in order to stand up then on the circle for one hour well not everyone has this theatricality. What can we do, not everybody can be like this (Supervising lecturer extract).

On the other hand some student teachers stated that they ‘do not know’ the criteria according to which they are being evaluated. Others commented that these change constantly:

Criteria change constantly. E.g one might want you to tell the truth. That is for example one girl taught a story ‘excuse me but you should not have told this’, another one said ‘you should refer to all the creepy details. One is bothered because the wolf eats the Little Red Riding hood, the other is not (Student teacher extract).

Lastly what seemed to create a problem was the perceived fairness of the feedback comments:
She [another ST of the group] had done a teaching on elections, during first semester, and I can’t say it was an easy theme. However in my opinion she does not do a good lesson. So she had a difficult issue but she does not do a good job. So I compare now the comment she did to her and the comment she did to me. She talked to her very politely and in essence she did not tell her anything bad. Ok she was telling her indirectly but with a very polite way. She did not tell her anything negative. And she stayed for the whole day. And she saw me only for five minutes and she told me all these terrible things she said (Student teacher extract).

We were not viewing placement as something from which we could learn. Don’t you remember what T (supervising lecturer) had said to me about a game I had made that it was not symmetrical? And she said who did this crap and threw it away? The first time I taught! And the teaching went wrong, that is I could not teach. Meanwhile there was nothing wrong with it. That’s why I was pissed off. It was the first time I have made something like it. And ok one two shapes were a bit crooked, not that the whole thing was crap. And then how can you teach? (Beginning teacher extract).

The findings of this study revealed that supervisors’ comments focused on immediate classroom practice and gave criticisms only to student teachers’ way of teaching. Also participants expressed their disapproval of their supervisor's ability in linking up theory and practice to facilitate their professional learning. Their learning was threatened when their supervisors failed their teaching with strong criticisms and unexpected and short supervisory visits. In relation to the issue of difficult behaviour the majority of prospective and beginning teachers considered that supervisors’ feedback was unconstructive. Making reference to the problems they faced in class they wished their supervisors could offer relevant guidance to them.

7.3.2.5 The interpersonal Relationships Setting

Participants in the practicum did not only relate professionally but personally as well. Student teachers interacted with various agents, including fellow student teachers, the schools’ kindergarten teachers and mentors as well as the children. The nature of these interactions had an influence on teacher development with regard interactions with challenging children. The limited support student teachers felt they received brought about a non-supportive learning environment and increased student teachers’ feelings of isolation. This implied that they did not have the opportunity to learn to teach from the kindergarten teachers in the schools.
With regard to the relationships among the student teachers, two student teachers commented:

*Thank God that Marina is in the class. ok Fani is good in her teaching, the way she does it fits her, but something goes wrong with her as a personality. There is something wrong with her* (Student teacher extract).

*I did not know Dorothea before. We met when we started teaching and we became friends. Antonia never helps, when she does not teach. When I have to do a handicraft and I am running out of time and need help and I tell her to help the other two help and she sits. And when she was teaching she said to me bring me the scissors. And I was oh, my God!* (Student teacher extract).

Another student teacher accused his coursemates of doing nothing to support him:

*Towards the end of the teaching the rest [of the student teachers] were tired and were not helping me at all. Now you saw that when the children were leaving from the door they told me you should keep them. How can I do it? How can I do everything in time? So you see that things are not ok among us* (Student teacher extract).

In relation to the children the nature of their difficulties seems also to provoke negative feelings which in turn influence student teachers behaviour:
I said that perhaps Elli could not have caused us such a big problem. Now at the end I saw that we should have treated her better. Because ok to an extent discriminations are made between children with and without challenging behaviour. There are favourites to an extent. At the beginning we were say ‘ok we cannot be engaging with Nefeli all the time’ you know such things. So we were telling her ‘go and sit over there, punishment’ to get over with it’. But finally now I see that when I tell her ‘you are the best child and you will get a star’ and things like that, she quiets and she wants to participate. I could have treated her completely different. But ok good or bad the year has come to an end (Student teacher extract).

After their teaching has finished Giota is leaving the class with her course mates. She seems frustrated and talks loudly about the difficulties they face in relation to children’s behaviour. She concludes by saying:

*And it is my children’s’ fault. And they are idiots* (student teacher extract).

In relation to the schools’ kindergarten teachers, relationships were also complicated. They were also crucial in relation to how student teachers felt that they fit or not in schools. Whether student teachers actually feel as welcomed and part of the school community or not depends on the school’s kindergarten teachers. In turn this affects their teaching and inclusive responses:

*We had last year kindergarten teachers who treated as friendly and this was communicated to the children. In contrast this year the climate was very unfriendly and cold. I will just tell you that they even blamed us for stealing books. So how can you expect after that the children can treat you differently? Or how do you expect that you yourself will treat them differently* (Student teacher extract).

Another student teacher compared the last year’s teacher with this year’s.

*Last year’s teacher was very good. She did not create us any problem. In contrast to here where I guess you have heard many things especially in relation to the other classes Ok they are a little bit… Ours, is very good. She is the best here. But the rest of them are not. I think many times and we discuss this with the other student teachers, haven’t they passed through that stage, the stage of the practicum? Don’t they understand? That ok it is neither so simple for us, nor we are disinterest; At least most of the girls. Nor we do our own way, neither we are ignorant. And we try to come here and do the best we can. Therefore we try too. But when you see a negative behaviour, you get disappointed, don’t you?* (Student teacher extract).
With regard to the parents student teachers not only do not have contact but there are cases in which problems are created:

It depends on how they deal with you at the school […] If the school’s teacher has created a bad climate to the parents about us, that ‘oh they come and ruin our class, and the children do not learn […] etc. ok I get pissed of that I come here (Student teacher extract).

Last year something happened and the kindergarten teacher blamed us. One mother came and said that her child returned to home injured. The child was so noisy and naughty that the other children were hitting her. So once the mother came and complained to the kindergarten teacher that you do not pay attention to my child and she [the school teacher] blamed us that ‘the student teachers do not pay attention to the children’ (Student teacher extract).

From the evidence provided, it is safe to say that non amiable relationships had some negative effects on the teaching practice experiences of student teachers in their learning needs. From an activity theory perspective these disconnected relationships hindered student teachers to develop inclusive practices. When student teachers and the rest members of the activity system were largely not aligned with each other they experienced an ambivalent sense of community. This meant that student teachers could not cooperate with each other in relation to challenging behaviour and that they lacked the support of the school’s teachers. This hindered a sense of belonging to the community of school.

7.4 The School Placement Cultural Models

Practices mediated participants’ actions in the activity. Also participants’ statements showed that it is important to theorise the ways of thought that are bound up with these practices. It is important to theorise the extended frame of reference to which each practice is related to. Discourse and the forms of joint activity in which it occurs can further our understanding of more obstacles in student and prospective teachers’ learning. In this study, there were a number of cultural models that had a cumulative effect in the development of a non-inclusive culture over the course of studies and which finally mediated participants’ actions. They related to conceptualisations about evaluation, learning, challenging behaviour, preschool education, teachers’ role and the impossibility of change. Assessment will be the first model to be discussed.
I have already talked about evaluation as a structural component of the school placement in section 7.3.4. Here its conception by the participants will be discussed. Findings showed that participants held particular views about assessment. In particular they spoke of their feelings of anxiety for their assessment. Talking about assessment as an intensely stressful process was a recurring theme supported by almost all participants.

Now, why I had some problems in my school placement. It was not because I could not communicate with the children. It was because I was very stressed by the evaluation. I cannot do anything when I know that the other is beside me but he is not interested in what I do, rather he is interested in evaluating me. And this is something that blocks both my imagination and my willingness of giving things. I do not know in what other way they could see what is happening within the classroom but this is a problem (Beginning teacher extract).

In relation to supervisors’ role another beginning teacher recollected:

There is the issue here of how you view supervisor, as a judge or as counsellor and supporter. At university, student teachers are afraid of whether supervisors blame them or the children, whether they blame them indirectly. They perceive them as a threat (Beginning teacher extract).

At the same time a majority of trainee teachers felt more relaxed when they were alone in class. They noted that:

There is a great difference when we are alone (Student teacher extract)

Supporting this viewpoint one lecturer spoke of evaluation as a critique:

What we do after the student finishes the teaching is to sit and discuss all of us as a team. What happened and what could we have done better. Of course what we call ‘colleague solidarity’ does not allow student teachers to say ‘I think my colleague made that mistake’. Maybe the mentality is such that we still consider supervision as a critique. That is we do not feel comfortable. And this is a major problem of education in general that should change (Supervising lecturer extract).

This sample of comments conveys the diversity of the factors which inhibit student teachers’ capacity to develop positive conceptions about assessment. First there was unanimity in their recognition of mentors’ negative influence in that they focused more to a grade than to an effort of improving their teaching. Secondly participants felt unwilling to exert themselves to find opportunities to talk about these perceptions. Thirdly these feelings were exaggerated by
the unexpected nature of the visits. Finally participants felt that on the spot feedback played a key role in their learning process and this did not include any comment on behavioural difficulties. Hence they seemed to experience their learning process with regard behavioural difficulties as being an issue that must be bypassed in any way so that they can be judged with leniency by their supervisors. This discourse of assessment seemed to be a critical factor of students perceiving their aim and consequently their role and behaviour towards challenging behaviour in the classroom as one or another:

When there is someone in the class who comes to judge you, you know that, you get prepared in order to be judged. You are not prepared to teach children; Much less the challenging children. I am not relaxed that tomorrow I will go to teach […] When I know that any moment someone might come to judge me, this fact stresses me. And I want to be prepared better in order to be judged better (Student teacher extract)

This feeling hindered inclusive practices. It foreclosed possibilities of student teachers’ engaging challenging children. Student teachers did not do any effort, from the very beginning, to plan about challenging behaviour and to formulate short or long-term action items. Instead a model of ‘assessment as judgement’ made them being interested in how the day-to-day lessons went, formulating practices for the average pupil.

Another model which was revealed had to do with the perception of school placement in itself. According to this, participants viewed school placement as ‘one more module’ they had to pass. This had an effect on how the teaching and learning process was conceived and managed. University was perceived as an organisation adopting a more explicit assessment ethos according to which:

Modules are considered as something you have to pass to get you to the degree (Student teacher extract).

The majority of the sample gave their emphasis on the mark and they viewed school placement “clearly as marking”. Findings revealed many examples of student teachers’ level of involvement with challenging behaviour being mediated by this model. Student teachers prioritised their efforts to be expended on getting a good mark. A prioritisation of the mark was reflected in minimal involvement in behavioural problems and was incompatible with effort being expended on learning about challenging behaviour. Their attitudes to learning
about teaching challenging children seemed to be similar to those summed up in a student teachers’ description of her view:

*Everyone seeks to pass it [school placement] as if it is a module. They do not care to engage more with these [challenging] children. Therefore this is how it works: “I do not care so I do whatever I can and then yes I leave” (Student teacher extract).*

This represented a view of practicum as a means to get student teachers through the degree instead of a valuable, for instance, activity in its own right. Within this view it can be argued that the purpose of practice teaching was reduced to performing a perfect lesson in front of a supervisor, instead of devoting effort to plan about and prevent misbehaviour. This was also highlighted by lecturers as well by school kindergarten teachers. A supervising lecturer provided evidence of low levels of involvement with problems of behaviour amongst student teachers relate to an assessment focused view of the practicum:

*When the only thing that interests you is to get the mark and only to be assessed without looking if children have such difficulties, if you succeeded the goal etc, it is one-sided in my opinion. That is it is a failed effort of educational process, ok? Because you overlook the basic element: the child to whom you convey some things, good or bad. That is we cannot look only to ourselves what we do. We have to look at the child too (Supervising lecturer extract).*

Another recognised this model as preventing student teachers to ‘engage with a challenging child’. This pertains to a more general discourse about learning and its nature. Whether student teachers view learning in its intrinsic value or as a means to pass their examinations:

*I believe that in cases concerning challenging children there is a different way of treating school placement. They should not treat it as one more obligation they have but as something they chose to approach. First of all I do not think that all student teachers view knowledge the same way. I think there are some students who are indeed interested in these objects. But what they will get from the placement and the university more generally has to do with a broader stance towards the studies more generally and the particular object more particularly (Lecturer extract).*

*Student teachers who are satisfied with a ‘five’ or a low grade […] are persons who generally do not have a disposition to work. They want to get a mark even a low one to pass the lesson to get over with it (Lecturer extract).*
These views were also supported by the school’s kindergarten teachers. They argued that if you want to offer something to your challenging pupils you have to:

_Want this and if you want this I believe you make it. And not to feel ‘I am obliged to do my teaching to get a mark and then ok, I am not interested in anything else, if the children have difficult behaviour or if I support them. This relates to how someone sees his/her role in relation to challenging behaviour. Maybe student teachers consider these problems as granted and they do not make any effort (School’s kindergarten teachers extract)._

That is in trying to explain why student teachers do not place emphasis on issues concerning challenging behaviour schools’ kindergarten teachers said that:

_Maybe they consider this as chore (School’s kindergarten teachers extract)._

These statements relate, also, to conceptions about student teachers’ role and, secondly, to conceptualisations on the nature of challenging behaviour. Both models mediated student and prospective kindergarten teachers learning. Both were shaped and sustained by the degree programme.

In perceiving their role in relation to challenging children most of the participants felt that this is not part of their job. They talked of how ‘they are to be with normal children’ about how this is for ‘girls who want clearly to engage with this area’. This was also supported by a lecturer. When asked whether he believes there should be a lesson for challenging behaviour he said:

_Difficult behaviour if by that we mean children that are special cases, concerns special education. We make an effort to establish a department of special education. We still have not made it. [...] If there are children with deviated behaviour, they should attend a special department, which we don’t have. But if this is about children that do not have a really disappointing behaviour, who in any case create some problems but are typical children, I insist in individualised education. Individualised education and learning alongside social education. How this will be achieved? The educator must find his/her own way you know (Lecturer responsible for the first year student teachers placement)_

Setting challenging behaviour in a different area other than general education means that this is out of student teachers’ role and responsibilities. Clearly this had to do with the structure
and practices of the university curriculum. Indeed prospective and beginning kindergarten
teachers were faced with apparently disparate messages about inclusive education. On the
one hand they were facing challenging behaviour in their classrooms; on the other this
problem was not accommodated by the degree programme. It is no surprise, therefore, that
student and beginning teachers express ambivalence about engaging with children with
challenging behaviour in their classes. They do not consider themselves as responsible for
diversifying instruction to meet the range of their learners’ needs.

Instead participants spoke of engaging with challenging behaviour as a matter of personal
choice and willingness. Since the degree programme mediates a perceived non-inclusive role
it is up to each teacher and his/her internal motives whether they will engage or not with
challenging children. Their responses related to two conceptions of teachers’ role that of
kindergarten teaching as a vocation and that of as a profession:

*I think what happens is that some kindergarten teachers take it for granted that the child is like that and they do not make any effort. They say that I want to make through the day as easily as possible and let every challenging child on his/her own* (Beginning teacher extract).

*I believe that if you have the sensitiveness and you engage in with the children, you find the way to deal with them. It depends on why you do this work. Either you do this job and you find ways to spend your day effortlessly or you do this job and you accept that you have children who have problems which you try to moderate in order for them to move a step further That is you enter a class for the day to finish, to leave and to get paid or you enter the class to do something?* (Beginning teacher extract).

The first model of the kindergarten teaching profession mediates the possibilities of taking
account and engaging with challenging behaviour. When the second is adopted these
possibilities are limited.

In a similar way, conceptions about challenging behaviour mediated inclusive possibilities.
These conceptions evolved mostly around deficit models. The models extended to a number
of aspects such as the nature of misbehaviour, its aetiology, appropriate pedagogical
responses and ownership. In relation to the nature of misbehaviour, these pupils were seen as
‘problematic’. In many cases children’s behaviour was considered as children’s
responsibility. It was related to within-child causes. For instance one of the student teachers
argued that:
The children were noisy [...] Children’s misbehaviour is not always teacher’s fault (student teacher extract).

A beginning teacher articulated:

The issue is not only me wanting this but him [challenging child] as well. I cannot force him to do anything. I cannot push him that is whenever I have tried by force to make him do something, he does not do it. Only for two seconds and then he tells me ‘leave me, I want to play (Beginning teacher extract).

In addition student teachers related children’s misbehaviour to school’s kindergarten teachers; school’s kindergarten teachers related it to student teachers; beginning teachers related it to other teachers who in turn relate it to the parents. These beliefs formed a vicious circle of a ‘defence and blame’ model. As two of the school’s kindergarten teachers said:

Student teachers have the way of thinking of who to blame when teaching fails. When teaching fails it is the children’s fault, directly the children’s and indirectly the school’s kindergarten teacher’s fault. When teaching goes well they are proud of themselves [...] we have told them that you never shoulder your responsibilities, that is to wonder why, what did not go well (School’s teacher extract).

One beginning teacher commented of how:

Some [kindergarten teachers] blame the house a lot. They tell for instance the mother ‘Aristeidis who does that, who does the other and you should make him compliant’. There are cases that tell mothers if you do not make compliant your children do not bring them again at school and they send them away[...], and they do not try to approach the child, to find the cause of his/her problems. (Beginning teacher extract)

In relation to pedagogical responses, challenging pupils are considered as needing something ‘more’, something ‘extra’. This is taken for granted. Participants took for granted that there is a need of a specialist in relation to these children.

I wanted to tell you that I believe there must be a girl in the class. To be specialist on these issues (student teacher extract).

The following syllogism was expressed by one student teacher:
If the other girl [teaching assistant] who is more specialist and is supposed to be better able to manage him, cannot do anything, you think’ ok what can I do here’ Nothing (Student teacher extract).

Similarly student teachers speak aphoristically as to possibilities of intervention through differentiated work. The majority of the participants expressed the concern that ‘you cannot engage with only one and leave all the rest’.

And we do not have this luxury as I told you earlier, to have him, to have him all the time in our mind (Student teacher extract).

If we do individualised work, we will abandon the rest. What will do the rest? They will disappear. You cannot leave all the children and engage in with only one (Student teacher extract).

A supervising lecturer related these cultural models to a wider discourse concerning the nature of preschool education. She spoke of the incompatibility of traditional classrooms/ nature of education and the inclusive criteria for challenging behaviour:

I do not want to be characterised as racist. But I do not understand many things from inclusive education and its principles. Constantly problems are created by the presence of challenging children and it is natural to be created because in a traditional classroom you cannot function with inclusive criteria. They is a need of special criteria. How do you integrate these children in the traditional classroom? You need a new classroom. Another philosophy, another function, you need ad hoc curriculum for every child separately. Only then you can engage with every child individually. But in a class wherein you put the children in circle and you want a uniform behaviour a challenging child will create to you problems (Supervising lecturer extract).

Finally another important model that mediated non-inclusive approaches towards challenging behaviour was the “nothing can be done” model. Participants believed they cannot do anything in relation to challenging children. When they believed so, they did so:

Simply I am thinking if we got what we could from this experience. Ok now Nadia, for one month and once per week what can you learn. You cannot. In addition we were four of us and all four were over him [the challenging child] (Beginning teacher extract).

Supervising lecturers admit that in relation to children with behaviour difficulties:
Well we must start from an objective factor. The student teacher goes to the kindergarten school once per week. Therefore whatever intervention she/he will try to do has limited possibilities of success since that day for example it will be her that teaches the next week someone else will be teaching and the week after the same will teach again. If then we go to the fourth years that do only two teachings per semester you understand that four weeks pass by [...] I consider though that in relation to challenging children if the class kindergarten teacher has not made it, the student teacher is not going to make it, for one day per week he visits the school (Supervising lecturer extract).

This impossibility was also supported by a supervising kindergarten teacher. She said that nothing can be done by the student teachers in the frame of the school placement since in its frame students are called to do many things. If you think that the kindergarten teachers herself many times refers children to a specialist, psychologist, child-psychologist, that is she herself cannot cope let alone a student who is required to do all these things. To keep the class, to feel how she herself is in the class to see if she likes what she does, to improve herself:

Nothing, my girl, can be done in this phase. We cannot work with only one child. By no means, this cannot be done. This demands firstly experience; it demands plenty of time for the child. That is the kindergarten teacher has to be with him/her, near him/her so the child can feel this safety. It is not possible every time that someone else comes to love the child, Thursday other students visit the school, Tuesday others. So this thing cannot happen under these conditions, ok? It demands another kind of work with these children on a daily basis. This work happens on a day-to-day basis. When this familiarisation comes with the student, then this thing can happen. That is when the child accepts his/her teacher, it is possible for work to be done. If she/he does not accept him/her nothing can be done. And in order for this to happen, the student teacher must feel that she is a teacher, to learn how to do this, that is all these things we try to do within a year. Ok? So when you work ad hoc this demands sensitivity by each girl. And more work as well in hours. That is to spend time with this child. Therefore his/her teacher can do that in a first phase. We do not have this luxury, to tell the girls to work extra. Then we must do another job that is a work of psychology. And this cannot happen in the frame of school placements. This is a professor’s who teaches psychology if you like job. There are some other things, which I could tell to the girls. In private I say these when they ask me; Because luckily it happened to do these studies and to enjoy this thing. It happened, ok? A kindergarten teacher many times may not have done extra studies on psychology. Therefore she acts as she can. With some seminars of school psychology, things like these [...] if you think that the kindergarten herself many times refer children to a specialist, psychologist, child-psychologist, that is her self cannot cope with challenging children much less can a student who is called to do all these things. To keep the class, to feel how
she herself is in the class to see if she likes what she does, to improve herself (Supervising kindergarten teacher extract).

This impossibility was expressed in supervising teachers’ feedback comments. In one instance and after a student teaching narrated an incidence in which a child swore at her the supervising kindergarten teacher said:

Be patient They are difficult children. So be patient. The year has almost finished. That is you do not have many things left to do (supervising kindergarten teacher).

A similar situation was expresses by the beginning teachers:

No there is not any flexible mechanism for support. Even the head of the LEA says well ok the year will pass by, be patient. Be patient, this is what everyone says. The same happens with the advisor. She visited me twice and it happened those days the children to be calm. Generally, If you have problem you can call her. But to tell you the truth I did not call her. Why to do so? So she can tell me to be patient? Because ok from whatever I have heard from colleagues who face similar problem, this is what they have been told (Beginning teacher extract).

Student teachers also expressed the view that:

You cannot do anything. If the children have not learned this from the beginning, of the school year nothing can be done (student teacher extract).

7.5 Conclusion

This evidence revealed one key element. The way the practicum discursive activities are organised can encourage different responses towards challenging pupils. When asked about their experiences with challenging children participants drew on a number of cultural models to explain their actions: ‘evaluation as judgement’, ‘placement as a module to pass’, ‘teacher for normal children’, ‘challenging children as needing a special teacher’ and the ‘nothing can be done’. Participants’ positioned themselves with or against these models in order to explain their dispositions towards challenging behaviour.

In this way each model became a tool that provided access in the mindsets that participants operated within which in turn provided access into additional constraints student teachers faced in their developing of inclusive educational practices for all; in developing their
teaching selves. That is findings showed that student and prospective teachers formed their teaching selves in relation to ways of inhabiting roles, expectations and cultural models that mattered to them. In other words it documented the dynamic relation between teacher identity and school placement discursive practice. It is to this I now turn.

7.6 Identities of the practicum

7.6.1 Introduction

Inherent in the participants’ responses mentioned in the previous section are the possibilities of learning to teach challenging children allowed within the school practicum’s discursive practice. These possibilities are called here ‘identities’. Identities include those subject positionings creating and created by the school placement conditions which when being adopted by student teachers mediate their inclusive or not responses towards challenging behaviour. The previous chapters gave an overview of these particular conditions. The purpose of this section is to explore closely the influence of both institutional and community practices to understand the conditions under which student teachers learn teaching and construct their professional identities.

The first most important finding of this section was that it was not possible for student teachers to reach a balance between two contexts. It was found that the way in which student teachers’ transition from university to school was organised played a crucial role in how they constructed their identities in these two different contexts. The trajectories of their identity development showed a gradual shift from a ‘theoretical’ inclusive approach to challenging behaviour at university to a more ‘non inclusive’ or ‘conflictual’ one at negotiating belonging and control at school. Identities were co-constructed in the practicum sociocultural relationships and were framed within particular relations of power.

This was largely because student teachers were not encouraged to become reflexive about these relationships – which is important since knowledge is socially constructed. Eventually, they were not encouraged to become reflexive about themselves, - i.e. how their placement membership and subject-positions motivated them to negotiate challenging behaviour knowledge in the ways they did.
From this perspective, then, whilst the focus of the previous chapter was the sociocultural structures in the particular practicum community, the analytic focus of this section is on the variety of positionings available for student teachers to occupy in that community. This has been the second important finding of this section. In particular in the analysis of data seven major constructions of teacher identity were identified:

“The visitor/guest identity”
“The student teacher identity”
“The class’ permanent teacher identity”
“The mainstream teacher identity”
“The special teacher identity”
“The born to be teacher identity”
The “conflicutal teacher identity”

What is important in these subject positions is that each allowed student and beginning teachers to experience and understand their school practice in a certain way. Each position opened up a specific view, as it at the same time prevented other ways of experiencing and understanding (Davies & Harré, 2001 cited in Søreide, 2006) challenging behaviour or in Davies and Harré’s, (1990) terms each position brought with it a ‘structure of rights’: specific possibilities for and limitations on action.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraining identities</th>
<th>Enabling identities</th>
<th>Key influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “visitor/guest” identity</td>
<td>The “class’ teacher” identity</td>
<td>Effect of school placement socioculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “student teacher” identity</td>
<td>The “special teacher” identity</td>
<td>Content of programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “mainstream teacher” identity</td>
<td>The “made to be” a teacher identity</td>
<td>Wider sociocultural discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “born teacher” identity</td>
<td>The “leitourgos” identity</td>
<td>Wider sociocultural discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “public servant” identity</td>
<td>The ‘inclusive’ identity</td>
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<td>The ‘conflicutal’ identity</td>
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Fig. 12: Situated student and beginning teacher identities
In this sense these positionings could also be categorised under two overarching categories, that of “identities facilitating learning about challenging behaviour” and that of “identities constraining it”. The content of the programme, the effect of school socioculture, and finally personal beliefs were all key influences used by participants to describe their senses of selves.

What follows is the case studies data as a source used to identify commonalities and differences across student and beginning teachers, attending to the reciprocal interaction between context and identity. To understand the interaction between the two, I looked for alignment and misalignment between the student teachers’ identities and the way that practicum was shaped in the program. All experienced an overall sense of misalignment between their focus on challenging behaviour and the program’s overall focus.

In seeking to bring together the findings to interpret participants’ views and better understand the links between their identities and context the section is structured around the key identities as mentioned above. The aim was to to empirically identify different professional identity profiles by investigating the situational nature experiences of the student teachers.

Also it was found that teachers position their identities according to the situational dimension of the school placement context which is of particular importance in this analysis as well as in relation to wider sociocultural discourses. Finally, differences between teachers with different professional identity profiles in features of the teachers’ responses and engagement with challenging children were explored.

7.6.2 The ‘Visitor/Guest’ and the ‘Class’ Teacher’ Identities

The ‘visitor/guest’ identity was one of the ways of being a teacher which seemed to foreclose inclusive pedagogical responses towards pupils with behaviour difficulties. It foreclosed the possibility of student teachers taking the initiative in relation to the hard-to-manage pupils. It had to do with the effect of student teachers’ agency and power relations with the schools’ teachers. These were related with teachers’ interventions, children’s ownership, the view of school placement as a module to pass and the view of evaluation as judgment. All elements
were found to mediate student teacher and teacher identities or in Engeström’s terms they shaped them as subjects in specific ways.

Student teachers’ agency and power relations related to schools’ teachers’ dispositions towards student teachers’ status as well as their interventions during their teaching. First, data suggested that the university’s perception that schools accept student teachers from a sense of obligation mediated to a great extent their agency. In relation to this two student teachers commented that:

*Simply the supervising kindergarten teachers told us ‘you have to be cautious, to behave nicely, not to come to argument as you are guests. That is they stress this. We are guests. So how can you feel then, do you understand? We are guests, meaning that they help us to do our school placements. They do us a favour* (student teacher extract).

*This is the line we get from university and it is a very clear line: Do not do anything that will bring you to confrontation with the schools’ teachers* (student teacher extract).

The following view was expressed by one supervising lecturer:

*Now when we have difficult forms of behaviour what we tell them is to ask the school kindergarten teacher how she deals with them. We do not want to create problem to the kindergarten teacher who welcomes us and supports us because we as I said previously we cannot change in one day or turn upside down what she herself has done* (supervising lecturer).

Secondly teachers’ dispositions showed that student teachers were seen as guests. When they as an example, talk about themselves as someone with the exclusive responsibility of children’s learning, they often present their responsibility as a contrast to student teachers’ lack of this responsibility.

*You know I am responsible for the children. Whatever happens I am responsible to the parents not student teachers* (School kindergarten teacher extract).

*One of my colleagues was on a leave and student teachers were teaching. Once a parent came to me and told me to take a look at his child as the other children were hitting him. That is even when student teachers teach, parents talk to us* (School kindergarten teacher extract).

Third, teachers’ interventions were important in the guest identity construction. It is obvious that ‘The visitor teacher’ is important in the construction of teacher identity because the
teachers, like four of them in the following excerpt, use interventions to express opposition from the class’ teacher identity.

*It bothers me. It bothers me a lot that they intervene that they tell us how to do something. It affects me. I feel disempowered against the teacher* (Student teacher extract).

*I never fell as the class’ teacher. It demotes me the fact that she intervenes the way she does. Like the other day she yelled at me to read slowly. She disoriented me* (Student teacher extract).

*When she intervenes from her desk, I feel like a stranger, as a strange girl who enters a strange space* (Student teacher extract).

*When they intervene I just do not get bothered. I think I visit the school for only few days and that’s it; so I do not get bothered* (Student teacher extract).

To recognise the importance of these interventions and how these are presented and understood has an empowering force in how they construct the visitor identity. It is empowering in the sense that it allows the construction of teacher identities that student teachers themselves experience as relevant and meaningful. Such awareness increases the ability to recognise and understand systems of power within institutions and discourses.

In addition, participants very often positioned themselves as persons who do not have ownership of the children. This subject position was used frequently throughout the interviews and seems therefore, to be significant for the teachers. When a student teacher does not manage to develop a sense of class and children ownership, he/she positions him/her as someone that cannot learn about challenging children. For instance a student teacher felt that:

*We come here. We have children only once a week, they are not ours, that is we do not have them from the beginning to have put them to work according to our rules and according to the conditions we want. So we cannot manage them [challenging children]* (Student teacher extract).

Another said that:

*We do not have our own kindergarten school to get to know the children. Now we are so many persons in each school, four students, the helpers, the school’s kindergarten teachers and the graders so consequently we cannot do whatever we want* (Student teacher extract).
For these reasons many participants expressed their desire to have their own class in relation to dealing with challenging behaviour in order to:

    Build a class from the beginning and not to have someone to get on our nerves (Student teacher extract).

A third one added

    I cannot consider a strange class as my own and this affects how I deal with difficult children. I would prefer to have my own class and to be able to design my own activities (Student teacher extract).

Other student teachers tried to explain why they feel as visitors by describing another element that of viewing learning at the school placement as a module to pass and evaluation as a judgment. They said that:

    I do not feel as a kindergarten teacher. I feel more as a student teacher. That I have to do something to pass, like it is a lesson. I view school placement, as a module I have. Because the children are not mine I do not feel them like they are my class. I feel it like a module, that I have to do this too to take me to the degree let’s say (Student teacher extract).

And:

    I am a student teacher that is I view school placement as a lesson I have to pass. I do not feel I am in familiar surroundings. Hence I am not worried particularly with misbehaviour. As soon as I finish I will leave (Student teacher extract).

And that:

    I felt like a student teacher. Even though I entered the class I did not feel that I will teach some time. I was stressed to do well the teaching, to get a good grade, these (Beginning teacher extract).

This identity construction positions the student teacher as very much away from ‘new’ ideas and initiations about school, teaching and behaviour management. This kind of teacher expresses a stable and conservative attitude, like the following participants when they say:

    I never felt like a teacher. I did not feel relaxed in order to experiment. I was a guest who had to do what was being told and that was it (Beginning teacher extract).

And:

    When we feel that we are being examined we cannot feel like ‘psychologists’. That is we cannot sit and engage individually with each challenging child. We cannot do this (Student teacher extract).
Hence a teacher within this identity construction is not eager and willing to learn more and develop his/ her own competencies in relation to behaviour management. Teachers’ interventions, ownership of the class, a view of learning as an external goal and supervisors’ views were important in making student teachers feel disempowered and as having limited agency in making sure that challenging children experience a positive learning environment in the school. Throughout the whole material it is possible to see how prospective teachers use these context parameters in their replies as part of their identity constructing process. As a supervising lecturer nicely put it:

_They find them in front of them in their school placements the difficult children which ruin their practicum, their activities, and they do not know how to deal with them. They could not of course deal with them in any better way because from the moment they are visitors they cannot get the initiative. It is the kindergarten teacher who gets the initiative and many times you see the student teacher following the right tactic, e.g. ignoring the child who misbehaves, and the kindergarten teacher intervening saying ‘sit down, do that do the other’ and to constantly giving negative orders to the point that the student teacher cannot do anything. So these are not easy things (Supervising lecturer)._ 

Consequently the visitor/guest identity comes in stark contrast with the ‘permanent class’ teacher identity when came to possibilities for learning and action about challenging behaviour. The “class’ teacher” breaks through as the dominant identity construction in relation to positive learning and handling of challenging behaviour.

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**Case study: School Gama**

**Identity agency**

_What I forgot to tell Chrisa [ST] and I saw it the other day on the video was that she was doing lesson and at some point the Skt told her “choose Eva she has not said”. She is a child that in case you do not do as she wants she will misbehave. Snt told her “pick up Eva”. And Chrisa replied ‘I will choose now Andrew and immediately afterwards her’. In the meantime Eva, after listening to the school’s teacher, she had stand up in front of her and Chrisa said to her ‘sit down because it is Andrew’s turn and then you will. “No I want now”. “Ok now” said Chrisa. That is we do not even know how to behave to children. I would not do that. I would have told her to sit down (Student teacher extract)_.

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168
In the student and beginning teachers’ efforts to explain why they are not learning about challenging behaviour, not being the class’ teacher seemed to be a significant identity construction with which to make an explanation for. Student teachers said that:

When you are the kindergarten teacher and you have in your class such a [challenging] child you must place him/her with all the others. Whilst now you look first all the rest, the eighteen-nineteen, and about him [the challenging child], whatever he can do on his own; because you cannot handle both (student teacher extract).

And

It is differently if you are the kindergarten teacher of the class. And ok you know that now children do this so I can engage a little bit a challenging child or with every child who has a problem. But again you cannot leave all the children and engage in with one. And especially when you do not have the necessary experience (Student teacher extract).

And

Good nursery teachers are those who when they see children who do not participate, they incite them and do not say ok I will continue the lesson with the “rest of the children”. Ok, as a student teacher, you have already lost this as you do not have experience but it is good to try to make all the children to participate. Especially the children who keep close to themselves (Student teacher extract).

The first important component of the class teacher identity construction is experience. Experience is considered an a priori requirement for dealing with challenging behaviour whilst the opposite constitutes an a priori constraining factor. The second component relates to a number of extra options you have in relation to the challenging children’s well-being and development. A supervising teacher puts it this way:

If you were the school kindergarten teacher you could have been able to have, for instance, a discussion with parents. But still you wouldn’t be able to do many things. Parents do not cooperate. Or you could ask the help of a specialist (Supervising kindergarten extract)

A third component has to do with the bonding that exists only between the class teacher and her/his children:

And because we are not one or two. We are four, another four the three years. That is they see so many persons during the week. It is not that we are only one
or two and they get to know us. So neither the children bond particularly with us (Student teacher extract).

This evidence suggests that the class’ teacher identity is an identity that seems to afford more possibilities in relation to challenging behaviour than that of the ‘visitor’. Yet this was an identity which was possessed by the school’s kindergarten teachers and to which student teachers had no access.

7.6.3 The ‘Student Teacher Identity’

The ‘student teacher identity’ was another identity that came in contrast with the class teacher identity. It had to do with student teachers’ status. It was evident in statements in which student teachers talked about both the schools’ kindergarten teachers’ behaviours towards them as well as about children’s parents and children themselves. Student teachers through children’s eyes are ‘girls who come to play with them’. This was said by a school’s kindergarten teacher:

In one or two days themes are not completed, teacher changes continually, children do not respect. They think student teachers are just girls who come to play with them (School’s kindergarten teacher extract).

Supervising teachers said that indeed children:

Take advantage of the student teachers’ presence as much as they can (Supervising lecturer extract).

And:

The children the days the student teachers visit the school are always more fidgety. This happens always. It has a simple explanation: another person comes therefore I will try to do whatever I like (Supervising lecturer extract).

Indeed this was corroborated by a number of student teachers. One of them said that:

Personally I do not feel as a kindergarten teacher. Simply I believe that children treat us as student teachers. That is they know we are student teachers, they have understood that faces change (Student teacher extract).

Another stated that:

The children do not listen to us, they do not attach importance to us (Student teacher extract).

Four further participants commented:
You know that the children view us as, they know, as students-teachers. This does not help us in particular with management issues (Beginning teacher extract).

and

A child once told me “you are a student teacher we do not care” (Student teacher extract).

and

Unless the kindergarten teacher yells they do not listen to us. Sometimes it does not matter if we talk or not; they do not pay attention to us at all (Student teacher extract).

In addition, in many cases the schools’ kindergarten teachers during the lesson call the student teachers in front of the children ‘girls’ and ‘student teachers’ (observations and video extracts). In some cases the children as well call them ‘student teachers’ (observation and video field notes). This also signifies the school’s kindergarten teachers’ role in the construction of this particular identity (see also section 7.3.3.2).

Once I could not help it and I told the schools’ teacher that perhaps she should call me as miss in front of the children. She kept calling me with my first name and I felt children were not respecting me (Student teacher extract).

If I am alone because it has happened to be on my own in the class, I feel as a nursery teacher, when the others are present I feel like a student teacher (Student teacher extract).

Once a child told me ‘student teachers again? I want to do lesson with my miss. The last time she told me that: you will teach again? I do not want to. I am bored I will go over there to sit on my own. Which again is a problem that has not been discussed (Student teacher extract).

7.6.4 ‘The mainstream’ and ‘the special teacher’ identities

The ‘mainstream’ and the ‘special teacher’ identity constructions emerged through conversations in the interviews about perceptions towards difficult forms of behaviour, responsibilities as a kindergarten teacher and what it is like to try to deal with such behaviours in the mainstream classroom. Both phrases were used by the participants themselves.

By being a mainstream kindergarten teacher they seem to mean that they do not have the knowledge nor the responsibility to deal with such difficulties. In many parts of the
interviews participants clearly and explicitly defined things teachers do for challenging pupils as something that is an addition to being a teacher, as something “extra” and, therefore, not something they consider a part of their job. In most of the interviews concerning their responsibilities as teachers towards pupils deemed to be challenging the interviewees have this clear recognition of and identification with a typical child/mainstream teacher challenging child/special teacher subject position.

I am a mainstream teacher. Let aside that I do not know how to help him with his behavioural problem. He also has a speech problem. Imagine that he does speech therapy with diphthongs. You have to be a specialist to do these things (beginning teacher extract)

I am supposed to be for the normal children. My job is not to run and look for rooms, subsidies etc. (School’s kindergarten teacher extract.)

In trying to discern what creates this subject position, the interest shifts on the content of the degree programme. In the following excerpts it can be seen how interviewees position themselves in this way with the help of experiences from their degree programme and information on challenging children. These elements mediated their identity as ‘kindergarten teachers for normal children’:

Concerning problems we face in the class we have not been taught anything at all. But I feel many times when I come across such children embarrassed and awful about myself. Not for my ability as a kindergarten teacher because I say, maybe it is wrong, but I am to be with normal children. My preparation is for normal children (Beginning teacher extract).

I feel that these children…I feel that I cannot manage them because I am not trained in a special education programme. I am trained in a general education programme, hence I cannot manage them and they get out of my control (Student teacher extract).

I cannot deal with them because I feel I do not have the training for these [challenging] children. I am supposed to be for the other children (Student teacher extract).

In other cases participants defined this identity by distinguishing it from that of the special teacher. Issues of emotional and behavioural difficulties:

Are for those who want to engage clearly with this area of special education (Student teacher extract).
I believe that I do not have the proper training for him. He is not for a special school. You could not say that. I guess though there should be another person specialised to attend only him. Because I can not give him the proper attention (Student teachers extract)

These statements might suggest that a perceived inadequate preparation in general teacher education programmes is a key element in framing a teacher identity for ‘normal’ children. When student teachers perceive that the information on challenging behaviour is not adequate they also place themselves in certain positions. The status of challenging behaviour in the structure of the programme mediated the development of a teacher identity for the normal children. Throughout the whole material it is possible to see how interviewees identify themselves with the teacher for normal children whilst at the same time they position themselves as opposed to providing for challenging children.

This identity implies that difficult cases are not an inherent responsibility of their role therefore forecloses, a priori, a focus on the learning and an interest on the development of inclusive teaching practices on the part of student and beginning teachers. In contrast these are usually assigned to the specialists. Therefore, in the interviews participants position themselves as opposed to someone with special knowledge about challenging children and how to treat them. This knowledge makes ‘specialists’ responsible for challenging pupils.

7.6.5 The ‘Leitourgos’ and the ‘Public Servant Teacher’ Identities

The public servant and the leitourgos [viewing kindergarten teaching as a vocation] identity constructions position student and beginning teachers as very much towards specific discourses about the nature and purpose of kindergarten teaching. Differences in conceptions of identity resulted from differences in personal beliefs about whether teachers want or not to deal with the issue of misbehaviour. Those who aligned with the first seem to shape their practices according to a norm which impedes the development of an interest on challenging children whilst the second seems to allow possibilities of developing a genuine interest on these children’s problems:

Good or bad I see two cases: either you do this job and you find ways to spend your day as easy as possible and to return to your home or you do this job and you accept that you have children who are living/animate dynamic and they
have problems which you try to moderate in order for them to move a step further (Beginning teacher extract).

To begin with it relates in my opinion with how you yourself view your job. If you perceive it as a job of public character let’s say that I go there for four hours, I tell children some things and I leave because then I have to wash and to cook, nothing can be done. If you see it as leitourgima (vocation) that look five times per day I am with human beings and I try to support them then something can be done (Student teacher extract).

The public servant kind of teacher expresses a negative and inflexible attitude towards challenging behaviour. A teacher within this identity construction is not eager and willing to learn more and develop his/her own competencies about misbehaviour, like the following participants when they say:

I think what happens is that some kindergarten teachers take it for granted that the child is like that and they do not make any effort. They say that I want to make through the day as easily as possible and let every 'Achilleas' to 'cut his throat and to get drown'. They blame the house a lot (beginning teacher extract).

There many teachers that do not try to approach the child, to see where from their problems start (beginning teacher extract).

In contrast the caring teacher has a connection to an inherent will to provide for children who misbehave:

If you have the sensitiveness and you engage in with the children, you find the way, you find ways to deal with them (Beginning teacher extract).

You can help. As long as if you want to (Student teacher extract).

7.6.6 The ‘Made to Be’ and ‘a Born Teacher’ Identities

A born teacher and the made to be teacher surfaced as identity constructions in the parts of the interviews where the teachers expressed inadequacy or uncertainty towards dealing with misbehaviour. The first seems to hold constraints for teacher learning and development. Student teachers inability to deal with these cases made them speculate that maybe keeping the class and keep children’s interest is something that:

You might have this in you. And maybe I do not have it (student teacher extract).
This was supported by the supervising kindergarten teachers when they tried to explain how someone can learn to deal with difficult forms of behaviour. One of them said:

\[
\text{This comes by yourself. It is instinct. It comes from inside you. It is an issue of character, kindergarten teacher's character. It is more an issue of character (Supervising kindergarten teacher extract).}
\]

A supervising lecturer said that:

\[
\text{There are people that have been born to do that job. And you can tell them in a moment. They are few.... Of course good kindergarten teachers can be made. They may have an inclination with the children but from then and on of course and they can become (Supervising lecturer extract).}
\]

Another one stated:

\[
\text{It comes from the student teacher if he/she captures, so to speak, the children, if he/she charms the children, if he/she can communicate with them. It is an issue of communication. You send messages of communication or you do not send. There are students with perfect material that do not send any message of communication to the children. It is impressive. And other students, who have much less material, are less prepared but they have their way; they have the way to communicate with the children (Supervising lecturer extract).}
\]

According to student teachers

\[
\text{Yes, we do not know what to do, we have not learned something which could help us. I believe that mmm, it depends on your mmm [...] Character. Yes, I do not know, kindergarten teaching is very, I believe it is to “have it”. To have it, to suit you (Student teacher extract).}
\]

\[
\text{Personality is very crucial for me. In many things generally, not only on teaching, because I can see that from myself, when I teach children will follow. They will be much more quite than they are when the rest of the girls teach them (Student teacher extract).}
\]

\[
\text{You do not learn this [dealing with misbehaviour], you have it (Student teacher extract).}
\]

These statements document that how individuals engage with or make decisions about the ways to learn to teach challenging pupils tend to be described in terms of innate skills or what one can or cannot do with little understanding or attention to the social and cultural practices which influence both the their teaching acts and development. The importance of these identities lies on the possibilities for action each allows. The teacher as born identity implies a giftedness that allows student teachers to face challenging pupils. It is like student
teachers are born with a knowledge of how to identify and respond to these students. The opposite means that training cannot provide student teachers the ability to teach adaptively.

7.6.7 The ‘Conflictual’ and the ‘Inclusive’ Teacher Identities

Participants found themselves caught in a conflict. They often talked in conflicting voices discussing how dealing with misbehaviour is with reference to how it should be. Their actions sometimes contradicted with their own beliefs. As the data show teachers talk about their current practices in ways that suggest these are sometimes in conflict with their views of themselves as teachers, and they tend to make sense of this conflict by making reference to the contextual circumstances they are working in.

To begin with, the majority of participants showed traces of an inclusive teacher identity. As they developed experience with children challenging behaviour, in the context of the classrooms, they developed a voice and an identity of conflict:

Anyway when I teach I try to involve him [challenging child] too as much as this is possible. If for instance once he was raising his hand I would never deny him to talk. But I cannot tell him ‘Achilleas tell us you too something’ (Student teacher extract).

Participants seemed to be willing with regard to children’s participation but they faced dilemmas in relation to how to behave, how to approach him, how to make him talk, to participate in the lesson. Definitely I want him to participate, yes, but how? (Student teacher extract).

In many cases they found themselves in congruence between what they believe is right and what they actually do in practice in relation to their efforts to manage the children:

Do you see what I do; I bribe them by giving them candies, apples, etc. (Beginning teacher extract)

Or

Sometimes I tell him ‘I will take you to the [primary school Head teacher’s] office’; ok which is not right anyway (Beginning teacher extract).

Or
The poor [other] children, they see how easy-going we are with all the serious things challenging children do and that sometimes they take the rap for them (Beginning teacher extract)

Or

Once we had this case with this child who was very aggressive. Any way I noticed that and I told his kindergarten teacher about it and she told me ‘ok, what do you care’? [...] and I tell to myself ok what can I do, can I myself talk to his mother? And what if she tells me something similar (Student teacher extract).

When try to discern the origins of this ‘conflictual’ identity several elements were found to have an effect on it. These related to particular elements of their initial education. These elements form a story of identity construction which begins with many dreams but ends with much disappointment. The following story highlights a prevalent and typical ‘course’ of how identities are being shaped through practice:

Look when I started I had many dreams, many ambitions to teach the children, etc. in practice though things are completely different because there are many problems. You have to deal with many problems. And in relation to the children you need to be more relaxed [...] Because now with all the problems I face I am not bothered whether they will learn all the letters. Either way they will learn these eventually (Beginning teacher extract).

This short narrative shows three major benchmarks or main influences in the story of student teachers’ developing of their identities: Student teachers’ conceptions about aspects of their work prior their studies; upon the beginning of their studies and teaching practice which is of particular importance in this analysis; and during their appointment as teachers.

Participants referred to the first time they taught as a significant moment that, in some cases, even changed their attitudes and opinions on the profession and their studies:

There was not at all in my mind pursuing studies at the preschool education department. I wanted to study at another department and I was determined to sit the exams again. The first semester we were offered only theoretical modules. I wanted to sit the exams again. The first time I visited a kindergarten school, in order to do an assignment, I decided to stay. And from then and on I also began enjoying the modules. Some of them, the more practical (Beginning teacher extract).

I was not very positive about it but now I think is good that we teach for two years and I started enjoying it that I tried experience (Student teacher extract).
Teaching practice was also crucial in changing their expectations of their role and profession. Participants referred how these changed upon the beginning of their studies:

That is ok I have heard from others too. You know they hear kindergarten teacher and they think, you know they view things into a continuum. Kindergarten teacher is nothing, primary teacher and philologist are at a higher ranking. Professor at university is at the top. I also hear from my ex classmates when I met them after graduating school and asked me what do you study. I told them kindergarten teacher And they were telling me oh, kindergarten teacher. Ok it is easy. You sing songs, etc. (Student teacher extract).

I expected things to be different and different they turned out…I expected things to be easier. However what kindergarten teaching is all about is different in reality. There are so many things to engage in and you have contact with children which I think renovates you. Ok sometimes it is tiring. There is also preparation that no one sees. And especially when you first start it is much harder. Until you adjust, and until you see the class how the children go and all these (Student teacher extract).

This was far more intense when participants talked about their expectations in relation to difficult forms of behaviour:

I was astonished. I had never seen before a child like this. That is two years now I had never seen, neither we had such a child more generally at the school I was placed. And it impressed me and I did not know to tell you the truth how to deal with it (Student teacher extract).

The expectations prospective teachers hold about their role in relation to their profession and challenging children, the way they are trained and in particular the way the teaching practice operates result in conflicting voices in relation to inclusive practices. When prospective teachers are not sufficiently well prepared and supported to work in inclusive ways they talk about themselves as teachers who want to support these children but do not know how:

I wanted to do something about these children but no one at the department was telling us how. They were not suggesting anything. Maybe this was because they did not have anything to suggest.

7.7 Conclusion

Institutions produce possibilities for constructions of job identities for their members through the way they are organised and what is valued (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Within each
discursive practice the individual always has a possibility of positioning (Davies & Harré, 2001). Data revealed that there are many ways of being a kindergarten teacher and that being a particular kind of kindergarten teacher relates to the circumstances being faced within the school placement. To obtain, therefore, an understanding of these teacher identity construction processes it was, necessary to broaden the analytical focus to include the discursive practices of school placement. That is the full implications of the above sections (7.3 and 7.4) discussing the discursive practice of the school placement is that it is a site wherein student teacher identities were constructed and performed. A variety of accessible identity constructions within school placement discourse was revealed, which opened up a situational understanding of teacher identity.

University and schools often ascribe identities to student teachers such as good or poor, based on their understanding of what each identity entails. – e.g. writing nice protocols and behaving politely at schools. However often these identities are narrow and student teachers are expected to take up the teaching practices valued within their classrooms. Responding to challenging behaviour seems not to be one of these teaching practices. This suggests that as they interact with school practice, and learn what constitute more or lesser valued student teacher identities, they begin to adopt the teaching practices they perceive as appropriate and use it as a way to understand themselves as prospective kindergarten teachers. This compromises who they become as prospective kindergarten teachers in that is does not lead to changes in identity in inclusive ways.

Up to this point such an analysis has focused on the constraints and impediments student and beginning kindergarten teachers face in relation to challenging behaviour. It was found that these are part and parcel of their degree programme. On the one hand the lack of appropriate information and on the other particular conditions and beliefs within the collectivity, transition, classroom, supervision and social relations settings were found to mediate particular situated student teacher and teacher identities. I will now turn to illustrate that these constraints can be framed as contradictions. That is the pedagogical actions of participants in relation to challenging behaviour may be understood by their function within the activity of a community and its motivation. The importance of such an analysis is that it moves impediments from the individual level to the level of activity. This was hypothesised to be a fruitful alternative in drawing school’s and university’s attention into how they can be better aligned.
Chapter Eight

An Activity Theoretical Analysis of the Findings

8.1 Introduction

Analysis, so far, has shown that focusing on the dyadic interaction between student teacher and challenging child is not sufficient. Data showed that participants located the nature of this interaction in the activity context of school placement. In this context their experiences of the programme are not relevant to the reality they face in classroom. An activity theory helped to understand why does this occur: largely because of internal and external contradictions.

Participants provided me with a helpful set of categories of problems – practices and cultural models – which were, however, descriptive. For this reason, this section addresses the issue of how one might move from such a description to a more theoretical conceptualisation of these problems in order to understand how university and school might be enabled to better coordinate their activities. This involves theorising tensions within an activity framework.

Taking an activity theoretical analysis was helpful in that these factors were conceptualised as contradictions. An examination of the obstacles reported in the previous chapter using activity theory helped me to identify three major contradictions in school placement activity system: (a) within the object of activity, (b) between the mediational means and the object of activity and (c) between aspects of the community and the object of activity. Within these contradictions the school placement was conceptualised as a ‘disconnected partnership’ with all the ramifications for student teacher identities and challenging behaviour this entailed.

Such an analysis was powerful, first, because it brought together university and school and secondly because, in this way, it placed possible changes at the partnership level. In this way, attendance to the contradictions of the activity triangle of the school placement provided “depth” to the initial “breadth” gained from the thematic analysis as presented in chapter seven.
School and university may be analysed as activity systems. Based on findings from the previous section and in relation to university the student teacher has been chosen as the subject in the analysis. The object of their activity is studies, and the desired outcome is to manage the studies in order to pass an exam. The instruments were lessons, seminars, the lesson plan, and lectures. The student teacher belongs to a community of student teachers, but here are also the lecturers, the supervising lecturers and the supervising kindergarten teachers. Hence an activity theoretical conceptualisation of the university setting may look like figure thirteen below:

Figure 13. University as an activity system

Similarly an activity theoretical conceptualisation of the school setting may look like figure fourteen below. Here the subject is the kindergarten teacher and the aim is the delivery of curriculum. The outcome is children’s all-round development, progress and learning. Curriculum and various classrooms resources are the artefacts. Class rules and routines, management techniques etc. were the rules that mediated this system. The community
consisted of the kindergarten teachers the children with and without challenging behaviour and their parents.

With the help of third generation activity theory (see section 4.2.2.) the school placement may as well be represented as an activity system and may look like the above systems coming together. Each produces knowledge about how to do the teaching, but they are differently motivated: one toward children’s learning, and the other toward student teachers’ learning. “The main thing that distinguishes one activity from another lies in the difference between their objects,” wrote A. N. Leont’ev (1977 cited in Worthen, 2008: 323), adding that, “the object of activity is its motive”.

In this way activity theory makes visible two conflicting activity systems simultaneously present in the school placement: the school and the university. It is important to distinguish the two activity systems and their motives to understand student teachers’ experiences and how they learn. It has already been said that Activity Theory also provided a means for constructing heuristic representations of these settings. The following sections analyse in detail the school placement activity with a focus on its inherent tensions.
8.3 School Placement as Activity System

The activity systems analysis based on the findings on chapter seven identified two activity systems the school and university that come together and form a new activity system, that of teaching practice. Participants of this system experienced several contradictions that mediated their actions towards challenging behaviour. In particular, student teachers’ learning was hindered when they felt uncomfortable in some way (e.g. stressed during evaluation) and when they held no priority in engaging with their challenging pupils. Other impediments concerned their understandings and meanings of their aim and role and their perceptions of formal structures of the university as not being interested in challenging behaviour. Their learning was hindered when this was not supported appropriately in terms of collectivity, transition, mentorship, classroom and social relation settings.

Figure fifteen recasts the work of these constraints in activity theory terms. Three aspects are immediately noticeable. First, school and university come together through the school placement. Secondly attention is drawn to the nature of this encounter. Whilst it may be that at a given point in time two activity systems coexist and are not in open conflict (Worthen, 2008), the figure shows that in this case coexistence is broken down. Instead of a genuinely collaborative partnership the practicum functioned in a disconnected way. Within a disconnected partnership challenging children were found to be on the verge of exclusion.

Figure 15. The disconnected school placement activity system
This was because two kinds of contradictions were involved. The first refers to a lack in the degree programme of behavioural difficulties relevance. The second involves contrasting discursive practices. Both had important ramifications for identity and challenging behaviour. The next sections will examine each of these types of contradictions and their ramifications in more detail.

8.4 Locating Points of Contradiction within the School Placement Activity System

8.4.1 Contradictions as a Lack of the Degree Programme

Figure sixteen, below, depicts the contradiction between school and university concerning the relevance of the programme with the reality student teachers face in classroom. The lack of a focus on challenging behaviour was documented in the modules (and in the various school placement components). As it has already been mentioned in section 7.3.1 when asked whether they discuss issues of behavioural difficulties with their supervisors or with school’s teachers or among them the following answers were typical of all the participants:

*No, we have not discussed this with anyone (Student teacher extract).*

*When school placements meetings take place no particular reference is being made to these special cases (Student teacher extract).*

Whilst student teachers recognise that behaviour management is an issue of major concern of their teaching experiences at schools, they think that this concern is not taken account by the school placement arrangements. This was also supported by the teaching assistant who stated:

*Student teachers try to offer. But their programme is not to integrate him. In the frame of their school placements I do not think this is feasible. In contrast I did my school placements only for those children. Ok you cannot have the kindergarten teacher coming to assess you and to integrate Achilleas. This is something that cannot be done (Teaching assistant extract).*

These statements revealed aspects of the school placement that seemed to contradict the reality student teachers face in class and their corresponding needs. This was also expressed in the following terms:

*What disturbs me is that everybody has the impression that everything
functions and must function normally. And for anything that deviates, from the most mild case to the most severe, we feel an embarrassment – this is the first reaction, we do not know how to deal with it, so the child with a problem exists in the team but is a little bit in the edge. For me that fact that I have a child with a problem who just exists in the team but does not belong to the team tells me nothing. Just existing is meaningless (Student teacher extract).

Hence the model below, figure sixteen, was formulated to depict this contradiction.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 16.** School placement activity system and its contradictions: Challenging behaviour as programme deficiency

8.4.2 Contradictions as Contrasting Practices of the School Placement

Model seventeen below, with its contradictions, is a synthesis of the activities apparent in all settings of the school placement as presented in chapter seven. The figure has been a heuristic device that helped to focus on the challenges most salient in each node. It depicts contradictions that were found within the elements, between the elements and between the systems. That is, the model depicts internal contradictions within the university activity system that were found within each node and between the nodes. Also it illustrates external inconsistencies between the activity systems of school and university. These inconsistencies manifested themselves in tensions, mismatches, denials, and oppositions. Specifically, I
focused on the relations of participants and object and on how these relations were mediated by tools and aspects of the community such as the rules and division of labour.

Three systemic tensions were found within and between these elements as illuminative of school placement activity. With respect to the first, a contradiction existed between the challenging children exclusion in the classroom and the rather shifted and ambivalent object of their inclusion student teachers had at their disposal.

Figure 17. School placement activity system and its contradictions - Challenging behaviour as contrasting practices
A second contradiction existed between the challenging children’s learning and the lesson plan which instead of a means of supporting children’s learning was seen as an inflexible means of evaluation. With respect to the third contradiction this existed between those challenging issues and the unclear division of labour that kept pulling different persons of the partnership apart from joint discussion. The next sections will discuss each of these tensions more analytically.

8.4.2.1 Differing Objects

The concept of the object of activity provides the possibility of understanding not only what people are doing, but also why they are doing it. Identifying the object can serve as a basis for reaching a deeper and more structured understanding of otherwise fragmented pieces of evidence (Kaptelinin, 2005). In the case of this study, results suggested that the object was ambivalent. This led to an internal contradiction. An example of contradiction is evident in a situation, when a person is torn by two or more opposite goals (Wenger, 1998). Mentors saw the aim of the school placement as two-fold: student teachers’ learning and student teachers’ teaching. Student teachers, however, considered that their mentors focused only on assessing them in their teaching and that they were not interesting in children’s’ progress. According to the lectures the aim of the school placement is:

\[\text{Of course both, students to teach children and to learn themselves (Supervising lecturer extract).}\]

However student teachers thought that their supervising:

\[\text{Kindergarten teachers and lecturers are mostly interested on how we deliver curriculum. When they come they are not interested in the children I think and our learning. They are focused on assessing us (Student teacher extract).}\]

In some cases they believed that:

\[\text{We enter the classrooms to learn too and this is something they forget (Student teacher extract).}\]

The second contradiction was external that is between the school and university. When the object at university is to pass the lesson, this contradicts the aim of including challenging children at school. That is data drew attention to how persons holding to an object in one
setting may experience their transition when entering a different context wherein a different aim is hold. The aim of student teachers at university is the theory and practice of education and this guides their actions towards ‘passing the course’ and ‘getting their degree’. Carriers of this goal at university they enter a different activity, actual teaching at school, wherein a different goal and is held: children’s learning and overall development. Whether they manage to orient their actions as to achieve children’s learning this ‘new goal’ or whether their aim contradicts that of school’s is of key importance.

The following incidence with a student teacher is indicative of such a contradiction: Danai had to video one of her school placement teachings in the framework of a module with an aim to exam whether it is possible to teach Greek mythology at kindergarten school and particular ‘Prometheus’ story:

Case study : School Beta
Differing objects

ST1 presents children with the outfits they are going to wear in order to dramatise the myth. Nia [the teaching assistant] chooses a hat and gives it to Achilleas. ST1 disseminates the roles and the outfits. She is looking for one particular hat, Prometheus’ hat. She cannot find it. Finally she sees is on Achilleas head. Who gave this to him? Asks. I did TA says. ST1 takes the hat from the child. So what about him TA asks. Sorry Nia but this cannot work ST1 replies (Video incidence).

The student teacher explained her decision-making as follows:

“I was so stressed then... I know that this tape will be seen by S. [lecturer] she just want to see what she wants, but she will see and this too. How did the teaching go. Because she is interested in if the story can be taught at kindergartens. And I will be judged let’s say. How did the teaching finally go. During second hour when I was dramatizing the myth, if you remember, and I was looking for a hat and I could not find it in my panic[...] and I hear Ioanna [teaching assistant] saying ‘I gave this to Achilleas... And I felt very bad and I told her ‘but Nia how will it work? But how can it be done?’ and she felt bad too and she yelled at me something like ‘and what Achilleas will do’ let’s say. And I told her ‘sorry but this is my dissertation and I am being marked for this’. And I was forced to take the hat from Achilleas and give it to another child... Prometheus was a role, which was essential role. It was not for example a guard. Guards were just sitting in which case I would not mind. The guards were sitting and guarding Prometheus and they were not talking. Understand? It was a role, which needed to show to do, whatever the children understood to act it. Achilleas would not have been able to respond to this. And I could not
When the objects is to show a good lesson, get the grade and pass the lesson, there is no space for the development of inclusive practices for children deemed to be challenging. According to participants their object in the school placement and what they perceive as the university’s object for facilitating school placement are not aligned with each other. Indeed by examining in more detail the node of the object in the above figure, it was found that student teachers faced challenging behaviour as one of the main concerns in their school placement. On the other hand, they perceived that universities were not interested in interventions that addressed student behavioural and/or achievement problems. According to them the university did not find the need for them to become proficient in behaviour management to meet their student needs. Moreover at schools the aim is “children’s learning” whilst there are no arrangements for student teachers’ learning.

These data indicate that the object of the school placement is ambivalent and shifting – at times it is the student teachers and at times the children. The issue is of importance because such tension, as it was shown, affects student teachers’ behaviours towards children in general, and challenging behaviour in particular. In addition, student teachers perceived that school and university were often in positions to enforce rule and artefacts of school placement that did not necessarily allow them to focus on specific management classroom interventions even though that was what they found as one of the most valuable object. If for instance we locates Danai’s act within the activity system of the school, we can see more clearly the tensions within which she is working. The following sections illustrate how the tensions faced by student teachers in their interactions with challenging children are also evident within the other nodes of the school placement as an activity system.

8.4.2.2 Mismatch Between Artefact and Object

With respect to the second contradiction, the interplay between participants and objects on the one hand and the lesson plan on the other was examined. Whilst at university the lesson plan was considered as a means to support student teachers in their planning of teaching, at school it became an inflexible means with regard the inclusion of challenging behaviour. The
importance of the lesson plan as the mediating artifact of the school placement activity system was found to be important in the following terms:

*If you can do it, if you can adjust it then you are ok. And you will be ok, I believe that if I could do that I would have been perfect. You know it gives you more, how to say this, more courage. And this then gives you the courage and the willing to engage in with someone else apart from the normal children you have in the class. But when you do not know these things and you do not know how to adjust this for the normal children and the normal children do not sit to watch the lesson. Either because you do not do it well either because they do not like the theme, or for any other reason of course you cannot engage with challenging children (Student teacher extract).*

First a contradiction was found between the object and means of teaching and learning. Looking at the artifact, which in this case is the lesson plan, it was found that student teachers were required to implement the planning discussed with their supervising kindergarten teachers in their placement schools and to operate as teachers who were delivering the schools’ version of the curriculum through their carefully planned lessons. It was not only found that challenging children were not considered as a part of this process but also that the lesson plan seemed to constrain student teachers’ responses towards these children:

*For example when the lecturer came I had to teach child and language. I had to do the compounds with ‘-tile’. I knew that they were not going to sit. It was right after break. Simply my lesson plan was writing this thing. So if I had not done that... If I were alone I would not have done this. I would have done something different and I would have taught this next day. That is you write these and you have to do them. I have to do this moment ‘child and language’. I have to do the ‘-tile’. No matter if the children don’t pay attention to me, and do whatever they like. I have to do this. Why? Because the lecturer is in the class and she will see me (Student teacher extract).*

Another student teacher also spoke of how hard she found to manage the class. Her comments were similar to the above and indicated that the lesson plan can mediate negatively their possible object to engage with challenging children:

*But every time this happens. What we have to do [activities] is specific. So you then enter the class and try to put in effect what you have discussed. And you see that it does not work. […] if you see it does not work you have to stop and this is how it should be. But what can you do when you must say some things. This is the issue. For example if you have to have a discussion and you decide to leave the discussion to play a game supervisors will then tell you that you do not know how to do your job (Student teacher extract).*
In other cases student teachers expressed their desire to have their own class in which

We will tell them what we want. We may get away for a bit from the theme and do something else (Student teachers extract).

Apart from this contradiction one more was found within the node of the artefact of the university system. When asked whether they considered their lesson plan as a means to teach the children and organise their teaching or as a lesson to be evaluated the majority of the respondents replied that lesson plans:

Are being assessed too. It is granted that you are being assessed. You write it clearly as if you write a test. And the bad thing is that you write it by yourself, there is no one in front of you and still you cannot cheat (laughs). You hand it in like an assignment. Is it possible now when I see it like this to be able to view it also as a means of organising my teaching? No, I clearly see this as a test. Clearly. Like an assignment I have to write and hand in (Student teacher extract).

In many cases the lesson plans became points of dispute between student teachers and supervisors:

She also told me that your lesson plan is very badly written. ‘Go and see Dina’s protocol how that is written and how is yours’. And I told her that I wrote the protocol just to show it to you, ok I teach, I wrote it yesterday. I will not give it in like this, it goes without saying. […]what did she want? To type it on the computer? She did not made comments to the point of the matter (Student teachers extract).

Another issue concerns the lesson plans, where we were writing down what we had taught. They were not correcting it in order to tell you that was wrong and that was right or to suggest you alternatives. I have the feeling that they were not even looking at them. So why were we doing them? Just to prove that we visited the schools? They did not do substantial feedback, e.g. “Here you did wrong and I suggest you this alternative” (Beginning teacher extract).

What was very interesting was that the same supervising lecturer the last student teachers referred to above made the following comment:

Yes I do not like this arrangement of the curriculum the strict which we have to follow we do language we do mathematics we do this activity; we do the other activity (Supervising lecturer extract).
The majority of lecturers supported the autonomy of the students. This is because:

_The passive student teacher, the passive pupil does help neither the teacher nor the child. Therefore you look for the energetic student and him you try to create_ *(Supervising lecturer extract).*

Innovative efforts are important in that they:

_allow student teachers to shape every time their practice accordingly to the context in which they act. To have possibilities for this, to be able to adjust and readjust constantly the choices of their contents, their actions, their ways. That is to act ad hoc every case in the framework in which every time they are called to act_ *(Supervising lecturer extract).*

These statements indicate that within the node of the artifact there are two contradictions one between school and university and the other within the university. Within the university–school partnership system there can be a pronounced tension between the university’s desire for the beginning teacher to have autonomy and scope for experimentation within the curriculum against the school’s need to deliver curriculum. Within the university there is a tension between professors wanting their students to be innovative and student teachers’ perceived inflexibility of their lesson plan.

8.4.2.3 An Ambivalent Community and the Object

To try to locate student teachers’ actions in a context, there is a need to look, also, at the rules that regulate the activity system as well as the division of tasks of the community of that context. Rules are, according to Engeström (2001), the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interactions in activity systems. The division of labour refers to the roles and responsibilities of each member of the community. These aspects were found to contradict the development of a shared school placement community. Tensions were found on a range of tools in relation to the collectivity, transition, classroom, mentorship and social relations settings practices as well as on the roles of each member. As one of the student teachers stated:

_They cannot do anything, the supervising kindergarten teachers, as they have not developed a relationship between us and the school_ *(Student teacher extract).*
In relation to the transition setting, teaching without observing contradicted student teachers' engagement with their challenging pupils. It hindered their good knowledge of their pupils as a class and as individuals, as well as of its culture and norms. This however was considered a crucial factor in the success of teaching. Equally important was that university mentors did not have the time to get to know the classes and the individual pupils for which they prepared their student teachers. As regards the mentorship setting this was organised using the conventions of teaching practice wherein university supervisors arrive, observe, feedback and depart. Section 7.3.2 referred to several aspects of these conventions that participants found to constrain them in developing their teaching practices. These referred to an emphasis on the organisational aspects of the teaching at the expense of behavioural management issues.

Contradictions were found, also, in the area of the beliefs that regulated the relationship between student teachers and their goal in particular ways. Beliefs on knowledge, on evaluation and on the teaching and learning of challenging pupils characterised more by deficit than social models were found to be related to the student teachers’ responses. The values and beliefs that student teachers held about pedagogy mediated the ways in which they responded to their pupils. Where student teachers held particular views about individualised education, for instance, then they were most likely to employ strategies that align with those beliefs. Also when they believed that challenging children were not their responsibility they tended not to include them in their teaching.

Another source of constraints related to the community of the school placement and in particular under what division of labours and roles they work with as well as with power dynamics. In relation to the division of labour in the classrooms roles and responsibilities are unclear and in cases contested. With regard the group of four, within and cross group practices seems to contradict collaboration. Evidence showed a culture and practice of isolation which constrained members from developing collaborative patterns in relation to challenging children. The emerging evidence demonstrated too that both student teachers and school’s kindergarten teachers do not cross boundaries in the division of labour; that is they do not have the opportunity to discuss practice and to understand the need for their role to develop more inclusive practices.
8.5 Conclusions

This analysis was driven by a wish to understand how student teachers are being positioned in the school placement. This method of analysis provided by Engeström’s (1987) framework allowed an investigation of how individual acts as analysed in chapter seven are located within wider sets of relationships, practices and expectations.

Findings argued that the constraints student teachers experience in their school placement in particular in relation to their developing of inclusive practices were interpreted as a deficiency of the programme and as a manifestation of the contradiction between the practice and discourse of the university and the practice and discourse of the school. These contradictions led to the concept of the ‘as-if’ collaborative or a disconnected activity system’; an analytic category which was used to explore and theorise tensions with particular reference to learner identity and corresponding responds to challenging behaviour.

A disconnected activity system’ is far from a joint collaborative form of partnership. In relation to challenging behaviour, the school and university seem not to engage in collaborative interaction in which both activity systems learn something from each other. Student teachers displayed little success in respect of challenging behaviour boundary crossing. As in many cases was noted “the situation repeats itself” and “there is no improvement”. Student teachers see challenging behaviour; but pretend they do not.

While this finding may not be a surprise, the use of activity systems analysis provided some evidence as to why school placement does not become a partnership. Largely because of the uncoordinated efforts for developing and attaining a shared object. This then created contradictions that affected student teachers’ practicum experiences. The importance of this layer of analysis is that by engaging in differences as contradictions the need to conceptualise their resolution in terms of a partnership model is stressed.
Chapter Nine

The Invisible Children: a Discussion

9.1 Introduction

The primary impetus for this study was a concern for the quality of one university-school partnership. The value of these partnerships has been affirmed as they can be mutually beneficial for all involved parties (Kim et al, 2013) and for student teachers in particular. The focus was narrowed to the following specific questions to be answered: “How do the school and university practices and discourses facilitate or constrain the development of inclusive practices for children with challenging behaviour?” and “What teacher/student teacher identities are found within these practices?”.

There was a particular concern that particular inconsistencies would inhibit student teachers challenging behaviour learning. Learning was considered as occurring through collective activity in a cultural setting, mediated by the ways of thinking and behaving of the community in which the learning took place. In this equation learning involves processes of identity formation; student teachers not only acquire knowledge and skills but become particular learners in particular professional communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Analysis was focused on how learning in the activity system of school placement helps to explain the nature of prospective kindergarten teachers’ problems and offer some explanations as to why they occur. The aim of this chapter is to discuss and place, in turn, such an analysis within the broader research agenda of educational studies. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first section discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and in relation to previous research findings. The second considers the methodology and in particular the potential of using activity theory as an analytical framework in issues concerning challenging behaviour in particular and inclusive education more general. Next, the limitations of the study are discussed.
9.2 The Invisible Children

Inclusive education does not simply refer to the placement of children with special needs into mainstream schools. It is concerned with the conditions under which all children can be effectively educated (Barton, 1997). In this respect, Farrell et al. (2007) argued that inclusion and achievement can be largely independent of each other. As regards the area of behavioural problems previous research has emphasised that instructional contexts do influence academic engagement differentially for students with behaviour problems (see e.g. Baker et al., 2009). For this reason various researchers investigated teachers’ experiences of and recommendations for creating a successful inclusive environment (see e.g. Goodman and Burton, 2010)

The data of this study, however, evolved around a different focus. Although in the classes observed there were children who were unable to access education this did not pose a learning challenge for student teachers. They did not attempt to develop more inclusive approaches to working with these children. The issue of challenging behaviour had been one that everyone avoided its existence let alone any effort of dealing with it:

*No there isn’t such section in the lesson plan about him. Achilleas is invisible (student teacher extract).*

First and foremost it had been an ontological problem:

*I was thinking that these children it was like... we did not see them. […] I guess this was because no one had anything to suggest about them (Beginning teacher extract).*

The hidden ontology of challenging behaviour was manifested in specific ways. Section 7.1 showed that it had to do with the educational aims student and beginning teachers set for their pupils, as well as with the nature and range of their interactions. In relation to their goals participants stressed that their emphasis was on social adjustment. Often, this was at the expense of children’s academic engagement and performance. Whilst participants commented these were poor, they did not set relevant goals. Two beginning teachers said that:

*He does not do a single assignment. He abstains from all the assignments and he does not accept any help (Beginning teacher extract).*
Do you know where I aim at now? I do not aim at his learning. Ok I want him to learn five basic things, e.g., the colours. […] I want him to learn to coexist with the others (Beginning teacher extract).

A student teacher added:

She does not understand, she has very poor vocabulary. For this reason when we engage with literacy activities she does not participate at all. That is I see her she usually goes and sits by the shop-corner (Student teacher extract).

In relation to their pedagogical interactions with the challenging children participants allowed children to engage with anything they wanted as long as they did not disturb the smooth function of the team: In other cases, as it was seen in section 7.1, removal from and within the class were practices adopted, usually, by the rest of the student teacher members in order to allow the student teacher who each time taught to do his/her lesson undistracted.

They can engage with something else as long as they do not upset the others (Student teacher extract).

Ok Marlene go to the office. Since you do not want to sit quietly, go to the office. Child leaves (ST 2 video extract: tape 1, 08:47:17)

Also previous research undertaken by Xalatsis (2005) and Angelides et al., (2006) showed that teachers engage with their pupils more when they exhibit disruptive behaviour and reduce their engagement when the child is not disturbing for the rest. What though was important in this study was the ‘non-interaction pattern’.

**Case study: School Beta**
The non-interaction pattern

ST1 tells the children to get their colours and sit at the tables. Achilleas does so as well. She then passes among the tables and disseminates pieces of paper. She passes by Achilleas twice without giving him a paper. He sits quietly holding his pencil case. She starts explaining what children should do. I gently whisper that she has not given Achilleas his sheet. ‘Oh, I forgot about him’ ST1 replies and gives him his piece of paper (classroom observation fieldnotes)

In most cases student teacher who each time taught did not interact at all with the challenging children. There were not actions to be ‘defined by their need to control the class’. Usually
this role was taken by the rest of the student teachers, the class teacher and/or the teaching assistant.

Prospective and beginning teachers know that dealing with issues of problematic behaviour would reap many positive results to their teaching and learning. Yet, when asked whether they initiated any kind of discussion on the issue of challenging behaviour in order to gather, for instance, basic information about the children’s behavioural profile, all participants’ replies were similar to the one student teacher who said:

*No we have not asked them [schools’ kindergarten teachers] anything to be honest (Student teachers’ extract).*

Nevertheless this might be due to more complex and simmering factors than those schools’ kindergarten teachers suggest:

*Student teachers never ask about challenging pupils. Maybe they do not care. I think they are not bothered (School’s kindergarten teachers extract).*

The study reports that such an overlooking might not in fact be at all about individual decisions. Instead, there were more subtle reasons that did not motivate participants to see this as a problem to discuss. Identifying, hence, the barriers of this hidden ontology and enabling a greater understanding of how these can be overcome became an essential part of this discussion. Largely these barriers had to do with the tensions participants experienced.

They spoke of the challenges to effective inclusion centring on lack of relevant knowledge and level of expertise. Most importantly, and in more open discussions, they spoke of an ambivalent sense of community at the school placement – with differing objects and mismatches between artifacts and the object. It was well documented that the university-school activity system promoted a non-stop flight practice of teaching that neglected children who exhibited out of control behaviour. This made it difficult for the student teachers to find and establish an inclusive student teacher identity. The school placement contradictions affected the identity positions allowed for the prospective teachers to take up; and their choices to disengage or dropping out of further engagement with challenging children. Student teachers struggled to identify themselves as inclusive teachers. In the end, though,
the university and school systems were disconnected; and produced kindergarten teachers that made challenging children invisible.

Participants’ responses showed evidence that their teacher identity clustered around four elements/patterns of the disconnected partnership which are summarised below. A common element mentioned was the foreclosed possibilities of learning about and dealing with challenging behaviour. Another strong element was their awareness of belonging somewhere in between school and university. Also the pre-service teachers were mindful of inadequate in-school and university supports that affected their pedagogical responses. Finally, the pre-service teachers acknowledged that they were not able to extract principles which might assist them to deal with challenging children in new contexts in the future. The results showed that each member of the school and university entered the relationship bringing different conceptions and holding differing expectations about each of the school placement contexts and maintained those. Hence the stage was set for one forceful tension.

9.3. Disconnected Partnership Patterns

9.3.1 A Missed Opportunity for Learning

Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 gave indications that the school and university were disconnected at the level of theoretical knowledge and at the level of school placement. It was in the area of information that the trainee teachers felt more emphasis needed to be given. Also they considered the frequency and duration of school placement as one additional constraint in developing an interest on inclusive practices. By the same token adding appropriate modules and increasing placements were the most commonly reported suggestions for change:

*I believe we should have some lessons of special education and how to behave towards these children* (Student teacher extract).

*We could have spent more time at schools. To do more placements and to participate during these, not only to observe. Or for example, how many modules on psychology did we do? We did a number of them which have not helped me really* (Beginning teacher extract).

This finding is not surprising. Limited knowledge of the special education field has consistently been reported as a barrier to implementing inclusion (Xalatsis, 2005).
Avramidis and Kalyva’s (2007) study showed that ‘attending courses at the university’ and ‘direct teaching experience with pupils with special educational needs’ were two of the methods for improving practice that received the highest ranking. This is in line with research which has showed that prospective teachers in general consider the duration of their school practice as not enough (see e.g. Mpatsouta and Papagiannidou, 2006).

In view of the above, many researchers have stressed the importance of maximising contacts with challenging behaviour children. Various researchers (Bullock et al., 1994; Gunter and Denney, 1996; Walker et al., 1998; Whelan and Simpson, 1996; Zabel, 1988; cited in Cooley and Nichols, 2004) believe that observation of and experience with these students are essential elements missing in teacher education programs. Consequently, enabling preservice teachers to work with these students during their programs of study will better prepare them to provide services to individuals with similar conditions in the future (Peltier, 1993, Feyten and Hines, 1998, Martin and Wienke, 1998 cited in Cooley-Nichols 2004; Whelan and Simpson, 1996).

These findings, however, are particularly troubling in light of the data of this study which suggest that despite exposure to the behavioural difficulties of their pupils, preservice teachers seem not to become better equipped to deal with them. Instead it was found that the contact in itself is not an adequate factor:

I think that we had enough placements. And I remember that even then there were problematic children. But we did not learn how to deal with them then and we do not know how to deal with them now (Beginning teacher extract).

Data showed that participants had actually the opportunity of directly interacting with challenging children in real classroom environments; yet they were not able to learn how to deal with them. No evidence was reported to show that the arrangements of student teachers’ programme in general and teaching practice in particular included encouragement to consider solutions about their challenging pupils or to plan how to manage them. This might suggest that it is the quality of contact that matters and not so much the contact in itself. Maximising hence school placement would not result in sufficiently prepared teachers.

Butler, et al. (1991 cited in Feyten and Hines, 1998) suggest that initial education courses should aim at ‘effective’ field experiences. This is because teachers are not skilled at learning from what Intrator (2006) called the ‘predicaments and circumstances of practice’; and that
often it takes all of their energy just to get through the day. One manifestation of this in this study was the following:

I felt exhausted. I have never returned at home to say the teaching went well (Student teacher extract)

I want this issue [of challenging behaviour] to be solved because the other day I was really sad (Student teacher extract)

Student teachers suffer. That is they go in the class and have problems, so how will they go to teach next time (Supervising kindergarten teacher)

Sections 7.3.2.1 to 7.3.2.4 evidenced the predicaments and circumstances of practice of this study. Undeveloped patterns of cooperation, abrupt transitions to classrooms, the vulnerability that comes with awareness of how supervisors judge their performance were some of these. Nevertheless there was one important finding in this respect in this study: challenging behaviour was not seen as a ‘predicament and circumstance’ of school placement practice. Instead it was contrasted to the rest and was seen as a problem that cannot be solved:

That is the student who teaches for the first time in her/his life … is required to learn how to do it, to learn to stand in the class, to be pedagogical in his/her relationship, to remember her/his aim, to remember the time she/he has to succeed this goal and to remember that possibly there will be someone who will see if he/she did well. ok? Her evaluation… therefore engaging with these [challenging] children is not easy, it’s not feasible (Supervising kindergarten teacher extract).

Foreclosing a priori the possibility for learning about challenging behaviour did not allow them to learn. This aspect framed the mentor conversation and made it easy to understand why a student teacher would choose to adjust to what is warranted in the activity.

There are many things you cannot do […] And simply you suffer in this situation. I see this, I feel I, I understand you…What can we do? When you go in this emotional state what teaching can you do? You can’t (Supervising kindergarten teacher talking to student teachers during preparation meeting).

This evidence gave strong indications that student teachers experience challenging behaviour as a missed opportunity for learning. What makes supervisors to believe that nothing can be done in relation to challenging children? Why learning to stand in class, remembering the
teaching aims, having someone evaluating you etc. are considered as skills to be gained during the practicum and learning to deal with challenging children is not? In this study, data proposed that challenges in meeting difficult behaviour stemmed from minimal and/or inadequate in-school and university supports to the student teachers concerning more general issues of the practicum. Both contexts seem not to provide student teachers with appropriate means to support student teacher transitions from university to school. This then impacted negatively on supports on the exceptionality of difficult forms of behaviour encountered upon entry to the classroom.

9.3.2 In Betweeness

Activity theory encourages one to ask how school and university might collaborate in reconceptualising the purpose and processes of school placement activities as a consequence of confronting their contested discursive practices encountered by student teachers. Chapter eight discussed these contradictions. It also discussed how these remained unanswered. This section stresses that unanswered contradictions created feelings of ‘in betweeness’ to the participants.

Belonging assists in the appreciation of how individuals make sense of their lives (Nind et al., 2012). In this study student teachers made sense of themselves in relation to others and in relation to where they felt they belong. In particular they felt that they did not belong neither to the school nor the university - much less to a joining of the two. Consequently they developed an understanding of themselves in relation to these feelings. This had significant ramifications in their pedagogy. There was evidence which demonstrated that ineffectiveness regarding behaviour management was mediated by student teachers who felt they belonged somewhere in between school and university:

*Ok what can I say. I feel that I have to be more responsible towards the school’s kindergarten teacher than to the university’s. Because I take her children and do things to them* (Student teacher extract).

*We feel we are in between university’s kindergarten teacher and school’s kindergarten teacher. The supervising kindergarten teachers tell us not to listen to the school’s kindergarten teachers and the school’s kindergarten teachers not*
to listen to the university’s kindergarten teachers. So we are in the middle and we no not know what to do and who to listen to (Student teacher extract).

You know there are cases that they [schools’ teachers and supervising teachers] do not agree on the themes. So we are in between and we afraid that we will take the rap for them. We know that the schools’ teacher will take it out on us (Student teacher extract).

This evidence is indicative of an ambivalent community as it was the clear-cut division of schools’ teachers on the one hand and university’s on the other. Student teachers felt they had to choose sides. ‘Belonging in between’ suggests a model of school placement which is in contrast to a partnership which implies a new community with shared goals and new established rules and roles. It is also in antithesis to a joint contextual formulation with a shared interest on the development of inclusive practices for challenging children.

Case study school Gama
‘In Betweeness’
As I leave school ST1 and two STs from the other class discuss intensely. As I approach them to get my bike I hear them talking about how much dissatisfied they are. They then approach me and tell me that they feel they are in between university’s kindergarten teacher and school’s kindergarten teacher. That is according to them the supervising teacher tells them not to listen to the school’s teachers and the school’s teachers not to listen to the university’s teachers: “So we are in the middle and we no not know what to do and who to listen to”. They are wondering whether to tell them or not and ask me “according to your opinion what should we do?” I tell them that they could tell how they feel but not in a judgemental way. That is they should acknowledge each other part’s contribution and to let each part know how confused they get when they have different opinions as professionals which to an extent is natural. Yet student teachers still worry: “And what if we say something and then one teacher tell the other?” And they conclude: “and it is children’s fault, my children are so restless… And they swear. And from the beginning, from the morning they come to school they are bored” (Field notes informal interviews)
It is against a collectivist interpretation of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where a group of people with different perspectives work together on the same object and seek to jointly develop new knowledge or tools to address the problems. Finally a disconnected partnership model does not provide a combination of information, support, and accountability in order for the student teachers to try out inclusive activities. This contributed to their reluctance to learn about and introduce inclusive practices in their classrooms.

### 9.3.3 Inadequate in-school and university supports

There are important considerations here for how student teachers trainers organise teaching practice as a learning environment. There are implications for if and how they train student teachers to find their place in the school placement and whether they encourage them to engage with learning to teach as a practice which consists of more than the ability to deliver a curriculum; which consists of the ability to deal with challenging children. The university staff did not seem to recognise the need to enhance particular situational factors to support inclusive teacher formation and that in order to do this the program had to attend to factors which included teacher knowledge and skills as well as to the contradictions found at the five practicum contexts (see chapter eight). Specifically, inadequate in-school and university supports concerned the unclearness of the object as well as aspects of the community; its rules at the transition, mentorship, classroom and social relations settings and its division of labour.

First in relation to the aim, data from this research contributed to theory and research that has shown the challenges of constructing work systems where the goal of the activity is either not given or is very poorly defined (Kinti et al., 2005). In this study, though, student teachers had a clearly defined goal – to get their degree. The problem was that this goal became irrelevant when faced with challenging behaviour at school. When student teachers perceived that their school placement experiences were driven by an object which does not include challenging behaviour, it became very difficult for them to engage in relevant meaningful activities. The situational factors at their schools were not arranged to support their learning in relation to these types of behaviours. Thus the differing object resulted in a conflict which remained though unsolved.
Similarly, in relation to the mediating artifact, the lesson plan, ideally this should include groups of students collaborating to solve problems through shared discourse centred around it (Jetton and Dole, 2004). In contrast, in this study it was found that the mediating artifact appeared as inflexible and therefore as constraining student teachers from developing inclusive practices:

You know it’s a big problem, the lesson plan. No matter what, we have to do what we have written. Even if the activity is not working we have to do it no matter what. For the supervisor, the class’ teacher, for anyone else but us. I want to be able to change my activities according to the children and according to what I think would be better (Student teacher extract).

This analysis suggested that student teachers had to stick to the plan even when they felt they should readjust it.

In relation to the aspects of the community the division of labour affected significantly prospective teachers’ practice. Apart from rules divisions of labour also structure the activity (Warmington, 2011). In this study the issue of collaboration emerged not only as a crucial issue but also as a problem. One of the difficulties appears to lie in the roles and responsibilities of the teaching practice members. Whereas it might be expected that members’ knowledge and professional background would contribute to a focus upon improving the level of professional support for challenging children, in fact no clear guidelines regarding their roles were provided. Yet the study showed that in order for practicum members to collaborate their roles should be first assigned and second clearly defined.

One finding that consistently emerges in many studies has to do with the importance of experienced teachers in the context of initial teacher preparation (Hamman and Romano, 2009). Experienced cooperating and mentor teachers play a pivotal role during the time when teacher candidates are learning to teach (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989, Nettle, 1998 cited ibid). In this study however experienced cooperating teachers were not a part of the school placement community and were not assigned an official role.

Consideration of how this affected student teachers’ practice and beliefs was an important part of this research. The result of this focus has been an awareness that student teachers
understandably struggle, within an ambivalent division of labour, to connect to challenging behaviour problems, and that school teachers would do well to facilitate this orientation. Ad hoc interventions played a crucial role in this. Schools’ teacher interventions both hindered and promoted student teachers’ work. This evidence suggests that student teachers are often struggling with contradictory ideas about teaching and learning and often begin to show a decreasing interest in classroom inclusive processes.

In relation to transition practices, evidence was provided about student teachers not observing classes before they take over responsibility of them. Previous research, though, has showed that placement learning is eased through specific practices. McNally et al. (1997) demonstrated the benefits of a more gradual induction where it is possible for students to sit in and observe teachers teaching their classes. Also, Turner (2005) found that making the move from university to placement was eased for students who had contacts before placements began than those who did not. Meeting colleagues beforehand and learning the characteristics of the whole class and of individual students help student teachers to modify their teaching so as to maximise students’ learning.

This study though showed that this is far from a simple process. For instance there was evidence that shows that when some student teachers asked to observe classrooms before their teaching, schools’ teachers did not accept so. Also meeting colleagues beforehand ensures neither that student teachers will ask the right or useful questions nor that schools’ teachers have or can give the right answers. This was particular important in relation to children with challenging behaviour. This issue proved to be so complicated that it would render ambiguous whether a brief period of practical orientation (McNally et al., 1997) would be enough in helping student teachers to find their way around problems of misbehaviour.

I did not come to antithesis. I tried to tell her in order to tell me what does she do the days she teaches and catches them good since she tells us that ‘they sit to me quite that they do not swear at me’. And yet many times it has happened to see they ignore her. I said to the school’s teacher that I and all the others are still inexperienced, we go at university we give some ideas to the kindergarten teacher and so does she and we correspondingly must act what we want to do. We come here. On the one hand we have children only once a week, they are not ours to have me from the beginning to have put them to work according to the rule we want [...] and according the conditions we want. And I tell her it is different. Because apart from us 4th years come too as well as 2nd yeas, they
And the kindergarten teacher told me ‘yes you are right, but you know you should have asked us to do dramatisation and discussion together’. I told her I was prepared to do so, I did not have a problem to believe or consult her; to do on my own? I still do not know I told her. And in the end this does not mean that it is my fault. It is my fault too because I might was not able to keep the children under children. I could not assert myself. On the other hand children are not mine to start telling them off, ‘I will show you’ (student teacher extract).

In other words the study showed that in many cases schools’ teachers do not have the answer to challenging behaviour problems to give it to the student teachers. University members believed that when this is the case there is no hope for student teachers to manage what school’s teachers have not managed.

As far as the classroom setting is concerned, the collaboration norms within each group of four student teachers seemed to be an important constraining factor when dealing with difficult forms of behaviour. Nokes et al. (2008) suggest that being placed with a partner can create shared experiences, which often led to dialogue and reflection. This study though showed that not only did team-placed student teachers not reflect on what they were going to do or what was occurring, they also had no conversations about what had taken place in the classroom or what they should change in their future teachings. Not having been given direction about how they should work together, each of the student teaching teams developed patterns of teaming during instruction that ranged from moderate to non collaboration. Usually when one student teacher taught the others’ involvement was limited to monitoring discipline or completing their protocols (video and observational field notes).

In addition this study showed the role of personal relationships in the process of such collaboration. It investigated not only the types of interaction among participants but also the reasons for which these were successful or not. The most significant of these reasons were whether participants liked each other or not and that there were no supports in relation to dealing with possibly negative feelings that affected their cooperation on the part of their mentors. When they liked each other and formed a kind of friendship they as well collaborated within the classroom. When they held negative feelings they did not do so; neither they discussed these in order to deal with them.
The mentorship practices was another area in which the incompatibility for the development of inclusive practices was manifested and an area which supported and contrasted previous research in certain aspects. Differing conceptions of mentoring, expectations related to communication, beliefs about teaching, and the evaluation criteria formed the primary borders student and beginning teachers on the one hand and their supervisors on the other had to navigate. First mentoring was perceived different by different people. For instance supervising kindergarten teachers saw student teachers as:

_The girls who ‘do not dare to think’ and think ‘what if I am wrong as to what I say’. That is they do not come with ideas because they say ‘I did not know what to do’. Of course I have pampered them because I suggest them things and I do not know some times if I do well or not. But I cannot not to tell (Supervising kindergarten teacher)._ 

Student teachers on the other hand, had this to say:

_You go there you listen to them and you leave. Do you want me to tell you what happens every time in the meeting? We go ‘hallo’, ‘hallo’. ‘What is your theme?’ ‘This’. Now I will listen to your ideas. We try we start to tell something what we have thought how to do it. And she then starts ‘no, you will do this, this, and this’. And then ‘but you did not suggest any idea again this time’. This is what happens every time (Student teacher extract)._ 

These statements suggest that there is a tension with regard to the mentors and students teachers’ expectations in relation to each others’ responsibilities and roles in the preparation meeting. In addition, tensions arose as a result of the interactions that occurred between participants and supervisors. In some instances, interns became frustrated because they felt that their mentor had not been communicating helpful advice and feedback to them as in Hobson (2002) and Maynard (2000) studies:

_If we show it to her she will judge us very strictly, I do not like this, I do not like that, that she is like god. And then after when she comes she observes you in a style ‘you have not made frame for the pictures’. That is tell me just one kindergarten teacher who does that. Kindergarten teachers simply present the pictures to the children, they not to glue them in paper. And we have these irrational demands form miss … [the supervising kindergarten teacher] and miss … [supervising lecturer](Student teacher extract)._
Hobson et al. (2009) argue that student teacher mentoring had great potential to produce a range of benefits for them, and their pupils. Yet, from the synthesis of research evidence of this study it was clear that this potential was unrealised. Some examples of poor practice of mentoring can be attributed to problems of mentors’ focus on preparation meetings. These often focused more on the organisational aspects of the teaching than on developing student teachers’ ability to support and facilitate their challenging pupils learning.

The themes discussed concerned equipment/material, how to present the teaching. Where T. [supervising lecturer] gave the emphasis was in that kindergarten teacher must not talk a lot. Let the children talk. That was her thing. But she was never commenting on the behaviour. She could have pointed at how to deal with such behaviour and not to blame us. Since the schools’ herself was admitting it how challenging the child was (Beginning teacher extract)

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) noted that while there are an increasing number of studies that focus on the conversations between mentors and new teachers and the types of advice given by mentors there are few studies that directly investigate the difficulties and tensions that arise as participants negotiate these relationships. The present study documented this complexity. Largely it had to do with differences in perspectives and that these differences remained unaddressed.

Another important finding of the study related to participants’ beliefs. These were constructed in their discourse as a struggle between the medical and social models (Jones, 2003).

In line with previous research (e.g. Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Broderick et al., 2012), the majority of participants felt that the responsibility for implementing inclusion fell predominantly on specialist staff—i.e. special educators and psychologists—who possessed the necessary knowledge and instructional skills to teach children with complex needs effectively. Although the belief in a need for special pedagogical approaches for these children has been widely critiqued (see, for example, Hart, 1996; Thomas and Loxley, 2001) it is still being sustained.

In practice it is hard. Generally it needs help from others too, from psychologist etc. (Beginning teacher extract).

There is no such luxury to work, that is to make you understand to tell the girls to work extra. Then we must do another job, it is a work of psychology, that is psychological things that have to be worked. And this cannot happen in the frame of school placements (Supervising kindergarten teacher extract).
This was also supported by Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006). These authors found that although Greek mainstream teachers held positive attitudes towards the concept of inclusion they expressed concerns over the practical difficulties they encounter if children with challenging difficulties are placed in their classroom. Such contradictory attitudes can be largely attributed to the fact that the responsibility for implementing inclusion in Greece has fallen on ‘expert’ professionals such as special education teachers and related professionals (see also Kearney, 2007 cited in O'Neill et al., 2009).

Case study: School Gama
Cultural models
ST1 finishes his teaching. He goes by the door where the Ukt stands. She says: you said, tell me Gerald, what is ‘Annunciation?’ If I talk to you in Chinese what will you answer me? ‘That I do not know’, Ermis replies. It’s inappropriate to ask such a question a child of this age because of the term ‘Annunciation’. You should have used ‘good things’. ‘I said that earlier, I said good news’, ST1 says. Even the word ‘news’ is difficult for the child to understand. Then you said ‘Do you remember the facts?’ Firstly it was one so it is ‘the fact’. Secondly the child cannot understand the term ‘fact’. So you could have asked ‘what happened’ instead of using the term fact.

ST1 – The children were noisy. What am I, their father?
Ukt – And do you think they listen to their father? Unless you bring down your level of teaching the children will not understand it they will misbehave.

ST1 – They were misbehaving earlier too
Ukt – It is not always child’s fault, it is our too.
ST1 – ‘Usually’ not ‘always’
Ukt – If you distance yourself and think ‘it is not my fault’ you will not be able to improve yourself.

ST1 – teaching this theme is very difficult, as they are not even Christians.
Ukt – You do not have to be one to understand these concepts. That is when you talk about e.g. kings do the children have the sense of kingship?
ST1 – They do from the stories.
Ukt – so if you say this as a story it’s not a problem for you.
ST1 – I said it once, twice, three, four times. I cannot do anything if they are not interested’.
Ukt – maybe is it that… could it be that… Do I not make myself clear?

ST1 – If they cannot I cannot force them. They have by themselves to be quite. What can I do”
Ukt – By your personality and not by shouting. Maybe is it that the teacher shouts to cover his/her lack of preparation? ST1 leaves. “I do not know maybe I cannot make myself understood” supervising kindergarten says looking at me with a look ‘there is nothing more than I can do, like someone who reaches a dead end’(observation of feedback discussion at school)
Jordan *et al.* (2009) also demonstrated the link between teachers’ beliefs that they either have or do not have responsibilities for instructing students with special education needs in their classrooms and the overall quality of their teaching practices. Teachers who believe pupils with special needs are their responsibility tend to be more effective overall with all their students.

*To love your job, to love the child you have beside you and to want to give him/her something. It is to want. Firstly you yourself to want and if you want I believe you make it…and not to be like ‘I am obliged to do my teaching to get a mark and then ok I am not interested in anything else’. If the children will be like this or if I give them something* (Supervising teacher interview extract)

Viewing the inclusion process as dependent on the specialists was a finding supported strongly by this research. The example of the teaching assistant was prominent. In the school wherein the teaching assistant was assigned to the child there were days in which the student teachers did not interact not even once with the child (observation field notes). Student teachers abdicated responsibility for the disabled student to the teacher aide. Thus what this study showed, in addition, was the exact ways according to which these beliefs were constructed.

First the profile of teaching assistant’s work entails segregative elements. Teaching focused on giving support to the child who had challenges in, was realised to an extent in an individual setting. Secondly, her role was not wide. Although the work of the special education teachers was revealed to consist of three elements: teaching, consulting and background work (Takala *et al.*, 2009) in this study it was consisted only of the first one. Consultation concerned co-operation and discussion was not noticed. It is in these ways that student teachers attributed the lack of conversations of challenging behaviour with their mentors:

*In addition when you see that there is a girl looking after Achilleas you just rely on this* (Student teacher interview extract).

*We have not discussed about him. I just think there would have been a much bigger problem if there was not someone to look after Achilleas. And I was coming to class and I had to deal with it* (Student teacher extract).

This shows that despite the growing demand for inclusive practices within mainstream schools which has resulted in classroom teachers having to take direct responsibility for the individual learning needs of all pupils within the setting (Takala *et al.*, 2009) this is not always a matter of personal choice and agency. The programme practice mediates student teachers seeing
themselves as not having the skills, experience or resources to provide effectively for children with behavioural and emotional needs.

In relation to the perceptions about challenging behaviour chapter seven has already discussed the ‘one and the rest’ cultural model. The notion of individualised education was seen as incompatible with teaching the ‘rest’ of the children. For student and beginning teachers the difficulty of giving time to individuals in need of emotional and behavioural support conflicted with their responsibility to work with the whole class. This was in accord with Connelly et al. (2008) who reported similar frustrations felt by their respondents. At the same time this evidence contrasted research that showed that there are inclusive schools that they do not simply ‘dump’ such students in mainstream classes, but rather employ relatively sophisticated systems of flexible and individualised provision (Farrell et al., 2007). The case studies explored uncovered no especially distinctive forms of classroom practice. Supporting Fantilli and McDougall’s (2009) study, adequately differentiating instruction to meet the needs of challenging students posed significant challenges for all student and beginning teachers studied.

The present study also reported views of the participants who see one another as the source of children’s misbehaviour. It was found that models of blame dominated situations where there was concern about children’s behaviour. In particular it was found that when participants viewed parents as being the source of children’s misbehaviour this inhibited their developing of more inclusive culture and practices. In this the study supported Miller and Black (2001) who found that that teachers view parents as being the major cause of pupil misbehaviour, thus creating a potential barrier to a genuine partnership around agreed strategies involving interventions.

Such constraints were exacerbated by what Marton and Saljo’s (1976 cited in Andreou et al., 2006) called as the notion of ‘deep and surface’ approaches to studying. Whilst the deep approach is characterised by an attempt by the student to understand the material through relating it to a wider context and an acknowledgement that the material has an intrinsic value, in the surface approach material is learned in a ‘verbatim’ or rote manner, with aim of achieving goals extrinsic to the meaning of the material itself, for instance passing examinations. Indeed in many instances this later goal seemed to be incompatible with challenging behaviour management. Wherein student and beginning teachers considered as
their aim to do their teaching get their mark and pass the course, they felt they could not engage with hard-to-manage children.

9.3.4 Learning spaces

Conflict or dissatisfaction are central to Engeström’s (1999 cited in Daniels and Warmington, 2007) notion of development since it is out of them that transformation of practice grows. In this study because conflicts remained hidden, they did not allow the creation of learning space (Clandinin, 2008) between the two contexts:

We go there but it is as if we do not learn (Student teacher extract).

Things repeat over and over again (Student teacher extract).

Despite the potential of contradictions to result in transformation in an activity system, this transformation does not always occur. In fact, contradictions can “disable” it. (Nelson, 2002 cited in Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008: 445). Contradictions may not lead to transformation because they may not be easily identifiable or they may not be easily acknowledged or even openly discussed by those experiencing them (Capper & Williams, 2004; Engeström, 1993, 2001 cited in Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008).

In theorising tensions in this study it can be argued that these are conceived as constraints in contrast to creative tensions through which a collaborative partnership develops and moves forwards. It seemed that much of the potential of collaboration was unrealised. It was found, as the partnership progressed, that conflicting perspectives about various issues on the teaching and learning the purpose of professional development became evident and created dilemmas that influenced the nature of the work. In contrast to a dynamic conception of a school as ‘learning organisation’ (Saiti and Saitis, 2006), data rather showed stagnation with ‘students falling in the same and with ‘no improvement’ taking place. In this sense contradictions seemed to disable rather than enable learning and progress.

I feel with this child that the story is repeats every day (Beginning teacher extract).

In accord with Borko & Mayfield (1995), an additional barrier that was found to hinder open communication in this respect was the desire of supervising kindergarten teachers and
Avoiding conflict in the relationship has been the main norm according to which student teachers were advised to behave in the schools they were placed. Indeed, several studies have indicated that members of various partnerships are reluctant to disagree with each other because they are unwilling to jeopardise the relationship. In Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild’s (2009) study, teachers tried to get the most out of the professional development in which they participated by avoiding involvement in this conflict. In a review of the mentoring literature, Hawkey (1997) cites several studies that indicate that both mentors and interns are reluctant to disagree or challenge each other’s ideas because they are unwilling to jeopardise the relationship.

At a first glance, the above excerpt confirms MacKinnon’s study (1989 cited in Shen, 2002) who found that compliance was in the eyes of the student teachers he studied a taken-for-granted part of being an outsider in someone’s classroom and that living with conformity was a fact of life for them. Nevertheless the excerpt also shows that this conformity was only superficial. Discussions with participants showed that they became very dynamic in shaping
concrete views about what was happening and whose fault or responsibility that was. Even so, this dynamic process of identifying and wrestling with problems that had to do with children’s behaviour never reached the surface. This inevitably gave rise to conflicts.

In these respects it was found that whilst expansive learning between agencies can occur by crossing boundaries between previously separate practices (Davies and Howes, 2006) this was far from the case in this study. Instead challenging behaviour was seen as disappearing with time. Implicitly the best policy might be one of patience.

These might suggest that not any joint activity results in genuine partnership. Instead, the descriptions provided by the participants supported the huge problems of coordinating, sharing and developing a partnership found also by Bartholomew and Sandholtz (2009).

9.3.5 Knowledge Application versus Identity Formation

In this research the question of teacher identity was explored, focusing on the preservice teacher’s work in the classroom. From this it was possible to see how the concept of teacher identity develops in response to the practicum practices in kindergarten classrooms for the catchment area of the University of Crete. Theorising which concerns itself with mapping preservice teacher realities must attend to the particular social structures and processes which create the very conditions of experience (Walshaw and Savell, 2001).

In this study student teachers were seen as contextualised and in relation to a variety of significant others: their course mates, university staff, school kindergarten teachers and the children they teach. Research evidence confirmed that personal biography and the social and cultural dimensions of context create a frame of reference of understanding that has an influence on the way student teachers learnt and developed as kindergarten teachers (Raffo and Hall, 2006). It supported research that regards student teaching as a critical stage in the development of novice teachers (Borko and Mayfield, 1995; Cole and Knowles, 1993) and as a critical factor that influences the development of the professional identity of beginning teachers (Smagorinsky et al., 2004).
Specifically, the importance of the analyses in chapters seven and eight lies in the specific connections participants make between the social and cultural dimensions of school practice and their evolving student teacher identities. They tended to make sense of themselves as kindergarten teachers by making reference to the concrete contextual circumstances they were working in as described in chapters seven and eight.

These connections are significant in two aspects. First in that they document teaching and teacher identity as socially embedded processes. Secondly and most importantly in the specific teacher identities that these connections allowed to surface and which point attention to specific contextual conditions.

Teaching reflected its context (Pennington, 2002) and was context adaptive at the level of collectivity, classroom, transition, mentorship and social relations settings. When these functioned in an unsupportive way the opportunity to acknowledge and develop an identity of an inclusive teacher for challenging children was limited. Focusing on identity as a part of learning enabled data analysis to focus on teacher learning and classroom practice. The construct of identity contributed to how student teachers came to make sense of themselves of what it means for them to be a ‘guest’ kindergarten teacher, what it means to be the ‘student teacher’ as well as the ‘class’ kindergarten teacher.

In many cases student teachers defined themselves in relation to the children with challenging behaviour with respect to the fact that they are not the class’ teacher. This was in contrast to other research which found that it is important for students teachers to realise that they are “borrowing” a real class, not “taking over” in a literal way (Nguyen, 2009). In this study it was found that the opposite might have positive results. That is the sense of children’s ownership was found to strongly mediate student teachers’ development as ‘the class’ teacher’; an identity which seemed to afford possibilities for the development of more inclusive practices. However particular conditions seemed to strengthen opposing identities such as those of the ‘visitor/guest’ and ‘student teacher’.

To this end the study’s findings supported Nguyen (2009) who found that cooperating teachers and university supervisors become in stewarding their student teachers through the apprenticeship period. For example, when they introduce their student teachers to their pupils as future teachers rather than “helpers,” it signalled to these student teachers a certain level
of respect and authority. In this study the opposite was manifested in schools’ kindergarten teachers calling the student teachers as ‘student teachers’ or as ‘girls’. This seemed to disempower the ‘class’ teacher’ identity.

Yet, literature describes the teacher as the formal leader of the classroom and that in order to fulfil the role and become a successful teacher, she or he has to possess authority (Hansen, 2006 cited in Vaaland and Roland, 2013). A teacher’s authority is significant for a positive learning climate, positive academic outcomes and prosocial pupil behaviour (Eresvåg & Vaaland, 2007; Pace & Hemmings, 2006; Roland & Galloway, 2002 cited ibid.). Also it can be argued that the practicum partnership is produced by social interaction, is subject to negotiation, consent and circumstance, and is inscribed with power and desire (Britzman, 1991).

In this study examples of situations that seemed to undermine the student teacher’s position and power status were when student teachers were made to appear powerless by the schools’ kindergarten teachers’ behaviour. Also participants’ weaker role identities as ‘student teachers’, ‘visitors’ were evident in their seeming lack of agency, understanding, and ability to use behavioural strategies effectively. They clearly stated that they knew challenging behaviour was a part of their experience and a part of the job of contemporary kindergarten teaching, but this did not describe them. In other words, they revealed conflict in their identities regarding how they viewed themselves as teachers and their actions in responses to challenging pupils. They often talked with conflicting voices, discussing how it is with reference to how it should be.

In contrast the class’ teacher identity appears as a strong teacher identity. In practical terms, this means that the class’ teacher has much stronger agency and a much larger repertoire of appropriate teacher initiations and choices. Preservice teachers with stronger role identities are better able to enact their chosen image as teacher and are less likely to conform to the various socializing pressures of the classroom (Hawkey, 1996 cited in Eick and Reed, 2002)

9.4 Discussing Methodology

The case was made, in this study, that the context experienced by the respondents can give insights into their learning experiences. Using activity theory as the basis for analysing the
data allowed the study of school placement as a joint activity and some of its complexity to be exposed. This approach to the analysis was advantageous since it exposed specific mediational aspects of the teacher education programme that seem to hinder student teachers from learning to develop inclusive learning strategies. These were exposed in the form of contradictions that impede the progress of individual and collective professional development.

This was because activity system analysis looks beyond the individual learner to understand how actions and human learning are mediated by the community and its division of labour, its cultural artefacts, instruments, rules and norms. In this study activity theory was a particularly valuable heuristic framework for asking important questions that other theories may not raise so clearly, and for seeing relationships among these questions (Russell, 2001) that may guide design of teacher education programmes. In other words, it was used as a tool to organise and then investigate the actual teaching practice situation. It made the assumptions, practices and beliefs that underpin the organisational and cultural perspectives of teaching practice more explicit.

It was a unit of analysis flexible enough to allow focusing analytical gaze in different directions and with different levels of "magnification" (Russell, ibid.) to help answer the study’s research questions. For instance within the teaching practice activity system, analytical gaze was trained to the supervisory context and within it it was trained to preparatory meetings then to form and content of feedback and finally to criteria of evaluation as important mediational means to student teacher learning. Also it allowed an understanding of how the evaluation practice focused student teachers on delivering the curriculum than developing an understanding of challenging behaviour that may inform their future professional development.

Yet, this analysis was far from unproblematic as this flexibility made it extremely difficult to define the activity system and its elements in order then to focus the theoretical lens activity theory provides. It was extremely difficult to capture the complexities of the school activity system both in depth and breadth. Paraphrasing Russell (2001) teacher education programmes do not come neatly divided into activity systems.
Additionally the classification of the responses within the elements of the activity system was arbitrary and thus a difficult part of the analytical procedure. For example, the lesson plan could be classified both as a rule guiding the provision for an individual child or as a mediating artifact between the student teacher and his/her goal. Likewise, the prospective teacher was consistently portrayed as the subject although in reality, the relationship was bidirectional. That is in this study teacher identities could also be classified as the outcome of the school placement activity system.

Nevertheless, being myself a graduate of the particular degree programme assisted in discerning the elements of each node as well as their interrelationships. Understanding the activity system of school placement means knowing the kinds of people who populate it, their relationship to one another as well as recognising their motives for action (Russell, 2001). Without this kind of knowledge perhaps it would be difficult to carry out this analysis. Nevertheless I did not have a complete image of the school placement. Although I had a clear sight of the school placement as a former student teacher, my appreciation of the constraints student teachers face was developed through activity theory.

Balancing the research questions was also an issue. One question in this kind of analysis is how much does one need to know about local culture versus how much about the personal history of the narrator (Skinner et al., 2001). For the present analysis, it was important to look closely at the context of the identity formation since it is the location both literally and figuratively (Skinner et al., ibid) from which participants produce their meanings and identities. For this reason although the first part of the findings looks as it had been foregrounded and that identity was perhaps less of an analytic focus both were of equal importance. An awareness of the different social positions student teachers can take demanded a detail analysis of the context.

In general, doing such an analysis with a theoretical understanding of how the production of identities relates to context was difficult to carry out. For this reason it was done in two layers. Activity theoretical tools helped in identifying and reporting relevant to the research questions themes within data. They assisted in selecting patterns which were of particular interest for the purposes of the present study.
9.5 Discussing Limitations

Before discussing the implications of the current study any further, the results of this investigation should be interpreted in the light of certain limitations. One of these limitations has to do with the sample: the study involved prospective teachers from one institution, while the selection of beginning teachers, in particular, followed convenience procedures. Although the Greek education system has always been entirely centralised and firmly controlled by the state and no regional variations in terms of policies and provision exist in Greece, this cannot eliminate possible variability in the constraints that might be found in other institutions. In relation though to schools it could be said that the fact that the sample was drawn from one particular geographical area, the island of Crete, does not impact significantly on the generalisability of the results given the uniformity of school management, resources, curriculum content and teaching arrangements across the country (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007).

In relation to the participants it should be noted that the study reported here was conducted with limited numbers of student and beginning teachers. Therefore careful decisions must be taken regarding the transferability of findings to other settings and to other participants. However, this was in line with a qualitative case study design. That is, the findings on experiences of student teachers presented in the study may still be used to illuminate teaching practice and professional learning and development in other contexts.

In addition there may be other types of emotional and behavioural difficulties than those used in the current research, which merit studying for the degree of severity which they pose to prospective teachers.

Another limitation connects to the data collection methods. These were subjected to the perceptions of the researcher. As with all observational studies, the act of being observed may have altered the behaviour seen in classrooms. Similarly, prospective teachers’ responses to interviews might be considered that did not disclose how they actually thought and felt and that did not represent their actual classroom behaviour. To minimise researcher subjectivity, however, particular methodological measures were taken. The video camera, for instance, was present for long periods of time in classrooms and held discreetly and very
little child or teacher reactivity was noted. In relation to interviews I asked some participants to check data for any inconsistencies. However not all participants were able to check data due to their unavailability at the times I tried to contact them. Apart from that, I relied on the use of different data collection tools and sources in the study. It could be argued that these provided some form of triangulation.

With regard to the complementary sample, that is supervisors, and in particular school’s kindergarten teachers, I had suspected that the study would have benefited from their voices and for this reason they were involved in the study. However the limitation here refers to the extent of this involvement. The main emphasis was given on data from the university. This obscured more detailed gathering from the data from the school’s part. This should be viewed as some form of limitation in the study since in many cases I felt there was a need for more data from their part. However, the findings in the study represented mainly the voices of the core subjects, namely, the student teachers.

Last but not least another limitation of the research concerned the issue of data variability. As it can be seen in the findings chapter there was a lack of variability in relation to practices and discourses that can possibly afford the development of inclusive approaches from the part of student teachers towards pupils that exhibit challenging behaviour. For instance, in relation to patterns of interaction between participants the fact that these patterns were ranged from minimum to non-collaboration was actually a feature of the data. Similarly relationships among student teachers and schools’ teachers were as well a feature of the data and not a feature of the data I chose to present. However it should be stressed that subsequent personal experience of student teachers and their experiences of the school placement has shown that actually there is to an extent variability in practice. There are examples where student teachers work harmoniously as a good team. However these examples of good practice were not encountered in the present sample.

Despite these limitations of the research methodology, the findings do allow some tentative comments about the respondents’ conceptualisations of challenging behaviour in their school experience. Limited in scope as it may, this study has implications for those interested in and involved with the preparation and development of kindergarten teachers, particularly with regard to the diverse student population. Notwithstanding these limitations, the results
reported here advance the existing knowledge base and offer important practical implications for policy-makers and professionals in the field. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

9.6 Conclusions

This study sought to understand the constraints student teacher face in their dealing with challenging behaviour within the school placement. It was found that school and university need to develop the notion and practice of a collaborative partnership in its full potential. This involved a conceptualisation of the two systems coming together, their differing goals, rules and mediating artifacts and the effects of these on identities. Student teachers and the other members of the partnership held differing views in relation to these aspects which, hence, were viewed as sources of contradictions. These contradictions did not allow the promotion of inclusive teaching practice. The final aspects of this discussion were to do with methodology and limitations. Despite certain difficulties and a number of limitations of the study particular insights of the findings were useful in proposing a number of innovations to improve teaching practice. Many of the interventions take a holistic approach to learning development in contrast to the isolated skill development of traditional programmes (Rix et al., 2009). In summary, there are important implications for practice. The next chapter will discuss them.
Chapter Ten

Implications for Initial Kindergarten Teacher Education

10.1 Introduction

Bridging the learning between the departments of teacher education and the schools is a recurring problem in studies of teacher education (Jahreie and Ottesen, 2010). Such issues promote policy reforms intended to develop more unified learning trajectories for student teachers, possibly bridging the perceived theory/practice gap (Jahreie and Ottesen, 2010; Allen, 2009; Roth and Tobin, 2002).

A scrutiny of the complex and dialogic relationship between student teachers’ learning practices and their involving identities in the activity systems in which they participate might provide windows for change. The implications discussed here are viewed in line with the contextual constraints that participants reported in the study. The lack of information on challenging behaviour and, mainly, the disconnected partnership are the two constraints along which the corresponding recommendations are discussed.

University programme stakeholders need to provide prospective kindergarten teachers with a range of different modalities in order to offer opportunities for them to engage with the theoretical concepts of inclusion and challenging behaviour and with their understandings of those concepts. Also they need to recognise, realise and utilise collaborative partnerships as resources for learning. The development of a school-university community that has a shared model of how challenging children should be dealt with is of crucial importance.

However these implications as being analysed in the following sections should be seen in a tentative light since the lack of variability as explained in the previous chapter concerning examples of good practice that can afford the development of inclusive practices cannot be justified on the basis of the data. However findings concerning the constraints student teachers face in their school placement can still offer useful possible ways to address these problems.
10.2 Information on Challenging Behaviour

There is a strong concern with the problem of challenging behaviour’s lack of relevance in initial kindergarten teacher education programmes. This was also documented by the present study. Therefore it can be argued that the programme at a first level should take account the diversity of learners student teachers meet in their school placement classrooms as a significant issue. Diversity of learners, to which challenging behaviour forms a part, might be useful to be updated from an ‘unofficial gap’ to clearly stated and documented degree Programme goals. In particular participants in the study reported the need for theoretical knowledge on emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Therefore, the first recommendation is in regard to relevant courses. Prospective teachers need some knowledge of systems and procedures (Pearson, 2009). Yet, the present study showed that adding proper modules should not be seen as an intervention in its own since it seems not to be able to bring about automatically an inclusive orientation of the university system. Rather such adding needs to be located within the context of understanding the role of the school and university activity systems in developing and contributing to an inclusive curriculum. The second area of recommendations, therefore, that are proposed here, are in regard to school placement. The school placement could become a site in which prospective teachers would have the opportunity to identify and challenge constraints in the development of more inclusive practices.

Planning changes of this type entails challenging the existing structures on which school placement functions. Evidence has been provided in chapters seven and eight about particular structures as a starting point of such an endeavour. First both school and university could acknowledge that they are participating in a joint activity. Then they could organise and support this as a truly collaborative activity. This could include the identification of shared goals and the establishment of practices and discourses conducive to these goals. The identification, also, of identities conducive to inclusive practices could be the cohesive link and guiding principle of these efforts. The presence, belonging and development of children deemed to be challenging should be at the heart of these goals.
10.3 Acknowledging Partnership

Hoyle and John (1998 cited in Mtika, 2008) noted the need for more collaborative partnership that targets teacher education programmes. 15 years later this study notes the same need. Whilst in the United Kingdom ‘partnership’ is the orthodoxy in terms of describing the appropriate relationship between schools and universities (Wilson, 2004; 2005), in Greece models of training seem not to help participants shift their perspectives through ‘mutual engagement in the exploration of possibilities’ (Rogoff, 1990 cited ibid.: 588).

It has been possible for the study to demonstrate that the joint activity of school placement does not guarantee a collaborative partnership. It does not guarantee that there is a shared object or that the efforts for meeting the object are organised. Instead the variety of objects and the corresponding uncoordinated efforts for attaining them brought inner contradictions that systemically affected student teachers’ practicum experiences and learning (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild, 2009).

One possible way to address this issue would be that both university and school could acknowledge that they participate in a collaborative partnership. Data showed that this is far from a taken for granted process. Acknowledging a collaborative partnership means to ensure that the school system and the university system do not operate in isolation but that they are interdependent in purpose and therefore in function (Hoyle and John, 1998 cited in Mtika, 2008).

For instance, schools appeared to be predominantly concerned with children’s learning and progress whilst university with the teaching and leaning of student teachers. Prospective teachers gave precedence to the object of passing the school placement at the expense of an inclusive goal for their challenging pupils. Supervisors privileged the objective of delivering subject material over the diversity of learners. Hence, schools and universities could discuss possible inconsistencies of their purposes. To do so, it would possibility be useful to ensure a commonality of goals and practices.

One possible way to ensure shared aims and practices would be for schools and universities to reorganise existing practices in order to deal with the so called ‘routinised collaboration norms’ (section 7.3.1.1). It would be possibly useful for the university to enact strategies that can
facilitate communication and discussion among all members in relation to practice and student learning. Establishing channels of communication in terms of persons and meetings could be possibly one such strategy. For instance school personnel and university staff could arrange regular discussions on issues arising from the partnership. Revealing each others’ views and expectations, in this way, as well as issues of concern could possibly address to an extent problems of disconnect, in terms of aims and discursive practices.

More practically, specific persons at the university context could be assigned this role and their contact details should be available. Also it could be useful for the kindergarten teachers as well to form a flexible committee in order to gather isolated issues arising from schools and discuss these at an institutional level. Also the establishment of a flexible time table for communication that sets an agenda for each meeting could be assumed as being useful. There could be two kinds of meetings.

On the one hand there could be an initial meeting in order for the participants to discuss the need to acknowledge that they are participating in a joint activity and to identify what that joint activity is. A necessary part of this process would be to realise that the school/university activity has an object as well as artefacts and community aspects that mediate each individual student teacher’s professional development as kindergarten teacher. Data also demonstrated that in many cases members of the school placement activity contest their roles. For instance school’s kindergarten teachers thought that it would be useful for them to give feedback to the student teachers although there is no formal arrangement for such contribution. One possible way to address this problem would be for the partnership members to acknowledge each others’ roles and contributions and make these clear in the partnership.

Also communication could be seen as a continuous process. Problems that can lead to difficulties in meeting joint goals could arise at any moment in the partnership. For this reason it could be argued that arranging meetings at regular intervals so that schools’ kindergarten teachers and university personnel can identify existing and potential problems between them would be a useful process in establishing good communication.

Activity systems analysis can take a role in all these processes. It can help university and school practitioners identify possible aspects that need to be changed to minimise tensions that impede student teachers’ learning. That is teacher educators and schools kindergarten teachers
would reflect on how they could be constrained by rules that may not longer have relevance and by divisions of labour which may not support their goals as a community. They would identify the tensions, explore them and see them as starting points for organisational learning (Edwards and Protheroe, 2004). They would then be in a position to engage in a form of professional learning which would allow them to think afresh about goals and strategies and how they might be able to change existing strategies in order to achieve them (Edwards and Protheroe, 2004).

In this context, it could be hypothesised that it would be useful for initial teacher education providers to support student teachers to go beyond the notion of compliance (Wilson, 2004). Instead of avoiding the concerns they should focus on them. They should support student teachers to develop their capacity to be critically reflective (Wilson, 2004) as well as to be able to discuss issues of concern.

Acknowledging the collaborative nature of the school placement as such could possibly bring about systemic coordination (Mtika, 2008) between the members of the partnership in order to support student teachers’ learning experiences. However, apart from this initial acknowledgement it would possibly be necessary for the school and university parties to organise and support the collaborative nature of the school placement. Supporting collectivity entails another area of recommendations. These recommendations have been prompted by the concerns of student teachers on the current practice within activity settings of transition, classroom supervision and social relations settings.

10.4 Balancing Partnership

Engaging with such an effort means identifying first and overcoming the barriers found in these contexts. Universities could find ways of reaching out and making connections with schools in a balanced way. The bases for this assumption are schools’ kindergarten teachers’ comments which showed a lack of democratisation in the sense that they feel the university enters their space without them having a reason about it and that universities are solely preoccupied with their teaching function.

They come in [the supervisors lecturers] without a warning and without introducing themselves. Once one came in, sat, watch the students and then left. I did not know who she was, whether she was a lecturer or a colleague. I then asked the student teachers and they told me who she was. It really bothered me.
I felt it was rude from her part and in a way I felt undervalued. They just come do their job and leave (School’s kindergarten teacher).

The problem of democratisation brings up the question that involves a change in the sharing of responsibility for the development of knowledge and teaching. Statements such as the above reveal a perceived image of the university as considering schools as a field of application for the student teacher practice. Instead the concept of collaboration between university and schools would be usefully redefined. Both systems could organise their activities in collaboration to each other. This means that it is crucial for the schools’ kindergarten teachers, in particular, to feel that they have a role to play in the practicum partnership.

Also this means the possibility that school kindergarten teachers could take greater roles in the partnership and that they would accept to involve student teachers in their aims and activities. That is there is a need for schools and universities to fit student teachers to the goals of schools as activity systems in ways which allow them to support children who present difficulties in behaviour. It also presupposes balancing of roles. Data revealed that it would be useful for the student teachers that the schools’ teachers could be assigned official roles in the practicum. In particular a central task would be for university and schools to jointly negotiate subject matter.

They could jointly meet and plan the themes to be taught to children. It also presupposes balancing of roles. Data revealed that it would be useful for the student teachers that the schools’ teachers could be assigned official roles in the practicum. In particular a central task would be for university and schools to jointly negotiate subject matter. They could jointly meet and plan the themes to be taught to children.

Viewing both contexts as more equal partners seems to hold more possibilities for a genuine collaboration. This would possibly allow student teachers to teach and learn in a more supportive context undistracted by partnership problems. Consequently they could include in their aims challenging behaviour and devote more of their efforts to engage with challenging children. I will now move on to the specific strategies for attempting this; that is the consequences for the structures and functions of the school placement.
10.5 Supporting Partnership

Boundary crossing refers to the competency or ability to function competently in multiple contexts (Walker and Nocon, 2007). Hence supporting partnership means at a first level supporting student teachers in their ability to function competently in the school placement context. University and school structures could focus their attention to the processes by which this competency can be supported and strengthened. One possible way to do this would be for university and school to understand the impact of their routinised practices on student teachers’ learning. Routinised ways of doing things are mostly accomplished without reflection (Miettinen, 2000). Reflective thought starts with studying the conditions, resources, difficulties and obstacles of action (Miettinen, 2000). Said another way, such an understanding presupposes the studying of the conditions of the school placement activity.

One implication of this finding could be that efforts aimed at clarifying roles would be essential. Efforts to align role expectations in teacher education programs, where there is close collaboration between the university faculty and cooperating practitioners in the school site, are difficult to achieve. Programs where no such efforts are made, however, are likely to become rife with confusion (Hamman and Romano, 2009).

Based on the finding of this study such considerations could focus on the transition and mentorship settings. Transitions and mentorship practices are two of the areas that could be organised in a way to support student teachers’ boundary crossing. In relation to transition practices, student teachers and their supervisors could be given the opportunity to get to know to the classes and the children they are about to be prepared for and teach. This could happen through visits in the classrooms prior teaching and by observing the patterns and the ways according to which school’s kindergarten teachers work In particular and in relation to challenging behaviour formal and informal discussions could take place which could give the opportunity for school’s kindergarten teachers, the student teachers and their mentors to share valuable information on the nature of the difficulties.

As far as the mentorship practices are concerned, the issue of behavioural difficulties could also be a part of the planning of their teaching as well as should be included in the feedback. It would possibly be useful for the university stakeholders to take account that the pressures and
multiple demands student teachers experience in the classroom frequently mean that too little time is available for them to critically examine these experiences and to learn from these. Managing challenging children is one of the difficulties that takes up much of student teachers energy (Hebert and Worthy, 2001).

Given little time to reflect and no feedback on these issues hinders their leaning and development. Hence they could provide student teachers and their mentors the motive and the means e.g. the time for proper preparation and feedback. The university supervisors could also support student teachers through more frequent and extensive conversations regarding issues of children’s misbehaviour. Borko and Mayfield (1995) found that it is important for supervisors to shift their role from critiquing specific lessons to a role of enabling student teachers to reflect on their teaching practices. With respect to challenging behaviour this study found that this is particularly crucial.

In relation to supervision and evaluation, in particular, one of the ways for the school teachers and university mentors to establish and maintain a supportive environment for student teachers would be to articulate clear expectations and criteria with regard to the performance and progress of the student teachers. Also it could be useful that the evaluation criteria would be relevant with student teachers’ classroom experiences. That is they could include issues of challenging behaviour.

Furthermore, it could be said that university stakeholders could ensure that supervisors and student teachers discuss their expectations of each other and share their ideas with each other. The university could take a greater role in assisting both partners to illuminate expectations as to the roles and responsibilities of each party and to foster productive communication. Also by developing clear understandings about the conceptions and beliefs about teaching that all parties bring to the partnership, misunderstandings and frustration could be reduced.

The university could also take greater responsibility in the initial preparation provided to mentors. For instance, Harrison et al., (2005) call for mentor training that exposes mentors to various models of mentoring and allows an understanding of the possible roles that they might adopt. Additionally, it would be useful for mentor training to provide the opportunity for mentors to delve into the complexities of challenging behavior so as to be in a position to give
guidance to prospective teachers. Alternatively when confronted with such difficult situations, they could be offered a place to turn for direction and support. Lastly the cooperation between the supervising kindergarten teachers and the supervising lectures could be strengthened. Supervising kindergarten teachers could be provided opportunities with the means to network with supervising lectures in order to support them to solve the problems they may be experiencing when conducting the school placement component.

In relation to the classroom context there is a need for supporting student teachers to develop productive ways to collaborate among them as well as with the school teachers. All members should be encouraged to talk openly about their differences and make a real effort to learn from the tensions that emerge. In addition, within the class team members might be helped by planning a coherent plan of management approaches. Wherein challenging behaviour is involved the student teachers cooperation in terms of a coherent management planning could be useful to be extended to the other years groups who visit the same class. In relation to the class teachers interventions these could be discussed in advance. Schools teachers’ role should be clear and clearly communicated to them as well as to student teachers. These measures might also support the development of amiable collegial relationships. Collaboration is likely to be most successful in contexts where the partners share such relationships and an emotional commitment to working together (Brown, 2005).

10.6 Supporting Cultural Models

Talking openly about differences and making a real effort to learn form the tensions that arise is both a structural implication as well as a dispositional one. It has already been said that all prospective teachers need some knowledge of systems and procedures on challenging behaviour and that these should be located in a supportive to learning context. An understanding of the role of discourses in developing more inclusive practices is also in inseparable aspect of such a context.

In the case of this study, a first area of recommendations in relation to supporting more inclusive cultural models would be for the school placement course to become a site in which to identify and challenge prejudice. Peters and Reid (2009) talk about planning approaches of this type, that is challenging prejudice and disabling perspectives, as a core element of teacher education programmes. In this study there were indeed particular student teachers’
interpretations of and attitudes toward conduct problems and the appropriate classroom
behaviours bounded by their values and beliefs. Both were found to be connected to deficit
models. Deficit and/or individualistic models position disability as individual attributes
(Broderick et al., 2012).

In this respect it would be useful for the university programs to take account that one of the
major difficulties in preparing teachers for the ideal of inclusive education in Greece is that
special education ideology is still very dominant in prospective teachers’ thinking and practice.
Historically, special education was constructed on an ideology of individual pathology and on
the belief that only expert teachers can know about, and meet the needs of, students who are
disabled (Ballard, 1990 cited in O’Neill et al., 2009). Thus there could be courses that could
explicitly challenge the processes of pathologising ‘difference’ and, ultimately, excluding
challenging children currently operating in schools, while instigating reconstructed educational
thinking and practice (Avramidis, 2006).

Also it would appear that supervision and assessment could be organised and discussed in such
ways that can allow student teachers to conceptualise them as a sources of learning to teach
rather than as a stressing means of judgment. Findings indicated that the evaluation culture
participants experienced was apparently more judgmental than encouraging, revolving around
models of supervision and evaluation as judgment. Hence towards this direction the
unexpected nature and limited duration of supervision could be changed into more conducive
to student teachers’ learning practices. For instance, the supervising lecturers could inform
student teachers as to the dates of their visits, could visit them more often and spend more time
in the classrooms. Visiting unexpectedly student teachers might carry the subconscious
message ‘catch them being unprepared’.

Alternatively and when this is not possible school’s teachers supervising role could be
established and strengthened. The feedback practices could also be organised in ways that can
allow prospective teachers to see them as a means of learning and of improving their teaching
practices. Instead of giving comments on the spot standing on the classrooms these could take
place at arranged times at university in the form of discussions with all members of the class
being present. This might support feedback as a valuable and inseparable means of studying
ones’ own practice and hence improving it.
10.7 Supporting Inclusive Identities

To sum up data this study suggested particular recommendations for university teacher education curricula. In order for novices to become more inclusive in their approaches they should have the knowledge in order to be able to engage all students in the learning process. In order to gain this knowledge what is needed is appropriate theoretical courses and supportive school placement learning environments. Student teachers could also be given the opportunity to engage in conversations to challenge their own ingrained assumptions about teaching and learning. The aim and importance of these implications is in their link with teacher identities and their manifestation in student teachers’ pedagogical practice. Consideration of teacher identity needs to be a central factor in Initial Teacher Education (Twiselton, 2004).

That is the above areas of recommendations are connected to identities. These as well provide further points that might stimulate discussion about how to promote quality in initial teacher education. Data focusing attention on the person of the teacher is of importance to the further development of teacher education (Korthagen, 2004). Facilitating learning concerned with student teachers developing identity as teachers seems to be useful to be considered by teacher educators.

Specifically a number of identity positions were presented in section 7.5 as relevant to a consideration of identity in initial kindergarten teacher education. These may provide some conceptual bases for a discussion of teacher identity in kindergarten teacher education. They can serve as a basis for a consideration of teacher identity in initial kindergarten teacher education and how questions of identity impact on teacher preparation. This is because the professional identity of student and beginning teachers can be described as a tension or dialectic between the subjective or personal aspects of teaching and the intersubjective or collective aspects (Pennington 2002), which I have described in chapters seven and eight.

Specifically these aspects suggest at a first level that teacher educators in Greece will need to focus with increasing seriousness on what kind of teachers are needed and what approach to learning in their initial teacher education will best facilitate this. Specifically, whilst it is important to take account Zeichner and Gore (1990) claim that general education involving liberal arts type courses, methods and foundations courses and field based experiences are elements that individually and collectively shape teachers’ knowing in particular ways, they
should also take account Fullan (1991) who make the point that there is little evidence about the impact of such components.

In this study the impact of discursive practices as discussed in chapter seven was manifested in contradictions (see chapter eight) in response of which different aspects of identity were switched on or off. That is all the identities described in section 7.5 can be described as situated (Clement and Noels, 1992) and thus suggest another area of recommendations, that of supporting an ‘inclusive’ student teacher identity.

In particular courses designers could organise the practicum in a way that student teachers can feel as ‘owners’ of the class instead of ‘visitors’. It was found that the identity of the class’ permanent teacher holds more possibilities for agency with respect the children who present difficult forms of behaviour than those of ‘visitor/guest’, ‘student teacher’ and the ‘teacher for normal children’. Hence teacher education providers could possibly address this by enhancing all those conditions that can mediate the development of the ‘kindergarten teacher’ identity.

Specifically student teachers could be given the opportunities to get to know their classes, bond with them and develop feelings of ownership as well as to participate in the long term planning of the curriculum along with the school’s kindergarten teachers. Most importantly they could be given the opportunity to develop initiations as far as the management techniques are concerned and to develop a culture of open communication instead of the ‘avoiding the conflict’ norm. Student teachers should be provided with the means to understand that they can make a significant contribution to school and children’s lives. They should not feel obliged to the schools for accepting them. Rather it can be argued that supporting student teachers to feel as equal partners of the school placement and as being equally responsible for their pupils might enhance their sense as the class’ kindergarten teachers.

In this respect Pennington (2002) spoke of co-identities between teachers and their students. Teachers who construe or construct themselves as part of an in-group to which their students also belong create a co-identity with their students which gives them a sense of responsibility for and participation in their students’ learning process and progress. The effect of this constructed in-group status or co-identity with students is a strong bonding between teacher
and students. This concept seems to be particular relevant in this study since its strengthening seems to influence the students teachers to have a strong commitment to their class and in particular to their challenging pupils.

10.8 Supporting Future Research

A fourth area of implications has to do with future research. These implications concern the purpose, scope of as well as the focus of the research. For instance, this study was a small scale qualitative case study. Although it included various voices of the school placement members and participants the emphasis was on presenting the dominant student teacher perspective based on what they described as the school placement activity. There would be, thus, a usefulness in future wide scale institutional studies and in studies that would equally include schools’ and university’s voices.

A similar usefulness could be found in research that is participatory and interventionist. Future research can set as its purpose the change of practice. Practitioners and researchers could work together to identify, for instance, multiple objects and motives in the teacher education surrounding teacher professional with an aim to map out the potential hazards and to address these. That is it would be interesting to see and document how expansive learning can work in practice. For instance the findings from a participatory and interventionist activity systems analysis could be used for the study participants to generate ideas for how to improve their activity systems of initial teacher professional development (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild, 2009).

Activity theory lens has been particularly useful in identifying the constraints participants faced. At this point I would like to suggest that a similar study on student teachers’ experiences during teaching practice focusing this time on successful examples of expansive learning could also constitute a possibility of further research. Such a study would as well provide implications that could be of direct usefulness to teacher educators and policy makers.

In addition, I would like to point that in relation to challenging behaviour perhaps it would be interesting for future research to keep a balance of focus between interactional factors and teaching practices. Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of a number of
teacher practices in increasing academic engagement for students with behaviour problems. Authoritative classroom management (Baker, 2006; Brophy, 1996; Wentzel, 2002), curriculum adaptations (Gunter, Denny, & Venn 2000), and proactive teaching practices (Ervin et al., 1998; Gunter et al., 1994) have regularly been associated with higher student engagement. Yet, as evidenced by this study and many others (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006; Martens, Peterson, Witt, & Cirone, 1986; Nelson & Roberts, 2000), teachers are not consistently using these practices in their classrooms. Future research, thus, needs to focus on creating strategies to increase the utilisation of these evidence-based teacher practices within classrooms given the constraints teachers face in relation to their activity systems.

Lastly in relation to the findings of the present study it could be noted that each one of the five practicum contexts as well could constitute issue of further exploration. For instance the mentorship setting and the "guided teaching" (Borko and Mayfield, 1995: 501) relationships between student teachers and their university supervisors and cooperating teachers, could in itself constitute an activity system according to which initial teacher education in Greece could be explored. Lastly, all these potential pieces of research should also be complemented by evaluating and planning teacher education provision using cultural historical activity framework (Daniels & Cole, 2002).

10.9 Conclusions

Whilst there are examples of radical changes to teacher preparation in other countries (Ford, Pugach, & Otis-Wilborn, 2001 cited in Pearson, 2009), the constraints on initial teacher education in Greece make this level of transformation seem less likely. In the Greek context there is no an established school-university national partnership framework. A major initiative on partnership in Greece would indeed be very timely but also very difficult. However, there is nothing to prevent the available time and resources being refocused. That is, implications for policy makers and teacher educators were presented around four areas of existing practices. These concerned providing prospective teachers with relevance in their studies of challenging behaviour; acknowledging and supporting the notion and practice of a collaborative partnership; supporting the development of inclusive identities; and supporting future research in the area of teacher education. All were derived from student teachers’ considerations of a lack of discussion and interaction with university and school staff in relation to challenging
behaviour and their experiences of a lack of support with regard their learning when faced with such behaviour.

These should, of course, not to be seen as exhaustive or straightforward implications of a university curriculum degree programme. The study recognises that most issues surrounding teacher education and development are long-standing and complex to be addressed and that the difficulties those with responsibility to transform teacher education and the quality of teaching face in meeting and addressing those challenges are overwhelming (Ramsey 2000, cited in Graham and Phelps, 2003). However and in relation to the Greek context, highlighting these issues has in itself a degree of importance.

Raising an awareness of the complexity of student teachers’ learning at the practicum and its impact on identities provided the need for teacher educators to integrate the identity agendas into their planning and designing of teacher education courses. Teacher education could move away from a curriculum focused on what teachers need to know to a curriculum organised around core practices, in which knowledge, skill, and professional identity are developed in the process of learning to practice (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). It has been suggested that this might happen through a better alignment of school-university practice.

These implications also support the argument that there is scope for more research in the areas of inclusive and teacher education that draws on activity theory. They also demonstrate a commitment to rigorous empirical investigation as a basis for policy and practice (Cooper, 2008). In particular sociocultural and activity theory can offer a conceptual tool box to education which has the potential to enable it to operate as a transformational social science (Edwards and Daniels, 2004).
Chapter Eleven

Concluding Remarks and Contribution to Knowledge

Classroom management has been a main concern for many student teachers (Eldar et al., 2003) and beginning teachers (Cattani, 2002; Lortie, 1975 cited in Nguyen, 2009). These concerns indicate that teachers would better be able to engage children in learning if they had their students’ attention and their class was in order (Scarpaci, 2007, cited ibid.). Greek teachers echoed these concerns. Hence they necessitated this study.

The study aimed at considering the difficulties and potential possibilities of a better alignment between school and university with a goal to better prepare prospective kindergarten teachers to deal with challenging behaviour. The disconnectedness between these two systems – in terms of various contradictions – was prominent; and as Perrone (1994) years ago noted, enormously wasteful. Yet, the same author also noted that the climate for moving beyond where we are now is improving. Indeed the study showed that there are possibilities for closer relationships and greater flexibility among schools and universities in the Greek context. This may be considered to be a relevant contribution to the literature.

Activity theory may have a significant contribution to make in this respect. Unlike previous research on teacher education which indicated problems and suggested solutions at the individual level (Bullough, 1989), the present findings suggested that taking the activity system itself as the unit of analysis (Brown, 2005) can contribute to the generation of model solutions (Mukute and Lotz-Sisitka, 2012). Also there has been little research on university-school partnerships geared towards the improvement of learning opportunities for children with disabilities (Kim et al., 2013). In Greece, in particular, research couched in activity theory in education focus on fields such as natural sciences education (Kolokouri et al., 2012), Information Technology (Tsouvolas and Komis, 2010), mathematics (Gkarani, 2010) and special education (Koutantos, 2006). What this study contributed was that it looked at the relation between teacher’s identity as certain kinds of teachers and at their teaching practices in the field of initial teacher education.
The enriched understanding of the ways schools and universities comprise distinct communities and how this distinctness impacts on these identities, is the contribution to knowledge within kindergarten teacher education in Greece: The school-university disconnected partnership produced kindergarten teachers that made challenging children invisible.

The seven identity constructions and its connections to the complexity of the school placement activities have a particular enlightening and empowering force in the context of Greece. The particular contribution of activity theory here is the potential to enable an analysis of the formation of the discursive practices within which identities are constructed. Activity theory provided the lens to look at how identity formation differs between the different subject positions of student teachers and how that formation is influenced by the discursive practices of school placement. This understanding can lead to reforms on initial kindergarten teacher education. For this reason the present study carries the potential for contributing to knowledge substantially, methodologically and professionally.

The particular contribution of activity theory in substantial terms has been an identification of the school placement as a joint activity, of its differing objects as well as a pointing towards the need to attend to the discursive practices of both schools and universities jointly. In this respect, it could be argued that collaborations that focus on the technical aspects of education aren’t very productive over the long run (Perrone, 1994). Instead those which make connections to cultural practices and identity issues, as it was the case of this study, seem to carry an alternative potential. This is because such considerations shift the focus of initial teacher education programmes into considering ways of assuring higher levels of communication and alignment between two different contexts. Trying to understand, during this process, how identities develop involves reflecting on and identifying the constraints student teachers face in their teaching practice. Teaching practice is not only a matter of a degree programme component and an obligation from student teachers part to get their degree. It is about student teachers entering a different world – the school – that mediates their learning and development as kindergarten teachers. In this sense identities in this study had been a critical analytical tool to identify these mediating barriers.
Inherent assumptions of this approach with an emphasis on the instructional contexts and identities are based on theories of situated learning. These have challenged traditional approaches to transfer which are based on the notion that knowledge is portable and can be unproblematically transferred from one context to another. In particular what activity theory in this study has contributed was that it distinguished activity from action. Activity concerns social motives at a broad level (Wertsch, 1985 cited in Feryok, 2009), whereas action is directed towards a goal which can be achieved by different operations, depending on the conditions.

Distinguishing actions from activity in exploring kindergarten teaching required an understanding of the different elements of that activity and finally their effects on professional identities. This understanding has been the major contribution of activity theory to the analysis of student teachers’ learning in this study and this study’s contribution overall to the area of teacher education in Greece. Every single small action student teachers do in class connects to larger operations at institutional level. Moreover Jahreie and Ottesen (2010) stress that there is much research on teacher education; however, only a few studies use CHAT. Hence the exploration of the connection between student teachers’ experiences towards inclusive education employing a qualitative activity theoretical research framework has been the methodological contribution to knowledge.

Tobbell and O’Donnell (2005) argued there are major omissions from the literature on learning as participation. These mostly involve a lack of detail or understanding of what actually happens in a classroom of the practices which construct participation and so learning. For instance, the need to know the rules is acknowledged but there is little information of what constitutes these rules; the importance of relationship is recognised but the nature of these relationships is not discussed. In this light the present study attempted an exploration of the detail; of the concrete ways in which student teachers’ learning and agency are shaped. It attempted not only to describe but to fully acknowledge this reality.

Also the study attempted to evaluate the learning experience from both a student teacher and a staff perspective. Coughlan and Swift (2011) argue that few studies have done so: “only when all players and landscapes that comprise the learning-to-teach environment are considered in concert will we gain a full appreciation for the inseparable web of relationships

Methodologically speaking this detailed acknowledgement of the reality aspired to deepen understanding on issues surrounding teacher education and learning about inclusive and/or exclusive practices. Relevant literature tends to focus its attention on single levels of analysis. For this reason the study attempted to conceptualises these issues across a variety of levels: the practices and cultural models regulating teaching practice from the university staff aspect, the expectations of student teachers regarding challenging pupils, examples of inter-student teacher work in the class as well as examples of student teachers experiences with both their supervisors and schools’ kindergarten teachers. That is the thesis provided a comprehensive overview, with a school emphasis. Analysis traced to the extent possible schools’ teachers’ points of view of the practicum. The activity theoretical account offered a thread between these layers of analysis.

Furthermore, the findings in the study were helpful for synthesising with other findings from other studies across the world adding a developing country perspective to issues around teacher education especially teaching practice that have hitherto not been explored. The aim was to provide an exploration of teaching practice and to contribute to its understanding within the international context. This is important since in this way the research attempted to add to the basis for a wider intellectual and practical foundation for more inclusive schools (Thomas and O’Hanlon, 2001).

The third area to emphasise in terms of contribution to knowledge is that of policy making. Greece still represents a system, in which the great emphasis is put on learning at university. Unlike the situation in other countries collaboration between school and university has not been an official government focus on improving vocational education in Greece. In other European countries, however, the trend of discussing the school-university links as to support student teachers’ learning shows that there is a great deal of potential in this direction for improving vocational education.

For this reason implications suggested in chapter ten are particularly important and pertinent to the current Greek educational and academic context. Studies on initial kindergarten teaching
education couched within activity theory have not been carried out in Greece. Hence corresponding implications take on a particular importance in terms of policy making.

In particular realising the need of better school-university alignment is of particular importance. This requires the developing among school and university partners of a strong sense of membership. It requires the developing of a strong partnership between universities and schools to be able to effectively shape possibilities for ‘being a teacher’ within the demands of a diverse student population. This is by means of developing commonly shared objects and rules, tools and community of labour that can support these objects. Also as noted by Graham and Phelps (2003) continuous negotiation of the tensions and contradictions between school and university is an inherent part of this process.

A last contribution to stress is one that synthesises all three: through ‘activity theory eyes’ it was possible for the invisible children to be seen. In the present study challenging children were defined as those children who ‘ruin student teachers’ school placements’, the children that ‘students do not know how to deal with’, who ‘make them suffer’. In class everything revolves around these children. At the same time these children appear different at university. There, they are the children who are not talked about; are not being taken under consideration when planning the teaching; are not being mentioned in after teaching feedback comments. In these terms challenging children exist only in prospective and beginning teachers’ dilemmas and problematisations and never reach out at the institutional level. In relation to the school placement, they are the invisible children.

In between this ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ antithesis challenging children are left to get along on their own within the classrooms. In between this ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ antithesis students are close and yet miss the possibility to learn about, interact pedagogically and impact positively on their children’s lives. In this sense, challenging behaviour was defined and discussed in this thesis as a significant, yet unexploited, opportunity for learning and for this reason as holding the potential for possible changes; changes for all.

In this sense, the focus on the children exhibiting challenging behaviour served an important analytic purpose: they provided for extreme case analysis, the mis-fits in the sometimes established classroom pedagogic cultures, which thus can aid in the identification of systemic contradictions. As one of the beginning teachers put it:
When you finish and everything has gone well and the children were quite you go home and you have nothing to think about (Beginning teacher extract).

When though children:

are not quite, obviously there is a big problem you have to think about (Beginning teacher extract).

In this way, the difficulties experienced by challenging children can indicate ways of improving the provision made for all pupils. Challenging children can become those children who can challenge our thought and practice to constant improvement. I would like to conclude with the words of one of my participants:

It is like we enter suddenly somewhere, it gives me the impression that we enter a space in which nothing is in place and we try to decorate. It is like the space is dirty and messy and we try to decorate the flowers in the vase. This is the feeling I have when we go to schools. The underneath remains untouched (Supervising kindergarten teacher).

Initial teacher education should and could teach kindergarten teachers how to change conditions at schools; and consequently their children’s lives.
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269


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APPENDICES

1. Description of the degree programme of the Preschool education department at the University of Crete

The department confers undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees. Undergraduate student teachers must complete 52 modules to be awarded the degree of kindergarten teacher. These modules are divided into four groups, compulsory, optional, seminars and school placements. The first group includes the core compulsory modes. As the documents state “these were judged to be indispensable for the scientific training of the kindergarten teacher”. These are: Introduction in Pedagogy, Preschool Pedagogy, Didactic Methodology I: General Principles, Didactic Methodology II: Preschool education Activities, Didactic Methodology III: Preschool Education Activities, Methodology of Psycho-pedagogical Research I, Pedagogic Psychology, Introduction to Psychology, Developmental Psychology I, Introduction to Sociology, Modern Greek I: Historical Evolution — literature, Introduction to Philosophy, Psychology, Statistics on Education, Computer science in Education, Musical and Rhythmical Education of Preschool Children I — II, Artistic Education of Preschool Children I- II, Physical and Psychokinetic Education of Preschool children I-II, Foreign Language I-III. Teaching practices are arranged in three levels. Four students attend each of the schools. Level 1: 2nd year student teachers observe the teaching processes of the school they attend for one semester. Level 2: 3rd year student teachers visit schools once per week. Each semester each student teacher teaches for half a day for four times. Level 3: 4th year student teachers visit schools once per week. Each semester each student teacher teaches for the whole day twice. Each student teacher completes and hands in a lesson plan where he describes the theme as well as the steps he/she takes to organise relevant activities.
2. The Lesson Preparation Plan Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF CRETE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
PEDAGOGICAL DEPARTMENT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

ACADEMIC YEAR: 
SEMESTER: 

TEACHING PRACTICE LEVEL: 
SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: 
KINDERGARTEN TEACHING ASSISTANT: 
KINDERGARTAN SCHOOL: 
CLASS: 
SCHOOL’S TEACHER NAME: 
DATE OF TEACHING: 
STUDENT TEACHER’S NAME: 

SHEET OF LESSON PREPARATION
(to be handed completed to the assisting kindergarten teacher during their first meeting)

THEME: 

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES: 

AREA: 
AIMS: 

ACTIVITY: 

SPACE AND VISUAL MATERIAL THAT WILL BE USED: 

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY: 

DATE 

......................................................... .........................................................
Kindergarten's teacher signature Student teacher’s signature
3. Fieldwork timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004/2005</th>
<th>Research stage 1</th>
<th>Research stage 2</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus groups to identify issues</td>
<td>Visits to schools to identify sample</td>
<td>At schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Mar</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
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<td>Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 4. Data Sources

### For Student Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research stage 1</th>
<th>Research stage 2</th>
<th>STs Observations/videos</th>
<th>STs Interview s</th>
<th>Feedback comments at schools</th>
<th>Skts’ Interviews</th>
<th>Preparatory Meetings with Skts at university</th>
<th>UKT’s interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interviews</td>
<td><strong>School Alpha</strong> (3rd year student teachers)</td>
<td>4 STs x 4 observations for each pair (7 videos)</td>
<td>x 3 interviews each pair</td>
<td>1 x 1 ST</td>
<td>1 x both Skts</td>
<td>1 x each student teacher</td>
<td>1 x 2 Ukts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd years</td>
<td><strong>School Beta</strong></td>
<td>4 STs x 4 observations for each student teacher (no videos)</td>
<td>x 3 interviews each pair</td>
<td>1 x 1ST</td>
<td>1 x 1 Skt</td>
<td>1 x each student teacher</td>
<td>1 x 1 Ukt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd and 4th years</td>
<td><strong>School Gama</strong></td>
<td>2 STs x 4 observations (1 video)</td>
<td>x 3 each</td>
<td>1 x 1ST</td>
<td>1 x Skt 1 x TA</td>
<td>1 x each student teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### For University Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturers of various subjects</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Lectures observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fountoulakis</td>
<td>1x50 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korosis</td>
<td>1x 40 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsopoulos</td>
<td>1x 30 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metoxianakis</td>
<td>1x 30 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pourkos</td>
<td>1x 30 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising lecturers</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Lectures observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafa</td>
<td>1x 50 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oikonomidis</td>
<td>1x 60 min</td>
<td>1 x(3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xatzistefanidou</td>
<td>1x 60 min</td>
<td>1 x (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### For Beginning Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research stage 2</th>
<th>Beginning teachers Observations /videos</th>
<th>Beginning Teachers Interviews</th>
<th>Interviews with colleagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Delta</td>
<td>1x7 (2videos)</td>
<td>x5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Epsilon</td>
<td>1x7 (no videos)</td>
<td>x4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Zita</td>
<td>1x7 (5videos)</td>
<td>x3</td>
<td>No colleague</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**288**
5. Summary of Information Regarding Student and Beginning Teachers’
Schools and Challenging Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>The students teachers</th>
<th>The child Causing concern</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Fani Dorothea Marina Antonia</td>
<td>Elli [Has been diagnosed as having emotional disorder and speech and language impairment. She has an unstable childhood and is now leaving with her mother.]</td>
<td>She seeks attention. She tries to understand if you pay attention to her, if you love her. This child has a great need of love. [...] Her parents are divorced and she never sees her father. Her brother faces similar problems. They go through difficult situations. She is deprived from emotions, from stimulus, she is abandoned. Her mother works a lot, and many times I do not know if she stays at home alone or with her grandfather. The grandfather was abandoning her. And recently, two months ago, from what I hear from the other children she leaves home from the windows, and her mother looks for her, she goes to other houses at noons. She was ringing the bells of other children’s houses so she can play with them. She seeks attention. She has no rules at home (School’s kindergarten teacher extract)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Danai Stella</td>
<td>Achilleas</td>
<td>Achilleas has not yet been officially diagnosed. His mother has gone to KEDDY but they are very busy. Also he is too young as he is a four year old to be sure about anything, however unofficially he is considered to be somewhere on the autism spectrum (Teaching assistant extract).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gama</td>
<td>Chrisa Giota Hra Ermis</td>
<td>Petros The whole class</td>
<td>The kindergarten teacher told us that Petro’s parents are recently divorced and that his behaviour has deteriorated a lot. Indeed he is sneaky, he hits the other children and he says ‘ok I hit her, so what?’ She told us that 70% of children are foreigners. She also told us that Efí is older and should have attended first grade by now (Student teacher extract)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SKT1: It is affection what these children lack. Mother’s caress and, Nadia, they have a different mentality. By beating they treat children, they beat them a lot. We have here mothers who beat them a lot. They miss hug, the caress. And the parents, the couple between them the
father hits the mother and the children themselves tell us this.

SKT2: yes they live at home difficult situations because they are poor families. Poorness brings nagging. They are also aggressive (Schools’ kindergarten teachers extract)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Located in rural location at the prefecture of</th>
<th>The child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Rethymno Number of children: 21</td>
<td>Iasonas’ father is in jail, for 12-15 years. He has three older brothers. He is very naughty at home too. He gets bitten by his mother as well as by his brothers. And he bites them too as more as he can from what I have heard. In the class he is restless. He can sit only for two minutes on the chair. Then he stands up, he teases and kicks the other children, he jumps from table to table, he throws objects. At the beginning he used to swear a lot. Now not so much. Sometimes he just yells. He does not do a single assignment. He abstains from all the assignments and he does not accept any help. And I have been told that his behaviour is like that since he was born. And when his dad was still at home. Simply I believe that his behaviour was deteriorated after his dad went to jail for whom he has a soft spot (Beginning teacher interview extract).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Located in rural location at the prefecture of</th>
<th>The child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon</td>
<td>Lasithi Number of children: 17</td>
<td>Andreas used to follow me wherever I was going. He even followed me to the toilette and was waiting for me at the door. He was very tempered, nervous, tensed and overactive. It was only when his mother trusted me that I found out what it was going on. At the beginning she was presenting everything as being fine. Finally after she felt comfortable she told me that you know something I read for an exam to sit and Andreas after school stays from the afternoon to the night to the private day kindergarten. And after this point we begun to think what can we do and I reached the point to convince her that she needs to spend time with her child (Beginning teacher extract). Omiros has speech problems which I think exaggerate his behaviour problems [...] Because every time he came to school after he had the speech therapy sessions I needed ropes to tie him. And I was thinking what is going on. I did not know how to deal with him. That is imagine that at the beginning he did not want to sit at all on the chair (Beginning teacher extract).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The beginning teacher</th>
<th>Erato</th>
<th>Andreas and Omiros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child</td>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas and Omiros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We would like to inform you that our school is attended by two brothers whose behaviour causes us great concern. The instability in their family causes intense problem in their behaviour at school. The children live with their father and according to him their relationship with their mother is bad. [...] The children present poor concentration, attention seeking behaviour, inadequate impulse control and aggressiveness towards the other children. This includes verbal as well as physical attacks (Beginning teacher's official letter extract to KDAY written to ask for support. She never received any reply.)
6. Consent Forms

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET: Department of Preschool Education

Miss…………………………………….under the supervision of Pr. Peter Farrell and Dr. Pauline S. Davis from the University of Manchester, UK is researching how student teachers think about teaching children with challenging behaviour during their teaching practice in mainstream kindergarten schools in Greece. We would like to conduct classroom observations and use video tape to collect these experiences. Also we would like to use audio tape to collect interviews so that we can analyse how student teacher’s experiences about teaching children with challenging behaviour relate to their school placement cultures and practices of teaching and learning. The audio and video tape recordings will be used for research purposes and will be treated with full confidentiality. We thus seek your permission to allow your student teachers to participate in this research.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET: Head kindergarten teachers

Miss…………………………………….under the supervision of Pr. Peter Farrell and Dr. Pauline S. Davis from the University of Manchester, UK is researching how student teachers think about teaching children with challenging behaviour during their teaching practice in mainstream kindergarten schools in Greece. We would like to conduct classroom observations and use video tape to collect these experiences. Also we would like to use audio tape to collect interviews so that we can analyse how student teacher’s experiences about teaching children with challenging behaviour relate to their school placement cultures and practices of teaching and learning. The audio and video tape recordings will be used for research purposes and will be treated with full confidentiality. We thus seek your permission in this research.

Please return the slip below to…………………………………………………by……………………

________________________________________________________________________

HEAD KINDERGARTEN TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I agree to Miss………………………………. conducting the research in this school and will facilitate her access where I can.

HEAD KINDERGARTEN TEACHER…………………………………………………………

SIGNATURE

SCHOOL………………………………………………………………………………

Date…………………………
7. Interview Sample Questions

For student teachers

- Do you feel prepared from your studies in relation to dealing with behavioural problems in your placement classrooms?
- Are there relevant to behavioural problems courses at university?
- If so, do you apply what you learn in university at school?
- What school placement related problems do you experience and what effect do those problems have on your dealing with challenging behaviour?
- Do you know the class norms and routines?
- Do you know possible management techniques the school’s kindergarten teacher use in relation to challenging behaviour?
- How would you comment on the cooperation with each other? - Do you discuss on the roles that each of you r group should keep - Do you discuss with each other a coherent planning of management techniques in relation to your challenging pupils?
- How would you comment on the preparation meetings? What kind of support do you get from the preparatory meetings? Did you get support in relation to challenging behaviour?
- How would you comment on the feedback sessions? Did you get support in relation to challenging behaviour?
- How would you comment on the the supervision practices?
- Do you discuss issues of challenging behaviour with your supervisors?
- What do you consider to be the aim of your teaching practice?
- How do you feel when you teach? - Do you feel as a teacher or as a student teacher?

For beginning teachers

- Do you feel prepared from your studies in relation to dealing with behavioural problems in your placement classrooms?
- Could you think back to your school placement experiences in university and comment on how these support or did not support you in relation to challenging behaviour?
- How do you view your role in relation to challenging behaviour?

For university supervising lecturers

- Do you feel student teachers are adequately prepared by their studies to deal with challenging behaviour?
- Is there a provision from the aspect of how the school placements are organised in relation to challenging behaviour?
- What do you consider to be the aim of the practicum?
- What is your role as a supervisors? What are your feedback comments about?
- What are you criteria according to which you evaluate student teachers in their practicum?

For university kindergarten teachers

- Do you feel student teachers are adequately prepared by their studies to deal with challenging behaviour?
- Do you see challenging behaviour as a problem that student teachers face on their school placement experience?
- What is your role in relation to student teachers’ teaching practice?
- Do you discuss on issues of challenging behaviour during preparation meetings?
- How would you comment on your cooperation with the schools’ kindergarten teachers and the supervising lecturers?
For schools’ kindergarten teachers
- What is your role in relation to the school placement?
- How would you comment on your cooperation with the university’s kindergarten teachers?
- How would you comment on your cooperation with the student teachers?
- How do you think student teachers view school placement?
- How do you think student teachers view challenging behaviour?
6. Example of Matix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation  
(adapted by Anfara et al., 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major findings</th>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(thematic analysis)</td>
<td>STs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UKts</td>
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<td>Int.</td>
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<td>O/V</td>
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<td>Int.</td>
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<td>Int.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Int.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The non stop flight teaching norm**

**Student teachers-pupils interaction**

- Removal from the class: X X X X X X
- Within class removal: X X X X
- Student –children non interaction: X
- Socialisation vs. academic goals: X X X X
- Use of punitive strategies: X X X X

**Knowledge about Children’s:**

- Background/nature/causes: X
- Level of inclusion: X
- Behaviour management strategies: X X X
- Schools’ teacher strategies: X X

**Collectivity Setting**

**Collaborative norms**

- Expectations: X X X
- Role definition: X X X
- Curriculum planning: X X X X

**Communicative norms**

- Open discussion: X X X X X X
- Consensus: X X X X

**Transition Setting**

- Student teachers’ transitions: X X X
- Supervisors’ transitions: X

**Classroom Setting**

- The student teacher group: X X
- School’s kindergarten teachers’ interventions: X X X X

**Mentoring Setting**

- Preparing lesson: X X X X
- Supervising lesson: X X X
- Evaluating lesson: X X X
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Setting</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships among STs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between STs and Skts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between STs and children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Interview Example of Initial Coding (with one of the schools’ kindergarten teacher)

1[[I suppose you have some ways of dealing with the children
I am not allowed to participate neither to butt in to say it like this. It is not allowed. However I do it some times when I see that the children get mad, ok? Or they get upset, they may need to relax. As now when the activity took too long and they children got tired and I could have intervened bit it is not allowed. I just sit]]

2[[How do you see this?
The way they are being done, in my opinion they must be done, they must be done to experimental kindergarten schools. And not the way they send now the children. They burden personally my programme, I cannot work the way I want to work because twice a week is too much]]

3[[Are they not coming on Tuesday too?
No we’ve discussed it the colleagues all together and we decided not to accept it.]]

4[[In addition they visit the school other students too not only you doing various researches. Ok we are educators ok we say yes to research, we have been there/through that stage but you cannot only burden the kindergarten schools of Rethymno every year.??]]

5[[In one or two days some themes are not being completed, the teacher changes continually, the children do not respect. They think they are just girls who come to play with them
I am not allowed to participate
However I do when children misbehave (so either way they intervene why not putting this intervention into a frame?)

Students burdening Skt’s programme
twice a week is too much
calls them ‘children’

Not accepting 2nd year students

Themes are not completed
Teacher changes continually
Children do not respect:
view students as just girls who come to play with them]
10. Developing and Refining Categories

EXTRACT

1[[I suppose you have some ways of dealing with the children
I am not allowed to participate neither to butt in to say it like this. It is not allowed. However I do it some times when I see that the children get mad, ok? Or they get upset, they may need relaxation. As now when the activity took too long and they children got tired and I could have intervened bit it is not allowed. I just sit]]

2[[How do you see this?
The way they are being done, in my opinion they must be done, they must be done to experimental kindergarten schools. And not the way they send now the children. They burden personally my programme, I cannot work the way I want to work because twice a week is too much
3[[Are they not coming on Tuesday too?
No we’ve discussed it the colleagues all together and we decided not to accept it.]]
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I am not allowed to participate
However I do when children misbehave
(so either way they intervene why not putting this intervention into a frame?)

The classroom setting
Snt interventions

The classroom setting

Micro class pedagogy

Impairment of partnership

Student teachers fitting in schools

Rules

Duration of practicum

Student teachers fitting in schools

Themes are not completed
Teacher changes continually
Children do not respect: view students as just girls who come to play with them

Constraining ‘student teacher’ identity
## 11. The Final Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTRACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ķoudl you talk to me a little more about the child? Ok, now that the other girl [teaching assistant] is in the class and takes care of him things are easier!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>SUBCATEGORIES</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>INTERECTION SHISP AMONG CATEGORIES</th>
<th>THEORETICAL TOOLS</th>
<th>Theoretical analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other girl takes care of him</td>
<td>Teaching assistant</td>
<td>student teachers’ responses to challenging behaviour and the teaching assistant</td>
<td>Mediating Tools Rules Division of labours</td>
<td>Mediating Cultural models – mediating identity</td>
<td>competing areas – contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things easier</td>
<td>The class</td>
<td>Challenging child as teaching assistant’s responsibility</td>
<td>On teaching assistant: Other girl takes care of him</td>
<td>This norm shapes an identity of student teacher that has no responsibility of challenging child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTRACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But when you teach and you have the stress of someone coming to see you and you have to be perfectly prepared and the children to sit quiet in order to seem that your lesson is successful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supervison</th>
<th>The school placement</th>
<th>Challenging behaviour and the stress of evaluation</th>
<th>The practice of supervison</th>
<th>On supervison</th>
<th>Supervision as stress contradict cb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>perfectly prepared</td>
<td>Challenging behaviour and perfect preparation</td>
<td>On being perfectly prepared</td>
<td>Perfect preparation model contradict cb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children sit quiet</td>
<td>Challenging behaviour and children’s quietness</td>
<td>on children quietness</td>
<td>Challenging quietness model contradict cb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You surely have a problem if John gets up and starts jumping all around for example or starts screaming.</td>
<td>have a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Examples of memos as analytical tools

Analytic memo at the initial stages of analysis:

It seems that how kindergarten teachers view their role and their job is important and relates to their actions, behaviours and attitudes towards the education of children considered as having challenging behaviour. Yet, it remains as an issue as to how these views are formed. Perceptions on the nature of these difficulties seem, for instance, to affect their inclusive practices. e.g. the severity of the difficulties seem to create tensions in relation to these children’s school placement: “…to put him simply in a normal team and simply to exist there, or it would be even better… to place him in a group in a special class…” A lack of adequate training appears to exist too.

Analytic memo at a later stage of analysis:

Learning to teach children with challenging behaviour cut across more issues than adding to the curriculum the appropriate modules; it pertains to teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about emotional and behavioural difficulties, their views and perspectives of their role, and who they are or want to be as teachers; their identities. The interviews have raised so far the following key question: does the school placement force students to behave and to think about their work, challenging children and themselves, as teachers who are supposed to teach diverse classrooms or not? It seems that it does not because school and university are understood as being distinct communities. For instance, do preparation meeting practices, wherein issues on emotional and behavioural difficulties are not discussed, create the conditions for some identities to be made central (e.g. that of teachers for children of typical development while others are marginalised (e.g. that of an inclusive teacher)? Do students identify themselves within the degree curriculum as teachers who are supposed to teach all children including those whose behaviour causes concern?
13. The First and Final Diagrammatic Illustrations

- A diagrammatic illustration of the student teacher-child dyadic interaction

- A diagrammatic illustration of the core categories and theoretical analysis