Nurture Group or Nurture Class?

Exploring Alternatives to the Nurture Group

by

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ii

Dedication

Dedicated to my aunt Marisa and grandmother Emily for their kindness in supporting me throughout this journey, and to my friend Sera whom encouraged me to keep on going, even in the most challenging of times.

Roxanne

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Roxanne Bonnici

Abstract

The Nurture Group provision is seen as a vital measure to tackle problems of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties [SEBD] within the local educational context. Although implemented over a decade ago; little local research assessed its effectivity in relation to the way it is being implemented and practiced. The extant research ignored the mainstream classroom and its contributions to nurturing children with SEBD. This research has, therefore taken the holistic picture into consideration, with the understanding that the Nurture Group reality may be skewed if one solely observes the Nurture Group setting.

This study adopts a generalist perspective and looks into the practices and approaches used by both mainstream teachers and NG staff, to nurture pupils with SEBD. An ethnographic methodology was used in order to gain a comprehensive view of current local practices and the experiences which attending an NG entails. Ethnographic observations were carried out over a period of two months within one mainstream class and one NG of one primary school. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were also carried out to understand the multiple perspectives and realities which the 'nurturing' of pupils entails.

It can be concluded that the local context varies significantly from the classic Boxall NG structure; posing the risk of children's educational needs becoming marginalized. No academic curriculum is covered within the Nurture Group. Pupils who attend are missing out on essential academic learning time. Effective nurturing principles and practices have the potential to become incorporated into mainstream classrooms, which would not only reach out to a greater number of pupils, but would also reduce the risk of pupils being excluded often for a prolonged period of time, since the practice of reintegration into the mainstream class was found to be weak.

Keywords:

NURTURE GROUP   MAINSTREAM   INCLUSION

ACADEMIC LOSS   SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

It is only in the last decade that the wellbeing of children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties [SEBD] has really become of concern to the school setting in the Maltese Islands. In 2008, schools around Malta began to follow in the footsteps of Marjorie Boxall with the implementation of the Nurture Group [NG] provision in various Maltese State schools. Currently, there are 37 NGs which are operating in the local and national level, with only one in Gozo (DQSE, personal communication, 19th November 2017). The intention was to provide an alternate nurturing environment to young pupils who may be struggling to adapt to school life and to equip them with skills in emotional and social literacy that would allow them to form healthier attachments with adults and peers. It is understood that by temporarily removing pupils from their mainstream class to provide them with a more caring and safe environment elsewhere, this would essentially result in the reduction of challenging behaviour and an overall improvement in the welfare and security of the child (Cefai & Cooper, 2011; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

The introduction of NGs in the Maltese context was presented to the public, to be a positive and inclusive provision for pupils with SEBD, with little indication to how this was so.

"With the introduction of nurture groups, it would be ensured that children, who might otherwise experience certain problems due to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, would be able to be included in mainstream education"
(Malta Independent, 2009).

The above statement led me to question how removing pupils from the mainstream context on a part-time basis would actually mean that they were being increasingly included within it.

As a person who was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at a young age, I am aware of the implications that certain behaviour can have on one's school experiences. Teachers were not always welcoming or understanding of my individual needs. Others saw no limit to my potential and acted as protective forces to my overall academic achievement and life fulfilment. This drove me to the realization that as teachers we hold the key to a door full of possibilities. Having studied psychology in my undergraduate degree and having a particular interest in the social and emotional experiences of children in the school setting, I became increasingly curious of the NG provision and how it was really aiding young pupils' lives. Being placed within a Maltese state school for my teacher education practicum, alerted me to the less well-known consequences of the NG placement. Questions related to the way the NG was being implemented and how this was affecting young pupils' educational and academic lives, were raised.

It is for these reasons that I hold inclusive principles close to heart. Through this research I aim to reveal how pupils may be impacted by labels schools attach to those who are not considered to be the 'ideal' pupil.

"At the heart of students' emotional responses to schooling is the fact that schools are attempting to construct students in a preferred form…education is about changing people in prescribed ways" (Slee, 2014, p. 449).

It became evident very quickly that since the implementation of NGs ten years ago, there has been a significant lack of research carried out in the local

setting in relation to NGs and pupils who struggle with SEBD. The research question is related to the concept that if we could provide pupils with a 'safe haven' in an alternate context which would yield positive results, then what obstacles prevent the nurturing environment being replicated and provided to all pupils in the mainstream setting?

With this question in mind and the lack of local research related to the topic, it appeared significant to capture the experience of these pupils' early years, who start off their educational experiences as being marked with 'SEBD'. In order to identify the reasons for which certain pupils are being removed from their mainstream classroom and why nurturing principles are not available to all, it became imperative to adopt a generalist perspective and contrast the practices which were being implemented in both the NG context as well as the mainstream one. Looking into the different perspectives and realties of the stakeholders involved, would ensure a more holistic view of the experience which attending an NG and the implementation of it entails.

With the abundance of positive results being suggested in international literature (OFSTED, 2011) it was essential to identify how closely the local nurturing practices could be compared to international ones. Is the local NG initiative really holding up to be a positive and inclusive step towards a child's general wellbeing and academic achievement? The overall intention of this study is to discover whether attending an NG could be posing any exclusionary aspects to young children who attend. It also aims to find whether an alternative to the NG provision could be adopted through the identification of nurturing principles within the NG, which could be applied to the curriculum and approach of the mainstream context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the Nurture Group (NG) phenomenon which in recent years has gained popularity in the education system, both locally and internationally. It is important to first understand the reasons for which the education system has felt it necessary to implement such an initiative and how pupils with social and emotional behavioural difficulties are perceived in their community. The NG concept shall be discussed in further detail in subsequent sections, including a critical review of NGs with the objective of establishing under which conditions NGs may work for specific groups of children.   The literature presented is also intended to create greater understanding regarding what the NG initiative actually entails including its: structure, practices, procedures and its effects on pupils and families.

2.2. The Social Context and Social Construction of SEBD

In today's world, children face growing up within a complex and multifaceted reality. Acquiring an education and mastering skills of self-expression and logical thinking have become increasingly fundamental to their quality of lives in the future. For one to succeed in this changing context, it has become vital for individuals to learn how to adapt and become accustomed to a demanding society (Cefai & Cooper, 2013). Sociological studies outline how smaller family sizes, the increase in working mothers as well as single-parent families, are posing a threat to the amount of quality time young children are spending with their primary caregivers. Statistically, young children coming from single-parent families are more likely to end up struggling financially and spiralling into poverty (Corsaro, 2005). Unfortunately, families coming from working-class backgrounds with less financial stability than

middle-class families, seem to have less influence or power on their child's social and academic life, either due to time constraints or feelings of insecurity with regards to what is best for their child (Corsaro, 2005; Lareau, 2007). With such high expectations and demands being placed upon young children, we have begun to see a rise in students who may be struggling to adapt and form the necessary competencies required to thrive in this modern environment (Layard & Dunn, 2009). All of this has brought us to realise that children too, may be subject to suffer from mental health issues; impeding appropriate emotional and behavioural development (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009).

Children are now living in a society whereby: family break-ups are becoming the norm; social inequality is increasing and notions of materialism and consumerism are controlling the minds of many. Many parents have become victims of social pressures, pushing them to focus on their own individual careers and endeavours, rather than the achievements of their family as a whole (Corsaro, 2005). All of this has led to the rise in occurrences of students struggling with social and emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Students with SEBD are characterized by long-term difficulties with behaviour management, emotional literacy as well as forming healthy social relationships with adults and peers; consequently, impeding their academic attainment and educational experience (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). "The term, SEBD, refers to those students who present with disturbing and/or disruptive behaviour that interferes with their own and others' social functioning and academic engagement" (Cefai & Cooper, 2013, p.8). Research suggests that the majority of such pupils tend to be: male, coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as many of them originating from ethnic-minorities and a significant proportion being brought up by single-mothers (Simpson, Cohen, Bloom, & Blumberg, 2009), many of

which could be considered as economically disadvantaged (Corsaro, 2005). It is also relevant to realise that all children are susceptible to face challenges in their lives, regardless of who they are and where they come from. Even those families with a seemingly high social capital and displaying a healthy marriage or partnership, may be affected by societal changes. Children are now spending less and less time with their primary caregivers, affecting their experience of that much-needed unconditional love (Layard & Dunn, 2009).

Students who struggle with SEBD may manifest their behaviour in very different forms; displaying either externalising outbursts or internalising behaviour and on some occasions a mixture of both. Externalising behaviour is characterized by disruptive-outwardly conduct, whereas; internalising behaviour can be witnessed by students who display symptoms of withdrawal and avoidance (Cefai & Cooper, 2013). Both categories of behaviour can be of particular concern as they become potentially dangerous to a child's safety and welfare (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014).

Students with SEBD have for a long time been perceived as a burden to teachers and a threat to the classroom harmony (Simpson, Cohen, Bloom, & Blumberg, 2009). Despite the growth in recognition of social and emotional, behavioural difficulties we are still witnessing a significant number of students who are being excluded from mainstream education, including those at primary level (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). As teachers struggle to manage problematic behaviour, alternative educational provisions are seen as preferable and more beneficial for pupils with SEBD (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). "Unlike other groups of students with special needs, they are still as likely to be placed in specialist provision now as 30 years ago" (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013, p. 47). However,

the question still remains as to whether such measures are truly beneficial to these students, or whether it be a consequence students must face, due to teachers' lack of understanding and training in their needs (Jull, 2008). With inclusive educational systems and practices having reformed significantly in recent decades to accommodate students with individual educational needs, students with SEBD are still the most disadvantaged group of individuals; for whom exclusionary alternatives and punitive practices are still allowed by law (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009).

The term SEBD has the tendency to be associated with psychological points of view, whereby pupils are seen as needing treatment rather than society needing to treat social factors which may be affecting children's wellbeing (Slee, 2014). We are still shying away from blaming the educational system or society at large when it comes to discussions related to behavioural issues and instead have resorted to personally labelling the individual as a 'problem-child' who must be punished rather than supported (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009; Slee, 2015). Unfortunately, this implies that the recognition of students with SEBD, ironically exposes the child to exclusion rather than leading to the development of new pedagogies and approaches (Jull, 2008). "Specialist provision for these children may only serve to attribute their difficulties to within-child features and overlook their real needs which may be disguised by their overt behaviour" (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003, p. 119).

Slee (2014), argues that pupil disaffection or disengagement can often be traced back to rational reactions to adverse social factors or the schooling system simply exerting too much stress on pupils (Slee, 2014).

A particular study related to pupil-teacher relationships, illustrates how those pupils labelled with SEBD come across negative relationships with teachers who fail to show understanding and empathy towards their difficulties, which further

contributes to pupils' challenges and negative perceptions of the education system. On the other hand, those who found comfort and support from their teachers displayed increased resilience and engagement within the classroom, as well as increased confidence and positive social relationships (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014).   The teacher-pupil relationship has some attachment characteristics of the parent-child relationship and highlights the potential teachers have to create positive teacher-pupil relationships. Teachers have the opportunity to become support-figures of care and mutual respect; modelling appropriate behaviour and value (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).

On a positive note, many professionals have been working on developing ways to help pupils who struggle with SEBD thrive in the educational setting. With the realization of the potential which schools and teachers hold to act as protective forces against developmental issues, many schools across the globe have begun implementing NGs within their walls. It is a concept aimed at combatting: social, economic and environmental hardships that some children must face; providing a 'safe space' for students displaying characteristics of SEBD (Sanders, 2007).

2.3. What is a Nurture Group?

The NG concept was first established in London in the 1970s by a renowned educational psychologist, Marjorie Boxall. Boxall recognized that there were a disconcerting number of students who were not responding effectively to the education system. She believed this was the consequence of children coming from deficient nurturing backgrounds in their early childhood (Binnie & Allen, 2008).

2.3.1. Theoretical Underpinnings

As stated by Schwartz (2015), NGs are primarily based on the work of John Bowlby, one of the people who coined the term 'attachment theory' in the 1980's; a conception which illustrates the necessity of forming positive interpersonal relationships throughout early childhood in order to fulfil attachment needs. Bowlby believed that in order for a child to develop a positive sense of self and interact with others in a constructive manner, the child must first receive a feeling of safety. Trauma and negative childhood encounters can severely affect the formation of such relationships, which in turn may lead to feelings of insecurity (Schwartz, 2015). Although of great value, Bowlby's work must be interpreted cautiously as much of it initially critiqued parents for their child's issues, giving particular significance to their mothers and their supposed lack of maternal love (Vicedo, 2011). We must be careful not to perceive Bowlby's theory as one which places the blame on parents and alleviates teachers from responsibility. Rather, we can apply Bowlby's theory by simply understanding that some children who enter school, may not have yet developed sufficient early attachment needs to cope with the demands of school (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). This shift of blame away from parents/primary caregivers helps us to recognize that the underlying principle behind the NG is not to replace the bond children have with their families, but to create a healthier attachment between the child and the school (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2010). As cited in Cefai & Cooper's work (2011), other developmental theorists such as Maslow, " have indicated that children can only achieve self-reliance, autonomy and self-esteem and other higher needs once their basic physical and emotional needs have been adequately addressed." (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p.66)

Keeping such needs in mind as well as the numerous amounts of vulnerable children who were being identified as having SEBD, NGs were founded with the

9

intention of providing an early intervention and therapeutic strategy for emotional and behavioural issues, before they became deep-seated in the child's educational and social life (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). By early intervention provision it is indicated that vulnerable children who begin school without having formed appropriate social and emotional learning skills, should be assisted though the NG provision as early as school enrolment age (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). In the case of Maltese schools NGs are available for students between the ages of 5 and 11 (Grech, 2010), despite children usually entering the educational system at the age of 3 (Cefai & Copper, 2011).

Pupils who are selected to attend the NG, typically display abnormal levels of disruptive or withdrawn behaviour patterns and are identified as being at risk of exclusion or depending on extra support and attention in their mainstream class (Sanders, 2007). Such students may also display aggressive behaviour as well as being erratic and disorganized, which further complicates the ability to fruitfully engage in class activities (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). A significantly common feature amongst children who appear to have SEBD, is low self-esteem. Their seemingly 'illogical' behaviour is a coping mechanism which they use to protect themselves from diminishing their self-worth (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). "Failure at school adds to their fragile sense of worth and a downward spiral is created" (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003, p. 120).

Slee (2015) also reminds us about the importance of considering the biopolitics which is associated with the term SEBD and the labelling of pupils as being deviant and disruptive. Sociological perspectives have focused their attention on pupils' backgrounds, social classes and families, whereas psychologists have tended to place blame on the individual, pointing fingers at the child's mental and

emotional disturbances. Slee argues that in order to fully understand such a phenomenon, a transdisciplinary approach must be taken, considering: biological, sociological and psychological perspectives (Slee, 2015). A combination of all three epistemologies will allow us to adapt our pedagogies, curriculum, daily routines and physical structures in a way which will allow for more positive interactions between the child and the school (Cooper, 2008).

2.3.2. Structure and Framework

The classic NG structure in primary school years, holds between 6-12 pupils, whereby a teacher-directed intervention is implemented which adheres to core psycho-therapeutic principles (Billington, 2012). The group size and high teacher-pupil ratios favour pupils who benefit from increased individual attention; many times the mainstream class structure is not able to offer this. This allows pupils to have more frequent one-to-one interactions with adults and enables them to experience greater care and support whilst developing learning skills and working on emotional management (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2010).   A primary feature of the NG is that they are usually found in mainstream schools and should house two members of staff; one of whom should be specifically trained as a NG teacher and the other should serve as a Nurture Assistant [NA] (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). The literature consistently states that pupils who attend the NG usually do so on a part-time basis and continue to attend for a total period of two to four terms, before becoming fully reintegrated into their mainstream class (Binnie & Allen, 2008). The classic Boxall NG structure involves pupils attending the NG class for four full days a week and one half day. The other half day allows pupils to go back to their mainstream class, giving them the opportunity to integrate with the rest of their peers and participate in lessons provided by their mainstream teacher (Cooper &

11

Whitebread, 2007). It is also common practice for pupils who attend the NG to keep in close contact to their mainstream teacher and peers, by remaining in class for specific group activities, as well as checking in with their classmates every morning for the register period (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). It is believed that NGs should be held on a part-time basis rather than a full-time provision, as this ensures the upholding of inclusive practices (Sanders, 2007). "In this way, children were always seen as part of their mainstream class and it was easier for nurture group teachers and mainstream teachers to share responsibility and promote inclusion" (Sanders, 2007, p. 58).

International literature specifies that NGs should follow a holistic curriculum which incorporates both the National Curriculum as well as periods of emotional learning, free play and physical activity (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). Although a holistic curriculum and pedagogy seems most beneficial, it is worth questioning whether in certain contexts, this is in fact being practiced. In cases where pupils are spending a few hours a week in the NG

, it can be inferred that there is restricted time in practicing both academic and emotional learning. There is limited research related to the Maltese context with regards to the aspect of academic curriculum, therefore we can conclude that further inquiry is needed.

2.3.3. Physical Characteristics of the Nurture Room

The NG room is designed to replicate the home-environment where staff act as role-models in initiating positive relationships and social engagements. It offers an alternative to the rigid mainstream class environment and focuses on creating a

nurturing atmosphere by including numerous soft furnishings and a cooking area (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). The classic nurture room comprises of: carpets and sofas, as well as a small kitchen and breakfast table providing a strong resemblance to some pupils' homes (Billington, 2012). These features offer a space for young children to learn and play in a more flexible manner. The kitchen is used to prepare meals and a dining table enables educators and pupils to have informal conversations whilst sharing breakfast as a group (Hepburn, 2011). Having such furnishings within the space, is intended for those pupils who have formulated negative perceptions of the regular classroom, as they may have repeatedly experienced failure amongst those four walls. The presence of desks, whiteboards and chairs may easily hold a negative association for young pupils, generating feelings of anxiety by the simple presence of such physical characteristics. The nurture space however should be specifically designed to reduce such feelings of apprehension, encouraging pupils to feel relaxed and accepted in a more child-friendly atmosphere (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2010).

2.3.4. Emotional and Academic Nurture Curriculum

The classic nurture curriculum should include both the academic aspect as well as the emotional and social one, however there is generally greater emphasis placed on the emotional and social aspects, as this is seen as a vital stepping stone to academic success (Billington, 2012). As shall be discussed below, the question as to whether pupils who attend the NG are receiving the same amount of knowledge acquisition as their peers, is debatable and of concern (Slee, 2014;2015).

Nurture principles highlight that activities which take place within the NG should provide a sense of predictability and reliability. In this way, pupils become to

know what to expect, making it easier to manage their behaviour in a way which elicits positive feedback more frequently (Bennathan, 1997). Pupils with low self-esteem tend to do well under more structured environments where success is planned and achievable. It is especially important for pupils with low levels of confidence to receive positive feedback for tasks which they have completed themselves and can attribute to their personal achievements. When giving praise, consideration is given to ensure that pupils know exactly what they have done right and for what they are being rewarded (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003).

Lessons and activities move at a slower pace to that of the traditional mainstream class, as this allows pupils more time to integrate knowledge learnt and think about ways to respond in group settings. This provides pupils with the opportunity to be heard in a setting where their opinion is valued by others; empowering pupils to feel worthy (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2010). As part of their emotional and social learning, pupils learn how to: become more independent, adopt effective social strategies in adverse circumstances, express their feelings and emotions, as well as how to communicate thoughts. All of this aids in increasing children's general capacity to learn (Sanders, 2007).

2.3.5. Effectivity and Factors Contributing to Success

Reviews and studies carried out in England in the 1980s reported that 86.7% of pupils who attended the NG provision were successfully re-integrated into their mainstream class, with a minimal number of them needing further support (Bennathan, 1997). In general, pupils who had the opportunity to attend a NG were found to show substantial progress in social and emotional areas in comparison to pupils who attended schools which did not offer the NG provision. (Binnie & Allen,

2008).   In fact, pupils who displayed characteristics of SEBD and did not receive support from an NG "were seven times more likely to be placed within special school provision" (Sanders, 2007, p. 46).

A study conducted to assess the effectivity of NGs, reported pupils feeling more comfortable with the school environment and altering the negative perceptions they previously held. Pupils became more motivated to learn and accept requests or tasks given to them by adults. Confidence seemed to increase amongst the majority of pupils, resulting in better social interactions and self-expression. Most importantly, pupils were better able to manage their behaviour and control destructive urges (Sanders, 2007).   It is noteworthy to mention that although research has undoubtedly recognized the social, emotional and behavioural gains NGs can provide, there has been less theoretical emphasis and available literature on academic benefits accrued by nurture principles (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). However, there is indication that by improving behaviour and perceptions of self-worth, NGs are indirectly leading to cognitive gains (Syrnyk, 2013), provided that pupils are not stuck in NGs beyond three to four months and that academic work is also being covered.

The success rates of NGs have undoubtedly led us to try to understand the factors which are yielding positive results and which variables may increase the extent of effectivity. However, research does also state that it has proven rather challenging to explicitly confirm the exact elements which contribute to the success of NGs (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009).   In Cooper and Tiknaz's study, carried out with NG staff to identify key elements which are contributing to the accomplishments achieved by NGs, most educators first and foremost discussed the importance of collaboration between teachers and assistants. It is seen as essential

to have similar visions amongst staff, so that decisions made are supported and backed up, whilst also taking care to share planning and assessment responsibilities (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

Another key element refers to the importance of balance in relation to classroom composition. It has been identified that having similar age groups together in NGs, as well as having a balance between males and females within the group, aids in better functioning and management of the group. It was also noted that groups worked a lot better when there was a healthy mixture of pupils who displayed either internalising or externalising behaviours (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

2.3.6. Nurture Group Variants

Despite the classic Boxall NG principles and framework being practiced amongst the majority of NGs which exist today, literature does also point out that there are numerous structural variations which differentiate across contexts (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). This raises questions as to whether NGs with significant variations are as effective to those which follow the classic Boxall structure; most of the research omits the relevance of such variations in relation to effectivity (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). The classic structural characteristics discussed above, all adhere to the classic Boxall NG principles. A study conducted across England and Wales, identified four different variations which exist and differ to varying degrees from the classic Boxall NG. The most significant variations found were that of time spent in the nurture class itself, as well as the curriculum which is covered (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). Variant 1 is known as the classic Boxall NG which focuses on providing pupils with a holistic curriculum; it identifies the need to integrate the National Educational Curriculum as well as social, emotional and behavioural

learning (Cooper, 2004). New variant NGs (Variant 2) still follow core nurture principles and structural characteristics however, the time which children spend in the group may vary from anywhere between one half day to four full days per week. The third group type referred to as 'groups informed by NG principles', often differ greatly from the classic NG features, as they may take place outside of the regular curricular time; such as being held in break-time or as an after-school provision. Often these groups may be run by one member of staff rather than two and at times such personnel can also be non-teaching staff (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). The fourth and final type are known as 'aberrant NGs' which may use the name 'Nurture Group', however, they do not represent the defining principles which characterize the classic NGs, creating a distorted image or perception of what a NG should entail (Cooper, 2004). The third and fourth variations tend to focus solely on the social and emotional aspect of learning with little to no attention being given to the academic side of learning (Cooper &Whitebread, 2007). Literature states that such variations to the classic NG can be theoretically dangerous, as they may result in marginalisation and pupils' educational needs becoming side-lined. The length of time which pupils spend in the NG was also noted as a factor which significantly affected improvements made by pupils (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). All this shall be taken into consideration when evaluating the Maltese context and its practices, given that it appears that the situation in Malta may be 'aberrant' in this sense.

2.4. Assessment, Evaluative Procedures and Reintegration

2.4.1. Admission and Assessment

When bearing in mind that NGs are a special educational provision, professionals should take meticulous care and thought when considering the

admission of a child in such a group. One must consider all factors contributing to the child's needs and how the decision to place a pupil in an NG may affect their lives as well as their social and educational achievements (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Professionals together with parents should discuss admission of a pupil as a group and together come to a consensus regarding what measure would be best suited for the child (Bennathan, 1997). The availability of NGs can become problematic if a thorough assessment of pupils is not taken before and throughout the placement. In some instances, a pupil being enrolled in an NG may not be the best option for a particular child and in that case other forms of support or pedagogical practices should be considered (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). As Cefai and Cooper argue (2011, p.69),"Clearly, nurture groups should not become dumping grounds for any behaviour problem at school" (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p.69).

A number of relevant evaluative and diagnostic assessment tools exist to aid professionals in determining whether or not pupils' needs fall under the support which a NG can provide. Such tools were also formulated in order to identify progress being made, as well as guiding the conception of personalized targets and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). The Boxall Diagnostic Developmental Profile was designed by Marjorie Boxall in 1978, as a diagnostic measure which allows a method of recording emotional and behavioural characteristics. It also illustrates the pupil's needs and gives professionals an indication of where issues are stemming from (Bennathan, 1997). The profile is split into two sections, one of which aims to extract developmental factors which may be affecting the child's ability to learn and engage in class successfully. The second section highlights the child's behavioural aspects which may be impeding positive social and academic performance (Cooper & Lovey, 2006). It is used as a guiding

instrument in setting up appropriate intervention strategies and target development as well as measuring progress and behavioural changes.   It contains 68 items which together paint a picture of the child by determining their individual, social and emotional functioning (Cooper & Cefai, 2010). NG staff and the mainstream class teacher usually work together in completing the profile, as it is vital that someone who knows the child well completes the assessment, to avoid misrepresentations (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). However, it is also relevant to consider the ways in which teachers and NG staff may differ amongst each other in their interpretations of pupils' needs and progress (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Although the Boxall Profile is now considered as a standardized and reliable document, one can still see how it might also be rather subjective and limited to the perceptions of pupils' educators (Jillian & Delafield-Butt, 2016).

Another similar assessment instrument used to establish levels of positive and negative behaviour patterns, is known as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). It is normally also filled out by teachers and NTs; it differs slightly to the Boxall Profile, as it is also intended that an identical questionnaire should be given to the parents, with both sets of results being compared and taken into consideration (Goodman, 1997). "The SDQ is a 25-item behaviour-screening questionnaire that measures 5 subscales, namely hyperactivity, conduct problems, emotional symptoms, peer problems and prosocial behaviour" (Cooper, Couture & Royer, 2011, p.22).

Although both the SDQ and Boxall Profile show similarities in terms of the characteristics which they are testing for, it is also believed that the Boxall Profile is a much more reliable and extensive assessment tool, suited for its particular purpose. The SDQ relies on psychological principles and childhood psychopathologies, with

most of the 25 items on the questionnaire focusing on negative behavioural occurrences. The Boxall Profile on the other hand is more suited to the educational context and also aims at unravelling positive characteristics (Jillian & Delafield-Butt, 2016).

2.4.2. Reintegration, Transition and Relapse

An important feature of the NG provision is the fact that preparation for reintegration should commence as soon as the child enters the NG. Using assessment tools discussed above, educators can begin to devise a plan for reintegration upon entry, by evaluating the needs of pupils and setting goals (Doyle, 2004). In a particular school in England, educators believed that although the Boxall profile is sufficient in creating an overall picture of pupils' behavioural patterns and development, it still appears to be rather broad when planning specific steps for reintegration and transitioning pupils into their mainstream class. Hence, Doyle (2001), developed what is referred to as the 'Reintegration Readiness Scale'; a tool aimed at setting up personalized and specific steps, which can be implemented to help pupils succeed and successfully reintegrate back into their mainstream class. Each criterion within the document can be applied as a target, which ideally can be achieved in a short time-span, whereby pupils, families and educators can measure progress (Doyle, 2001). Transition programs are seen to be of utmost importance to the success of the provision. For this to be carried out as smoothly as possible, NG staff and mainstream teachers should work together to slowly wean pupils off the NG, thereby ensuring that there is continuity of support within the mainstream class, as well as consistency in approaches (Cefai & Cooper, 2011).

Literature also suggests that although pupils usually maintained the knowledge and skills acquired in NGs, there are still cases were children show signs of relapse, especially in social and emotional aspects (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

2.5. Parental Education, Perspectives and School Staff Involvement

2.5.1. Parental Education & Perspectives

Due to NGs being based upon a lack of healthy attachment in a child's early years, parents may very often feel as though they are responsible for their child's maladaptation to the school setting. In some cases, parents may show some hesitation to their child joining such a group, for fear that they themselves or their child are to blame (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Upon admission to the group it is suggested that parents are involved in the discussion process and consulted with in-depth, regarding what the NG provision entails. Educators and professionals should take care to show sensitivity and support towards parents, as well as adopting a non-judgemental approach. Meetings with parents at the admission stage are considered as fundamental in creating a healthy bridge between the school and home (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011).

Although many parents might show resistance initially, studies related to parental perspectives depict a positive attitude towards the initiative. In Binnie and Allen's study (2008) which evaluates the effectivity of NGs, 97% of parents felt that the NG had left a positive influence on their child. The majority agreed that their child had made significant changes in levels of positive behaviour, self-confidence, as well as academic improvement (Binnie & Allen, 2008). Studies have emphasised how NGs could potentially lead to a ripple effect; bettering lives at home and enabling more positive parent-child relationships (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

NGs also possess the potential to become resource centres for parental education, where qualified staff can assist parents in furthering emotional literacy development at home (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). NG staff may serve as role models to parents, supporting them in developing parenting skills and encouraging them to bond through activities such as reading (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). It is suggested that teachers and NG staff do not only meet up with parents for formal reviews but should make it a point to allow parents to approach staff informally throughout the day. Most NGs also adopt an 'open door policy' where parents can come into the NG to spend time with their children and observe activities carried out. However, in many schools this has not proven to be very successful and parents many times did not make use out of the initiative (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011). NGs often invite parents to have breakfast with their son/daughter or share a snack together during school time. This increases opportunities for parents to become more involved in their child's educational life as well as continue to strengthen the parent-child bond (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013).

Although parental involvement and collaboration are considered central to the success of the NG provision, reports have indicated that "professionals are far from achieving the successful engagement of parents in education" (Kirkbride, 2014, p. 84). This draws attention to the need to discover ways in which parents can become more active in their child's educational life.

2.5.2. Collaboration and Holistic Approaches

Professionals working with vulnerable children are encouraged to find ways of collaborating with colleagues in order to improve pedagogical and instructional practice (Obiakor et al., 2012). This can be achieved by: sharing resources,

developing new strategies, problem solving collaboratively and continual communication (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2010). In fact, a central element to the NG, is the interdependent relationship of the NT and NA; which serves to demonstrate healthy social relations and team-work to pupils (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

In order to maintain the inclusive aspect of the provision, the literature emphasizes the value of mainstream teachers remaining in close contact to nurture staff and the pupils themselves. The idea is to ensure that pupils can still uphold their identity as part of their mainstream class; however, it also means that mainstream teachers can provide continuity and consistency to the nurture approach (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). Unfortunately, in some cases mainstream teachers appear to have welcomed the NG provision, based on the fact that it is removing 'problematic' pupils from their class (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). It is easy to see how this perspective can endanger the possibility for healthy collaboration and positive teacher-pupil relationships. NG staff also tend to hold weak status in the school in comparison to other educators, therefore finding it difficult to create equal and influential partnerships with the rest of the school (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011).

In order to fully assume a holistic approach, NG educators and teachers are also encouraged to liaise with other professionals such as counsellors and external agencies (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2010). Many times, pupils with S.E.B.D require a number of support systems. In such cases intervention should not stop at the NG level; rather, multisystemic and transdisciplinary approaches should be adopted to unravel and assist all areas which may be affecting the child's life (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2008).

2.6. The Maltese Context

2.6.1. The Introduction of NGs in Maltese schools

Unlike the situation internationally, Malta has only in the last decade begun to value the benefits of the NG initiative in primary schools. Maltese teachers have for years been voicing their concern regarding pupils with S.E.B.D and their difficulties in managing their behaviour in a regular mainstream classroom (Cefai & Cooper, 2013). Of particular concern are Maltese state schools who statistically appear to have the greatest difficulties with S.E.B.D and pupils at risk of developing such characteristics. This boils down to the greater percentage of pupils who are coming from low socio-economic backgrounds in contrast to church and independent schools (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009). A national report published in 2008 suggested the implementation of NGs as a preventative and interventive strategy, aimed at supporting pupils with S.E.B.D (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri,2008). Following this recommendation, two NGs were set up in two state primary schools as part of a pilot-project study which was met with positive remarks and results (Cefai & Copper, 2010). In 2009, three more NGs were set-up, all of which have continued to operate, whilst many more schools around the island have worked on following in their footsteps (Cefai & Cooper, 2010) with a total of 37 NGs currently operating on the national level (DQSE, personal communication, 19th November 2017).

2.6.2. Structure, Curriculum and Activities

NGs in Malta differ from the classic Boxall nurture structure, mainly in terms of time pupils spend in the NG and in what they learn within it. In order to align with inclusive principles, the NG provision in Malta also operates on a part-time basis, however, in comparison to the classic Boxall NG, pupils in Malta only attend for two

half days a week, spending the rest of the time in their mainstream class (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). Although the term 'inclusion' is widely recognized around the world, the term still remains rather ambiguous with regards to its actual definition and the ways in which it should be practiced to achieve a fully inclusive community (Curcic, 2009).

> "*The policy in Malta is concerned primarily with the placement of students in mainstream schools*" (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p.68).

Despite the Maltese policy showing its commitment to inclusive practices and creating inclusive schools, one can also raise questions as to whether removing pupils from their classroom for part of the day and creating a situation where certain pupils are being seen as deviant to the norm, could potentially be more of an exclusionary measure then an inclusive one, especially when considering the absence of academic learning (Curcic, 2009).

Some of the first NGs established in Malta have described their main structures, activities and procedures, allowing us to understand how closely the local context matches up to a classic Boxall NG (Cefai & Cooper, 2010). Schembri Meli (2010), explains that when it comes to pupil selection, mainstream class teachers together with the Head of School usually select pupils who they think may benefit from the provision. The Boxall Profile together with the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire are administered before admission to ensure that decisions made are backed up with assessment tools. Parents are then encouraged to attend a meeting where they meet the staff and decide whether or not they would like to give consent for their child to attend. An individualised learning program (ILP) would then be devised to identify each pupil's particular needs and targets (Schembri Meli, 2010).

Conforming to the classic Boxall structure, further literature concerning other early NGs in Malta, explain how the groups usually have two staff members present, one of whom is a teacher and the other being a qualified Learning Support Assistant (LSA) (Pizzuto, 2010)

Popular activities within Maltese NGs include: circle time, breakfast, free play, brain gym, arts and crafts, as well as storytelling. Schembri Meli states that NTs should also collaborate with mainstream teachers to ensure that important lessons or activities covered in the mainstream class are not missed out on (Schembri Meli, 2010). Circle time seems to be of special significance to the Maltese NG as pupils are *"introduced to emotional literacy activities in order to help them become aware of the importance of non-verbal communication along with the verbal aspect of feelings and emotions"* (Pizzuto, 2010, p. 67). This time is utilized as a space for pupils to express themselves and communicate with each other in a respectful yet free and safe manner (Grech, 2010; Pizzuto, 2010; Schembri Meli, 2010). Gardening and breakfast were also two important elements brought up in Maltese literature, which provided a time for pupils to have a bit of fun and improve self-confidence. Both activities also require pupils to communicate and work together; cultivating their social skills (Grech, 2010).

When looking at the activities which pupils cover throughout their stay in the NG, it is clear that in the Maltese context NG sessions are highly adapted. They show particular focus on emotional and social learning, with little or no academic learning to replace what has been lost from 'pulling out' pupils from their mainstream classrooms. One must keep this in mind when considering the ways in which this can affect the child academically. Unlike the situation in many other countries where pupils also cover the National Curriculum in NGs, pupils in Malta are missing out on

multiple mainstream lessons. Research has highlighted the significance of the NG incorporating the National Curriculum into the nurture curriculum, to ensure pupils are not being disadvantaged in cognitive dimensions of school life (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper * Whitebread, 2007; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Unfortunately, Maltese literature does not refer to this gap in the nurture curriculum, neither does it point to the need for pupils to catch up on missed lessons and how this is done, if done at all.

2.6.3. The Reintegration Process

The concept of reintegration frequently came up in Maltese literature, highlighting the importance of pupils to become fully reintegrated into their mainstream class. In order to ensure that pupils are re-integrated at the right time, nurture staff and teachers carry out detailed observations and assessments throughout pupils' stay in the NG. This is followed by recurrent discussions with parents and mainstream teachers; regarding the pupil's progress as well as strategies which could be used in the mainstream class to avoid relapse (Grech, 2010; Schembri Meli, 2010).   A particular school pointed out that the reintegration process also involved the pupil slowly attending the mainstream class for longer periods throughout the day, where by the NT would observe the child's progress within the mainstream class and provide assistance when needed. After a slow and gradual transition, pupils are usually reintegrated into their mainstream class after the third term (Grech, 2010).

2.7. Room for Improvement and Challenges Faced

2.7.1. Cognitive Gains, Effectivity and 'Opportunity Costs'

Most of the literature tends to take on a positive stance on the NG concept however, it is still evident that the field has much still to improve upon. In terms of cognitive gains and academic improvement, there is a lack of reliable data pointing to the concrete effectiveness of NGs. Much of the research available which points to academic gains are based upon teachers' perceptions and the ways in which teachers chose to answer questions throughout interviews and questionnaires. (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009). Mainstream teachers may find it difficult to pin point exact cognitive improvements made by the child, because of a lack of data provided to them by nurture staff. Often teachers may not really know what specific learning is taking place in the NG, and therefore they can only base their evaluations on their own impressions (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

Multiple studies have also pointed to the possibility of children missing out on valuable time which they would otherwise spend with their peers should they not be enrolled in the NG. There is concern for the possibility of 'opportunity cost' which the NG might be inflicting on the child; both in relation to social interactions with mainstream teachers and peers as well as academic missed opportunities (Syrynk, 2013; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Research findings related to pupil gains after full reintegration into their mainstream class, also show that some pupils begin to show deterioration in certain aspects of behaviour and performance (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). This highlights the issue of continuity, whereby in certain cases, replication of NG principles are not being administered in mainstream classes, leading to relapse and weakening of improvements made (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

2.7.2. Logistical Challenges & Teacher Training

Many times, finding the physical space for an NG and acquiring the funds to cover the costs of: activities, purchasing snacks and resources as well as paying for staff training can be problematic (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). "Not only do nurture groups require considerable physical and human resources, including specialised training and equipment, but individual nurture groups require a minimum number of participants (usually 10) to enable meaningful social interaction and learning activities" (Cefai & Cooper, 2011, p.69).

Cooper & Tiknaz's (2005) study also puts forth an argument related to group composition and balance of externalizing behaviours vs withdrawn ones. NGs with a greater ratio of pupils who presented with externalizing behaviours posed a threat to the harmony and management of the NG. Having too many pupils who normally act out, meant that nurture staff had to adopt reactive teaching strategies rather than directive teaching styles. This meant that teachers spent more time controlling negative and deviant engagement rather than co-constructing positive behaviour (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

A study carried out in New Zealand related to pupil-teacher relationships and children with S.E.B.D, indicates the significance of having highly-skilled teachers in schools. Teachers who were trained in special education showed greater compassion, patience and higher levels of support. Mainstream teachers are unfortunately, not usually trained in special education and therefore they perceive themselves as not able or not having sufficient training to cater for the varied needs of such pupils in mainstream classes (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014). Implications derived from research, raises awareness for the need in developing

teacher education which is aimed at challenging teachers' perceptions of SEBD and improving their levels of self-efficacy (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

Sanders (2007) also mentions that teachers sometimes feel demoralized at having to assume responsibility of pupils who attend the NG, as they may feel that they do not know those pupils so well, due to them spending minimal time in their mainstream class. This suggests that NGs should have more open policies, where mainstream teachers can come and watch the group, to better understand what goes on (Sanders, 2007).

2.7.3. Effects on Pupils

Mainstream teachers have also expressed their concern regarding pupils who attend NGs becoming dependent on their NG or else growing more attached to their nurture class than their mainstream one. This can inhibit the inclusive principles and further cause marginalization of children (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Pupils attending NGs can also become more attached to pupils who attend their NG, this causes the formation of cliques and deters from positive social-relations with mainstream peers. Nurture pupils may also cause friction with their peers by boasting about the fun activities which they took part in, creating a sense of jealousy amongst other pupils (Sanders, 2007).

2.8. Making it More Inclusive: A Whole School Approach

Being placed in alternate facilities to their peers, NG pupils may be facing the reality of stigmatization and judgement (Obiakor et al., 2012). Knowing that NGs hold the risk of becoming 'dumping grounds' for pupils who show traits of problematic behaviour (Cefai & Cooper, 2001), much of research has led to the realization that in order for the NG to be a truly positive and supportive initiative, the whole school must

begin to take responsibility in adopting nurturing principles and supporting all pupils (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). There is now emphasis being placed upon the notion that all teachers should consider themselves special educational needs teachers, ensuring that accountability for all pupils is shared and that care is shown towards all pupils from all educators (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). The encouraging aspect of the NG provision is the element of adaptability and room for development which it holds. Nurture principles can be seen as holding the potential to be applied to wider contexts, positively affecting larger populations of pupils (Cooper, 2004). The vision which Marjorie Boxall held in the implementation of NGs was not to create an exiled community within a larger community, rather it was to create a nurturing model which would eventually become part of the whole school approach (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011). Multiple sources of literature have highlighted the positive impact which NGs have had on the whole school (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Doyle, 2001; Sanders, 2007), creating more pro-active teachers (Binnie & Allen, 2008), increased positive-regard for pupils with S.E.B.D, as well as adopting nurturing principles into mainstream classrooms (Sanders, 2007). "It has offered opportunities for staff development, alternative approaches to supporting the needs of a significant group of children, and co-operative working" (Doyle, 2001, p.131).

2.8.1. The 'Social Development Curriculum'

Taking into account the literature's contradictory arguments to whether or not NGs can be considered as inclusive or exclusive practices, Doyle (2001;2004;2006), has worked on combatting this issue by developing an objectives-led document aimed at integrating nurturing principles into the mainstream context. It was designed to aid teachers in implementing nurturing strategies in every day teaching, by suggesting a list of activities which can easily be combined with the mainstream

curriculum, using minimal financial resources (Doyle, 2004).   The Social

Development Curriculum is based upon four key areas of development: social skills,

self-awareness and confidence, skills for learning as well as self-control and

management of behaviour (Doyle, 2004;2006). *"Each of these key areas contains a*

number of learning objectives, a range of possible teaching activities to help address

these objectives, and the expected learning outcomes, in a clear easy to read

format" (Doyle, 2006, p.257). This was created with the intention of increasing

opportunities for social and emotional development for all students whilst also

targeting vulnerable pupils. The development of nurturing principles in mainstream

classes may lessen the need to extract or pull-out pupils from their regular

classrooms and peers, lessening the danger of exclusion and stigma which attending

the NG might incur (Doyle, 2004; 2006).

One particular physical characteristic which Doyle suggests is the 'nook'; a

quiet corner or space which children who may feel overwhelmed, angry or upset can

retreat to. The space should offer comfortable seating with cushions as well as

books and soft toys, to help them overcome the rigidity of the mainstream classroom.

It should also be contained with translucent fabric to create an area where children

can feel emotionally secure; however, they should still be able to observe what is

happening in the rest of the classroom (Doyle, 2006). Some other curricular

suggestions include: circle time, stories containing social and emotional learning,

using puppets with dialogues related to feelings and show and tell sessions which

aid in learning the rules of talking and listening to others. The teacher can also use

organizational strategies which help pupils in knowing what is expected of them in

the classroom; by creating concise task boards with daily activities, timetables and

routines. Using a noise level indicator can also help pupils understand what level of

communication is required of them during activities; knowing when to be silent, when to use quiet voices and when they can socialize and talk normally (Doyle, 2004).

Recognizing that such strategies can be so straightforward, raises questions as to whether NGs will eventually become redundant, if mainstream schools hold the potential to take on fully inclusive and collaborative approaches, to support not only vulnerable pupils, but all children within their walls (Binnie & Allen, 2008).

2.9. Conclusion

The objective of this review was aimed at identifying the main ways in which we can learn from the current situation to improve the future nurturing approach. The nature of S.E.B.D as well as the NG phenomenon has shown to differ across contexts, location and time, and it is for this reason that it is valid to assess the local context critically in order to understand if the provision in Maltese schools is applying what is best for our future generation. The lack of local literature has shown the necessity of more in-depth and modern research in Maltese settings which will hopefully enlighten educators and policy makers on more optimal ways to move forward from here.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. An Introduction to Research Methodology

When conducting research related to the social sciences and education one must identify two main factors; the first being the phenomenon which we wish to acquire knowledge about and the second being the approach we shall take to acquire this knowledge (Langbrdige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). It is vital for research to be accessible and relevant to policy makers and professionals in order to bring about positive differences, bridging the gap between research and practice (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004). This chapter shall provide an in-depth explanation of the perspectives and stance adopted to generate new knowledge regarding the Nurture Group (NG) initiative, as well as the methods and tools chosen to implement such a research study. Ethical issues will be discussed as well as the implications of the researcher's role.

3.2. Epistemology

My personal standpoint on understanding the complexities of individuals, boils down to one key perception, which is that there is no person in this world who experiences the same reality to another. As educators, it is vital to develop a sensitivity to this notion when attempting to create rules, strategies, lessons and curricula which are meant to cater for the vast assortment of individuals which we may encounter in a school setting.

There are two main epistemological paradigms which can be identified in the field of social sciences, which are referred to as positivistic and interpretivist approaches (Lin, 1998). A positivist approach mainly sees the world as an objective

experience which refers to the social world being something which is natural and pushed upon human consciousness (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). It aims to identify common characteristics or patterns in relation to a particular phenomenon which can be stretched across contexts and individuals (Lin, 1998), usually requiring a scientific method of research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). An interpretivist approach relies on the notion that experiences are completely subjective and the truth of a reality is created by the individual themselves. In a sense, it is a more flexible search for truth, understanding that humans have the ability to create their own construct of the phenomena being studied, dependent on multiple factors (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Finding the right epistemology for a research question cannot be looked at as black or white. A researcher may find their perspectives and beliefs in knowledge to fall somewhere in between these two ends of the spectrum (Howe, 1992). Lin (1998), argues that adopting understanding of both epistemologies may be beneficial to research, eliminating biases which adhering strictly to one approach may incur.

By looking into the NG context itself, as well as the mainstream classroom in which such pupils attend, I was able to contrast the two different realities in which a child experiences the school context, as well as understand the ways in which all pupils are being nurtured on the mainstream level. The nature of the phenomena which I am exploring leans more closely to the anti-positivist/interpretivist perspective of epistemology as it does not aim to unravel an ultimate truth which we can say is true for all individuals who attend NGs (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Rather it seeks to help us comprehend the multiple and complex notions of the ways in which a NG works, how it is benefitting individual pupils as well as the challenges which are currently faced; taking into consideration that these aspects may be completely

unique to each individual. It also includes the different perspectives of people who are in some way related to creating this social construct, affecting our understanding of it thereof. Adhering solely to a scientific way of looking at the lives of humans ignores the key understanding that humans can create their own reality involving their own interests, morals, beliefs, attitudes, personalities and stories which are infinitely intertwined with the realities of those around them and the contexts they find themselves in (Biesta, 2007). Creating a scientific theory which is known to be true to all pupils struggling with social and emotional behavioural difficulties may have proven rather difficult without carefully analysing each and every contributing factor (Greene, 2016). For this reason, I am not searching for a set standard of knowledge or a rule of thumb which could be applied to all NG settings, I am simply seeking to improve understanding and use it in a way which could eventually lead to improvements to what is already in place.

It is for this reason that I am approaching my research with a non-positivistic approach, allowing teachers, NG staff and parents to voice their everyday realities within their context, giving them freedom to express their opinions, concerns and beliefs which may be unique to them and the particular school in which the study took place. Unfortunately, the majority of available research does not seek to ask questions as to whether or not NG provisions uphold to inclusive practices and whether the same principles could be applied to the mainstream setting. This is to not only help improve the lives of students with S.E.B.D but also other children in the classroom.

Having said that my central stance gives importance to the individual experience, I have also used information acquired from the study to interpret the practices in place and critically analyse support practices in a way which can be

generalized to the mainstream setting. My research questions and the knowledge I seek to acquire, does not entirely conform with one specific epistemological paradigm; adopting beliefs from social constructionism, interpretivism and critical notions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

3.3. Research Methodologies

There are essentially three main types of research methodologies used in educational research, being: quantitative, qualitative and a combined mixture of the two known as mixed methodology (Langbrdige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Before going into the specific methodology used for this study, I shall first explore the merits and limitations of the three options.

"Quantitative researchers believe in an objective world where scientific methods are used to represent, measure, predict, and explain causal relationships among key variables" (Saracho, 2017, p. 15). Positivist approaches and scientific methods of research have dominated the social and natural sciences in past years; carrying the belief amongst many researchers that quantitative research and randomized controlled trails are the only methods which lead us to causation and the possibility for advancements in education (Maxwell, 2012). Quantitative research is characterized by tools which adhere to empirical research using experimental methods and structured questionnaires which aim to elicit an objective reality. It is seen as dominant because of its tendency to be more precise in measuring data which can be generalized to other contexts and larger populations (Langbrdige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Many practitioners and educators however have criticized this method of research as it fails to recognize the unique complexity of individuals found in social settings such as schools. Much debate over the scientific-based

approach has initiated an alternative way of conducting research, which places value on subjectivity and the relevance of contexts in relation to phenomena concerning human nature (Bryman, 1984).

Qualitative research generally focuses on text, language and meaning of subjective experiences which individuals may be going through with regards to a phenomenon in question. Collection of data usually involves a much smaller number of people participating in semi-structured or unstructured interviews which are then investigated in-depth to originate meaning from individual accounts (Langbrdige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). The nature of qualitative research is in a sense much more flexible and open-ended, allowing for the subject to express their reality freely and often leading to un-expected understandings of individuals (Saracho, 2017). Despite qualitative research seeming to be a very enlightened and new-age approach, many still question how reliable or valid information acquired from such research is. With the rigid expectation of researchers to conform to either quantitative or qualitative methods, researchers began to realise the need for combining both approaches (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007); satisfying more widespread criteria (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

The third research paradigm being mixed methodology, does not aim to replace qualitative and quantitative research methods, rather it tries to minimize the weaknesses and build on the strengths of both methodologies. Mixed methodologies aim to keep the main research question in mind by not adhering to one specific methodology and using the best tools to measure and analyse the research question (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods "recognizes the existences and importance of the natural or physical world that includes language,

culture, human institutions and subjective thoughts" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18).

Some research questions may benefit from both qualitative and quantitative measures, as the researcher may feel that the phenomena at hand would benefit from exploring both the objective natural side of things as well as the subjective experience of people within a specific context (Pagán-Maldonado & Ponce, 2015).

3.4. Chosen Methodology & Research Design

As my research question heavily depends on the social construct of individuals and the context in which these individuals find themselves in, I could safely assume that my research question not only leaned towards an interpretivist epistemology but also required a qualitative method of research; more specifically, an ethnographic one (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). One of the main reasons that an ethnographic style of research was chosen for this study is because a large part of the data which I planned to gather fell within the actual context of the mainstream classroom and the NG itself. This conforms with ethnographic concepts as it requires using naturalistic settings as tools, moving away from controlled settings (Jeffrey & Troman , 2004). Since much of ethnographic research takes on a holistic approach involving as many different stakeholders related to the phenomena as possible (Wilson, 1977), I too chose this method to create a comprehensive picture of the current situation in a Maltese school; including perspectives of not only pupils involved but also teachers, NG staff as well as parents. I believe that only by allowing individuals to provide their own meaning to the social setting they find themselves in and observing them within that setting, can one formulate a clear picture of the context as a whole. As my study involved observing students and

educators within context, patterns found in student-educator interactions are described within this study, providing an 'insider account' and giving meaning to the multiple experiences found within the classroom (Greene & Hogan, 2005). Using different tools and acquiring different perspectives helps us to identify habits and structure, drawing a picture of daily life within an educational setting (Korn & Watras, 2009).

3.4.1. Data Collection and Research Tools

Ethnographic researchers can choose to collect data in a number of ways and are not restricted by one specific method of data collection; rather it is seen as relatively normal to use multiple data collection tools, in order to use the research tool which is seen as most suitable for its particular purpose (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Since ethnographic research is characterized by the researcher entering the world of subjects, observations are perhaps one of the most common techniques used in this type of research where the researcher is all eyes and ears to the processes and interactions which take place in a localized setting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In this study observations were carried within both the NG as well as the mainstream class of a Year 1 classroom, where I observed both pupils and educators interacting and learning. Throughout observations with pupils no audio-recording was taken, and data was only collected in the form of written field notes which were taken *in situ* or at some point after the observation. To increase the validity and value of data, meticulous care was taken to make sure to jot down detailed reports or field notes of what was observed (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The observational period took place over two months, ensuring enough time to achieve a good sense of rapport and trust with students and educators as well as observing a degree of progression over time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Observations are often commonly accompanied with a set of semi-structured interviews which usually make use of open-ended questioning techniques, allowing the participant to be flexible in their responses and leading the direction of the interview. Semi-structured interviews are useful in providing the participants with an opportunity to expand further on that which is being observed and giving their own personal 'present construct' of events and experiences (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008). For the purpose of this study, a number of interviews were conducted with concerned adults in order to achieve triangulated accounts of the phenomenon at question (Jeffrey & Troman , 2004). One interview was conducted with the class teacher of the mainstream class observed, as well as one interview with a NT, and finally one interview with a parent whom has a child attending the NG. Each interview took approximately an hour long and had a common aim of achieving the different individual perspectives held regarding the NG and nurturing strategies. In order to strengthen the value of the research argument; a supplementary interview with the NT at the school where my teaching practicum took place, was also arranged.   This was done in order to gain an additional perspective on the NGs potential towards becoming 'a whole school approach', since it was identified that the NG practices within this school varied significantly to the studied participatory school. For the purpose of transcriptions and analysis of data further on in the study, interviews were audio recorded with the consent of participants.

Finally, I wish to highlight the importance of on-going informal ethnographic conversations in a naturalistic type research. Throughout observations I worked on eliminating the image of 'stranger' with pupils and educators in order to hold natural day to day conversations with participants. Maintaining a relationship of mutual care and respect towards participants is a key element in deriving accurate and detailed

information from the participants without influencing or changing their daily activities, behaviours or social interactions (Shagrir, 2017).

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study due to logistical elements imposed by my university studies. The reason for choosing such a sampling method is related to: location, accessibility, availability of subjects and most importantly the theory behind the research question itself. Purposive sampling which is often used with ethnographic type research relies on the generation of theory, which in-turn directs the researcher to contact participants with a particular intent in mind (Wellington, 2000).   In this case random sampling was not feasible due to time constraints therefore, this particular school was chosen as it had a NG class which operated on the particular day which I could attend. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants; based on the belief that each person related to the phenomenon may provide unique and valuable accounts which will enrich the study (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014).   Due to the limited number of students who attend NGs in each school, it was only possible to observe and collect data regarding one child within both the NG and mainstream class. However, the in-depth nature of the study still unraveled valuable information related to the provision. The main research question does not focus on the different experiences of pupils, rather it aims to question the structure and practices which are in place and their effectivity; therefore, one pupil and multiple stakeholders was considered sufficient in providing this information.

3.5. Ethical Principles & Access

When conducting research in education, one will most likely face a number of ethical issues and moral reflections, which must be considered in order to ensure

that participants are respected and cared for, evading any emotional or physical damage which may be incurred through their participation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). One of the most obvious issues concerned with educational research is the involvement and participation of human subjects and more particularly the contribution of children as subjects of research. Although the term 'ethics' can be rather ambiguous in its definition, all researchers would agree that the implementation of ethical procedures throughout research is vital in maintaining standards and dignity of the participants (Mcniff, 2016).

Before gaining consent/assent from parents and children involved in the study, it was necessary to first gain access within the educational system and school itself. Gatekeepers including: the college principal, head of school, service manager and teachers were contacted and informed about the details of the study as well as what participation was required should they choose to allow the study to take-place. This step in the study was vital in ensuring positive research engagement through honesty and openness (Wellington, 2000).

3.5.1. Gaining Consent from Adults

"Gaining informed consent is a procedure for ensuring that research participants understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur" (Social Research Association, 2003, p.28). As my research involved the participation of various adults, namely, NG staff, teacher and parents of children attending NGs, it was necessary to obtain informed consent from all stakeholders. When obtaining consent there are three main principles to keep in mind, the first being to ensure that all participants are given detailed information on exactly what they are consenting to and what their

participation entails. The second principle involves making sure that participants are aware that their participation is in no way obligatory and they are taking part on a voluntary basis whereby they can choose to withdraw at any point in time throughout the study. Finally, is the more complex notion of ensuring that participants are able to comprehend the information given to them in a way that they are able to make a fully informed decision in which they are aware of all their rights (Abed, 2014). For this reason, careful consideration was taken when preparing information letters and consent forms, by selecting the most appropriate information to provide each of the different participants, in order to avoid issues of stigmatization or compromising the validity of data acquired. Information related to voluntary participation and withdrawal as well as anonymity were clearly stated in each document presented to all stakeholders to ensure compliance with ethical principles. Due to the fact that in Malta we have two National languages including Maltese and English, translations were also provided for all documents given to parents and children to guarantee comprehension of information.

3.5.2. Gaining Parent Consent and Child Assent

In order to achieve a full account of the experience of children attending NGs and mainstream classes, it was vital to include children as part of my research in order to give a voice to children and an opportunity to express things which matter to them (Thomas, 2001). Children are considered to be a vulnerable group especially considering that some pupils who participated in the study may have been experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties. Such students may have already had instances of emotional distress within their personal and academic lives, therefore care was taken to not further any sufferings (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). Ethical consideration with children is particularly significant when conducting

research as many times minors may not be able to comprehend the details of the study and the entailment of their participation (Thomas, 2001) In order to lessen such risks it is essential to firstly achieve parental/guardian consent through informing them of their child's participation and then follow up by obtaining child assent from the students (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Literature suggests that researchers should include children in the decision-making process together with their parents or guardians in order to give empowerment to the child to take their own decisions (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).   By providing children with the opportunity to give assent to participation, a researcher is also allowing a child to dissent, showing respect to the child by giving them the option to opt out of the study (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015).   It is for this reason that I did not adopt a passive stance in child participation and involved them fully in the process, by presenting them with an information letter and assent form which was age-appropriate and refrained from including information which may incur stigmatization of children who attend NGs (Dockett & Perry, 2011). Care was also taken to only collect data which was related to the research question, to avoid unnecessary data being collected about the child (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015).

3.5.3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Another highly important ethical issue is the need to consider the aspect of confidentiality and anonymity when involving human subjects in research for both adults and minors. In most cases literature would agree that revealing any kind of personal information and identity related to the participant may expose the participants to risk or emotional damage. Participants may also refrain from fully disclosing their story, opinions or experiences for fear of being judged by their community or society, should they think that people will trace information back to

them (Wiles, Crow, Health, & Charles, 2008). In order to conform to ethical practices attention was given throughout the research to eliminate any revealing characteristics from the data including names, school name and any other personal information by using pseudonyms and simply omitting any sensitive or personal data.

3.6. Field Relationships, Field Roles & Ending of Research

As one can note from the processes stated above, the stance taken throughout this study was an overt or open research, where-by all participants were aware of my role as researcher. In social research, we are aware that when entering a naturalistic setting as researchers we may lead participants to act differently than how they might normally act without the presence of an outsider (Wellington, 2000). However, we must always keep in mind that we are morally and ethically obliged to not deceive our participants in any way and for this reason covert participation was regarded as malpractice throughout this study (Burgess, 1984). Having this open culture throughout the research allowed for children and key stakeholders to understand that at any point throughout the research they could discuss any concerns or questions which they had. With regards to children, it was vital to reflect on what was best for these young pupils whilst also allowing them to speak and be listened to, without inflicting any risk on the child (International Save the Children Alliance, 2003).

When working with children it must be noted that children do not always verbally inform us on what they are thinking or feeling. They may express themselves through different mediums such as facial expressions or mannerisms. As a field researcher, it is important to place importance on such behaviours throughout the research, as they may be indicating if the child is feeling

uncomfortable or distressed as well as adding to the fruitfulness of the data (Dockett & Perry, 2011; Thomas, 2001). Signs and signals were considered throughout research to show sensitivity to the child and refrain from pushing them to speak if they did not wish to. A process assent approach was taken by reminding children on different occasions that their participation could be stopped at any point in time (Dockett & Perry, 2011; Morrow, 2008).

To ensure children felt comfortable throughout the study and to avoid pupils becoming influenced in their behaviour and conversations throughout observations, it was of utmost importance to display a sincere interest in the child (Thomas, 2001). A true ethnographic research allows the researcher to build a relationship which is grounded on mutual trust and respect. "It is important to be friendly and open, empathic and above all 'straight' with children" (Thomas, 2001, p.108). This outlined the basis of my interactions as a field researcher with all participants, which allowed these individuals to communicate more openly with me and enabled me to capture moments in conversations which they wished to contribute on their own initiative.

3.7. Analytic Method

Through collecting an extensive amount of different forms of data from various sources, I was able to offer my own interpretation on the information which was acquired by bringing all different aspects together in order to achieve a more complex and vast meaning to the experiences and educational strategies being used. When analysing data we are seeking to create new and unexpected theories from the data as well as answer the initial hypothesis formulated prior to data collection (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Despite there being a vast number of analytic methods, which could have been used alongside my research, (Greene &

47

Hogan, 2005), I shall focus on Thematic Analysis [TA] and the reasons for choosing such an analytic method.

TA is unique in its flexibility and applicability to different research paradigms and frameworks. The main aim of TA is to extract themes from data which illustrate a shared idea, experience or perspective amongst participants. The goal is to organize data in such a way that can be easily interpreted and analysed and related to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2016). TA is not primarily focused on giving an accurate account and narrative of an individual experience as in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, rather it is concerned with the data being related to the main research questions and identifying patterns within the data. It does however also emphasize on the fact that un-expected occurrences or themes may arise throughout the study, which should also be given importance despite seeming irrelevant to the research question (Aronson, 1995). "The emphasis is on producing rigorous and high-quality analysis, TA has in-built procedures such as a two-stage review process (where candidate themes are reviewed against the coded data and the entire data-set)" (Clarke & Braun, 2016, p. 297).

The reason I chose to adopt a Thematic approach is because of its usefulness in exploring critical perspectives (Aronson, 1995). This especially concerns the aspect of my research question involving a critical element of the practices which are in place in NGs and whether they can be enhanced to include all pupils. This therefore has given me more freedom to use the data to develop my own perspectives and theory of the matter whilst still maintaining the value of the experiences and perspectives of the participants. It was essential to extract themes across the different forms of data which would enlighten us on the current situation which children, parents and educational staff face in relation to the NG intiative. This

allowed me to compare findings to both local and international literature in order to identify differences which may be impeding a positive nurturing environment in the Maltese context. When analysing both interview transcriptions and observational fieldnotes, the coding procedure first involved the extraction of relevant data to the research question. A list of potential categories was first devised through the identification of patterns across different data forms, which were then further grouped as sub-themes under main themes. In order to remain true to the data and the experience of participants, unexpected themes were also given relevance within this research.

3.8. Conclusion

With this methodology chapter, I hope to have highlighted key elements to my research, including basic philosophical assumptions all the way through to logistical and ethical concerns as well as the tools used to collect data and derive conclusions from research. It was especially important for me to select a correct methodology and take care of minute details at planning stage, in order to create a solid foundation for this study, whilst always considering the importance of genuinely caring for participants and their well-being.

Chapter 4: Contextualising the Nurture Group Placement: The School Setting and its Policy Implementation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a profile of the child who is experiencing the NG placement. It gives as a description of the school, mainstream class and NG contexts at Springfield College Primary School A. Nurturing policies and structures are presented through the personal accounts, perspectives and attitudes towards challenging behaviour and the NG provision of key stakeholders in the setting. Finally, practices related to the involvement and communication of parents with the school, together with staff collaboration will be outlined. Data presented is taken from both ethnographic observations and conversations as well as interviews with key stakeholders including: the child's parents, mainstream teacher and Nurture Teacher [NT]. Pseudonyms will be used throughout to maintain the anonymity of all participants within the study.

4.2. Child Profile

Mark is a five-year-old boy who is currently in Year 1, Springfield College Primary School A, a school in the north of Malta. After spending some time with him, it became immediately apparent that Mark is a very energetic, caring and intelligent young boy. His intelligence shines through, as he often finishes his work ahead of his peers, participates in class enthusiastically and answers many questions posed by teachers correctly, when others in his class may still find the same concepts puzzling.

Many pupils struggle to keep up with the dictation words and get frustrated. Mark, however, manages to get all the words down correctly and finished his work quickly. (Fieldnotes, Mainstream Class, 17th January 18)

As a 5-year-old boy born in July Mark is placed within a class where the majority of pupils are of similar age range; those born between May and September. The fact that he is not amongst the oldest of his grade yet sails through the curriculum, indicates further that Mark is clearly bright for his age.

After discussing certain issues with the SMT [School Management Team], it was discovered that Mark is in the process of being statemented to have a shared LSA [Learning Support Assistant] and was recently diagnosed with ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] by an educational psychologist. Even though his statementing application was submitted in October of 2017, at the beginning of the scholastic year, the school is still waiting to hear form the Statementing Board. In brief, his report states that Mark struggles with inattention, hyperactivity and antisocial behaviour.

Mark does indeed display a number of challenging behaviours which shall be discussed further in the next chapter. Most significantly, Mark appears to struggle in social aspects of school life, finding it difficult to make friends and understand appropriate social dynamics. Mark's parents attributed this to the fact that he is an only child, having no siblings or cousins of similar age whom he can play and socialize with after school.

"Hu mdorri tifel waħdu, hu tifel waħdu, m'għandux kuġini, dejjem mal-kbar. Allura tant kemm jiġi over excited dat-tifel li he overdoes it" (Mother, Interview, 16th January 2018).

Despite Mark presenting a number of social and behavioural challenges at school, it would appear that it is not affecting him academically in any way; most of the time Mark appears bored, needing more challenging academic work to keep him stimulated. Mark's mother clearly expresses her concern for this aspect of Mark's school life below,

> "*Qiegħda ninnutah qed jiġi bored. Qed jiġi bored. When he is happy, he obeys to be honest ta'"* (Mother, Interview, 16th January, 18).

Mark's mainstream teacher also depicts such traits with the following statements.

> *"Hu enerġetiku ħafna, qisu ma jafx x'se jaqbad jagħmel fil-klassi"*
>
> *"Hu jlaħħaq kieku. Hu bravu. Intellectually mhux taffettwah"*
>
> (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

Although Mark struggles socially, he has displayed a number of occasions where he truly wishes to integrate with others and make friends. He longs to communicate with others and form positive social relationships with his peers when he is allowed to.

> *Mark sees another boy sitting on the sofa instead of the carpet and now Mark asks if he can also go on the sofa next to his peer. (Fieldnotes, NG, 26th January 18)*
>
> *One boy brings a book with him to the NG, and Mark asks the boy to come and sit down next to him and bring the book with him. (Fieldnotes, NG, 26th January, 18)*

Mark begun attending the NG at the beginning of the scholastic year, just a few months before fieldwork observations commenced. It is unclear as to whether Mark would be considered 'gifted' or not; however, he is definitely beginning to show traits of a 'gifted' pupil (Honeck, 2012).

4.3. The School Context

Springfield College Primary A, is a relatively large state school, housing between five to six classes per grade with a total of 680 pupils. Grades range from Kinder 1 to Year 3, holding about 32 classes within the school in total. Primary School A and B, although considered separate establishments and run by different heads of school are still connected as one building. Certain facilities, one of them being the NG class and staff, are shared between both schools. This also means that the NG staff have a large load on their shoulders, needing to divide their time between both schools. The NG in this school was set up around seven to eight years ago and has been in the hands of NG teacher, Ms.Melanie for the last three years, together with the Nurture Assistant (NA), Ms.Rosalie.

4.4. The Class Context

Mark's mainstream class is spacious in size, having 18 pupils within in it and plenty of room to move about at the front of the classroom. The class is taught by teacher Ms.Rebecca, a qualified primary teacher with over 15 years of teaching experience, in collaboration with one LSA, Ms.Fiona. Ms.Fiona is a shared LSA providing support to two other pupils in class, Mark is not yet entitled to support from an LSA. Saying this however, Ms.Fiona appears to take on more of Teacher's Assistant approach, aiding the teacher as well as all pupils not solely the two pupils allocated, when needed. Mark's mainstream class also has 3 peripatetic teachers who teach; Music, Art and Physical Education (P.E.) lessons. For Music and P.E. lessons pupils are taken out of their mainstream classroom and therefore, their mainstream teacher is not present during these two lessons.

The classroom layout consists of two long group tables where pupils sit together in class. Despite having this group organization within the class, there was the re-occurring exception that Mark had his own desk to the front of the classroom all by himself. This aspect of Mark's reality within his classroom shall be discussed further in the next chapter. Apart from a few charts containing the letters of the alphabet as well as some of the children's art work, there was not much material displayed on the walls for pupils to refer to. This not only gave a dull impression of the classroom but also indicated that creating a positive learning environment was not a priority in this Year 1 classroom.

Mark's mainstream teacher often resorted to scolding and shouting as a consequence for misbehaviour, displaying a rather hostile discipline philosophy. She also believed in isolating Mark from the rest of his peers as a measure to control his behaviour.

4.5. Nurturing Policies and the Nurture Group

On a national level the nurturing policies aim to follow Malta's inclusion policies by placing nurture groups within mainstream schools which run on a part-time basis (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). This was indeed the case within Springfield Primary School A, as the NG class resides in the same building as the mainstream classrooms and pupils are taken out for two, 90-minute sessions per week.

As is the case with NGs in England, NG staff in Malta consist of one NT and one NA, taking on between 6-12 pupils in one session (Bennathan, 1997). The NG in the fieldwork school which I observed had eight pupils attending each session. In a supplementary interview with a NT in another school who is herself involved in

54

induction training, it was stated that in Malta, NTs do not technically require any additional specific training.

> *"The post does not ask me to have particular training. We need to be a B.Ed. teacher and have five years of teaching experience, but then we have monthly meetings with our Service Manager. Also they provide us different support, I must say, ranging from stress, from how we assess profiles. So every month is a different topic. We also have an induction course". (Nurture Teacher, School 2, 17th April, 18)*

Currently, it appears that no formal qualification or training related to special education or psychology is required for one to become enrolled in such a position in Malta. It cannot be established whether the person/s described as Service Managers have special qualifications themselves.

The NG class in Springfield Primary A has a homely feeling to it; it has a large round table at the front of the class, a lounge area with a carpet and sofa in the centre, as well as a playing area with a vast number of toys. In contrast with international literature where pupils are invited to prepare and eat breakfast together, (Billington, 2012), the NG class observed in Springfield Primary A, has no such facilities. Breakfast and cooking activities were hence not included in the nurture programme which the NT gives an explanation for.

> *"And now I remember when it started they used to prepare them for breakfast, but since it has been replaced in school with the breakfast club, it has been replaced".*
> *(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)*

4.6. Structure and Implementation

The NG within this school is set up to offer the implementation of nurturing sessions with the intention of improving social and emotional literacy for young pupils

with SEBD. Sessions are scheduled for the same time each week; often pupils miss out on the same academic and non-academic lessons each week unless the mainstream teacher decides to shuffle his/her lessons to suit the child's right to the full academic curriculum. This was not the case in Mark's mainstream class. The NT and mainstream teacher presented two contrasting realities during interviews.

> *"The teacher tries to put it into the timetable so that she/he won't miss any academic work". (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)*

> *"Jiena l-ebda timetable ma tiddependi fuqi. Lanqas tan-NG, dik jagħtuhielna l-SMT.   Jiġifieri jien ma jkollix ċans inċaqlaqha".   (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)*

In this fundamental sense the services offered in the school are very different to the intended classic Boxall NG which states that pupils should attend their nurture group class for four times per week, during which they work on the same academic curriculum as their peers, simply in a specialized setting (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). During a two-month period of observation within this NG, no session included any teaching or learning related to mainstream curricular topics or tasks.   This was confirmed during an interview with the NT in the following extract:

> *"There is no academic learning. This is not a curriculum. Our philosophy here is to get them to the mainstream. To deal with emotions. Once the emotions are settled down they will be able to continue academically" (Nurture Teacher, Interview 26th January 18)*

4.7. Allocation to NG

During the fieldwork period, referral procedures of the school were revised with the NT in order to understand the basis behind the decision to place a pupil within this provision. The NT explained how after a teacher or other member of staff has referred a child, NG staff then usually go into the mainstream class to observe

the child and his/her behaviour in order to understand his/her needs better and whether or not the provision would be beneficial for the child.

> *"The nurture teacher would observe the child in the class room, do a report, send the parent of the child a Consent Form . We can't accept a child without a Consent Form." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)*

A Boxall profile is then filled out by the mainstream teacher, to determine the child's strengths and challenges which eventually leads NG staff to form targets for the child and an Individualised Learning Program (ILP) related solely to emotional and social learning. When asked about the reason behind handing out the form to the mainstream teacher to fill out, the NT indirectly hinted that NTs do not have enough time to fill it out themselves.

> **NT:** *…then there is the Boxall Profile that is filled out by the teacher.*
>
> **Researcher:** *When is this done? Before or after referral?*
>
> **NT:** *Usually after the consent form. Because what is the use of paying up and doing the whole process. Have you seen how long this form is?*
>
> (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

The NT's use of the phrase 'paying up' refers to mainstream teacher's responsibilities to fill out the Boxall profile and her perceptions of it being a time-consuming and laborious task.   A Boxall Profile is not filled in unless the school has already received consent from the parents for their child to attend the NG. Parents are given a letter explaining what the NG is all about; outlining the underlying reasons for their child 'needing' to attend the NG.

> *"Mela bagħtuli nota kienu jiġifieri, u għalxiex kienu ir-raġunijiet...dik kienet kollox. Kitbuli pereżempju li Mark għandu bżonn minħabba emotions".*
> *(Mother, Interview, 16th January 2018)*

Ultimately, the final say is up to the parents/guardians with regards to whether their child attends the provision or not. However, it is interesting that parents are supposed to make this decision with very little information handed to them at all. No meeting is set up with parents on referral point and there is no time for parents to express their concerns or share knowledge they have about their child.

> *"Jiġifieri hu beda jmur in-Nurture Group, imbagħad iltqajna wara, meta diġà beda jattendi." (Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)*

An ILP is devised purely on observations and the Boxall Profile which is filled out by the mainstream teacher, despite the knowledge that these responses may be rather subjective.

4.8. Attitudes to Challenging Behaviour

During interviews, key stakeholders each held their own distinct and individual perceptions of why particular pupils 'needed' to be enrolled to the NG provision. Some blamed the child, some blamed the educational system and others blamed the parents. Each provided an account of what characteristics merited a placement in the NG, which will be discussed below.

4.8.1. Who is to blame?

Upon discussing the reasons for referring pupils to the NG with Mark's mainstream teacher, the notion of parents lacking parental skills and being the culprits of pupils' challenges and maladaptation to the school setting was clearly depicted in the following extract.

> *"Jkun hemm ħafna negliġenza d-dar...Ġieli anke ċertu basic skills pereżempju lanqas ikollhom, jibgħatuhom ġimgħa sħiħa bla pocket, jew ikollhom xi erba'*

lunchboxes fil-basket... tal-ġurnata ta' qabel ma jkunux qallawha.." (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th Febraury 18)

This implies that Mark's mainstream teacher has a stereotype of parents who are 'negligent', which then leads to prejudice of their children and a readiness to pathologize them. The NT rehearses the same argument by implying that societal changes have led to a drop in the quality of parenting skills and the formation of positive parent-child relationships, which has ultimately affected the child's social and emotional development.

> *"Problems at home are increasing and we can see the difference you know, parents lack parental skills."*

> *"Parents not having enough time, quality time with their children. We can see children coming for breakfast, at 7am for the breakfast club…and they stay at the after-school club. What quality time are parents giving to their children?*

(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

These accounts clearly depict the ways that parents/guardians are problematized in the school context, where maladaptation is not attributed to the educational system and its approach, but rather to the society which exists outside of school walls.

Interestingly, Mark's parents gave a more holistic picture of the factors which may be contributing to the issues and challenges Mark faces. They show understanding that there may be a number of reasons which have led him to develop the characteristics of a pupil with SEBD. Firstly, Mark's parents openly admitted that they may not always know how to best handle their child's behaviour, attributing difficulties to both their child's characteristics as well as their own parenting skills.

> *"Hu ġie wara tmien snin. Il-Bambin tahulna fhimt, allura forsi ma nafux kif nitteckiljawh...għax hu jdejqek, jġibek ragħad."*

"Parental skills, you need it ifhem għax dan ħadd ma joħroġ parent tajjeb mal-ewwel. Meta jkollok tfal b'ċertu difficulties bħal m'hu Mark, essaċ mhux difficulties imma eħe, fejn tfal oħra tgħid 'ijwa oqgħod naqra kwiet'."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

Mark's parents also point out that the educational system and pedagogy may be failing their child as well as other pupils.

"Naf li hija impossibbli imma ċertu tfal kif tista' tipprova tpoġġihom bilqiegħda fuq desk"

 (Mother, Interview 16th January 18)

"It-tfal lanqas irriduhom suldati fil-klassi lanqas ta'"

"Jew hemm haġa oħra, t-tfal irriduhom kollha bir-remote control, jekk joqgħod naqra mqarreb, mela ADHD".

(Father, Interview, 16th January 18)

The above extracts clearly depict how Mark's parents believe that pupils' challenging behaviour which is within the normal limits of childhood behaviour, is being perceived as pathological when in fact it is not. They also imply that it is unfair to assume that all children can easily conform to the regimental routines of school life.

4.8.2. Why Resort to the NG?

Both the mainstream teacher and the NT gave a vague account of why they believed pupils needed to attend the NG, displaying an uncertainty in what characteristics warranted referral. The NT explained that the teacher is responsible for identifying if the child may be going through a challenging time and may therefore 'benefit' from the NG provision.

"If the teacher sees something crops up with the child and she thinks they will benefit from the NG...there could be an event, maybe separation, maybe we don't know what."

"We have to take everything into consideration. If these children are not settled, that's why the NG may help them psychologically, social, emotionally, behaviour." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18).

Mark's mainstream teacher on the other hand, more specifically identified challenging pupils as being ones who display aggressive outwardly behaviour.

"Pereżempju, jien normalment nirreferihom jew għax issawtu... Pereżempju Mark hu ma jafx ma jiġix jagħtik daqqa."

"Eħe hemm tfal li tant kemm għandhom problemi u aggressivi. Lanqas jafu x'jiġifieri li tgħix ġo klassi!" (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

Such statements imply that the mainstream classroom is not a space suited for pupils with antisocial tendencies, and therefore must be dealt with elsewhere.

When Mark's parents were asked about their decision to consent to their child attending the NG, their reactions were positive. They craved any extra help they could get in attempting to solve Mark's social issues at school, as is depicted below.

"Jiġifieri for me in-NG kienet bonus, jien hekk ħadtha, issa jekk ħadtha ħażin ma nafx....u anke jekk forsi ċertu emotions aħna ma nistgħux noħorġuhomlu, forsi in-NG jistgħu jaraw ċertu affarijiet li they can tackle. Ma rajt xejn negattiv."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

Mark's parents also express how they feel their child lacks awareness in social skills and appropriate social behaviour. They openly admit that their child has antisocial

and impulsive tendencies which they wish to solve, hence resorting to the NG for help.

" U taf x'inhi, jekk xi ħadd jimbuttah, hawn min joqgħod jaħseb biex ma jidħolx fiha, hu jekk xi ħadd jimbuttah, Mark jimbuttah lura mill-ewwel."

(Father, Interview, 16th January 18)

"Ma jafx x'inhu tajjeb u x'inhu ħażin, dak il-ħin jagħmel dak li jagħtih moħħu."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January18)

Although Mark's parents understand that their child's behaviour is an issue, they also express their heartfelt concern for their son not having positive friendships at school and how they feel their son genuinely wishes to connect with his peers.

"l-istess problema fil-klassi fhimt, għax qiegħed jgħidilna: 'ħadd ma jrid ipinġi miegħi mummy...ngħidlu: 'Imma għaliex sabiħ? X'nistgħu nagħmlu biex forsi nirranġaw is-sitwazzjoni?'"

"Mhux għax ikun irrid iddejjaqhom. Ma jafx jikkontrolla l-emozzjonijiet, eżempju, ma jafx isaqsi: 'Nistgħu npinġu flimkien?', le jaqbad jeħdilhom il-ktieb u jpinġilhom."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

It is evident that Mark's parents just want the best for their child and only wish that he becomes positively integrated with the rest of his mainstream peers and school. The NG is perceived as a solution in hope that professionals can better assist Mark in developing more positive social understandings and aid in reducing behaviour that might be turning away his peers.

4.9. The Nurture Group 'Solution'

Key stakeholders had different opinions regarding how effective they thought the NG is in tackling social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All interviewees believed in resorting to the NG when a child's needs 'could not' be catered for within the mainstream class however, there were surprisingly different views regarding whether the NG could 'solve' the 'problem'.

4.9.1. Perceptions of Effectivity and Relapse

The mainstream teacher explains that she does not always believe the NG yields positive results with all pupils. She argues that taking pupils out for a few hours a week is not enough time to tackle the severity of some pupils' challenges.

"Hemm tfal li tranġaw imma hemm tfal li marru għalxejn. Hemm tfal li tkun ġejja mil-karattru tagħhom. Tant kemm hemm problemi li dawn it-two jew three hours li jagħmlu fil-ġimgħa magħhom mhux biżżejjed."
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

She also suggested that the efficacy of the programme also depended on the NT implementing it and how creative or inventive she/he is.

"Nemmen li jitgħallmu, imma skond il-persuna, kemm inti kreattivi inti u kemm tagħmillha interessanti"
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

The NT on the other hand provides a contradictory perception towards the efficacy of the programme and whether pupils are benefitting from it or not. She highlights that she has seen pupils improving after they have attended for a while. However, she also states that many show signs of relapse after the summer holidays, which then sees them back to the NG once again.

"We have seen changes in children that have been attending, this is their third year now with us and they have improved a lot. It is satisfaction for us, they have improved, but then you know what happens, they go back home. The support we give them, after the holidays we have to start again."

(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

With most of the literature recommending that pupils attend the NG for a maximum of three/four scholastic terms, it is surprising that pupils are still attending after three years, which ultimately leads one to question the programme's efficacy. The NT shows less certainty towards the benefits and efficacy of the NG and implies that at times pupils' behaviour may begin to improve due to maturation, which suggests that year 1 pupils may be too young to 'label' with SEBD.

"Sometimes there is no change. Sometimes something happens, they are growing up and their behaviour drops." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

The NT also indicates that NG staff do not always have the power to aid pupils; implying that ultimately the interest in improving has to come from the child.

"It depends, something which we don't have control over. It doesn't depend on us as well. It depends on the child and what they are going through and how ready they are to change as well." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

When it came to Mark's parents speaking about the effectiveness of the NG, although they could see an improvement in their child, they were unsure as to what had initiated the change.

Father: *Minn erba' ġimgħat l'hawn, ijwa ta' kien hemm differenza, id-differenza rajnieha.*

Mother: *Issa minn xiex ma nafux.*

Father: *Jew għadda minn fażi, jew beda jikber forsi.*

Mark's parents also felt that Mark had begun to develop increased consciousness related to antisocial behaviour, which they attributed to social and emotional learning taking place within the NG.

"Ġie aktar konxju, ġie aktar konxju li pereżempju jekk tkellmu fuq bullying, mhux għax hu rrid ikun bully imma jekk tqabbiżielu u jimbuttak..tal-inqas jagħmilha dak il-ħin imma imbagħad wara jirrealizza li għamel xi ħaġa ħażina."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

4.9.2. Reintegration Practices and Perceptions

Directly related to question of positive outcomes, is the rate at which pupils are being successfully reintegrated into their mainstream class and the practices or procedures involved in this aspect.   It was found that reintegration was not really given urgency within this school setting. The only official procedure related to reintegration was the filling in of the Boxall Profile at the end of the year, to assess whether pupils will be attending again the following year.

"At the end of the year, we just fill it up again and we will see if there has been any improvement. Sometimes we see that maybe some clusters still need to be worked on. So next year we start working on those clusters". (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

Although, it was stated that the ultimate goal of the NG is to reintegrate pupils back into their mainstream class, this was not really backed up, as is shown in the two following contrasting statements.

"Out intention is to reintegrate children back into into their mainstream class"

"It depends, we have children that started attending in Year 1 and are still attending in Year 6"

(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

When asked about how pupils are prepared to be reintegrated into their mainstream class, the NT's response lacked specifics, suggesting that procedures and processes are indeterminate and subjective.

"When we see they are ready and fit to go back to the class. They just accept it."

(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January)

Despite knowing that reintegration is a primary feature of the NG provision, the data suggests that Mark's parents were not aware of this aspect. In fact, to the contrary they were quite happy to see their child continue to attend the NG on a more regular basis.

"Jekk lilu tagħmillu l-ġid, lili ma tagħmillix differenza...jien għalija jista' jmur kuljum in-nurture"

(Mother, Interview, 16th Janurary 18)

This highlights how Mark's parents are accepting to anything which could potentially help their child's educational experience, but also displays a lack awareness towards the implications the NG may have.

4.10. Communication and Collaboration

Literature on NGs often highlights the significance of communication and collaboration with parents and staff, as a measure to ensure the success of the provision (Obiakor et al., 2012; Kirkbride, 2014). It was therefore, vital to identify the levels of communication practiced within the walls of Springfield College Primary A.

4.10.1 Parental Involvement and Support

It became clear at the end of my eight observation sessions that there was very little communication with parents of pupils who attend the NG in the school. Parents were not invited to come in and join any session, neither were they updated frequently with any improvements or challenges faced in sessions. The NG teacher did not believe that parents should be allowed into the nurture class, as in her belief, pupils' behaviour and interactions may be impacted by their parents' presence.

> *"I don't think it's a good thing for parents to join. Maybe a one off yes. Not even the LSA will come to the nurture class because if the children want to say something they won't be able to say it." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)*

The only time parents are officially invited to talk to the nurture staff is on Parents' Day, where they are invited to come in and see the nurture class as well as discuss any need which arises.

> *"We give them a paper, telling them we are present at the school and if there is the need to come to talk to us that they can" (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18).*

The nurture staff would arrange a meeting alongside the SMT and parents to discuss certain issues that cropped up from time to time; this was infrequent.

> *"If we think the need arises or else if the teacher feels that they need to talk to the mother of the child. We could call a meeting, we would discuss first what we are going to say and what the problems are".* (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January)

Contrary to the perspective of the school, parental involvement and support was a key feature in the interview carried out with Mark's parents, in which they expressed their wishes for greater support from the school to assist them in parenting skills and nurturing approaches.

"Jien nixtieq nkun naf jekk nista' nirranġa xi affarijiet, forsi nibda nagħmilha miegħu"

"Ħeq jiena ma mortx Università meta sirt mummy, jiġifieri inti ssir mummy and you don't have any guidance, you have to live day by day. Ikollok bżonn għajnuna inti ukoll, mhux it-tfal biss"

 (Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

Mark's mother also voiced her wish that there was greater communication with

Mark's mainstream teacher. She explains that she could assist Mark's teacher in

understanding her son's needs better through the recommendation of approaches.

"Nixtieq li hemm kommunikazzjoni bejnietna, bejn il-klassi pereżempju, għax anke jekk it-teacher mhux tara ċertu affarijiet. Ħa nitkellem fuq Mark, forsi jiena nista' ngħidilha, mhux ngħallimha, imma biex forsi joqgħod aħjar, forsi flok għamilt din, għamilt din."

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

4.10.2. Staff Collaboration

During interviews, the NT and mainstream teacher gave accounts of two

contrasting realities regarding the level of collaboration which takes place between

them. The NT had a more positive stance on communication between staff

members. However, she highlights the fact that no official meetings are set up to

discuss matters related to pupils who attend both their classes.

"One way or another we find the way to communicate. That's how we work here. If I see you in the corridor, I will say look I need to talk to you. We support each other."

"We keep in touch by word of mouth and if the need arises."

(Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

Mark's mainstream teacher however, held a more negative perception on the

levels of communication with current NG staff. She said that previous NG staff used

to keep her more updated on what topics of learning were taking place in the NG, which she saw as beneficial.

> *"It-teachers ta' qabilhom, kienu jagħtuna l-ischeme tagħhom. Monday għandna session u ħa nagħmlu hekk."*

> *"Qatt ma pereżempju jgħidulna ara qed naħdmu fuq hekk jew fuq hekk. U jien nħossni pastaża jekk insaqsiha...għax jien m'inix fuqhom"*

(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

Although disappointed with the lack of information given to her by NG staff, Mark's mainstream teacher claimed that she did not feel comfortable enough to approach them herself.

4.11. Conclusion

It was found that no official training in relation to special education is required for teachers to become enrolled in the NT position. Most significant to this research was the fact that no academic learning related to mainstream curriculum took place within the NG. In terms of structure and implementation; allocation to the NG is based solely on the perceptions of mainstream teachers and the Boxall Profile. School staff often pathologize parents, as being responsible for their child's maladaptation to the school setting, with little attention paid to teachers' characteristics, curriculum or pedagogy. Despite reintegration into the mainstream class being the main goal of the NG, reintegration procedures and processes were found to be lacking. Since the NG does not always result in successful reintegration, no conclusion can be reached on the success of the provision. Finally, communication and collaboration with parents and amongst staff themselves is scarce; there are no formal opportunities for discussion and the sharing of knowledge.
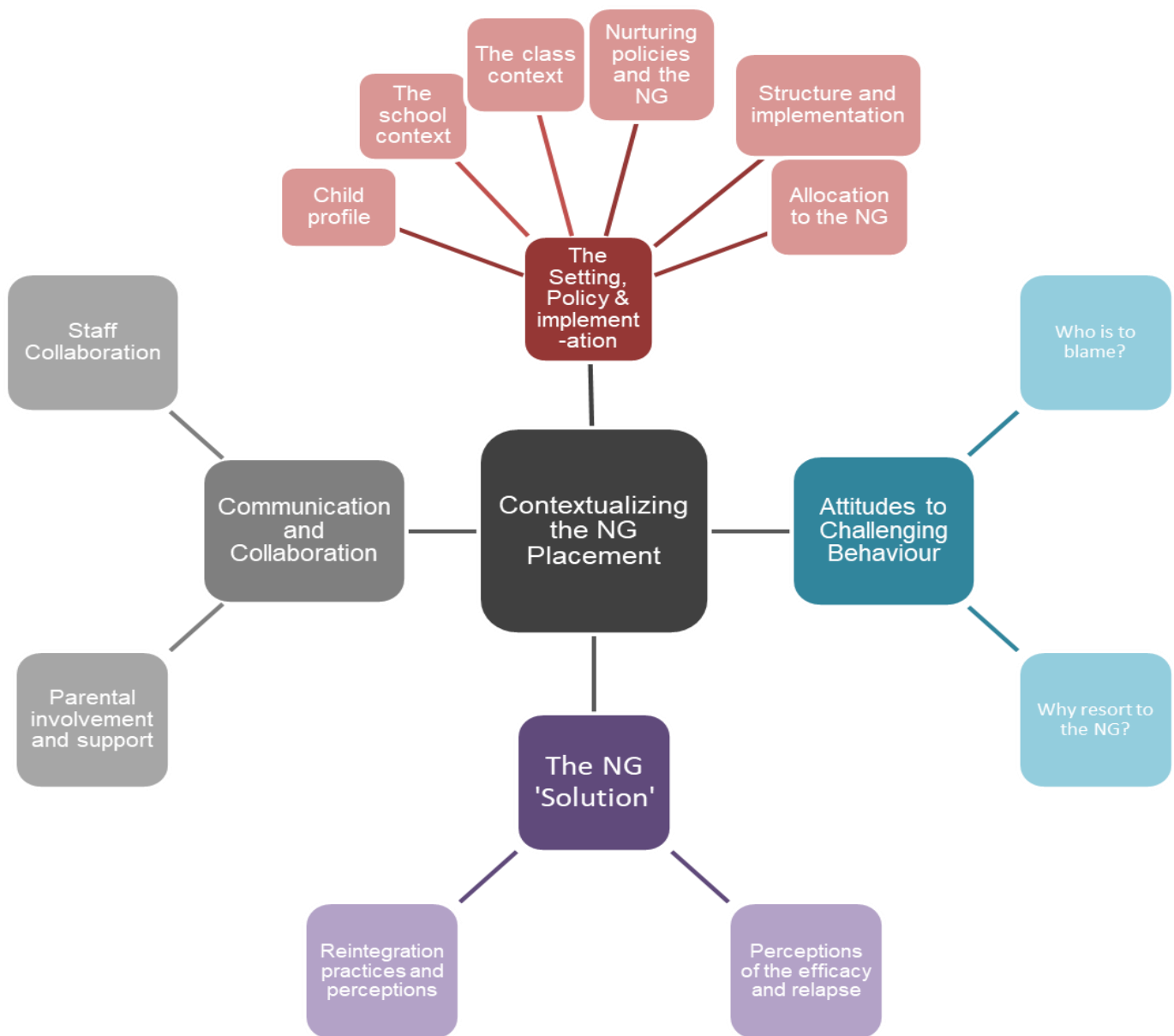
Figure 1: Contextualizing the NG Placement

Chapter 5: The Experience of 'Nurturing' in Different Classroom Contexts

5.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the ways in which a child is being 'nurtured' at Springfield College Primary A, it depicts Mark's reality, as being a child who has been characterised as one who struggles with SEBD and ADHD. This looks into the diverse pedagogies and approaches used, as well as the interactions which took place with adults and peers. Finally, behavioural characteristics and occurrences shall be unravelled together with identified areas for improvement.

5.2. Pedagogy and Approach Throughout Varying Contexts

After a short while observing Mark's mainstream and NG classrooms, it became clear that Mark experienced varying realities between these two contexts. It is believed that a large part of this was due to the different approaches, pedagogies and curricula which were used in both settings.

5.2.1. A Video & Colouring Pedagogy

In Mark's mainstream classroom one element which stood out the most was the sheer amount of videos which were used as tools for learning in supposedly 'academic' lessons. During the eight full days of lessons observed in the mainstream classroom, it became evident that many lessons were loaded with randomly selected educational videos related to religious education, literacy and numeracy. The teacher often skipped from one video to another, without making any connection to content or skills to be learnt. The following extracts are taken from fieldnotes of one observation day, during the timespan of about an hour.

71

Teacher is finding another video on the IWB related to maths and the numbers from 1-10.

The teacher then chooses another video song to watch, with the difference that the video goes over the numbers 1-20 this time.

Now the teacher plays yet another song related to days of the week.

The 5th song is played related to months of the year.

(Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 19th January 18)

It became quickly evident that although initially intrigued by the videos chosen, pupils soon became bored and fidgety, as videos were often quite long and were not followed by questions and written tasks or any motivating force to maintain attention.

The video is thirty minutes long and even though it is an animated religious video for kids, pupils appear bored and have begun to whisper amongst themselves. Mark is looking in his bag to find something to play with.
(Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 9th January 18)

The following extract perfectly depicts how this pedagogy may not be suited to the needs of all or any pupils within the class, with particular reference to Mark becoming uninterested in the lesson.

All pupils are a bit lost or tired of singing. Mark is bored of this song, and he walks back to his place by himself.

(Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 19th January 18)

There were only short occasions throughout the day where pupils participated in academic learning without the use of videos, which usually followed the pedagogy of the description below.

The teacher hands out their Maths books and instructs them to work individually. Using the IWB she projects a soft copy of the workbook page which they must work out. She quickly works out an example from each

exercise to show them what they must do. (Fieldnotes, Mainstream Class, 19th January 18)

A big part of the day in this mainstream class also involved pupils 'colouring in' between 'learning' time. When pupils finished their class work quickly as did Mark, they were immediately instructed to 'colour' on their drawing books.

Pupils are told to write and copy down their diary. The pupils who have finished may now colour again on their colouring book.

 (Fieldnotes, Mainstream Class, 6th February 18)

Those who are ready from their dictation and do not need extra help are instructed to colour, Mark colours happily alone at his usual front table.

(Fieldnotes, Mainstream Class, 17th January 18)

5.2.2. "Għalih qed tiġi boring."

Pupils were not given opportunity to work in pairs or groups despite being seated in a large group arrangement. Mark's mainstream teacher evidently favoured pupils working individually on every occasion I was there.   It is easy to see how this type of pedagogy may not be suited for a pupil with ADHD who needs constant stimulation, challenging work as well as opportunities to keep active and get out of his/her seat (Cooper & Cefai, 2013). In the interview, however, Mark's mainstream teacher did show her awareness towards Mark's needs and what measures could be taken to assist him.

"Naħseb li kieku hu għandu ċans jew jilgħab iktar, ħafna iktar activities, time-outs mill-klassi, jiġri ġirja, naħseb jgħinu naqra jikkalma"
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

Her justification for not being able to implement such strategies to assist Mark, was based on the fact that Mark did not have an LSA, who could contribute in providing a differentiated approach.

"Almenu jekk għandek LSA, tgħidlek: 'La tlesti dak, imbagħad niġru ġirja'...jekk nibagħtu barra fil-bitħa qed nissogra" (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February)

Mark's mother voiced her concern for the pedagogies and approaches which are being used in Mark's mainstream class, which she feels are not suitable for the needs of a child with ADHD and a high level of intelligence. Mark is ahead of the work being covered and finds the repetition and pace frustrating.

"Dawn it-tip ta' tfal flok jaħasra qegħdin nagħmlulhom il-ġid qegħdin nagħmlulhom il-ħsara...Jekk dan għalih mill-one sat-ten diġà jafhom, għalih qed tiġi boring. Agħtih xi ħaġa oħra ħa jitgħallem, ħudu x'imkien ħa jilgħab u jitgħallem, jitgħallem affarijiet differenti"

"Dawn it-tfal meta jkunu għadhom żgħar għaliex ma jagħlmuhomx differenti il-lessons? Issa għandek problema u m'għandekx, agħmilha iktar enjoyable il-ħaġa"
(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

5.2.3. Social and Emotional Learning in the NG

During our interview, the NT spoke about the multitude of social and emotional learning topics which are covered as part of the NG curriculum which she devises herself.

"Bullying, being responsible for behaviour, being respectful, listening is important. Being honest and self-control. Choices, sharing and caring. Identifying problems and being assertive. Keeping healthy." (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

A common introductory feature of the nurture group sessions was the practice of circle time and the expression of feelings. Pupils were given a name card with their name on it, which they would then stick on the whiteboard next to a picture of an emotion or feeling which corresponded to how they were feeling that day. They were then invited to sit in a circle, often going over the circle time rules first.

"Why do we use our ears? To listen. Why do we use our mouths? To talk. Why do we use our heads? To think. How do we use our hands? We keep them to ourselves."

(Fieldnotes, 19th January to 6th February 18)

Each pupil was then given a chance to discuss how they were feeling that day and why, as is shown in the following example.

Mark: *I am feeling bored!*

NT: *Why?*

Mark: *Because when I wake up in the morning, I didn't have time to eat today.*

NT: *Ahh, so you are not bored, you are hungry.*

When you wake up in the morning make sure to leave yourself enough time to have something to eat before you come to school. Maybe it would help to sleep a little earlier, so then it is easier to wake up.

(Fieldnotes,16th January 18)

The session then usually moved on to a social story delivered with tools such as a video or book. The topics covered throughout fieldwork included: bullying, assuming responsibility, as well as listening. One pupil showed that he did not particularly appreciate this part of the lesson as he put his hand up to his face in despair and passed the following comment: *"Telling all these long stories, oh my*

God!" (Nurture Pupil, Fieldnotes, 16th January 18). This depicts how Mark is not the only pupil who may be finding the content tedious.

Pupils were then invited to openly discuss questions posed by the teacher in relation to the story they had just read.

> **NT:** *How can we show respect to others?*
>
> **Mark:** *We do not hit each other and if we do it, we do not do it again.*
>
> **NT:** *Yes, that is important, and we must say sorry if we do hit someone.* (Fieldnotes, 26th January 18)

Throughout the sessions opportunity was taken to teach children about social dynamics such as allowing other children to talk, listening to others and not distracting one another. This aspect was emphasized throughout these weeks and it seems that the calm approach of the NT really invited children to take this information on, obeying many of her instructions and requests. Mark loved to participate in discussions about stories and often came up with very good ideas and interpretations related to the topic. In one particular lesson about responsibility, Mark points out that: *"It is our responsibility to obey in class".* (Mark, Fieldnotes, 17th January 18).

A guided meditation also took place at the end of one session helping pupils to relax and remain focused, as is described below.

> *Now the teacher tells pupils that they are going to close their eyes and that they are going to listen to some relaxing music. They have to try to imagine that they are in the most relaxing place they can think of, like the beach or on a mountain. (Fieldnotes, NG,31st January 18)*

Mark, in particular, found it difficult to sit still; however, he still seemed to enjoy the activity and went along with it as best as he could.

In the final session (6th February 18) a listening activity using drawing and colours was also included at the end of the lesson, which Mark particularly enjoyed. Others however, found it difficult to follow, which demonstrates Mark's developed ability to listen and integrate information.

> *The teacher gives out a picture to each pupil. She gives out instructions and the pupils have to colour in the parts as the teacher tells them to. It is an activity which allows her to identify who is listening to the instructions given.*

(Fieldnotes, NG,6th February 18)

Mark's mother also explains how she feels her child is positively integrating the information which is being covered in his NG class.

> *"Dejjem affarijiet pożittivi jgħidli u jkun jaf x'inhu jiġri. Jgħidli: 'qagħdna nitkellmu fuq bullying mummy.' Kollox jiftakar, jiġifieri hu qiegħed jieħu xi ħaġa minna."*

(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

This provides us with a positive outlook on the type of learning and approaches which are taking place in Mark's NG, which are perhaps more catered to his individual learning needs.

5.3.4. "Can we Play?"

The nurture session always ended with a 20-minute free playtime, where pupils were allowed to play with any toy they wished. This was evidently pupils' favourite part of the session, as they frequently asked about when it was time to play. In fact, I witnessed this aspect of the session becoming rather problematic, as very often pupils were distracted during emotional literacy learning, thinking about when the time would come that they would get to play.

Mark: *Meta ħa nilgħabu?*

Teacher: *Meta nlestu nilgħabu ta'.* (Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

Many pupils even appeared to grow attached to the NG because of this element, with certain pupils expressing that they would not like to go down to their class for break time and would rather stay in the nurture class to play. On one occasion, the NT even allowed for this happen.

> *It is now supposed to be break time and although some of the pupils' teachers have come to pick them up, some pupils have expressed that they would like to stay in their nurture class during break. The NT, assistant and class teachers all accept this.* *(Field notes, 26th January 18)*

Mark also mentioned that he loves going to the NG; playing time was his major incentive.

"Jien nħobb immur in-nurture...anke P.E. nħobb immur...Għax nieħu pjaċir nilgħab". (Mark, Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

The NT supports the fact that pupils wish to remain in their NG classroom, portraying the reasons for which they enjoy attending.

"If anything, they want to stay. The fact that they get out of the classroom, it's a change for them. (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

"When they come to play, they look forward to it, some of them ask, 'Are we going to play?'" (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

4.2.5. What has been lost?

From the NG sessions which were observed, no academic curriculum was ever included, which meant that any lessons taking place in Mark's mainstream class

were being missed. The only attempt the teacher made to keep Mark up to date with his mainstream peers is described below.

"Jekk ikunu n-nurture, fuq il-page niktbilhom 'Nurture', ħalli x'ħin jaraw il-workbook u tqelleb il-pages, tgħid 'Ara t-tifel tiegħi ma kienx hemm.'. Issa skond, issib ġenituri li jagħmluhom u ssib ġenituri li ma jagħmluhomlhomx."
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

Parents are therefore required to take on the teacher role at home, irrespective of their capacity to do this.

On a more positive note, one exception was made to attempt to reduce the level of 'opportunity cost' for Mark. On days when Mark's class had a physical education [P.E] lesson which clashed with the NG time, Mark was allowed to go to the P.E. lesson and then join his NG late.

> *The first lesson is P.E. and even though Mark also has his NG session, he is not made to miss P.E. as his teacher has expressed that it is a vital lesson for him which he should not lose out on.* (Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

This particular peripatetic teacher seemed to be aware and considerate of Mark's individual needs, ensuring that he did not miss out on a lesson which would especially benefit a pupil who would do well to use up a bit of energy. This also ensured that Mark was not missing out on the opportunity to integrate with his mainstream peers.

In one particular NG session with Mark, I discovered another disappointing occurrence when the NT put up a video about bullying which Mark stated he had already watched.

Mark: *Din mhux diġà għamilniha?*

NT: *Ee, jista' jkun għax forsi għamiltha mal-klassi l-oħra.*   (Fieldnotes, 26th January 18)

The NT felt the need to explain to me why this was so,

"He may have joined another group since his teacher wasn't here this week, so they did it to relieve him from the other teacher".   (Nurture Teacher, Fieldnotes, 26th January 18)

In this episode Mark had been removed from his class in order to not 'further burden' the supply teacher who was allocated pupils from Mark's class. He was then required to watch the same video again and cover the same material he had done with a different group to his own. Mark's objection to this indicates that the repetition of material and activities adds to the tedium he experiences.

Mark's mainstream teacher also expresses how removing challenging pupils from the classroom is seen as a viable solution to control behaviour and lessen distractions of other pupils.

"Bħal li għandi din s-sena, nibgħathom in-nurture, għax tgħidx kemm ntella' xogħol... għax ma jkollix noqgħod insikket. Imma minn-naħa l-oħra eħe l-ieħor qed jitlef."
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

It seems that Mark's teacher is aware that pupils who attend the NG are losing out on essential academic work; however, she does little to combat this issue. She also mentions that sometimes parents do not accept that their child attends the NG because of their awareness of what could be lost in terms of learning time.

"Ġieli ma jaċċettawx il-ġenituri, għax jiddejqu li t-tifel joħroġ minn ġol-klassi u jitlef il-lessons." (Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th Febraury 18)

5.3. Interactions with Adults

A central part of Mark's reality within his school relates to the interactions exchanged with adult stakeholders. This theme was analysed in depth in order to understand the types of interactions being used to 'nurture' a child in different contexts

5.3.1. Scolding and Isolation

It was clear from the onset that Mark was being labelled as a troublesome and challenging pupil within his mainstream class. During the Christmas play rehearsal at school, the LSA in Mark's class voiced her interpretation of Mark's behaviour.

"Fil-klassi ħafna agħar minn hekk, qisu fidget spinner" (LSA, Fieldnotes, 12th December 17).

Mark's parents also expressed their concern for Mark being labelled as a problematic pupil within his mainstream class and the repercussions this may bring in his future educational experiences.

Mother: *Il-problema hija li t-tifel naħseb ħa l-fama fil-klassi.*

Father: *Jien ma rridx li s-sena d-dieħla, x'ħin jintagħżel fil-klassi, t-teacher li jkollu meta tisma' ismu tgħid: 'Ajma ħej!'."*

(Parent's Interview, 16th January 18)

His challenging behaviour seemed to blind his mainstream teacher and LSA from all that which is good about him. When Mark worked silently with no complaints and completed tasks successfully, this was rarely noticed by either his mainstream teacher or LSA. During one observation (31st January 18), Mark was scolded and

told that he would get his chair taken away for standing up to investigate what some of his peers had thrown on the floor.

"Trid niħodlok is-siġġu? La tqum bilwieqfa l-ħin kollu, sinjal li m'għandekx bżonnu!" (Mainstream Teacher, Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

Mark was often not allowed to interact with his peers as he was often reprimanded as soon as any attempt was made.

A pupil sitting close to Mark takes out a colouring book and goes to show it to Mark, however the excitement was short lived as the teacher immediately scolds Mark.   (Fieldnotes,19th December 17)

"Don't't touch it... Dak mhux tiegħek!"

(Mainstream Teacher, Fieldnotes, 19th December 17).

Another feature of Mark's interactions with his Mainstream class teacher is also directly related to his interactions with peers. During the period of fieldwork observations from the 12th December 2017 up until the 6th February 2018, Mark was placed on a separate desk to his peers, where he was forced to sit at the front of the classroom with his face to the interactive whiteboard sitting all by himself. Mark was only given an exception to move his chair slightly back when the interactive whiteboard was being used, simply so he could see. Mark expressed to his teacher and LSA that he was not happy about this arrangement.

Mark: *Jien irrid noqgħod x'imkien ieħor, dejjem waħdi!*

LSA: *Ijja issa x'ħin tibda toqgħod bravu, toqgħod fejn sħabek.*

(Fieldnotes, 9th January 18)

When seated in front without no one to make contact with, Mark begins to show his desire to be next to his friends and with every opportunity he gets, he begins to

shuffle his chair closer and closer to his peers, until the teacher notices and he is sent back to his place.

"Come back next to me, or else I will tell your art teacher to not let you sit next to the others as well" (Mainstream teacher, 19th December 17).

5.3.2. Abandonment & Humiliation

During an aggressive tantrum during break time which included Mark hitting out at others (which will be analysed later on in this chapter), Mark's mainstream teacher demonstrates her tendencies to exert her power through exiling and humiliating Mark. The following extracts highlight the escalation of the situation, demonstrating an institutionalized neglect to tackle the reasons behind his behaviour as well as a lack of awareness for emotional disturbances that such interactions may cause.

He is placed literally in the middle of the doorway and given his Social Studies booklet. He tells the teacher that he has nowhere to write here.
(Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

"This is your problem, now see how you are going to sort it out"
(Mainstream Teacher, 31st January 18)

Mark asks something to the teacher about the work assigned, and the teacher advises him that she is no longer his teacher and she will not answer any of his questions. (Fieldnotes,31st January 18)
This episode portrays an all-time low and a relationship breakdown between the teacher and pupil, whereby Mark has completely been rejected.

5.3.3. A Warm and Caring Approach

Following this episode described above, on the last observation day (6th January 18) in Mark's mainstream class, it appeared that there was a rather positive and sudden shift with regards to interaction between Mark and his mainstream teacher and LSA. It is uncertain as to what caused this change, but it seemed he was now allowed to sit next to his peers and sharing colours was suddenly allowed.

"It's ok that you are sharing, but make sure to look after each other's colours"

(LSA, Fieldnotes, 6th February 18).

Both the mainstream teacher and LSA spoke to him in a kinder manner, and his teacher even discussed openly with Mark that she would like to have a better relationship with him in order to have a more peaceful environment.

"Ejja naħdmu flimkien ħalli nimxu l-quddiem fil-paċi."

(Mainstream Teacher, Fieldnotes, 6th February 18).

Mark seemed the happiest and most obedient I had seen him, on this particular day, consistent with the ways in which positive pupil-teacher relationships may act as a protective force with pupils who struggle with S.E.B.D (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014).

Within the NG, Mark's interactions with adults differs significantly from the situation in his mainstream classroom. The nurture staff's approach showcases a more caring, supportive and understanding environment. Both the NT and NA actively listen to Mark and display greater patience when he is not obeying or acting out. Below is an extract which depicts an example of how NT staff often refrained from scolding or shouting.

Mark is the last one to put his playdough back in the pot. The nurture assistant gently instructs him to put it away, however he keeps on resisting

and continues to play. After a couple of times being told to put it away he finally follows her instructions. (Fieldnotes,9th January 18)

On three occasions (16th, 26th & 31st January 18) Mark was told off in a gentler manner during NG sessions; he was told that he would have five minutes of his playtime taken from him should he not begin to behave.

Mark's five minutes of not playing has been forgiven or forgotten about. Nothing is mentioned. (Fieldnotes,26th January 18)

Each time Mark was given the opportunity to fix his 'negative' behaviour by behaving well for the rest of the lesson. Being given a second chance worked positively with Mark, as he loved his playtime and was motivated to obey in order to not lose it. On the third occurrence (31st January 18), his teacher decided to stick to her decision and calmly told Mark:

"You will have to sit on your chair for five minutes today, until I tell you the time is up. Then you can go and play." (Nurture Teacher,31st January 18)

Mark is also continuously reminded by his NT about the conventions of getting along with his peers. Expressing to him calmly that he must share toys and take turns with his peers. After Mark openly discusses with his NT about him getting in trouble for fighting with Philip, she gently explains to Mark:

"If you would not like to be punched, then you shouldn't do it to others."
(Nurture Teacher,16th January 18)

Her gentle requests are perceived as fair by Mark and are often obeyed immediately.

Mark walks over to the teacher and asks her for the rolling pin. She explains that he needs to share it with the others, and in fact he walks over to the round table and places it in the middle. (Fieldnotes,16th January 18)

Mark is also sometimes recognized for behaving well in his NG, with his NT often passing positive remarks when he participates in questions.

"Bravu Mark". (Nurture Teacher, Fieldnotes, 26th January 18)

It is positive that Mark is rewarded for his actions within this context as it seems that being verbally rewarded brought about further positive behaviour in Mark. For example, he was one time (6th February 18) congratulated on one of his drawings done in a drawing exercise. The recognition encouraged Mark to help one of his peers in re-creating the drawing of a cloud they were asked to do. This voluntary altruistic behaviour was then once again rewarded with positive verbal remarks.

The NT congratulates him on helping his peers and the way he drew his cloud. (Fieldnotes,6th February 18)

During an interview with Mark's parents, his mother herself contrasted between the two different approaches which Mark experiences at school; demonstrating her concern regarding the mainstream reality.

"Naħseb li fin-NG, iktar kwiet, iktar jobdi. Jiena ma nkunx fil-klassi, forsi t-teacher [Mainstream] tiegħu tgħajjat miegħu jew nkella t-tfal forsi ma jċċedulux." (Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

5.3.4. Happier When Together

The most signifying feature of Mark's interactions with his peripatetic teachers, was the fact that Mark was not exiled from his peers during art, music and P.E. classes. Contrary to Mark's mainstream teacher, his peripatetic teachers always allowed Mark to sit next to his peers, with only one particular exception described below. During an informal conversation with Mark's music teacher it became

apparent that he strongly disagrees with the fact that Mark is forced to sit alone in his class and went on to state:

"I make it a point to let Mark sit where he wants in my lessons." (Music Teacher, Fieldnotes, 17th January 18)

Peripatetic teachers were aware of the fact that Mark had to sit alone for the rest of the day and saw their lesson as an opportunity to give Mark somewhat of a break from being isolated. However, there was one occasion where Mark's art teacher seemed to have been influenced by the practices carried out by his mainstream teacher and resorted to isolation as a consequence of 'bad' behaviour.

Mark breaks the point of one of Ollie's pencil colours. Ollie gets upset and therefore the art teacher sends Mark back to his usual place at the front of the class.

(Fieldnotes, 9th January 18)

Mark appears to be happier in general during peripatetic lessons and participates enthusiastically throughout. He even says 'bye' and 'thank you' to his teachers, displaying his gratitude and enjoyment for their lesson. His P.E. peripatetic teacher does not treat Mark any differently to the rest of his peers, displaying kindness and patience with Mark. Mark enjoys his P.E lessons tremendously and listens to his teacher and instructions given attentively.

He is smiling all throughout gym class and gets through the whole lesson without any fighting or issues. He is trying really hard in the activities given. (Fieldnotes, 17th January 18)

During the final observation on the 6th of February 18, the NT chose to confide that some peripatetic teachers have stood up for Mark and his circumstances in the school, as described in the following extract.

The NT informs me that Mark's class will most likely be changed, as some peripatetic teachers are not happy with how Mark is being isolated in his mainstream class. (Fieldnotes, 6th February 18)

 This shows commitment to Mark's wellbeing and an attitude of genuine care. Despite this, after further investigation on this matter post my fieldwork observations and following SMT discussion, it was said that Mark's class could not be changed since they are still awaiting Mark to become statemented for an LSA. Mark's class is the only class which currently only has one LSA, if his class was changed now and he was to be subsequently statemented, his class would have to be changed back anyway in order to accommodate another LSA.

5.4. Social Relationships with Peers

Mark's interactions with his peers was a significant theme which came through in observational and interview data. Once again, the type of friendships and interactions which took place varied across contexts, with a greater amount of positive interactions taking place within the NG and peripatetic contexts.

5.4.1. "Nixtieq li għandi friends mummy."

It quickly became clear that Mark's peers in his mainstream class did not hold a very good perception of him. The first evidence of this was during their Christmas concert rehearsal as is described below.

Two pupils come to tell their teacher that Mark was bothering them. Their accusations appeared to not be serious at all…As soon as they sit down Mark is immediately scolded and the teacher asks Mark to come sit down next to her.
(Fieldnotes, 12th December 17)

I catch another boy teasing Mark and sticking his tongue out at him from a distance. Mark reacts by pulling a face back. (Fieldnotes, 12th December 17)

During a Religious education lesson, Mark was pushed by another pupil when he attempted to shuffle out of his place whilst their teacher was not looking. When the teacher questioned this pupil about why he had pushed Mark, his response was:

"Go back to your place Mark!" (Mark's Peer, Fieldnotes, 19th December 17).

It seems that pupils begun to pick up and mimic their teacher's behaviour, integrating what they observe as part of Mark's identity. Pupils sometimes accused Mark of hitting or pushing them, with many of these accusations being trumped-up.

They then go back into the class, and on their way once again a pupil accuses Mark of hitting him. The teacher expresses that she is tired of these petty fights. (Fieldnotes, 19th December 17)

It seemed that every little thing Mark did annoyed his peers even when he was not truly bothering anyone. Given the teacher's failure to protect him, and her own readiness to scapegoat him, other children followed suit.

He is humming and sharpening his colours on his desk all alone. Other pupils start to 'shhhhh' Mark's humming. He ignores them and continues to hum. (Fieldnotes,16th January 18)

On my last observation a new pupil (Ryan) joined the class; on a positive note Mark was given the opportunity to sit next to Ryan, which Mark was evidently happy about. It was encouraging to see Mark attempting to interact with a pupil who did not already hold negative perceptions of him. Despite the fact that they seemed to be getting along really well, Mark disappointingly went against his new friend by telling 'a lie' to not get into trouble himself.

Mark starts cutting out his mask without being instructed to. Ryan warns him that he was not supposed to cut it. He continues to do so when the LSA walks in and scolds him for cutting the mask without being told. Mark immediately lies.

Mark: *Ryan qalli biex nagħmilha!*

 Ryan: *Why would you lie?*

(Fieldnotes, 6th February 18)

This exemplifies the issues Mark is having within his mainstream class, as even though Mark does many nice things, his reputation remains tainted as he upholds certain behaviour. It is unfortunate that at times Mark did indeed hit or push his friends as will be described later on in the chapter, which has consequently lead his teacher to believe his peers over Mark. One boy named Billy in Mark's class seems to have particularly formed a very negative perception of Mark.

The teacher expresses to me that Billy goes home and talks to his parents about Mark, and the teacher feels like his parents are making Billy dislike Mark even more, which could be causing Billy to lie and overly accuse Mark.

(Fieldnotes, 9th January 18)

Although aware of this issue, the mainstream teacher stated that she is at a loss with how to solve this problem, she may not always be able to identify who is being provoked by who. Mark's mainstream teacher advised me that his peers' negative perceptions of Mark may be extending to a wider number of pupils.

The teacher informs me that she has been receiving a lot of complaints from various parents about Mark. She said that she has been 'honest' with Mark that his friends have been complaining about him. (Fieldnotes, 16th January 18)

With this knowledge, it is clear that Mark is aware of the ways others perceive him and how he is looked down upon by his peers; a deep wound for Mark which was

aggravated by his teacher's comments. It is uncertain as to why Mark chooses to still hit or lie to his peers but perhaps he is just living up to the expectations people have of him. If everything good goes unnoticed in his mainstream class, Mark is not being reinforced or motivated to act in desirable ways.

Mark's parents explain that their child is aware of his defiant behaviour and feel as though Mark's peers may be reinforcing his behaviour through false accusations.

"Hu jgħidli pereżempju: 'Nixtieq li għandi friends mummy.'. U edtlu eżempju: 'Imma għalfejn? X'tagħmel l-iskola?' u jgħidli: 'Għax jien dejjem naughty.' Jiġifieri dan it-tifel jaf li hu naughty miskin. Dawn qegħdin jitkellmu bejniethom it-tfal"

(Mother, Interview 16th January 18)

"Dak inhar qalli xi ħaġa li vera weġġagħtni...qalli li t-tfal l-oħra jugżawh fil-bitħa u li ma jkunx vera li tahom daqqa. Pereżempju omm Billy rajtha barra, u qaltli li Mark qed idejqu lil Billy...Mark loves him and cares for him so much jaħasra."

(Mother, Interview 16th January 18)

Through these extracts it becomes evident that both Mark and his parents are clearly hurt by his social experiences at school and are aware of the negative labels associated with him. It seems that the burden of change is falling on Mark whilst adults have not soothed his path for positive peer relations.

5.4.2. Persisting Negative Perceptions (Beyond the Mainstream)

There are no pupils from Mark's mainstream class who attend the same NG as him, which is a positive element, as he is allowed a fresh opportunity to formulate positive peer-relationships. However, it seems that the negative perceptions people hold of Mark has leaked throughout the school, with some pupils still labelling him as

a problematic child, even though occurrences of bullying and false accusations are much less frequent within the NG context.

During an NG session one pupil expresses how she would not like to sit next to Mark and gave no reason as to why this was so.

"Ms. ma rridx noqħod ħdejn Mark!" (Nurture Pupil,16th January 18). The teacher did not allow this girl to get her way but neither did she pick up on the opportunity to tackle this girl's negative perceptions of Mark. Instead Mark was portrayed as the bully, even though no form of bullying was observed.

The teacher ignores her remark. He seems a little sad by what the girl has said. The teacher explains to Mark that he is growing up now and that he cannot continue to bully others. (Fieldnotes, 16th January 18)

In Mark's NG pupils are quick to inform the NT about any of Mark's behaviour which they perceive to be negative.

Mark is starting to fidget five minutes into the story, and another boy who is sitting next to him, tells the NT that Mark is not sitting down. (Fieldwork, 17th January 18)

Whilst playing with playdough, a girl accuses Mark of mixing colours even though he hadn't and was happily playing with one colour as was instructed. (Fieldwork, 9th January 18)

Many of these petty accusations are then ignored, which contrasts to the approach used in his mainstream class where pupils' accusations are usually followed by a consequence for Mark.

5.4.3. Fostering Positive Peer Relations

On a more positive note, there were many moments when Mark seemed to interact well within his NG. Playtime was a great opportunity for Mark to play with his peers and on many occasions, pupils played happily together with no issues.

> *The NT brings Mark and another boy whom he gets along with to play a*
> *memory game. Mark finds turn taking difficult and tries to skip his peer*
> *however, both boys are really into the game and enjoying themselves.*
> (Fieldnotes,26th January 18)

Since Mark was able to sit next to his peers during NG sessions, he was also given the opportunity to begin to form positive connections in a space were forming friendships was encouraged and allowed.

In music lessons, Mark's peripatetic teacher not only allows him to sit with the rest of his peers but he can also choose who he sits next to, which meant that Mark had the freedom of selecting peers who he knew were more accepting of him. During the three music lessons which I observed throughout fieldwork, it was noticed that pupils did not really interact much with Mark, however neither did they bully or accuse Mark of misbehaving. The lack of interaction in some way actually indicated a positive shift in his peripatetic music lessons, as pupils were not concerned with what Mark was doing wrong.

> *Mark was very obedient and participated a lot throughout the whole lesson. It*
> *seems however, that Mark is so enthusiastic to participate in the lesson that he finds*
> *it difficult to allow others to speak when their music teacher asks a question.*
> (*Fieldwork, 17th January 18)

The above extract portrays Mark's happiness within this context. However, it raises one of the difficulties Mark has with social conventions such as listening to others and turn taking.

P.E. lessons are yet another example of the ways in which interactions with peers positively varied across contexts. Mark was grouped randomly with his peers during cooperative games and was even grouped up with Billy during one particular lesson.

> *Mark and Billy are in the same group and in this context they seem to be getting along with each other.* (Fieldnotes, 17th January 18)

This was surprising as it was known that the Head of School had informed teachers to not allow Billy and Mark to stay next to each other, but the P.E. teacher thought it was important for these two pupils to learn to get along. In fact, during P.E. lessons, Mark displayed no traces of antisocial behaviour; quite to the contrary he displayed traits of being patient and cooperative.

> *Two pupils in his group seem to be skipping him every time. Even though Mark is aware that they are skipping him, he does not put up a fight and allows them to; peacefully going for his turn when they let him.* (Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

During one lesson I pointed out to Mark's group that they were not giving a fair chance for Mark to take his turn.   Mark's response to this was quite unusual for a five-year old boy.

> *"It's ok Ms. let him [Billy] go before me, I will wait."* (Mark, Fieldnotes, 17th January 18)

In spite of this injustice, Mark still left his P.E. lessons in high spirits. Even when he lost every game or race, he congratulated winners and went on with the lesson.

> *Mark loses both races at the end of the lesson. However, he runs over to high five his friend Ollie for winning.* (Fieldnotes, 31st January 18)

In certain contexts, Mark displays conscious efforts in prosocial behaviour which will be further discussed below. In others he shows no concern about what his peers think of him and how his behaviour may be affecting his friendships. It is rather evident that when there are secure attachments present with adult teachers or caregivers, Mark also transfers this type of relationship and attachment to his peers (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014).

5.6. Contrasting Behaviour

It is essential to look at positive behavioural occurrences in order to attempt to unravel any context specific associations or protective factors which may be directly leading Mark to participate in prosocial and positive behaviour through a nurturing environment. It is also equally relevant to evaluate occurrences of challenging behaviour to identify any triggers or causes.

5.6.1. Prosocial and Engaged Behaviour

In one of my fieldwork observations (19th December 17), I noticed Mark was allowed to sit and eat his lunch with the rest of his mainstream peers. On this particular occasion a few pupils were playing a game with Mark leading it. Mark would say a random letter of the alphabet and pupils had to think of a word which starts with that letter.

Mark is still leading the game. He compliments other pupils on their choice of words, as he confirms their correct answers. Now a girl raises the argument that someone else should lead the game, and Mark openly allows her to lead without any trouble. (Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 19th December 17)

In Mark's mainstream class much of his positive behaviour goes ignored by his mainstream teacher as he does sometimes work quietly on his own, entirely

engaged with the task at hand and often doing it correctly, as is depicted in the example below.

> *Mark is quiet and focusing on copying down his homework. He is not rewarded for this positive occurrence. Pupils all take a while to do this task, however, Mark's name is the only one mentioned to keep him focused.* (Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 19th December 18)

During times when pupils are allowed to 'colour' in his mainstream class it was noticeable that Mark's behavioural challenges reduced. He loves to colour and once absorbed in his drawings he often refrained from participating in distracting or antisocial behaviour.

> *Mark's peers are spinning a bottle cap and playing a game when they are meant to be colouring. Mark is sat next to them. He continues to colour on his own and proudly presents his work to his teacher. She smiles at him.* (Fieldnotes, Mainstream, 6th February 18)

In the NG context Mark frequently displayed a number of positive behaviours. In most sessions, Mark was completely absorbed in the social stories being read and participated with insightful comments which ensured that he was engaged and learning.

> *Mark expresses that the goats in the story were not responsible. The teacher then asks how they could have behaved at breakfast to show respect. Mark replies: "They stay behaved, they sit down and eat all their breakfast."* (Fieldnotes, NG, 26th January 18)

In the NG context and peripatetic classes this type of behaviour was more frequent, pointing to the benefits of a nurturing approach. With the NT consistently drilling notions such as listening to others and turn-taking, Mark has picked up on notions such as putting your hands up to talk, and practices them within context.

In a particular art lesson (9th January 18), Mark sits down next to another boy who did not understand their art teacher's instructions. Mark demonstrates a perfect example of his capacity to participate in prosocial behaviour and his desire to form positive friendships.

> *As the teacher begins to explain what they are going to do, one boy sitting next to Mark (Ollie) makes a mistake. Mark goes off to ask the teacher what Ollie should do now, and Mark instinctively goes to help Ollie erase his mistake.* (Fieldnotes, 9th January 18)

Mark's mother also refers to this positive aspect of Mark's character; referring to his capacity to share his belongings outside of the school context.

> *"Dak li jkollu tiegħu, jagħtiha ta', jekk ikollu jew it-tablet jew drawing book, jagħtihom milli jkollu."* (Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

5.6.2. Fidgeting and Inattention

Despite Mark participating in good behaviour there were also multiple occasions in which Mark displayed a variety of social and behavioural challenges which reinforced other people's beliefs of him being a child who struggles with SEBD At the mildest level, Mark was continuously fidgeting and finding ways to overcome his boredom in both his mainstream and nurture classroom.

> *Mark seems to be bored and is sliding off his chair; almost lying on the floor. His mainstream teacher corrects him and he immediately obeys and sits back up. After a couple of minutes, he is sliding back on the floor again.* (Fieldnotes, Mainstream Classroom, 9th January 18)

> *Mark is having difficulty sitting down and listening today, he is rolling on his back and bothering other pupils since they are sat in a small space.* (Fieldnotes, NG, 26th January 18)

However, when asked questions during these seemingly inattentive periods, Mark almost always gets questions right; demonstrating his level of intelligence and ability to integrate information through auditory learning.

It seems that Mark does not feel like paying attention today and does not participate to answer questions. The NT notices Mark's lack of participation and directly asks him a question, he answered correctly showing that he was still paying attention. (Fieldnotes, NG, 31st January 18)

5.6.3. Conscious Defiance & Antisocial Behaviour

Mark sometimes showed levels of conscious defiance towards adults and teachers in his school, as is depicted in the two instances below.

Mark was colouring in break time and forgot to eat his lunch. The LSA tells him to put his lunch away as they will be starting a craft activity. Instead of putting his lunch away, he sits down and starts to eat with a cheeky grin on his face. (Fieldnotes,6th February 18)

As Mark's class is performing their part in the Christmas concert rehearsal the camera man tries to take a picture of Mark. Mark sticks his tongue out at him. (Fieldnotes,12th December 17)

On the 9th January 2018 Mark was given a time-out for the first five minutes of his break time, after the teacher caught Mark fighting with another boy in his class. I asked to speak to Mark about why he had been fighting.

Researcher: *Għaliex għandek 'time out'?*

Mark: *Konnha qegħdin niġġieldu jien u Philip.*

Researcher: *Imma jekk taf li mhux sew li tiġġieled, għaliex għamiltha?*

Mark: *Jien u Philip konna qed nilgħabu logħba biss.*

(Fieldnotes, Playground, 9th January 18)

In break time on a separate occasion, Mark seemed to have what appeared to be a cross between a tantrum and a fit; acting in a very aggressive and antisocial manner.

He pulled a boy's hair, kicked a girl multiple times and punched another girl in the back as she was eating her lunch. Both the teacher and myself tried to calm him down, but it was like he didn't hear a thing we were saying (Fieldnotes, Playground, 31st January 18)

Such events showcase the struggles Mark has with understanding group dynamics and what is acceptable behaviour in school, perhaps sometimes thinking that playfighting is tolerable. It also displays a level of conscious defiance to an intolerable situation and a cry out for attention.

During one NG session dedicated to 'bullying', Mark expressed his aggressive tendencies with the following statement:

"Nobody does bullying with me, I do bullying with others." (Fieldnotes, Mark, 16th January 18).

This type of remark could impact the way others including his peers perceive him; preventing him from forming positive friendships.

Much of his 'hitting' behaviour which I witnessed happened to occur in break time. This further suggests that Mark has troubles with the conventions of play and socialization. Mark's parents also show awareness to the contextual factor of Mark's behaviour; raising concern for the situation in his mainstream class.

"Jiena nixtieq nkun naf ħaġa waħda, jekk huwiex l-istess fil-klassi tiegħu bħal meta jkun fin-NG ma Ms.Melanie. Nixtieq nara jekk hemm xi differenza fil-behaviour tiegħu..... nixtieq nara jekk forsi pereżempju jekk għax m'għandux il-ħbieb tiegħu fil-klassi." (Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

5.9. Moving Forward: Recognized Needs for Improvement

During interviews with key stakeholders a number of points were brought up which pointed towards an awareness for the need of change or improvement. Personal interpretation of this theme will be further discussed in the following chapter however, it is pertinent here to highlight the aspects which key stakeholders are already conscious of.

5.9.1. Resources and Time

Mark's mainstream teacher recognized that the NG provision may not be proving to be effective enough due to the short amount of time pupils are spending within it.

> *"In-NG għandha tmur id-dar ukoll, għax tant kemm hemm problemi d-dar li dawn it-three hours li jagħmlu fil-ġimgħa magħhom mhux biżżejjed. Proprjament, naħseb li jinħass ukoll il-bżonn li tagħna ta' school A u school B, jkun hemm teachers għalihom".* (Maintream Teacher Interview, 6th February 18)

This extract points out that not only is it thought that pupils spend too little time within their NG but also suggests that the NG approach should also stretch out to parents who may need support in nurturing their child.   The issue of being short-staffed is also attributed to the matter of time, in which creating a program where pupils spend more time within the NG would require a greater number of staff.

The wish for a more suitable space to carry out activities such as cooking and sharing breakfast together within the NG was also pointed out by the NT.

> *"We would like a bigger room, with a small kitchenette, the space is very limited here."* (Nurture Teacher, Interview, 26th January 18)

Such realizations point towards a shift in the NG which would match up closer towards the practices being implemented internationally, where pupils spend up to 4 days a week in their NG and participate in social experiences such as cooking.

5.9.2. A Whole School Approach

A significant concern for Mark's mainstream teacher, which may be inhibiting a move towards a more nurturing and whole school approach, was the aspect of staff collaboration and communication. When asked about how the NG approach could potentially be applied to the mainstream classroom through the inclusion of emotional literacy, it was expressed that this would be difficult to include if the curriculum being covered in the NG is not shared.

"Emmini lanqas nista' ngħidlek, għax aħna lanqas is-syllabus tagħhom ma nkunu nafu...ehe circle time pereżempju fil-bidu tal-ġurnata ġieli għamiltha, and it's useful."
(Mainstream Teacher, Interview, 6th February 18)

This leads us to question whether teachers would make use out of more nurturing strategies should they be more informed or trained in emotional literacy learning and approaches.

The concept of a whole school approach in which all pupils may benefit from NG principles was also brought up by Mark's mother.

"Il-way kif qegħdin jgħallmu dawn it-tfal fin-NG, allura għalfejn meta jkunu għadhom żgħar ma tkunx hekk għal kulħadd".
(Mother, Interview, 16th January 18)

Such aspects highlight how the NG holds the potential to be a positive provision however, if principles of social and emotional literacy learning are solely contained within the four walls of the NG context then the benefits reaped may be limited.

5.10. Conclusion

From the data presented in this chapter it was found that the approach and pedagogy being practiced within the mainstream context is not suited to all pupils, with particular reference to pupils who struggle with SEBD. Children on the other hand, enjoy attending their NG which could be attributed to a more free and caring environment as well as more opportunities to play. Parents are expected to help their child make up for academic work which is lost while pupils attend their NG. Interactions with adults also differed across contexts whereby, a more nurturing approach was adopted in the NG and peripatetic lessons. Mark also displayed more positive peer relations and behaviour in contexts where adults showed more secure attachments with pupils. Pupils in the mainstream context often resorted to labelling Mark, which may have been a consequence of negative teacher-pupil relationships.

It was suggested by stakeholders that for the NG provision to be more beneficial, pupils should spend more time within their NG. It was also recognized that a greater amount of staff collaboration is needed to move towards a 'whole school approach'.

Figure 2: The Experience of Nurturing

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the reasons for which a child is seen to 'need' to attend the NG provision. The structure and implementation of 'nurturing principles' in both the NG and mainstream contexts, shall be contrasted with international literature, in order to shed a light on the ways in which the local context varies. It reviews what types of approaches and interactions may be impacting the experience of the 'nurtured child'. Transferring NG principles to a whole school approach will be recommended, as a preventative and alternative measure to exclusionary 'nurturing' practices.

6.2. Comparing the Local Context to the Classic Boxall NG

It was found that a number of elements practiced at Springfield College Primary A, as well as on the national level, did not match up to the classic Boxall NG structure suggested by Marjorie Boxall.   Research states that this could potentially result in reducing the effectivity of the provision, as well marginalizing pupils' academic and educational needs (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

The fact that NTs on the national level do not require specific qualifications related to special education, is contradictory and problematic when considering that the NG is in fact a specialized educational provision. NTs are being entrusted with the delivery of a programme in social and emotional literacy, when their formal training does not differ to that of mainstream teachers, leading us to doubt their proficiency in the area. Bennathan (1997) not only highlights the importance of NTs

being trained in nurturing principles but also argues that this should be a focus for all educators' training.

The time spent within the NG as well as the content covered is of particular concern, with pupils only spending up to 3 hours a week within their NG context. The literature emphasizes that pupils should spend up to 4 days a week within their NG, covering a holistic curriculum which includes the national academic curriculum as well as social and emotional literacy learning (Cooper, 2004). The NG within Springfield College Primary A covers no academic curriculum, which leads us to identify the researched context with what is referred to as an 'Aberrant NG' (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005); with the risk of academic loss to pupils who attend. The issue of 'opportunity cost' (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005) is a central notion to this research, as it presents the risk of pupils falling behind on academic achievement as a consequence of their 'behavioural' challenges. In Mark's case, he is extremely academically adept. However, it is a worry that if he continues to attend his NG for years to come that he may risk regression in his principal strength, which could diminish his ability to remain active in learning. Children who attend the NG context are being deprived of their entitlement to the full academic curriculum. By leaving the mainstream classroom for 3 hours every week, pupils are required to return to their class with gaps in learning, which may further lead to behavioural disruptions.

Research states that the NG provision holds the risk of becoming a 'dumping ground' for children with SEBD. It may not always be the most beneficial option for all children when all aspects are considered (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). Mark's mainstream teacher expresses her favour with such exclusionary services. She argues that she is able to get a lot more work done with other pupils through the removal of behavioural distractions. Such an outlook is damaging, as it sends a

message that teachers favour protecting the learning experiences of children who easily comply to classroom rules, over those that are not perceived as the 'ideal pupil' (Slee, 2014).

Local and international literature both state that pupils should not attend the NG for longer than a maximum of four terms (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Grech, 2010). Pupils at Springfield College Primary A may attend for up to six years (all the years of primary schooling), if NG staff and mainstream teachers deem pupils' 'emotional' progress as insufficient. From observations it is inconclusive as to what differentiated measures are taken within the NG to prepare pupils for reintegration back into their mainstream class. All of the NG pupils follow the same NG curriculum in any one session; if pupils have individualized needs and progress targets, it does not appear that these needs are being considered or catered for. Local NGs could become increasingly more effective if they made use of formal reintegration procedures and tools such as the Reintegration Readiness Scale developed by Doyle (2001). In this way specific targets and procedures can be devised at the individual level, to help pupils achieve the main goal of the NG, which is to get pupils successfully reintegrated into their mainstream class. This would prevent pupils being excluded for a prolonged period of time and missing out on essential academic curriculum.

Despite the classic Boxall NG, which recommends that evaluative and diagnostic tools such as the Boxall Profile be used, prior to admission to the NG (Bennathan, 1997); this was not the case in this school. Despite research also suggesting that the Boxall Profile is filled out by both mainstream teachers and NG staff in a collaborative approach (Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney, 2009), it was only filled in by the pupil's mainstream teacher. This meant that the child was vulnerable

106

to misrepresentations and subjective interpretations, especially when the classroom teacher so clearly wished to have him moved.

The involvement of parents was given little value within this school. As Bennathan (1997) also highlights, selection for admission of a pupil should be discussed in depth with the child's parents in order to come to an agreement with regard to what intervention practices suit their child best (Bennathan, 1997). Parents were only invited to officially discuss their concerns and knowledge about their child during Parents' Day. Apart from signing the Consent Letter, they were not involved in the admission process. No 'open door policy' exists within this school which was also suggested in international literature, in order for them to spend time with their children and pick up on nurturing techniques (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011). It is contradictory that educators resorted to blaming parents for their child's challenges at school yet saw little reason to involve parents in the nurturing process. Mark's parents clearly expressed their wish to be more involved in discussions about their child within the school, as well as a desire for increased support on nurturing practices which they could take home with them.

The NG has the potential to become a resource centre for both parents and mainstream teachers, who wish to receive support on ways to tackle challenging behaviour (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). However, the opportunity to extend its resources to both the mainstream class and parents was not made available.

6.3. Approaches and Interactions Within Different Classroom Contexts

. Research points out that many mainstream teachers feel that they lack necessary skills in managing social and behavioural challenges, often resorting to spur of the moment measures to control behaviour (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman,

2014). Mark's teacher often resorted to abandonment, humiliation and isolation as disciplinary consequences to his 'deviant' behaviour, with no attempt to teach restorative justice to pupils.

Due to Mark's high level of intelligence, in the mainstream context he often seemed bored or frustrated with the material being covered. Mark's mother also showed concern for this aspect of Mark's mainstream reality, arguing that it is difficult to expect Mark to abide by the school framework if his learning is not catered to his levels of intelligence and social needs. If tasks given were designed to engage Mark in productive academic work which was challenging and suited to his interests and needs, perhaps there would be less occurrences of behavioural distractions. This could consequently lessen the need for the use of disciplinary measures which may be impacting the formation of positive teacher-pupil relationships. It is known that pupils' negative interactions with their teachers may directly affect their adjustment to the school setting as well as their general success in school (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Research also states that when adults focus on forming positive relationships with pupils as well as rewarding prosocial behaviour, such measures can drastically improve the development of social skills. These act as preventative or interventive measures to pupils acting out or taking part in deviant behaviour (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005).

Isolating Mark from the situation in which he can learn to socialize in a positive manner, sends a message to other pupils that Mark is not worthy of positive interaction, creating a vicious cycle of negative relations and a barrier for pupils to approach Mark. Through controlling issues by exiling Mark, no opportunity is taken to teach pupils within the mainstream context about social conventions, together with accepting individual differences and tackling emotions. The concern for Mark being

labelled was significantly raised by Mark's parents; displaying an awareness to negative perceptions being circulated to wider contexts. In fact, Mark's mainstream teacher may have propagated a scapegoating culture, which she was then unable to control.

> "Teachers are likely to attach 'deviant' labels to pupils who present with SEBD. This may not only exacerbate behavioural problems and lead to problems of disaffection and disrespect, but it can also serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Hajdukova, Hornby, & Cushman, 2014, p. 147).

As soon as Mark is allowed to socialize in break time, his increase in anti-social actions with peers reflects a response to a threat to his self-image; resulting in him 'living up' to the expectations adults and peers hold of him.

In Mark's NG and peripatetic lessons, teachers refrained from labelling Mark. They often used intrinsic verbal rewards as a source of reinforcement for positive behaviour. It was evident that greater effort was made to form secure and caring attachments with pupils in these contexts which consequently lead to a drastic contextual improvement in Mark's behaviour and social interactions. Such relations also resulted in more engaged and participatory learning (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). This suggests that nurturing principles should be spread out to a wider context and number of pupils, in which pupils are 'nurtured' in all settings they come across in school (Cooper, 2004).

6.4. Where does the problem reside?

On the individual level one has to question why it is seen as necessary for a child to attend the NG provision. With inclusive practices, differentiated teaching and the importance of mixed-ability classrooms becoming prominent discussion in

educational research, it is a wonder as to why mainstream teaching cannot also be adapted in a way which suits the characteristics of a child with SEBD (Jull, 2008).

From the data it became clear that Mark struggles with social issues and challenging behaviour at school. Mark's parents attributed this aspect to him coming from a single-child family. In fact, a study about single-children's personality outlines how children not having social interactions with siblings or children of similar age, may result in maladjustment to social settings (Lam, 1991). Research also states that traits of 'giftedness' can also correlate with challenges in pupils getting along with their non-gifted peers (Honeck, 2012). Mark does perhaps require the need for an individualised learning program to cater for his social and behavioural challenges as well as his high levels of academic achievement. Resorting to the NG implies that these needs cannot be met within the mainstream classroom. The problem resides within the educational system, rather than within the child (Slee, 2014).

Mark's behaviour although falling within the lines of a pupil who struggles with SEBD, differed across contexts (mainstream classroom, NG, peripatetic lessons) which indicates that Mark is having particular difficulties settling into the school life of particular frameworks. It is said that NGs can have a positive effect on social and behavioural challenges through a more caring and socially empathetic environment, which was indeed witnessed at Springfield College Primary A. However, one can question the reasons for which this caring and supportive space is not provided within the mainstream context for all pupils and not just those who struggle with challenging behaviour.

If positive behaviour is being reinforced within the NG context and then not reinforced within the mainstream one, then positive behavioural occurrences may not

be replicated or transferred to other settings. This depicts the limitations of the NG policy, whereby educating children in social and emotional literacy in an alternate context, may be limiting the application of this knowledge to this setting alone; defeating the purpose of pupils being referred to the NG in the first place.

6.5. Moving Forward: 'A Whole School Approach'

Questions raised by the efficacy of the NG implications in this case suggest that most of the elements of NG practices observed, which have shown to be beneficial to pupils with SEBD, could be replicated within the mainstream classroom. Much of recent research (Doyle, 2004;2006; Binne & Allen, 2008) has begun to point towards a whole school approach being more valuable to all pupils, as well as being a more inclusive nurturing practice. What would it take to begin to transfer knowledge of nurturing principles to the mainstream classroom and drastically reduce the need of pupils to attend the 'pull-out' NG?

It was recognized that mainstream teachers need greater support and training with regards to special education and social and emotional literacy approaches. If there was greater collaboration with NG staff and the school's educational psycho-social team, perhaps application of nurturing principles could become more widespread. From the data it was discovered that Mark's mainstream teacher knew very little about what was being covered or learnt within Mark's NG and expressed her wish to know more. Meetings between NG staff and mainstream teachers were infrequent and informal, which once again contradicts the importance of collaboration and communication presented in international literature (Obiakor et al., 2012). It is therefore difficult to identify the NG provision as an inclusive practice, if little information about the child whilst in the NG, is shared with his/her mainstream

teacher. Although there was extensive collaboration between the NT and NA, this type of communication was not spread to wider contexts; remaining within the walls of the NG and maintaining it as an exclusive provision. Collaboration and communication amongst staff and parents, needs to be an essential feature of the provision in order to uphold to inclusive practices and strengthen their potential to become resource centres for the school. More than anything, pupils who attend the NG, should not be deprived of their rights to follow the academic curriculum.

Activities like Circle Time and open discussions about feelings and emotions could effortlessly be incorporated into the regular school day of primary school pupils. The social stories being covered within the NG could also be part of a multi-disciplinary approach in which social and emotional literacy learning can be incorporated with language and reading lessons. If activities within the mainstream classroom involved more 'hands on' and experiential learning within group dynamics, then opportunity could be taken to teach pupils social conventions like turn taking and respecting others within group activities. The element of play which was observed, was a substantial reason for pupils' enjoyment in attending their NG. If learning tasks in the mainstream context involved a greater element of play, this could result in similar enjoyment to mainstream learning and increased engagement. This could also combat behavioural issues of pupils who do not do well under the traditional teaching and learning framework; allowing them more time to be active and involved in social and kinaesthetic learning.

Doyle (2004;2006), offers a great resource for mainstream teachers to identify ways and approaches that social and emotional literacy learning can be integrated into the daily mainstream pedagogy and curriculum. The 'Social Development Curriculum' could truly become a tool for teachers which prevents pupils from

needing to be exiled, isolated or labelled with the stigma of attending the NG. It could also eliminate the factor of pupils missing out on academic learning time, as well as opportunities to spend time socializing with their mainstream peers.

On a more positive note, it seems that some schools in the local context may already be taking steps towards implementing a more whole school approach and becoming social and emotional resource centres for the whole school. In a supplementary interview with a NT (18th April 18) in another school it was found that this particular NT has opted for the delivery of 'Circle Time Sessions' to whole mainstream classes, which the SMT is supportive of. It was argued that this has not only reduced the stigma of pupils attending the NG provision, but it has also reached a wider number of pupils, whereby mainstream teachers and LSAs are also invited to attend, in order to pick up on social and emotional literacy strategies used within the NG. Although, "*within those classes there are children who are then referred individually*" (Nurture Teacher, School 2,18th April 18) to the NG provision, this still indicates a more inclusive step forward in the local context which other NGs could begin to implement. Another positive feature discussed with this NT, was the sharing and preparation of resources for mainstream teachers and LSAs, which are to be used within mainstream classes to assist teachers in managing challenging behaviour.

> *"We do provide resources for LSA's and teachers, which they keep many times…especially those linked to anger management. Calming cards, things like calming bottles. We do provide such things, anger rules especially for the class as well as the individuals."* (Nurture Teacher, School 2, Interview, 18th April 18)

Such approaches and ideas have provided this study with clear indications of how the NG provision may be improved, if mainstream practices where to be

enhanced through increased support in tackling SEBD across all educational contexts.

6.6. Limitations of the Study

One evident limitation to the study is the fact that due to time constraints, observations and interviews could not be spread out to a wider number of schools within the local context. This implies that the data gathered from the participatory school, may not resemble the situation in other school settings. Data from this study is therefore limited in it's potential for generalizations across the whole local context.

It was also noted that certain practices, approaches and pedagogies which were observed may have been influenced by the presence of a researcher. Due to adopting an honest and open approach with participants, key stakeholders were perfectly aware of the educational practices which were of interest to this study. Observations therefore, may have not always reflected the full reality of 'nurturing' practices within Springfield College Primary A.

6.7. Recommendations for Future Research

A study which aims to provide a more widespread picture of the NG provision within the local context could be beneficial in providing a more extensive reality of the NG and the experience which comes along with attending it. After analysing the data, it became clear that despite there being certain policies in place which all NGs across the local context should abide by, there is still many factors related to 'nurturing' practices which depend upon the discretion of individuals who are implementing them, resulting in the potential for NGs and mainstream practices to vary significantly across contexts. Such variations would be thought-provoking to

capture in future research, for one to truly identify the aspects of the NG which could potentially improve across all state schools in the Maltese Islands.

6.8. Conclusion

To conclude, I wish to mention that this study was rooted in a passion towards the bettering of educational practices and the futures of young children. It is believed that education always has the power to keep on moving forward, with the protection of all pupils' potential and welfare at heart. It is believed that if social, emotional and behavioural aspects are given significance in all contexts of educational realities, then this would lead to an overall improvement and adjustment to educational settings. This would also lessen the risk of pupils needing to be excluded from the mainstream context and depriving them of their rights to the academic curriculum.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: College Principal

Dear _____,

 I, Roxanne Bonnici, am currently studying for a Masters in Teaching and Learning in Early childhood and Primary Education and am currently in the process of collecting data for my dissertation, in which I aim to explore the learning and social experiences of children who attend a nurture group in Year _____. My supervisor is Professor Mary Darmanin.

Children's experience of both the mainstream classroom setting and the nurture group is of interest to my research. In order to get a clearer picture of the experience of these pupils, I hope to carry out a series of observations over the maximum period of two months in both the mainstream classroom setting as well as the nurture group setting of one particular class. My study would also entail conducting between 1-2 interviews with the mainstream class teacher as well as 1 nurture group member of staff, and between 1 and 2 parents whose child attends the nurture group.

Throughout observations I will also carry out informal conversations with pupils which will not be audio-recorded. Data collected during observations with pupils shall only be recorded in written format in the form of field-notes. I hope to not disrupt the class with my presence and will not discuss any personal or sensitive matters with any of the participants.

Interviews carried out with key stakeholders (nurture group staff, class teacher and parents) shall be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcriptions and with their consent will take-place at a time which will not affect any school activities.

Confidentiality for all participants is guaranteed, by using pseudonyms and concealing identifying details which may reveal the identity of participants. Data will only be used for the purpose of this study and audio-recording will be destroyed within six months of the publication of results.

Participating in this study would help us to deepen our understanding of the strategies and procedures used to support children as well as the ways in which children experience this reality. To this end, I would be very grateful if you would give me your permission to conduct my study in one school within the Maria Regina College.

With your consent and approval, I would like to carry out my study at Maria Regina College, Primary School A, Mosta. Should you agree to this proposal, I would appreciate it if you could sign the document below.

Should you have any other questions or require any other information related to the study please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Head of School Signature   Supervisor's Signature

_____   _____

Appendix 2: Head of School

Dear Head of School,

 I, Roxanne Bonnici, am currently studying for a Masters in teaching and Learning in Early childhood and Primary Education and am currently in the process of collecting data for my dissertation, in which I aim to explore the learning and social experiences of children who attend a nurture group in Year __. My supervisor is Professor Mary Darmanin.

Their experience of both the mainstream classroom setting and the nurture group is of interest to my research. In order to get a clearer picture of the experience of these pupils, I hope to carry out a series of observations over the maximum period of two months in both the mainstream classroom setting as well the nurture group setting of one particular class. My study would also entail conducting between 1-2 interviews with the mainstream class teacher as well as 1 nurture group member of staff, and between 1 and 2 parents of whom their child attends the nurture group.

Throughout observations I will also carry out informal conversations with pupils which will not be audio-recorded. Data collected during observations with pupils shall only be recorded in written format in the form of field-notes. I hope to not disrupt the class with my presence and will not discuss any personal or sensitive matters with any of the participants.

Interviews carried out with key stakeholders (nurture group staff, class teacher and parents) shall be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcriptions and with their consent will take-place at a time which will not affect any school activities.

Confidentiality for all participants is guaranteed, by using pseudonyms and concealing identifying details which may reveal the identity of participants. Data will only be used for the purpose of this study and audio-recording will be destroyed within six months of the publication of results.

Participating in this study would help us to deepen our understanding of the strategies and procedures used to support children as well as the ways in which children experience this reality. To this end, I would be very grateful if you would give me your permission to conduct my study in this school.

Should you agree to this proposal, I would appreciate it if you could pass on the attached documents to relevant staff members (Class teacher of Year___, and nurture group staff). I could discuss procedures with them in order to obtain consent from parents and assent from pupils.

Should you have any other questions or require any other information related to the study please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Head of School Signature   Supervisor's Signature

_____   _____

Appendix 3: Service Manager

Dear_____ ,

 I, Roxanne Bonnici, am currently studying for a Masters in Teaching and Learning in Early childhood and Primary Education and am currently in the process of collecting data for my dissertation, in which I aim to explore the learning and social experiences of children who attend a nurture group in Year ____. My supervisor is Professor Mary Darmanin.

Children's experience of both the mainstream classroom setting and the nurture group is of interest to my research. In order to get a clearer picture of the experience of these pupils, I hope to carry out a series of observations over the maximum period of two months in both the mainstream classroom setting as well as the nurture group setting of one particular class. My study would also entail conducting between 1-2 interviews with the mainstream class teacher as well as 1 nurture group member of staff, and between 1 and 2 parents whose child attends the nurture group.

Throughout observations I will also carry out informal conversations with pupils which will not be audio-recorded. Data collected during observations with pupils shall only be recorded in written format in the form of field-notes. I hope to not disrupt the class with my presence and will not discuss any personal or sensitive matters with any of the participants.

Interviews carried out with key stakeholders (nurture group staff, class teacher and parents) shall be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcriptions and with their consent will take-place at a time which will not affect any school activities.

Confidentiality for all participants is guaranteed, by using pseudonyms and concealing identifying details which may reveal the identity of participants. Data will only be used for the purpose of this study and audio-recording will be destroyed within six months of the publication of results.

Participating in this study would help us to deepen our understanding of the strategies and procedures used to support children as well as the ways in which children experience this reality. To this end, I would be very grateful if you would give me your permission to conduct my study in a particular school in which the nurture group provision falls under your management.

With your consent and approval, I would like to carry out my study at Maria Regina College, Primary School A, Mosta. Should you agree to this proposal, I would appreciate it if you could sign the document below.

Should you have any other questions or require any other information related to the study please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Service Manager's Signature   Supervisor's Signature

_____   _____

Appendix 4: Mainstream Class Teacher

Dear Class teacher,

I, Roxanne Bonnici, am currently reading for a Masters degree in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and am in the process of collecting data for my research, described below. Professor Mary Darmanin is my supervisor.

 My study aims to explore the learning and social experiences of children who attend a nurture group in year _____.   I would like to discover more about the integration of children who attend nurture groups in the mainstream classroom. Their experience of both the mainstream learning setting and the nurture group   is of interest.

To this end I would be extremely grateful if you would allow me to observe your class as one of the two main settings in which these children learn and socialize. To understand this experience in context, it is the context (mainstream class and nurture group) which will be the main focus of study and not the respective children per se.

No video or audio recording will be taken throughout observations; data will be collected in the form of written field notes, should you give consent to this. Observations shall take place over the period of about two months throughout the academic year. Without disrupting the class and with your permission, parental consent and child assent, and, I will, from time to time, informally talk to pupils about their everyday lives in these settings.

Additionally, I would appreciate it, if I could talk to you regarding your perception of the nurture group system and on the nature of the support it offers to the children in your class. Your participation would require between 1-2 interviews of not more than an hour long, at place convenient to you, which will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcriptions.

Your identity shall be protected by the use of pseudonyms of your name and the school's name. Confidentiality shall be kept both regarding your own views and also regarding third parties.   Any identifying   personal or school level details will also be removed from the data.

Any audio recording will be destroyed six months after the publication of the examination results of my dissertation.

I wish to remind you that your participation is in no way obligatory. You may also wish to quit at any point throughout the study without needing to give reason. You also have the right to not answer any questions which you do not wish to answer and you may also ask for specific data to be removed.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and would be very grateful if you would fill in the consent form below should you agree to participate in this study.

Should you have any further questions or specific requirements please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Kind regards,

Roxanne Bonnici
 Mobile Number: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mainstream Teacher Consent Form

I_____, the undersigned have read the Information Sheet given to me by Ms Roxanne Bonnici and have been able to ask for clarification.

I give consent to Ms. Roxanne Bonnici to carry out observation in the class I am teaching. I understand that observations and informal conversations with will only be collected in the form of field notes.

I also agree to participating in 1-2 semi-structured interviews of an hour's duration which will be recorded with my consent for the purpose of transcriptions.

I understand that my participation in this study is in no way obligatory and I may choose to withdraw at any time throughout the research project without needing to give a reason.

I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and names will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Please indicate which applies to you:

I consent to observations and ethnographic conversations being carried out in my class.

I consent to be interviewed once or twice in my capacity as a teacher of children who also attend nurture groups and **agree/disagree** to be audio recorded. (*Please indicate by underlining, whether you agree or disagree to be audio recorded*)

Participant's Signature_____ **Researcher's Signature**_____

Date:_____

Should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact me on:

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Appendix 5: Nurture Teacher

Dear_____ ,

I, Roxanne Bonnici am currently reading for a Masters degree in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and am in the process of collecting data for my research. My study aims to explore the learning and social experiences of children who attend a nurture group in Year _____. I would like to discover more about the establishment of supportive teacher-student relationships as well as the integration of children who attend nurture groups in the mainstream classroom. Their experience of both the mainstream learning setting and the nurture group is of interest. To this end I would be grateful if you would allow me to observe your nurture group as one of the two main settings in which these children learn and socialize. To understand this experience in context, it is the context (mainstream class or nurture group) which is the main focus of study and not the individual children per se. Professor Mary Darmanin is my supervisor.

I would be grateful if you would allow me to observe the nurture group in which you teach. Additionally, I would like to hold informal ethnographic conversations with pupils from Year_____who are in the nurture group. No video or audio recording will be taken throughout observations and informal conversations and data will only be collected in the form of written field notes should you give consent to this. Observations shall take place over the period of no longer than two months throughout the academic year and I shall make sure that no personal or sensitive questions will be asked to pupils.

Additionally, I would appreciate it if I could talk to you regarding your experience of nurture groups and strategies used. Your participation would require between 1-2 interviews of not more than an hour long, which with your permission will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcriptions.

No questions will invade your privacy and full confidentiality shall be kept to. Your identity shall be protected by the use of pseudonyms for your own name and the school's name. Any identifying details will also be removed from the data.

Any audio-recorded data collected will be destroyed six months after the publication of results in my dissertation.

I wish to remind you that your participation is in no way obligatory and you may wish to quit at any point throughout the study without needing to give reason. You also have the right to not answer any questions which you do not wish to answer and you may also ask for specific data to be removed.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation. Should you agree to participate in this study I would be very grateful if you would fill in the consent form below.

Should you have any further questions or specific requirements please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

 Kind regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Nurture Staff Consent Form

I_____, the undersigned give consent to Ms. Roxanne Bonnici to carry out observations and informal conversations with students in the nurture group I teach in. I understand that observations and informal conversations with students shall not be recorded and data will only be collected in the form of field notes.

I also may agree to participating in 1-2 hour long, semi-structured interviews about nurture groups which will be recorded with my consent for the purpose of transcriptions.

I understand that my participation in this study is in no way obligatory and I may choose to withdraw at any time throughout the research project without needing to give a reason.

I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and names will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Please indicate where applies to you:

I consent to observations and ethnographic conversations being carried out in my nurture group.

I consent to participating in one or two semi-structured interviews related to nurture groups and **agree/disagree** to be audio recorded. (*Please indicate by underlining, whether you agree or disagree to be audio recorded*)

Participant's Signature_____   **Researcher's Signature**_____

Date:_____

Should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact me on:

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Appendix 6: Parents of Mainstream Class

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently reading for a Masters degree in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and am in the process of collecting data for my research. My study explores the learning and social experiences of children in the mainstream and nurture group classroom. To understand these experiences, I will be carrying out observations in the classroom setting, where I may also have short informal conversations with pupils about their everyday life which are age appropriate and which should not disturb the routine of the classrooms. My supervisor is Professor Mary Darmanin.

To this end, I would be grateful if you would allow me to observe the class in which your son/daughter currently attends. No video or audio recording will be made; observational data will only be collected in the form of written field notes. Observations shall take place over the period of about two months throughout the academic year.

For anonymity reasons, I will conceal identity by changing the school's name, the name of the class and nurture group teachers, your child's name and any other identifying details.

I wish to remind you that your child's participation is in no way obligatory and should you choose not to give permission for your child to participate in this study, your son/daughter will still be present in the classroom and participate in all the lessons and activities pupils are entitled to, however, no data related to your child will be kept. I will give a simple information sheet and assent form to your son/daughter, he or she is free to accept or refuse.

You and your son/daughter have the right to quit the study at any point in time without needing to give any reason as to why. Your child has the right to ask for anything communicated to me to be removed at any time she or he wishes.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and would be very grateful if you would fill in the consent form below should you agree to allow me to observe the class in which your child is a pupil.

Should you have any further questions or specific requirements please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

 Kind regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I_____, the undersigned have read the Information Sheet given to me by Ms Roxanne Bonnici.

I give consent to Ms. Roxanne Bonnici to carry out observation in the mainstream classroom which my child currently attends. I understand that observations and informal conversations with pupils shall not be video or audio recorded and that data will only be collected in the form of field notes.

I understand that my son/daughter's participation in this study is in no way obligatory and she or he may choose to withdraw at any time throughout the research project without needing to give a reason.

 I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and names will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Parent/guardian's signature   Researcher's signature

_____   _____

Date:_____

Should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact me on:

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Għażiż Ġenitur/Kustodju,

Attwalment, jien qed insegwi kors ta' Master f' Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, u ninsab fil-proċess ta' ġbir ta' data għar-riċerka tiegħi. L-istudju tiegħi jesplora l-esperjenzi soċjali u ta' tagħlim tat-tfal fil-klassi integrata u f'nurture group. Sabiex nifhem dawn l-esperjenzi, se nagħmel osservazzjonijiet fl-ambjent tal-klassi, li fihom jista' jkolli wkoll konverżazzjonijiet informali qosra mal-istudenti dwar il-ħajja tagħhom ta' kuljum, li huma adattati għall-età tagħhom u li m'għandhomx ifixklu r-rutina tal-klassi. Is-superviżur tiegħi hija Profs. Mary Darmanin.

Għal dan il-għan, napprezza li kieku inti tagħtini l-permess li nosserva l-klassi li fiha jattendi ibnek/bintek bħalissa. Id-data ta' osservazzjoni se tinġabar biss permezz ta' noti bil-miktub fuq il-post; xejn mhu se jiġi rrekordjat bl-awdjo jew bil-vidjo. L-osservazzjonijiet għandhom isiru matul il-perjodu ta' madwar xahrejn matul is-sena akkademika.

Għal raġunijiet ta' kunfidenzjalità, l-isem tal-iskola, tal-għalliema tal-klassi u tan-nurture groups, isem ibnek/bintek u kwalunkwe dettall ieħor ta' identifikazzjoni se jibqgħu anonimi.

Nixtieq infakkrek li l-parteċipazzjoni ta' ibnek/bintek mhi bl-ebda mod obbligatorja u ladarba tagħżel li ma tagħtix il-kunsens tiegħek għall-parteċipazzjoni fl-istudju, ibnek/bintek xorta waħda se jkunu preżenti fil-klassi u jipparteċipaw fil-lezzjonijiet u l-attivitajiet kollha li l-istudenti huma intitolati għalihom, madanakollu, ebda data relatata ma' ibnek/bintek mhi se tiġi rrekordjata. Jiena se nagħti ittra ta' informazzjoni lil ibnek/bintek u formola ta' kunsens, li huma liberi li jaċċettaw jew jirrifjutaw.

Inti u binkom/bintkom għandkom id-dritt li tieqfu tipparteċipaw f'dan l-istudju f'kwalunkwe ħin mingħajr il-bżonn li tagħtu raġuni għalfejn u għandkom ukoll id-dritt li titolbu li jitneħħew ċerti dettalji.

Nixtieq nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem għall-kooperazzjoni tiegħek u napprezza ħafna jekk timla' l-formola ta' kunsens hawn taħt ladarba taqbel li tagħtini l-permess li nosserva l-klassi li fiha hemm ibnek/bintek bħala student/studenta.

Dejjem Tiegħek,

Roxanne Bonnici

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi ulterjuri jew rekwiżiti speċifiċi nitolbok tikkuntattjani fuq:

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Formola ta' Kunsens tal-Ġenitur/Kustodju

Jien _____, hawn taħt iffirmat, qrajt id-Dokument ta' Informazzjoni mogħti lili mis-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici.

Jien nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi lis-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici sabiex tagħmel osservazzjoni fil-klassi integrata li jattendi fiha ibni/binti. Nifhem li osservazzjonijiet u konverżazzjonijiet informali mal-istudenti m'għandhomx jiġu rrekordjati u li d-data se tinġabar biss f'forma ta' noti miktuba fuq il-post.

Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni ta' ibni/binti f'dan l-istudju mhi bl-ebda mod obbligatorja u hu/hi jistgħu jieqfu jipparteċipaw f'kwalunkwe ħin matul il-proġett ta' riċerka mingħajr il-bżonn li tingħata raġuni.

Nifhem li l-ismijiet se jinbidlu għal raġunijiet ta' anonimità.

Firma tal-ġenitur/kustodju: _____   Firma tar-Riċerkatur _____

Data:_____

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi kkuntattjani fuq:

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Appendix 7: Parents of Pupils who Attend NG

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You have already received information about my research study on the integration of children who attend a nurture group in the mainstream setting and their academic and social learning. Thank you for your consent to my observation of the mainstream classroom in which your child is a pupil.

I am now writing to you, as the parent/ guardian of a child who spends some part of the day in the nurture group as well as in mainstream class.

With your child's agreement (assent), I would also like your permission to accompany your child to the nurture group class. With your consent and your child's assent, I would like to talk to your child from time to time, in an informal manner, about everyday life in both the nurture group and mainstream classroom. Care will be taken to make your child comfortable at all times. At any time s/he wishes to not talk, or to stop for a while, s/he may do so. Nor will I spend so much time with your child as to make him or her feel uncomfortable or miss any lesson or play.

To this end, I would be grateful if you would allow me to observe the nurture group classes which your son/daughter currently attends. No video or audio recording will be taken throughout observations and data will only be collected in the form of written field notes. Observations shall take place over the period of no longer than two months throughout the academic year.

To protect your child, his/her identity shall be concealed by changing his/her name and any identifying details which may reveal their identity.

I wish to remind you that your child's participation is in no way obligatory and should you choose not to consent to participate in this study, your son/daughter will still be present in the classroom however no data will be written related to your child.

Your son/daughter has the right to quit the study at any point in time without needing to give reason as to why and also have the right to ask for details to be removed.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and would be very grateful if you would fill in the consent form below should you agree to allow your child to participate in this study.

Should you have any further questions or specific requirements please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Mobile Number: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

 Kind regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Għeżież Ġenituri/Kustodji,

Diġà irċevejtu informazzjoni rigward l-istudju tiegħi dwar l-integrazzjoni ta' tfal li jattendu nurture group fl-ambjent ta' klassi integrata u t-tagħlim akkademiku u soċjali tagħhom. Grazzi tal-kunsens tagħkom sabiex nosserva l-klassi integrata li fiha hemm bħala student/studenta binkom/bintkom.

Din id-darba qed nikteb lilkom, bħala ġenituri/kustodji ta' tifel/tifla li jqatta'/tqatta' xi parti mill-ġurnata tiegħu/tagħha fin-nurture group kif ukoll fil-klassi integrata.

Bi qbil ma' binkom/bintkom, nixtieq nitlobkom il-permess li nakkumpanja lil binkom/bintkom fil-klassi tan-nurture group. Bil-kunsens tagħkom u l-approvazzjoni ta' binkom/bintkom, nixtieq inkellem lil binkom/bintkom minn ħin għal ħin, b'mod informali, dwar il-ħajja ta' kuljum kemm fin-nurture group kif ukoll fil-klassi integrata. Se tingħata kull attenzjoni sabiex binkom/bintkom jkun/tkun komdu/a l-ħin kollu. F'kwalunkwe ħin li binkom/bintkom juru x-xewqa li jieqfu għal ftit, huma liberi li jagħmlu dan. L-anqas ma jien se nqatta' wisq ħin ma' binkom/bintkom b'mod li jħussuhom skomdi jew jitilfu xi lezzjoni jew logħob.

Għal dan il-għan, napprezza jekk tagħtuni permess nosserva l-klassijiet ta' nurture groups li fihom jattendi/tattendi binkom/bintkom. Id-data se tinġabar biss fil-forma ta' noti miktuba fuq il-post; matul l-osservazzjonijiet mhix se tiġi rrekordjata informazzjoni bl-awdjo jew bil-vidjo. L-osservazzjonijiet għandhom isiru matul il-perjodu ta' mhux aktar minn xahrejn matul is-sena akkademika.

Għal raġunijiet ta' kunfidenzjalità, l-isem tal-iskola, tal-għalliema tal-klassi u tan-nurture groups, isem ibnek/bintek u kwalunkwe dettall ieħor ta' identifikazzjoni se jibqgħu anonimi.

Nixtieq infakkarkom li l-parteċipazzjoni ta' binkom/bintkom mhi bl-ebda mod obbligatorja u ladarba tagħżlu li ma tagħtux il-kunsens tagħkom sabiex tipparteċipaw f'dan l-istudju, binkom/bintkom se jkunu xorta waħda preżenti fil-klassi, madanakollu ebda data mhi se tinkiteb dwar binkom/bintkom.

Binkom/bintkom għandhom id-dritt li jieqfu jipparteċipaw f'dan l-istudju f'kwalunkwe ħin mingħajr il-bżonn li jagħtu raġuni għalfejn u għandhom ukoll id-dritt li jitolbu li jitneħħew ċerti dettalji.

Nixtieq nirringrazzjakom bil-quddiem għall-kooperazzjoni tagħkom u napprezza ħafna jekk timlew il-formola ta' kunsens hawn taħt ladarba taqblu li binkom/bintkom jipparteċipaw f'dan l-istudju.

Dejjem tagħkom,

Roxanne Bonnici

F'każ li jkolkom xi domandi ulterjuri jew rekwiżiti speċifiċi nitlobkom tikkuntattjawni fuq:

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I, Roxanne Bonnici would like to firstly thank you for consenting to your child's participation in my research, your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of nurture groups, I am also interested in the perception of parents of children who attend such groups. Therefore, I would be grateful if I could talk to you about how you feel about your child's experience of the classroom and the nurture group. The questions will be about the academic and social learning of the child in the mainstream classroom and in the nurture group.

The interview would take about an hour and will be held at a place and time of your choice. With your permission, it will be audio-recorded. If you return a signed consent form with your details, I can call to arrange a meeting.

Your identity shall be protected by the use of pseudonyms of your name(fictitious names), your child's name and the school's name. Any other identifying details and personal information will also be concealed.

The audio recording will be destroyed six months after the publication of the examination results of my dissertation.

I wish to remind you that your participation is in no way obligatory. You may wish to quit at any point throughout the study without needing to give reason. You also have the right to not answer any questions which you do not wish to answer and you may also ask for specific replies to be removed.

I would like to thank you once again for your cooperation and would be very grateful if you would fill in the consent form below should you agree to participate in this study.

Should you have any further questions or specific requirements please do not hesitate to contact me on:

Kind regards,

Roxanne Bonnici

Mobile Number: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Għażiż Ġenitur/Kustodju,

Jien, Roxanne Bonnici, nixtieq qabel xejn nirringrazzjak talli tajt il-kunsens tiegħek sabiex ibnek/bintek jipparteċipa/tipparteċipa fir-riċerka tiegħi, il-kooperazzjoni tiegħek hija apprezzata ħafna.

Sabiex jinkiseb fehim aħjar tan-nurture groups, jien interessata ukoll fil-perċezzjoni tal-ġenituri tat-tfal li jattendu l-gruppi msemmija. Għalhekk, napprezza ħafna kieku nkun nista' nitkellem miegħek fuq kif tħossok dwar l-esperjenza tat-tifel/tifla tiegħek tal-klassi u tan-nurture group. Il-mistoqsijiet se jkunu dwar it-tagħlim akkademiku u soċjali tat-tfal fil-klassi integrata u fin-nurture group.

L-intervista ddum madwar siegħa u ssir f'post u ħin tal-għażla tiegħek. Bil-permess tiegħek, l-intervista se tiġi rrekordjata. Jekk inti tirritorna il-formola ta' kunsens iffirmata bid-dettalji tiegħek, jien nikkuntattjak sabiex issir il-laqgħa.

Ismek, isem ibnek/bintek u l-isem tal-iskola se jibqgħu anonimi minħabba raġunijiet ta' kunfidenzjalità. Kwalunkwe dettall ieħor ta' identifikazzjoni u informazzjoni personali se jiġi moħbi wkoll.

Dak li se jiġi rrekordjat se jinqered sitt xhur wara l-pubblikazzjoni tar-riżultati tal-eżamijiet tat-teżi tiegħi.

Nixtieq infakkrek li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek mhi bl-ebda mod obbligatorja. Int tista' tagħżel li tirtira f'kwalunkwe punt matul l-istudju mingħajr ma tagħti raġuni. Għandek ukoll id-dritt li tirrifjuta li twieġeb kwalunkwe mistoqsija li ma tixtieqx twieġeb u tista' titlob ukoll li titneħħa xi data speċifika.

Nixtieq nirringrazzjak għal darboħra tal-kooperazzjoni u napprezza ħafna jekk timla' l-formola ta' kunsens li ssib hawn taħt ladarba taqbel li tipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju.

Dejjem tiegħek,

Roxanne Bonnici

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi ulterjuri jew rekwiżiti speċifiċi nitolbok tikkuntattjani fuq:

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I, Ms. Roxanne Bonnici am currently reading for a Masters degree in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and am in the process of collecting data for my research. My study aims to explore the learning and social experiences of young children who attend a nurture group. My research project requires me to carry out a number of observations in a nurture group class to understand the initiative better.

Participants for the study have already been selected, however due to the fact that multiple pupils from different classes attend one nurture group, your child may also be present whilst I carry out my observations of other pupils. I am writing this letter to inform you about my presence in your child's nurture group class and would also like to ensure **that no data will be collected about your child**. Care will be taken to not interrupt your child's lessons or activities in any way. No video, audio recording or photographs will be taken throughout observations and I will only be present for between 5-8 observations in your child's nurture class only.

Should you have any questions or objections regarding my research, please do not hesitate to contact me on my details found below.

Thanking you in advance,

Ms. Roxanne Bonnici

Mobile number: 77011258

Email address: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Kindly sign below to indicate that you are aware of the above and have no objections to my research taking place.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature   Researcher's Signature

_____   _____

Għeżież Ġenituri/Kustodji,

Jiena, Roxanne Bonnici qed insegwi kors ta' Masters f'Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education, u ninsab fil proċess ta' ġbir ta' data għar-riċerka tiegħi. L-istudju tiegħi jesplora l-esperjenzi soċjali u ta' tagħlim tat-tfal li jattendu nurture group. Ir-riċerka tiegħi tirrikjedi li nwettaq numru ta' osservazzjonijiet ġewwa klassi tan-nurture sabiex nifhem l-inizjattiva aħjar.

Il-parteċipanti għal dan l-istudju huma diġà magħżulin, però minħabba l-fatt li xi studenti minn klassijiet differenti jattendu nurture group waħda, it-tiflel jew tifla tiegħek ser ikunu preżenti waqt li jiena nwettaq l-osservazzjonijiet tiegħi ta' studenti oħrajn. Qed nikteb din l-ittra sabiex ninformak bil-preżenza tiegħi ġewwa l-klassi tan-nurture group ta' ibnek jew bintek u nixtieq nassigurak li ebda data mhi se tiġi rrekordjata li huwa relatat ma' ibnek jew bintek. Jiena ser noqgħod attenta sabiex il-lezzjonijiet u attivitajiet li jsiru ġol-klassi ma jiġux affettwati bil-preżenza tiegħi bl'ebda mod. Xejn mhu se jiġi rrekordjat bil-vidjo, awdjo jew permess ta' ritratti waqt osservazzjoniet u jiena ser inkun preżenti biss għal madwar 5-8 oservazzjonijiet ġewwa l-klassi tan-nurture group biss.

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi jew oġġezzjonijiet rigward ir-riċerka tiegħi, nitolbok tikkuntatjani fuq id-dettalji tiegħi provduti hawn taħt.

Grazzi mil-quddiem,

Roxanne Bonnici

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

Email: Roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Jekk jogħġbok iffirma hawn taħt sabiex turi li inti taf b'dak spjegat hawn fuq u li m'għandek ebda oġġezzjoni li ssir ir-riċerka tiegħi.

Firma tal-ġenitur/kustodju   Firma tar-riċerkatur

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I_____, the undersigned have read the Information Sheet given to me by Ms Roxanne Bonnici.

I give consent to Ms. Roxanne Bonnici to carry out observation in the nurture group class which my child currently attends.

 I also consent to having Ms Roxanne Bonnici accompany my child to the nurture group and to having short, informal, age appropriate conversations with him/her. I understand that observations and informal conversations with my child shall not be audio recorded and data will only be collected in the form of written notes.

I understand that my son/daughter's participation in this study is in no way obligatory and s/he may choose to withdraw at any time throughout the research project without needing to give a reason. If at any point my child is uncomfortable or unhappy with participating, Ms Roxanne Bonnici will immediately let him or her withdraw from the research.

I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and names will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Parent/guardian's signature: _____   Researcher's signature _____

Date:_____

Should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact me on:

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Formola ta' Kunsens tal-Ġenitur/Kustodju

Jien _____, hawn taħt iffirmat, qrajt id-Dokument ta' Informazzjoni mogħti lili mis-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici.

Jien nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi lis-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici sabiex tagħmel osservazzjonijiet fil-klassi tan-nurture group li ibni/binti jattendi/tattendi fiha.

Jien nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi sabiex is-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici takkumpanja lill-ibni/binti għan-nurture group u li jkollha konverżazzjonijiet qosra, informali u adattati għall-età tiegħu/tagħha miegħu/magħha. Nifhem li osservazzjonijiet u konverżazzjonijiet informali ma' ibni/binti m'għandhomx jiġu rrekordjatii u li d-data se tinġabar biss f'forma ta' noti miktuba fuq il-post.

Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni ta' ibni/binti f'dan l-istudju mhix bl-ebda mod obbligatorja u li hi/hu jistgħu jagħżlu li jieqfu f'kwalunkwe ħin matul il-proġett ta' riċerka mingħajr il-bżonn li tingħata raġuni. Jekk f'xi ħin it-tifel/tifla iħossuhom skomdi jew imdejqin bil-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom, it-tifel/tifla huma liberi li jieqfu jipparteċipaw immedjatament fir-riċerka.

Nifhem li d-data kollha miġbura se tinżamm kompletament kunfidenzjali u l-ismijiet se jinbidlu għal raġunijiet ta' anonimità.

Firma tal-ġenitur/kustodju: _____   Firma tar-riċerkatur _____

Data:_____

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi kkuntattjani fuq:

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I_____, the undersigned have read the Information Sheet given to me by Ms Roxanne Bonnici and have been able to contact her for clarification.

I agree to participate in a semi-structured interview with Ms. Roxanne Bonnici related to nurture groups, which will take approximately an hour. I understand that the interview shall be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription. It will be stored safely and destroyed six months after the dissertation has been examined.

I understand that my participation in this study is in no way obligatory and I may choose to withdraw at any time throughout the research project without needing to give a reason.

I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and names will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

Please mark which is applicable to you:

I agree to participate in a semi-structured interview which shall be audio recorded.　☐

I agree to participate in a semi-structured interview which shall not be audio recorded.☐

Participant's signature: _____   Researcher's signature _____

Date:_____

Parent Contact Details:

Please fill in your details in order to arrange a meeting for interview.

Mobile Number_____

E-mail Address_____

Preferred Time and Date _____

Preferred Place_____

Should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact me on:

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Formola ta' Kunsens tal-Ġenitur/Kustodju

Jien _____, hawn taħt iffirmat, qrajt id-Dokument ta' Informazzjoni mogħti lili mis-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici u kelli l-possibbiltà li nikkuntattjaha għal kjarifiki.

Naqbel li nipparteċipa f'intervista semi-strutturata mas-Sinjura Roxanne Bonnici dwar nurture groups, li se ddum madwar siegħa.

Nifhem li bil-kunsens tiegħi, l-informazzjoni tista' tiġi rrekordjata bl-awdjo għall-iskop ta' traskrizzjoni. Din se tinżamm b'mod sikur u tinqered fi żmien sitt xhur mill-eżami tat-teżi.

Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħi f'dan l-istudju mhi bl-ebda mod obbligatorja u nista' nagħżel li nieqaf f'kwalunkwe ħin matul il-proġett ta' riċerka mingħajr il-bżonn li tingħata raġuni.

Nifhem li d-data kollha miġbura se tinżamm kompletament kunfidenzjali u l-ismijiet se jinbidlu għal raġunijiet ta' anonimità.

Jekk jogħġok immarka fejn japplika għalik:

Jien naqbel li nieħu sehem f'intervista semi-strutturata li tiġi rrekordjata bl-awdjo. ☐

Jien naqbel li nieħu sehem f'intervista semi-strutturata mingħajr ma tiġi rrekordjata bl-awdjo. ☐

Firma tal-Parteċipant: _____   Firma tar-Riċerkatur: _____

Data:_____

Jekk jogħġbok imla' id-dettalji tiegħek sabiex isir ftehim fuq il-laqgħa għall-intervista.

Numru tal-Mobile_____

Indirizz tal-Email _____

Data u Ħin Preferuti _____

Post Preferut_____

F'każ li jkollok xi domandi kkuntattjani fuq:

Email: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Mobile: 77011258

Appendix 8: Pupils of Mainstream Classroom

Dear Pupils,

As you know, I am Ms. Roxanne Bonnici, and I am studying at the University of Malta to become a teacher. To finish my final project, I would like to know more about learning and being with friends in a primary classroom.

If you agree, I would like to come and watch your class and sometimes maybe talk to you for a little while so that I can understand more about what you do in school.

I will be with you during your lessons or activities, and will just be writing down some notes for me to remember. You do not have to tell me anything that you would not like to. I will be changing the names of the school, teachers and your name so that no one will know who said the things I will note down.

You do not have to participate in my project if you do not wish to, and you can choose to stop taking-part at any time. If you would not like to take-part, I will make sure to not write any notes about you or about what you say.

It would be very kind of you, if you could fill in the form I will give you later, to tell me if you agree or don't agree to take part in my project.

Thank you for taking your time to read this with me. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to ask me.

Ms. Roxanne Bonnici

Mobile: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Għeżież Studenti,

Kif tafu, jien Ms. Roxanne Bonnici, u qed nistudja fl-Università ta' Malta biex insir għalliema. Għall-proġett finali tiegħi, nixtieq insir naf aktar dwar it-tagħlim u kif tkunu ma' sħabkom fi klassi primarja.

Jekk taqblu, nixtieq niġi nsegwi l-klassi tagħkom u kultant forsi nitkellem magħkom għal ftit biex nifhem aktar x'tagħmlu l-iskola.

Jien se nkun magħkom matul il-lezzjonijiet jew attivitajiet, u se nkun qiegħda nieħu xi noti għalija biss biex niftakar. Ma għandkomx għalfejn tgħiduli affarijiet li ma tixtiqux tgħiduli. Se nkun qed inbiddel l-ismijiet tal-iskola, tal-għalliema u tagħkom biex ħadd ma jkun jaf min qal l-affarijiet li jiena ktibt.

M'għandkomx għalfejn tipparteċipaw fil-proġett tiegħi jekk ma tixtiqux tagħmlu dan, u tistgħu tagħżlu li tieqfu fi x'ħin tridu. Jekk ma tixtiqux tipparteċipaw, jien nagħmel minn kollox biex ma nieħux noti dwarkom jew dwar dak li tgħidu.

Napprezza ħafna jekk timlew il-karta li se ntikom aktar tard, biex tgħiduli jekk taqblux jew ma taqblux li tipparteċipaw f'dan il-proġett.

Grazzi tal-ħin tagħkom. Jekk ikolkom xi mistoqsijiet tiddejqux issaqsuni.

Ms. Roxanne Bonnici

Mobile: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

My name is_____.

Ms. Roxanne has talked to me about her study and given me an information sheet to read.

I agree/disagree to let Ms. Roxanne Bonnici come to watch our class for some time and know that she might talk to me sometimes and take some notes.

I know that I do not have to take part in her study and that I can stop taking part at any time.

I know that it is ok if I do not want to talk to Ms. Roxanne at any time.

 Please circle the happy smiley face if you agree, or the sad smiley face if you do not agree. Only pick one.

I agree   I do not agree

Pupil signature   Researcher's signature

_____   _____

Date: _____

Contact Details:

Mobile number: 77011258

E-mail: Roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Formola ta' Kunsens

Jien jisimni _____.

Ms. Roxanne tkelmet miegħi dwar ir-riċerka tagħha u tagħtni karta bl-informazzjoni biex naqraha.

Jien naqbel/ma naqbilx li Ms. Roxanne Bonnici tiġi tara l-klassi tagħna għal xi żmien u naf li hi tista' xi drabi tkellimni u tieħu xi noti.

Jien naf li mhux bilfors irrid nipparteċipa fir-riċerka tagħha u li nista' nieqaf nipparteċipa fi x'ħin irrid.

Jien naf li ma jkun ġara xejn jekk jien ma nkunx irrid inkompli nitkellem ma' Ms.Roxanne.

Jekk jogħġbok agħmel ċirku mal-ismiley ferħan jekk taqbel, jew mal-ismiley imdejjaq jekk ma taqbilx. Agħżel wieħed biss.

Naqbel   Ma naqbilx

Firma tal-Istudent/a   Firma tar-Riċerkatur

_____   _____

Data: _____

Ikkuntattjani fuq:

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

E-mail: Roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Appendix 9: Pupils who Attend NG

Dear Pupils,

As you know, I am Ms.Roxanne Bonnici, and am studying to be a teacher at the University of Malta. I am interested to know more about learning in a primary classroom and will be coming to watch you and your friends in your class. I would also like to know more about the nurture group class and what kinds of things you learn about and do in this group.

If you agree, I would also like to come and watch the nurture group which you go to and sometimes talk to you while you are in this class. I will just be taking some notes of what happens in your class and some things that you tell me. You do not have to tell me anything which you would not like me to know. I will be changing the names of the school, teachers and your name so that no one will know who said the things I will note down.

You do not have to agree if you do not wish to take part in my project, and you can choose to stop taking part at any time. If you would not like to take part, I will make sure to not take any notes about you.

It would be very kind if you could also fill in form I will give you later to tell me if you agree or don't agree to takepart in my project.

Thank you for taking your time to read this with me.   If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

Ms.Roxanne Bonnici

Mobile number: 77011258

E-mail: Roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Għeżież studenti,

Kif tafu, jien Ms. Roxanne Bonnici, u qed nistudja fl-Università ta' Malta biex insir għalliema. Jinteressani nkun naf aktar dwar it-tagħlim fi klassi primarja u se nkun qed niġi nara lilkom u lil sħabkom fil-klassi tagħkom. Nixtieq inkun naf ukoll aktar dwar il-klassi tan-nurture group u x'tip ta' affarijiet titgħalmu dwarhom u tagħmlu f'dan il-grupp.

Jekk taqblu, nixtieq ukoll niġi u nsegwi n-nurture group li qegħdin fih u kultant inkellimkom sakemm intom tkunu f'din il-klassi. Se nkun qiegħda nieħu xi noti dwar dak li jiġri fil-klassi u xi affarijiet li tgħiduli intom. Ma għandkomx għalfejn tgħiduli affarijiet li ma tixtiqux li jiena nsir naf. Se nkun qed inbiddel l-isem tal-iskola, tal-għalliema u tagħkom biex ħadd ma jkun jaf min qal l-affarijiet li jien se nikteb.

M'għandkomx għalfejn taqblu li tipparteċipaw f'dan il-proġett jekk ma tixtiqux, u tistgħu tagħżlu li tieqfu tipparteċipaw fi x'ħin tridu. Jekk ma tixtiqux tieħdu sehem, jien nagħmel minn kollox biex ma nikteb xejn dwarkom.

Nieħu gost ħafna jekk timlew il-karta li se ntikom aktar tard biex tgħiduli jekk taqblux jew le li tipparteċipaw f'dan il-proġett.

Grazzi tal-ħin tagħkom. Jekk ikolkom xi mistoqsijiet tiddejqux issaqsuni.

Ms.Roxanne Bonnici

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

E-mail: Roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Assent Form

My name is_____.

Ms. Roxanne has talked to me about her study and given me an information sheet to read.

I agree/disagree to let Ms. Roxanne Bonnici come to watch my nurture group for some time and know that she might talk to me sometimes and take some notes.

I know that I do not have to take part in her study and that I can stop taking part at any time.

I know that it is ok if I do not want to talk to Ms. Roxanne at any time.

Please circle the happy smiley face if you agree, or the sad smiley face if you do not agree. Only pick one.

            I agree   I do not agree

Pupil's signature   Researcher's signature

_____   _____

Date: _____

Contact Details:

Mobile number: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt

Formola ta' Kunsens

Jien jisimni_____.

Ms. Roxanne tkelmet miegħi dwar ir-riċerka tagħha u tagħtni karta bl-informazzjoni biex naqraha.

Jien naqbel/ma naqbilx li Ms. Roxanne Bonnici tiġi tara n-nurture group tagħna għal xi żmien u naf li hi tista' xi drabi tkellimni u tieħu xi noti.

Jien naf li mhux bilfors irrid nipparteċipa fir-riċerka tagħha u li nista' nieqaf nipparteċipa fi x'ħin irrid.

Jien naf li ma jkun ġara xejn jekk jien ma nkunx irrid inkompli nitkellem ma' Ms.Roxanne.

 Jekk jogħġbok agħmel ċirku mal-ismiley ferħan jekk taqbel, jew mal-ismiley imdejjaq jekk ma taqbilx. Agħżel wieħed biss.

Naqbel	Ma naqbilx
Firma tal-Istudent/a	Firma tar-Riċerkatur
_____	_____

Data: _____

Ikkuntattjani fuq:

Numru tal-Mobile: 77011258

E-mail: roxanne.bonnici.10@um.edu.mt